

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, 13th May, 1965

*The House met at half-past
Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Crossings (Weymouth)

1. **Mr. Evelyn King** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science at how many schools in the Weymouth area children have ceased to be guided across the road at the conclusion of school time; and what alternative arrangements have been made.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. R. E. Prentice): The Dorset Local Education Authority tells me that this has not happened in any Weymouth school.

Shakespeare Memorial Theatre

2. **Sir Knox Cunningham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the amount of the annual subsidy paid out of public funds to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and its predecessor, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, for each of the years 1954 to 1964, respectively.

The Joint Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Miss Jennie Lee): The Royal Shakespeare Company and its predecessor received no subsidy from the Arts Council before 1962-63. In that year it received a grant as a guarantee towards losses on touring of £10,000, in the next year £7,000 and last year £8,000. No basic grant was paid before 1963-64. In that year it was £40,000 and last year £80,000. This makes £145,000 in all. In addition, the Company has also received some sums from the British Council either by way of guarantee against loss or for deficits on tours arranged by the Council.

If the hon. and learned Member wishes, I shall be glad to send him further details.

Sir Knox Cunningham: I should be very grateful if the hon. Lady could give a breakdown of these figures. If she does not have them at the moment, will she get them from Sir Fordham Flower, the chairman, and tell us how much of this public money is used to subsidise the playing of Shakespeare to full houses at Stratford-on-Avon and how much is used to produce plays at the Aldwych Theatre, some of which have nothing to do with Shakespeare, like the one which centred round the very unedifying theme of a woman breaking wind on the stage?

Miss Lee: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will not want to go along the dangerous road of applying any kind of censorship to ideas in our theatres. We are very well served with our Arts Council, and I believe that Members on both sides of the House would agree that we should leave these questions to the Arts Council.

Natural Environment Research Council

3. **Mr. Wingfield Digby** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the Natural Environment Research Council gives added emphasis to military oceanography, as stated in the Defence White Paper.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Anthony Crosland): The Natural Environment Research Council is not responsible for research in oceanography directed specifically to military purposes. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, and the Defence White Paper refers to added emphasis being given to military oceanography by the Ministry of Defence. In the field of basic research, there will be a common interest and arrangements are therefore envisaged which will provide for representation of the Ministry on the appropriate Committees of the Research Council.

Mr. Digby: Is not the right hon. Gentleman now generally responsible for the National Institute of Oceanography and its work, and is it not self-evident that the reduced responsibility of the

Ministry of Defence for this Council will tend to mean that less work and money will be available for it at the very moment when it needs it most to keep its research ship busy? Will the right hon. Gentleman watch this matter and give definite directions to the Council in these matters of co-ordination?

Mr. Crosland : It is quite true that I am now responsible for the Institute, but special arrangements have been made for the Ministry of Defence and the Institute to maintain the close association which they have always had in the past. Sir Graham Sutton, the new Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council, has already had talks with the Minister responsible and the chief scientist to the Navy. We are very conscious of the need to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention, and I will certainly keep it in mind.

Students (Grants)

4. **Mr. Boston** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will review the system by which grants for higher education are awarded to students by local authorities with a view to eliminating anomalies and obtaining a more uniform pattern throughout the country so that, in particular, a student is not denied a grant because he resides in a particular area.

Mr. Crosland : The Education Act, 1962, and regulations made under it ensure general uniformity of treatment for virtually all qualified British students following first degree and comparable courses; and similar treatment is given to all recognised students at teacher training establishments. Further education courses outside these fields vary very considerably in scope and character. The law therefore confers discretion on local education authorities and I have no proposals for altering this at the present time.

Mr. Boston : Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that a considerable amount of hardship is being caused because, while some county councils award grants, in exactly similar circumstances other county councils do not, and that it would be very valuable to find out the extent of the hardship being caused over the whole country? Once we have that information, would it not be a good idea

to have a review of this system? Would my right hon. Friend also accept that the members of the last Government have some responsibility to bear because they were asked to examine this matter and did not do so?

Mr. Crosland : I am, of course, willing to look at this, and I know that my hon. Friend has been good enough to write to me about three particular cases. The difficulty is the extreme variety of courses in further education. The hope which we all have is to obtain the maximum possible degree of consistency without losing the flexibility which is necessary to meet the great variety of demand.

Mr. Lubbock : Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that as part of the post-graduate course in librarianship at the North-Western Polytechnic students are required to undertake study tours of Continental libraries and that the Kent County Council is the only local education authority, as far as I am aware, which does not make any grant to students for this purpose?

Mr. Hamling : It is a Tory council.

Mr. Crosland : Perhaps the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Lubbock) would write to me about that matter.

Mr. Tinn : Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that there is still a great disparity between the attitudes of different authorities in their treatment of applicants for places in colleges of further education like Ruskin College, Oxford? Will he consider making provision for his Department to award a certain number of grants as a kind of second tier award?

Mr. Crosland : I should not like to commit myself on the particular point about making grants, but I am certainly willing to look at this again with a completely open mind.

Sir E. Boyle : Is it not true that the whole basis of the 1962 Act was that grants in certain circumstances should be mandatory on local authorities and in other cases they were optional? Will the Minister accept that although we on this side would be quite happy for this to be looked at again to see whether the boundaries are rightly drawn and even, perhaps, ready to contemplate further legislation on the subject, we should

nevertheless think it a big departure to say that all grants should be absolutely mandatory, with no discretion allowed to local education authorities in respect of grants for any courses?

Mr. Crosland: I agree with that. It is not possible to make all grants mandatory because of the extraordinary variety of the courses offered in the whole range of further education.

Field Studies

5. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many youth hostels are engaged for field studies; and what steps he is taking to expand this work.

The Joint Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Denis Howell): Over 200 youth hostels are available for use by school parties, and 12 of them, 11 in England and one in Wales, are specially equipped for field studies. I understand that the Youth Hostels Association intends to equip a few more hostels for the purpose in 1966. My Department makes an allocation from the Youth Service building programme to the Youth Hostels Association in respect of its overall programme but not specifically for this activity.

Mr. Lewis: This is most valuable educational work. Will my hon. Friend treat sympathetically the desire of the Youth Hostels Association to expand its programme in this direction?

Mr. Howell: I entirely agree. We shall do what we can to aid its expansion, but it is for the Association to produce proposals.

6. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made with the expansion of local education authority field study and rural study centres.

Mr. Denis Howell: I know of 29 field study centres organised by local education authorities. Others are on the way, and a number of outdoor pursuit centres and school camps are also used in part for field studies.

Mr. Lewis: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but will he use his good offices, perhaps through the Schools

Council, to persuade more local education authorities to branch out in this work?

Mr. Howell: Yes, Sir; we hope that the Schools Council will have regard to this when it is studying curricula. We shall do all we can to encourage the expansion of this activity.

Colleges of Education and Universities

7. **Mr. Armstrong** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the relationship between colleges of education for the training of teachers and universities.

Mr. Crosland: I would like to take this opportunity to affirm once again that the Government would welcome closer academic links between colleges of education and the universities, including the grant of university degrees in suitable cases. This is a matter for the universities and colleges to work out together through the institutes of education. I know that much thought has in fact been given to it, and I hope that some universities will soon be in a position finally to approve arrangements to this end.

Mr. Armstrong: My right hon. Friend's answer will give great satisfaction to the colleges of education, but will he constantly bear in mind that, owing to the heavy pressure which is being put on them, the colleges sometimes feel that they are regarded as units for the production of teachers rather than as places of higher education? Will he continue to give them the encouragement that he has been giving in recent weeks?

Mr. Crosland: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. Recently, there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and quite unnecessary anxiety on the part of the colleges about what we have in mind. I am glad to have this opportunity to affirm how important, in the Government's view, the work of the colleges is in the whole field of higher education.

Sir E. Boyle: Will the right hon. Gentleman take it that we on this side have always wished to stress the part which academic studies can play in many training college courses, and we

welcome the hon. Gentleman's question? What progress has there been since the end of March in the study group on the internal government of the training colleges? Are the universities ready, as it were, to give evidence to the study group, as suggested by the Minister of State when winding up the debate on that occasion?

Mr. Crosland: The study group will be having its first meeting at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, and I hope to take the chair myself.

Outdoor Pursuit Centres

8. **Mr. Armstrong** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many outdoor pursuit centres have been established in England and Wales; and what steps he is taking to expand this work.

Mr. Denis Howell: Detailed information is not available on the whole range of establishments known as outdoor pursuit centres, but I understand there are 30 mountain activities centres alone. There is a continuing movement among local education authorities and voluntary bodies towards the expansion of this work with which my Department is closely in touch.

Mr. Armstrong: Will my hon. Friend continue to support this very valuable activity? Is he aware that in Durham and Sunderland we have had particularly valuable experience of outdoor pursuits, for instance, mountaineering, canoeing and hill climbing, providing wonderful experience for youngsters in these days?

Mr. Howell: We are delighted about this development, and the Department has had some hand in setting up the mountain leadership training board because we feel that in this activity leadership is the key to expansion.

Mr. Hamling: Is my hon. Friend aware that in certain cases when local education authorities in England seek to open this sort of centre, perhaps in Scotland, they run into administrative difficulties as regards grants?

Mr. Howell: I am not aware of any great administrative difficulty. Fourteen of the 30 mountain activity centres are run by local education authorities, and

we know of several others which are looking out for suitable premises to purchase. If my hon. Friend has any examples of difficulty, I shall be delighted if he will let me know.

Moor House Research Station

9. **Mr. Tinn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what expansion has taken place in the work of the Moor House Research Station of the Nature Conservancy.

Mr. Crosland: The research work being carried out at Moor House Field Station is closely integrated with that of Merlewood Research Station in Lancashire, and is described in the Conservancy's last Annual Report for the year ended 30th September, 1964. Moor House Field Station started in 1952 with a staff of 2 (1 scientific). The staff complement is now 6 (3 scientific).

Nature Study Teachers

10. **Mr. Tinn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in developing training of nature study teachers.

Mr. R. E. Prentice: Nature study in its familiar sense is being replaced in the primary schools by wider studies which cover both the physical and the biological aspects of the natural environment. These studies are taken by future class teachers; and suitable preparation is normally included within the training course for students intending to teach in primary schools.

Mr. Tinn: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but will he and his right hon. Friend, in order to help forward this most welcome trend, encourage schools, particularly in industrial areas, to develop the kind of field training area which we already have in my own constituency, in the Victoria Street School in South Bank, where, thanks to the courtesy of Imperial Chemical Industries, access to a large area has been available for the school on a permanent basis for some years past? Will my hon. Friend encourage this development and make it available to other schools?

Mr. Prentice: I think I can say "Yes" to that, with the slight reservation that

detailed instructions on such matters do not go from the Department to the schools; but this is obviously the kind of thing to encourage, and it is being encouraged by the work of the Schools Council.

Married Women Teachers (Recruitment)

14. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local authorities have undertaken this year special campaigns to recruit married women teachers; and with what result.

Mr. Crosland: So far, 41 local education authorities have informed me that they are planning special advertising campaigns this year to supplement my national campaign, and 70 authorities have taken up publicity material supplied by my Department. It is still too early to measure the results; I expect to have some interim figures available by the end of June.

Mrs. Short: I know my right hon. Friend's great concern about the need to recruit additional teachers. Will he keep the House informed of the response to his circular on nursery classes, and will he bear in mind also the need to provide short training courses for those married women who are so recruited? Further, to encourage recruitment, will he undertake to have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the problem of taxation for married women who come forward to teach?

Mr. Crosland: The answer to the first two questions is, "Yes, Sir". The answer to the third is a more conditional "Yes, Sir." I am willing at all times, and on all matters, to have words with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I must point out that there is some misunderstanding about the amount of salary that actually goes in tax. I have had a lot of tables prepared showing how particular categories of either full-time or part-time married women who return fare under the tax system, and few pay anything like the amount of tax that they think they do.

Sir E. Boyle: Is it not a fact that one of the most helpful measures taken on

the tax side from the point of view of women teachers who are wives of professional men was the decision by the previous Government to raise the Sur-tax level? Would not the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the wisest decisions has been not to reverse that very wise step?

Mr. Crosland: No, Sir.

Secondary Schools (Youth Club Facilities)

15. **Mr. Dunn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice or direction he has given to local education authorities, relating to the proposed building plans for secondary schools, for the inclusion of adequate provision for youth, or for the addition of an independent youth club wing, giving full opportunity and facilities for the various activities, outside normal school hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Denis Howell: Advice about youth service accommodation attached to other educational buildings is given in my Department's Building Bulletin No. 20, published in September 1961, a copy of which I am sending to my hon. Friend. The Department's Architects and Building Branch is always willing to consider proposals for such accommodation and to discuss its design with education authorities and governors of secondary schools and I very much appreciate this opportunity of emphasising that developments along these lines are very much to be encouraged.

Mr. Dunn: Will my hon. Friend make his right hon. Friend aware of the fact that there is much concern in cities of high residential and traffic hazard that school playgrounds and playing fields are not available during the normal school holidays? Bearing in mind that capital expenditure on schools is so high, I think that we should extract the maximum utility value from it. Will my hon. Friend see that this possibility is examined, as well as the wider aspects of other community activities?

Mr. Howell: I am delighted with that supplementary question. I have made three speeches on this subject during the last month. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about some action?"] I should like to

have more action but, as hon. Gentleman opposite know, this is a matter in which local authorities exercise their own autonomy. One can only expect them to make progress, and we shall do what we can to keep this under review.

Mr. Tilney : I welcome this grant, but will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind existing boys' clubs and the effect that new building might have on them?

Mr. Howell : Certainly, but I am also equally interested in youth clubs. I think that it is very important to get youth work right across the field for both boys and girls.

Mr. James Johnson : Will my hon. Friend take steps to see that in future school plans the gymnasia are big enough for badminton and tennis clubs to play there in the evenings?

Mr. Howell : This is one of the things to which the Sports Council which I have set up is directing its attention. As a matter of fact, it is meeting at the moment to consider this subject, and I hope soon to issue advice to local education authorities and others on the matter.

Somerset (Building Programme)

16. **Mr. Dean** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now make a statement on the Somerset education building programme for 1967-68.

Mr. R. E. Prentice : I cannot add to the answer my right hon. Friend gave the hon. Member on 1st February and the answer I gave him on 18th March.

Mr. Dean : Can the hon. Gentleman say what is causing this delay? Has he abandoned the intention of announcing the education programme for three years ahead? If so, what is his reason for doing that?

Mr. Prentice : The first half of the school building programme for 1967-68 has been announced. The second half and the subsequent building programme will be announced after the Government have completed their review of public expenditure which is taking place at the moment, and which will decide priorities between the various forms of public expenditure in the years ahead.

Medical Research Council (Asthma)

17. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much is spent by the Medical Research Council on asthma research; and what is its forward programme.

Mr. Crosland : Research relevant to asthma forms part of the Council's extensive programme of work on respiratory and other related conditions, and it is not possible to estimate expenditure on asthma alone. Every opportunity will be taken by the Council to promote new and promising lines of study in this field.

Mr. Walters : But is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Asthma Research Council is the only body in this country which is systematically tackling research on asthma? It is spending £10,000 in the current year, which is all that it can afford. It has three important projects on which it could spend £4,500 but which are held up. Will the Minister consider giving the Council a grant?

Mr. Crosland : The Medical Research Council is always willing to consider any application by qualified workers or groups for medical research projects in this or any other field. Perhaps I could take this opportunity of saying that I know of the work of the Asthma Research Council. I have a high regard for it, and I am pleased that it has a direct link with the Medical Research Council. I am certain that there is a place for organisations of this kind, as well as for the more official and formal Medical Research Council.

Medical School (Southampton)

18. **Mr. David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will authorise the establishment of a medical school in Southampton for the Wessex region.

19. **Sir J. Fletcher-Cooke** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is aware of the need for a medical school in Southampton; what action he is proposing to take; and whether he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now announce

his plans for the establishment of further medical schools to meet the national need for doctors.

36. **Dr. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to establish a medical school in the Southampton area.

Mr. Crosland : I cannot add anything to the Answer I gave on 6th May to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Dr. Summerskill) and the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Peter Walker). The claims of all possible sites for new medical schools will be considered at the appropriate time.

Mr. Price : Will the Minister say when the "appropriate time" is going to be? During his period of intellectual gestation on this matter, will he bear in mind that the Wessex region is the only one in the country which does not have a teaching hospital within its own boundaries, and, secondly, that a new teaching hospital could be established in Southampton more quickly and more cheaply than anywhere else in the country, because all the necessary academic facilities exist in the Southampton area?

Mr. Crosland : I am well aware of the strong claims of Southampton in this matter, but a number of other places have very strong claims which are constantly pressed on me. When the time comes to take a decision, I shall take the advice of the University Grants Committee on the most appropriate sites for any new medical schools which it may be possible to establish.

Sir J. Fletcher-Cooke : When the time comes will the Minister also bear in mind the possibility of associating Netley Hospital with this project of a medical school, if the decision goes, as I hope it will, in favour of Southampton?

Mr. Crosland : At the appropriate time I shall bear every appropriate consideration in mind.

Mr. van Straubenzee : In reaching his decision on the appropriate time, I hope that the Minister will be urged and spurred on by the serious gaps which are revealed by recent reports in training the required number of doctors. Is not there a strong case to be made for the establish-

ment of a school at a place where it can be done really quickly?

Mr. Crosland : I think that there is a strong case for assuming that we need a greater expansion in the number of medical students than the one to which we are committed now. The precise degree of expansion which is needed is at present under study by the various Departments concerned. Whether this expansion can best be made by establishing new schools or building on existing ones is a separate question which will also be considered.

Mr. James Johnson : Would not my hon. Friend agree that all the arguments which have so far been adduced for Southampton and Wessex apply equally, if not more so, to Humberside and Hull?

Mr. Crosland : That is one of my troubles.

Space Research

20. **Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy with regard to the inclusion of British experiments in the manned spacecraft of the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Mr. Crosland : United Kingdom scientists are encouraged to propose experiments for inclusion in the United States programme within the limits of the funds made available for the space research programme. Only recently have the Americans extended their invitation to cover manned spacecraft, and British scientists are considering possible experiments. These will have to compete scientifically with those from other countries which wish to accept this generous offer by the United States authorities, and also with the United States experiments.

Mr. Lloyd : Is the Minister aware that American scientific opinion has expressed surprise at the apparent lack of enthusiasm on the part of British science and British authorities to take part in the Gemini and Apollo projects? Will he do his best to encourage some participation, particularly in the medical and biological spheres, which might be valuable and not very expensive?

Mr. Crosland : Yes, Sir. I do not think that the surprise is well justified. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have co-operated on two satellites, Aerial I and II, which have carried U.K. instruments, and a third satellite, U.K.III, is being built in this country and will be launched by a N.A.S.A. vehicle. I am aware of proposals for experiments with Gemini and Apollo, and these are being examined by the Research Council.

Mr. David Price : Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that Aerial I and II have shown the Americans what a great contribution our scientists can make and, at the industrial level, what extremely good relations exist between B.A.C. and the Hughes Corporation? Does he further agree that the real problem is the problem of every Government, of getting enough money to spend on space?

Mr. Crosland : Yes, to all those points.

School Leavers (Careers Advice)

22. **Mr. William Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is aware of the growing concern about the information services on careers available to school leavers; and what steps he intends to take to implement the Newsom Committee recommendations on this problem.

Mr. R. E. Prentice : I am aware that interest in the subject is increasing. Information and guidance on careers for young people, including advice on the choice of educational courses, are provided both by the Youth Employment Service and the schools, working in close collaboration. The Youth Employment Service is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour. The guidance given in schools has been improving, and the Department and the Schools Council, in consultation with the Minister of Labour, are studying how to help the schools to make further improvements. The Department is hoping very shortly to issue a pamphlet giving some general guidance to teachers and schools.

Mr. Hamilton : Is my hon. Friend aware that this shows a growing volume of dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the services in relation to vocational

guidance, especially in secondary modern schools, and junior secondary schools in Scotland—for which he is not responsible? What active consultation is going on with the N.U.T. and other teachers' organisations in this regard? Can he say whether the pamphlet to which he has referred will indicate the view of the Government as to the appointment of full-time counsellors, as recommended in paragraph 233 of the Newsom Report—which must be an extremely valuable suggestion?

Mr. Prentice : The Government share the view that further improvements are needed and that this problem will increase as a result of raising the school-leaving age in a few years' time and the need for further improvement in provisions to meet that. On the point about the provision of counsellors, the Newsom Report mentioned the practice in the United States, of specialist counsellors. It did not say that this should be copied. It did say that there should be, within each school, teachers with a particular responsibility for this, although it is a responsibility that might be shared with other teaching duties. Our view is that provisions certainly must be increased, but we do not think that the best way to do this is by instituting a separate counsellor service along American lines.

Sir E. Boyle : This is an important matter. Is it not a fact that the question of information available to school leavers is very much linked with the question of the right sort of job for the Newsom sector to be aiming at? Will he take it that all of us greatly welcome the news that the Schools Council is to look at the question of the work that will have to be done in relation to raising the school-leaving age?

Mr. Prentice : I agree. The problem is of giving advice both on the type of job to be followed and the type of work to be done in the final period of school so that that advice may be given in time and, thirdly, the type of further education to be followed after leaving school. The three aspects of the one problem must be linked together.

Mr. Tinn : Will my hon. Friend bear in mind in this connection that there are limits to the extent to which advice can be given? Where it is desirable, will

he encourage schools to develop links with industries and firms in their areas with a view to pupils being seconded to these firms for certain periods of rather more than a mere visit of one day—perhaps for a week or a month, working in the apprentice sections of the firms, in order to gain some idea of what various jobs actually entail?

Mr. Prentice: This is one section of the Newsom recommendations which is particularly valuable and which has the full support of the Government. One of the first three major projects which are being undertaken by the Schools Council is a study of the final period at school, with that suggestion, among others, in mind.

Immigrant Children

23. **Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy in regard to schools with an exceptionally high proportion of immigrant children; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Denis Howell: My right hon. Friend intends very shortly to issue to local education authorities a circular about the education of immigrants, which will refer particularly to the needs of schools with a high proportion of immigrant pupils. I will send the right hon. Member a copy when it is available.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the hon. Gentleman bring specially to the notice of local education authorities the importance of developing the careers advice, referred to also in the last Question, in respect of these children, who will probably face special difficulties which we would all want to be avoided? Does he agree that it would be most important to get our techniques well prepared before this becomes a large-scale problem?

Mr. Howell: I answered that Question by the right hon. Gentleman last week, so I will just say "ditto repleto".

Devon (School Building)

24. **Mr. Peter Mills** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in Devon have had to cancel new classrooms and extensions due to the cuts by the Government in the school building programme.

Mr. R. E. Prentice: The school building programme has not been cut. Taking

both major and minor works together it will be substantially bigger in 1965-66 compared with 1964-65.

The Devon authority's minor works proposals for 1965-66 included projects costing between £2,500 and £20,000 for all types of extensions and improvements to schools at a total cost of £448,500. In addition, the authority planned to carry out 333 similar jobs costing up to £2,500 each. The authority's minor works allocation for all minor works is £200,000. It is for the authority to decide which of its proposals to carry out in 1965-66 and which will have to be deferred.

Mr. Mills: Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that I cannot accept that? There have been cuts. Many primary schools have been affected in Devon. Will the hon. Gentleman also bear in mind that his hon. Friends are not the only ones who have the privilege of using these schools? My own two children are attending a primary school which has been affected by these cuts.

Mr. Prentice: I do not really see how anyone can suggest that a larger programme represents a cut. It may be that the hon. Member is making a comparison between the allocation to Devon and the amount for which Devon asked, but he will be aware that over many years—under all Governments—authorities have tended to ask, in respect of minor works, for about three times what has been allocated to them. In any other context there has not been a cut in this programme, and it is unfair and unreasonable for hon. Members opposite, who have heard the facts over and over again, to keep using that emotive argument.

Sir E. Boyle: Is it not the fact that the major building programme for 1965-66, which was fixed by the previous Government in October, 1963, is being increased by £20 million but that there will be, overall, an admittedly small cut, but none the less a cut, in the minor works programme for 1965-66 as compared with that of the previous year, as announced in this Parliament?

Mr. Prentice: No, Sir. This matter has been discussed over and over again in this House, and it is unreasonable for the right hon. Gentleman, who knows the facts, to distort them in this fashion.

He will be aware that the minor works programme for 1964-65 was £18 million and for 1965-66 it is £21 million—and that is not a cut.

Sir Harmar Nicholls: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that this problem is not confined to Devon? Northamptonshire is in exactly the same position. The cut in the minor works programme is affecting the quality of education that we are likely to get. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that we hope that when we see his Ministry in a week or two's time we shall have a more forthcoming answer than that which he has just given to my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Prentice: Perhaps the hon. Member does not know the facts, but his right hon. Friend does. The programme of £18 million for last year included an allocation of £3 million for mini-minor works. That sum was exceeded, and about £7 million was spent on mini-minor works. Hon. Members opposite are trying to take credit for that. They never intended that; they intended it to be £18 million. We are under an obligation to bring the mini-minor works within the minor works allocation. We are doing this more effectively than the party opposite did, and we are increasing the allocation by £3 million. These are the facts. In the process, certain local authorities are getting less than they spent last year and certain other local authorities are getting much more. Naturally, those which are getting less on balance are protesting about it. But overall the allocation is £21 million, compared with £18 million last year. These facts have been explained over and over again, and we are getting sick of hon. Members opposite trying to make cheap party points by distorting the situation.

Medical Engineering

25. **Mr. J. H. Osborn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which universities and colleges of advanced technology have courses in medical engineering; and how many undergraduates or students are taking such courses at present.

Mr. Crosland: According to the latest information available, there are now full-time courses in various aspects of medical engineering at the universities of Bir-

mingham, Bristol, London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Southampton and Strathclyde. A total of about 40 students are at present taking these courses; all of them are post-graduates. I understand that courses are being planned at other universities.

Mr. Osborn: I thank the Minister for that reply. May I draw his attention to the recent meeting of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee when it was agreed that not enough engineers were aware of the problems of the doctors and not enough doctors were aware of the problems of the engineers? Is he satisfied that enough progress has been made? Surely a figure of 40 students is a little on the light side, and will he give this every encouragement in the future?

Mr. Crosland: Yes, Sir. I will certainly give encouragement in the future. I am glad to say that additional courses are being planned or considered at the Bristol College of Science and Technology and at the universities of Aberdeen, St. Andrew's, Liverpool and Southampton, which shows that we are in a period of considerable expansion.

26. **Mr. J. H. Osborn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many engineers are carrying out work on behalf of the Medical Research Council at present; and what proposals he has for giving further encouragement to research and development in the field of medical engineering.

Mr. Crosland: Fourteen professionally qualified engineers are members of the staff of the Medical Research Council, which also provides support for a number of others working in University departments. In addition many of the Council's staff with other qualifications are concerned with engineering aspects of medical research. A wide range of projects which can be covered by the term medical engineering already receives the active support of the Council, which will continue to encourage and support promising leads in this and related fields.

Mr. Osborn: I thank the Minister for that Answer also. Will he say what is being done now to aid the task of the nurses in hospitals through the M.R.C., particularly with engineering devices which will assist the nurses as well as aiding doctors and engineers?

Mr. Crosland : The Medical Research Council has started a considerable number of projects. A number of these were listed in an answer given on 24th March last year to the hon. Member for Edmonton (Mr. Albu). Perhaps I could send this list of projects which have been started to the hon. Member. It is too long to read out.

Higher National Certificate

28. **Mr. Harold Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what relationship exists between the qualifications required for associate membership of technical institutes and the curricula of Higher National Certificate courses.

Mr. R. E. Prentice : The Higher National Certificate is primarily a qualification in its own right for the senior technician, but it has in many cases given either full or partial exemption from the requirements of professional institutions and has thus offered a route to professional qualifications for the part-time student.

With the raising of standards on the part of many institutions it is likely that in future the H.N.C. will not afford the student as much exemption as in the past, and, while it is important that there should continue to be a part-time route, those aiming at professional qualifications should pursue a full-time or sandwich degree or diploma course where practicable.

Mr. Walker : Is my right hon. Friend aware that this relationship compels education authorities to orientate their courses towards the requirement of the institutions and in this way to enable the institutions to use their influence with regard to degree courses to supply the kind of requirements they represent? Does he realise that this is a restrictive practice which it would be desirable to investigate?

Mr. Prentice : I would not accept that it is a restrictive practice. There is here a very difficult problem, on the one hand, with the institutions which in many cases wish to raise their standards and the H.N.C. which performs a valuable rôle by training and testing people for higher technicians' work. It would be wrong to distort that sort of course to meet changes

in the requirements of the institutions. It is a very difficult problem which varies between one profession and another. If my hon. Friend has any particular aspect in mind I should be glad to know about it.

Sir E. Boyle : Is it not the case that whereas part-time H.N.C. courses have played an important part in the past in helping people to gain qualifications, we hope to see less part-time routes and a growing number of those taking the full-time route? Is not it right that many more qualifications should be expressed in terms of full-time courses? Would not the hon. Gentleman agree that if the Robbins' figures get altered and we have more full-timers by 1974 it will be in line with the progress which most people want to achieve?

Mr. Prentice : We do not want to close the part-time route. I agree that more and more young people should have an opportunity of full-time courses, sandwich courses and the like, and the policy of the new industrial training board should be directed towards this and encourage expansion along those lines.

Nature Conservancy

35. **Mr. Deedes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future organisation and status of Nature Conservancy.

Mr. Crosland : The formal responsibilities of the Nature Conservancy will be transferred to the Natural Environment Research Council, but the Conservancy will continue to carry out its present functions under the supervision of the new Council as part of the general effort in environmental science. Its members will form one of the main Committees of the Council, and its status will be the same as that of the other major components of the new organisation.

Mr. Deedes : Can the Minister say whether this change will reduce the influence of the Nature Conservancy? Is he aware that there is great anxiety among those who think that in present circumstances nature conservancy is doing an indispensable job and its authority ought not to be diminished?

Mr. Crosland : I am well aware of the anxiety which has been expressed a great

deal in the correspondence columns of *The Times*. The anxiety and fears expressed are completely unfounded, and I should like to take the opportunity of saying that not only the Government but Sir Graham Sutton, the new Chairman of N.E.R.C., attach great importance to the work which the Conservancy has done and must continue to do.

GOVERNMENT PURCHASES

Q1. Mr. Marten asked the Prime Minister what instructions have been given to Ministers about following a policy of buying British.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Harold Wilson): No general instructions, Sir.

Mr. Marten: Would not the Prime Minister agree that the Minister of Aviation is one of the biggest defenders of not buying British? Does he realise that by not buying British aircraft we are dissipating the technological resources of this country? On the other side of the same coin, can the Prime Minister please confirm that if we purchase the F 111 the payments will be spread over 13 years and for the F 130 over 25 years, and is not this bad for our balance of payments?

The Prime Minister: This has been fully debated and it would have been easier for my right hon. Friend to have bought British aircraft if the hon. Gentleman and his senior partner at the Ministry of Aviation had left those aircraft in a position where they would be ready at the time and available at a reasonable price to the taxpayer. So far as the general question put by the hon. Gentleman is concerned, the position is, of course, that all Ministers will try wherever possible to buy from sources within this country, provided that does not involve inordinate extra cost to the taxpayer. In the case of computers, where we have been fighting hard to keep the computer industry going, again if it had been done a little earlier we might have been in a stronger position for Government Departments to buy British.

Mr. Woodburn: On the general question, may I ask the Prime Minister whether there is any plan to use the tremendous spending power of the

Government to help in a policy for the location of industry? For example, is it not much easier, by planning properly, to develop industries where they exist than to shift great industries from one part of the country to another. Is not—
[HON. MEMBERS: "Speech."]—Dounreay in Scotland and industries and research in the west of Scotland an example in recent history?

The Prime Minister: This spending power is being used for this purpose, and I think that it has been done continuously over a period of years. We are trying to mobilise the spending power of some new sources of purchase. I have referred to computers for which there was a big Government programme to use them to get industry modernised and cheapen costs to enable us to place many more of our orders with genuinely British firms.

Captain W. Elliot: Would not the Prime Minister agree that the cost to the country of the decision to buy a particular type of aircraft does not end with that decision if in the process it destroys an industry and forces the country to buy all future types from other countries?

The Prime Minister: Certainly, I agree, but so far as the aircraft industry is concerned, in the first place my right hon. Friends have made clear that there is no decision whatever to buy the F 111. This is a matter which will take a lot more consideration; there is certainly no decision. Secondly, regarding the "technological fall-out," as it is called, it is vitally urgent to get more resources in scientific terms and in craftsmanship in civil industries so that we may keep up with other countries in civil technology where we have been falling behind.

Mr. Heath: If the Prime Minister looks at the figures for the purchase of computers by the Government in recent years, would not he agree that the great majority of computers bought by the Government were British computers; and at a period when the figures are worse for the second month running and at the exact moment when the Prime Minister is saying on television that he has got on top of it, does not he think it vitally important that he should take notice of what my hon. Friend has said?

The Prime Minister: It is only a year ago that we were hearing very much from the right hon. Gentleman about not taking single months. [*Interruption*]. All right, if the right hon. Gentleman will compare the trade figures for those two months with the same two months last year, the very two months when he and his right hon. Friend the Member for Barnet (Mr. Maudling) said that the figures were marvellous—he and the then Prime Minister both said that there was good news coming—he will see that the figures were far larger in terms of the gap.

With regard to the computers, I agree that of the relatively small but growing programme of Government computer orders in the 12 months before last October, the majority were for computers made in this country, though I think the right hon. Gentleman will agree that a considerable number were for American firms which were stationed in this country—[HON. MEMBERS: “Stationed?”] Yes, practising in this country. But the right hon. Gentleman will not disagree that by October last there was the very gravest doubt about whether an independent British computer industry could survive at all. Now, it will.

TSR2

Q2. Mr. Marten asked the Prime Minister what representations about the cancellation of the TSR2 have been made to him by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The Prime Minister: None, Sir.

Mr. Marten: Is the Prime Minister not aware that the C.N.D. demanded that the TSR2 should be cancelled as part of the way towards unilateral disarmament? Could he give the House a reassuring remark that he will not be pushed around by this pressure group of C.N.D. and will go no way towards unilateral disarmament?

The Prime Minister: If we were pushed around in this connection we were pushed around by the facts. They were the facts which the hon. Gentleman left us of a programme which had deteriorated in time scale and trebled in cost.

Mr. Arthur Henderson: However much one may agree or disagree with the objects of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, will the Prime Minister make it quite clear that in his view any organisation is entitled to put forward its views to the Government on any matter of public concern?

Sir F. Bennett: Including the First Secretary?

The Prime Minister: This is certainly the case, though, as I said in my original reply, this one has not done so.

Q6. Mr. Fell asked the Prime Minister on what date the first discussions took place between himself and President Johnson of the United States of America on the possibility of an American alternative to the TSR2.

The Prime Minister: There has not been any discussion between President Johnson and myself on the possibility of an American alternative to the TSR2.

Mr. Fell: I wonder whether, in his general discussions in the United States of America on the cancellation of the TSR2, the Prime Minister tried to persuade the United States to buy some of the British equipment, such as the new tank, the strike fighter, the HF.125, and our advanced radar and communication equipment. Will he, in the next 13 weeks, issue an instruction to his Ministers to buy British wherever it is possible for them to buy British having regard to the price, the availability and the performance of the equipment?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member because his Question enabled me to get rid of one legend which has grown up, that all this began in my talks with President Johnson last December. The subject was never mentioned either then or in my visit in April. [An HON. MEMBER: “Why not?”] Because we had no intention of discussing with him any proposition for an American alternative to the TSR2, so we did not.

Of course, talks have been going on—as I think the hon. Member knows—not only about joint production, but about further development in American purchases for certain new projects, both with regard to avionics and to certain developments based on British aero-engines. In regard to a general over-riding directive to buy British for all

purposes, I remind the hon. Gentleman that a substantial purchase of Phantom aircraft and our development of American designs and foreign production for helicopters was started by the former Government a year ago.

Mr. Michael Foot : Why is the Prime Minister so eager to depreciate the Opposition's desire to buy British when he has been telling us all about these applications for honours?

Mr. Biggs-Davison : Would not the Prime Minister have spoken with more conviction in N.A.T.O. about interdependence if he had more faith in some of our most advanced British aero space projects? Will he separate propaganda from facts? Is he not aware that the country fully understands that what happened with the TSR2 was an act of double appeasement, of C.N.D. and the U.S.A., which smacks less of firm government than of political schizophrenia?

The Prime Minister : A lot of midnight oil was spent on that supplementary. I have made it clear, and I thought that this was understood by the whole House, that this project got completely out of hand from the cost point of view. It should be remembered that although right hon. Gentlemen opposite were telling the country that their Government would reduce taxes, in the TSR2 and in four other censure debates they have attacked this Government for not spending much more of the taxpayers' money than we are spending.

Mr. Soames : Would the Prime Minister say when he made the agreement with the United States on the purchase of the Phantom and the C130? What items of British military equipment being manufactured in this country did he suggest should be purchased by the Americans to go part of the way to meeting this expenditure?

The Prime Minister : The agreement was not made by me and it was not discussed with President Johnson. If the right hon. Gentleman wants details of individual items he should put a Question down to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES (MANUFACTURING RESOURCES)

Q3. Mr. Sheldon asked the Prime Minister which nationalised industries will be free to employ and develop their manufacturing resources.

The Prime Minister : I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement made on 31st March by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Sheldon : Can my right hon. Friend give any indication of what may be expected about the forthcoming plans for the gas and electricity industries in particular? Is he aware that his initiative here has given us a great deal of pleasure on this side of the House, and that since many of the most progressive companies are organising themselves on vertical lines his measures to allow the nationalised industries to be equally progressive in organising themselves on vertical lines has given a great deal of satisfaction?

The Prime Minister : With regard to proposals within the gas and electricity industries, my hon. Friend will, no doubt, put down detailed questions to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Power. What the Government have decided—

Sir F. Bennett : Is to have a review.

The Prime Minister :—as announced by the Minister of Transport in March, is that the artificial restrictions operated by the previous Government, particularly by the previous Minister of Transport, which prevented nationalised industries from competing with private enterprise on a competitive basis, even within their own field, should go. They have gone.

Mr. Buck : Will the right hon. Gentleman now give the assurance which was sought by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Powell) on an earlier occasion, namely, that the nationalised industries will be called upon to account separately for any extension of their manufacturing processes so that no concealed subsidy is involved?

The Prime Minister : There will be no question of subsidy. Of course, we have the Select Committee on the Nationalised

Industries, which will be able to form any view on the point made by the hon. Member for Colchester (Mr. Buck). What we had before was a decision to force these industries or these factories to work below capacity—to work uneconomically—because of an ideological ban by the previous Government on their undertaking competitive work.

HONOURS LISTS

Q5. Mr. Hamling asked the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to end the practice of annual honours lists, in so far as they relate to honours for political services.

The Prime Minister : Legislation would not be necessary.

Mr. Hamling : Is my right hon. Friend aware that the proliferation of political honours in recent years has brought the whole system into contempt and has detracted from the real work of many people who deserve and receive honours?

The Prime Minister : I think that there was a good deal of adverse comment, not least from the Liberal Party, last year and the year before about the lists year after year of baronetcies and knighthoods for Members of this House. There was a good deal of suspicion about the way in which this was linked to the activities of the Government Whips. While I do not see that it would be right to abolish the practice of annual honours in general, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance—**[An HON. MEMBER** : “What about Woodrow?”]—Wait and see. **[Laughter.]** I can certainly assure my hon. Friend that these lists will not be used for political purposes, so far as knighthoods and baronetcies for Members of this House are concerned.

With regard to the question which was shouted at me, I can certainly say—I do not think that this could be said by successive Patronage Secretaries on that side—that at no point since we came into office have any political honours been dangled in return for political behaviour.

Hon. Members : Leyton.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop : How is the statement which the right hon. Gentleman has just made rendered compatible with what

happened at Leyton, when political honours were awarded in order to make room for one of his right hon. Friends?

The Prime Minister rose—

Mr. Speaker : Order. We got on to this through a fictional suggestion about a recommendation. The fact is that a discussion of individual honours would be out of order.

Mr. Heath : Did the Prime Minister have to ask his own Patronage Secretary to stay away while he talks such nonsense so that he should not be contradicted? **[Laughter.]**

The Prime Minister : Over the next 13 years I will give the right hon. Member for Bexley (Mr. Heath) each year the opportunity of saying whether we have given a single knighthood or baronetcy in respect of votes in this House. I shall then invite him to tell us how many were given by him and his successors, from Suez onwards, under the previous Government.

Mr. Shinwell : Has my right hon. Friend received any representations from the Leader of the Opposition about the desire of many of his hon. Friends to go to another place, and what has been his reaction?

The Prime Minister : No, Sir. I have had no such representations from the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps it would not be right to say how many of his hon. Friends might have made representations.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Sir Alec Douglas-Home : May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business of the House for next week?

The Lord President of the Council (Mr. Herbert Bowden) : Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows :

MONDAY, 17TH MAY—Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Committee stage, which will be continued on Wednesday, 19th May, and Thursday, 20th May.

TUESDAY, 18TH MAY—Remaining stages of the Trade Disputes Bill.

Motions on the Fertilisers (United Kingdom) Scheme, and on the Church of England Benefices (Suspension of Presentation) (Continuance) Measure.

FRIDAY, 21ST MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY, 24TH MAY—The proposed business will be: further progress with the Committee stage of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home: To return to the question I asked last week—whether the Government will provide a day to debate Commonwealth affairs before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference—is there not a case for broadening this debate to include some colonial matters as well? Would the right hon. Gentleman say when the Colonial Secretary is likely to make a statement about the Aden Commission, since there are indications that his proposals will contain some very unusual features for a Commission of this kind?

Mr. Bowden: Yes, Sir. I think that a statement will be made next week on the Aden Commission.

To answer the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I have given some consideration to the matter. It would be necessary to fit this in before Whitsun if the debate is to be worth while; that is, if it is to take place before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference. Perhaps we can discuss this through the usual channels. I am fairly certain that a debate can be arranged.

Mr. Selwyn Lloyd: Is the Leader of the House aware that there will be some disappointment throughout the House at his not having found time for the half-day debate for which I asked last week on the Second Report of the Select Committee on Procedure in regard to Question Time? I beg the right hon. Gentleman to give this suggestion his sympathetic consideration. It is a pity that he has not managed to find time for this discussion next week. Is he able to promise to provide time the week after?

Mr. Bowden: No, Sir. I cannot move from the position which I took up last week. The position is that I do not think that the House should make any change whatever in its procedure until a decision

has been taken by the House in debate. This is because there are two Reports from the Select Committee on Procedure and the Government must bring forward their own proposals. We should not have this debate until such time as we can implement the decision of the House. This does not affect the roster between now and the end of July if the Opposition wished a change to take place then.

Mr. Philip Noel-Baker: Will the Leader of the House try to find time for an early debate on foreign affairs? Is he aware that there is armed conflict in certain parts of the world, that no serious attempt is being made to end these troubles by the machinery of the United Nations and that, apart from the S.E.A.T.O. and N.A.T.O. conferences, there are other matters which urgently require discussion?

Mr. Bowden: I agree that these are urgent and important matters, but I cannot promise time for a debate this side of Whitsun.

Mr. Marten: Following on the question put by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, since, on Monday week, we resume the Committee stage of the Finance Bill, and since it is also Commonwealth Day, would it not be appropriate for us to debate the Commonwealth on Commonwealth Day?

Mr. Bowden: I think that perhaps the usual channels had better have a look at that suggestion.

Mr. Shinwell: In view of my right hon. Friend's reply to the question of the Leader of the Opposition on the subject of a debate on Commonwealth affairs, does my right hon. Friend intend to have a debate on the Commonwealth in Government time or on a Supply day? Why is it necessary to have a debate on the Commonwealth at the request of the Opposition when the Opposition practically abandoned the Commonwealth two or three years ago?

Mr. Bowden: It so happened last year that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference was later in the year, July, and the debate took place in Government time. The difficulty this year is that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference is rather earlier. That presents

certain difficulties, despite which I think that a debate should take place this side of the Whitsun Recess.

Mr. Lubbock : Has the right hon. Gentleman noticed Motion No. 196, about the case of Timothy John Evans who was hanged for a murder which he did not commit? Will he arrange for a debate to take place on this subject, so that we may try to persuade the Home Secretary to undertake a fresh inquiry into this matter?

[That this House calls on the Secretary of State for the Home Department to carry out an investigation into the case of Timothy John Evans as he advocated in 1961, or to appoint a Judge of the High Court to hold a public inquiry for that purpose.]

Mr. Bowden : My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary did make a statement, I think, early in February. I will have a further conversation with him to see whether he has any change of view.

Mr. Woodburn : In view of the possibility of protracted debates on the Finance Bill next week, will my right hon. Friend, through the usual channels, consider whether the House, in its dignity, ought to allow hon. Members to risk death by being brought here in ambulances and by other means to vote when they could pair and by that means stay in bed, with the same result in the voting Lobby? *[Laughter.]* Is he aware that hon. Members will not laugh or feel very proud if some of their colleagues die in this exercise? Is it not stupid of us not to make other arrangements?

Mr. Bowden : I am inclined to agree with my right hon. Friend. I would not think that any hon. Member really likes this system, but we have it and are stuck with it until such time as we change it. It would seem reasonable if, through the usual channels, it would be possible to agree that where there are two ambulances coming here, one on each side, the hon. Members concerned could pair so that neither of them need come here and there would be no risk. However, I understand that on a recent occasion that was not so easy to arrange, because one of the hon. Members concerned insisted on coming here.

Mr. Hastings : Has the Leader of the House seen the Motion in the names of about 100 of my hon. Friends and myself on the subject of the Steel Bill? In view of the charade to which the House of Commons and the country have been subjected by the Government, and of what most of us would regard as a gross deception of two hon. Members of the House, would the right hon. Gentleman consider granting time so that we may debate this Motion? Would he also accept that important public statements made by senior Ministers of the Crown on the Floor of the House cannot be simply written off or closed by private party meetings upstairs?

[That this House notes the suggestion of the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs that Her Majesty's Government is prepared to listen to proposals other than its own for the future organisation of the British steel industry, and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House and the nation, when, where, and on what basis he proposes that discussions with the steel industry should take place.]

Mr. Bowden : The criticism is often made that statements are not made on the Floor of the House, but at party meetings upstairs. On this occasion, the statement was made on the Floor of the House; I see little objection to that.

We have already had one full day's debate on steel this week. Perhaps the matter could be raised on the Second Reading debate on the Bill.

Mr. John Hynd : Referring to the foreign situation, may I draw attention to the fact that these desperate and urgent situations are arising throughout the world, and that it would be deplorable were the House not given at least a half-day's opportunity to make some expression of its views on the general situation before the lapse of another five or six weeks? Would it not be possible to discuss this matter through the usual channels?

Mr. Bowden : There are difficulties about fitting in an additional day this side of Whitsun. I accept that if it is not done before Whitsun it must wait for about four weeks. On the other hand, my right hon. Friend the Foreign

[MR. BOWDEN.]

Secretary has made one or two statements in the House, and will continue to be as helpful as possible. But I cannot promise a debate on foreign affairs until after the Whitsun Recess.

Sir F. Bennett: Can the Leader of the House say anything about the progress of business on Wednesday mornings? Is he aware that during the last few weeks we have never had many more than about half a dozen Labour Members in the Committee during these morning sittings, and as these sittings were very largely his idea in the first place, can he do anything to persuade rather more of his hon. Friends to abandon their directorships and other private pursuits to come to the House and take part in our proceedings?

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Member will recall that the decision to conduct the Committee proceedings on the Floor of the House was taken by the House itself. As for attendance here on Wednesdays, if the hon. Member looks at the Division lists he will find that considerably more than a few hon. Members have been here.

Mr. Paget: Would my hon. Friend agree that it would require no more than a simple Resolution of the House to enable a sick Member to be nodded through the Lobby before he got into the ambulance instead of only after the ambulance got here? Could not we have that Resolution?

Mr. Bowden: I should be delighted to look at that suggestion through the usual channels, to see whether something can be arranged, as it is rather more sensible than the present procedure.

Dame Irene Ward: Has the Leader of House seen the Motion in my name to invite the Fleet Air Arm Presentation Team to give in the Grand Committee Room in Westminster Hall an account of their personal service and of their aircraft? Will he be kind enough now to find out whether the appropriate Minister will issue such an invitation, a step that would be very welcome to both sides of the House in view of the Fleet Air Arm's service to the country?

[That in the opinion of this House the Fleet Air Arm Presentation Team would

be very welcome to give, in the Grand Committee Room in Westminster Hall, their experiences of their personal service and that of their aircraft: and the House urges the Minister of Defence to accept the offer made by Admiral Sir Richard Smeaton, K.C.B., M.B.E., of an early date in June for this purpose; that the House would appreciate the opportunity of participating in the tour of the Fleet Air Arm Presentation Team which has given in many towns an opportunity to the community of seeing and hearing up to date experiences of this magnificent service.]

Mr. Bowden: I have seen that Motion. I am very sympathetic towards it, and like it, and I will see what I can do to make it possible.

Mr. Warbey: Will my right hon. Friend try to do something, at least, through the usual channels to get a debate before Whitsun on the United Nations? Is he aware that the United Nations is facing probably its gravest crisis in the 20 years of its existence as a result of the persistent flouting of the United Nations Charter by the permanent members of the Security Council; and that if something is not done very quickly to make possible a pronouncement about this from this House we may see the end of the United Nations before we can even begin to discuss its peace-keeping operations?

Mr. Bowden: I promised last week to look at this subject, but I cannot do anything this side of the Whitsun Recess. We must see what happens afterwards.

Mr. Fisher: As the Leader of the House has invited us to raise on the Second Reading of the Steel Bill the rather shabby trick played by the First Secretary of State in the last debate on steel, could he say when that Second Reading debate is likely to be? Will it be before Whitsun, or between Whitsun and the Summer Recess?

Mr. Bowden: It is not next week. It will be announced in the usual way on Thursday's business at some point.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the general interests, we must move on now.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA (Mr. GORDON WALKER'S TOUR)

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Michael Stewart): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to make a statement on Mr. Gordon Walker's tour of South-East Asia.

I promised the House to say something about the results of Mr. Gordon Walker's tour of South-East Asia from 14th April to 4th May. This had three main purposes. Her Majesty's Government wanted Mr. Gordon Walker to supplement the reports of our ambassadors by providing me with a single, comprehensive account of the repercussions in South-East Asia of the Vietnam conflict. Her Majesty's Government also wanted him to explain, as my personal representative, British views to South-East Asian Governments, and to explore further with them the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Because the value to me of Mr. Gordon Walker's report depended on the frankness with which he recorded his personal impressions, it is not suitable for publication.

But I do want to say something about the other objectives of this tour. Explaining British policy to foreign Governments and seeking their concurrence is normally the function of our ambassadors on the spot. But, when a particular aspect of British foreign policy has aroused as much interest in Britain itself as our attitude towards Vietnam, it is occasionally useful to supplement the ordinary diplomatic exchanges by a visit from someone more intimately acquainted with the British political scene that any of our ambassadors abroad are in a position to be.

I know that this aspect was particularly appreciated by many of the South-East Asian leaders with whom Mr. Gordon Walker had his discussions. I hope, too, that his visit may have helped to answer one complaint frequently reported by our ambassadors in South-East Asian capitals. This is that, largely because of the workings of our parliamentary system, so few British political leaders visit that important part of the world.

But Mr. Gordon Walker's main achievement was in persuading certain friendly Governments to withdraw their objections to the proposal for a conference on Cambodia. As the House will recall, the previous Government's efforts to promote such a conference in 1964 foundered on objections from Thailand and South Vietnam. These, at least, have now been overcome, thanks in large part to our decision to emphasise the importance we attach to this project by sending a special emissary to visit these and other Governments.

It was a disappointment that the Chinese and North Vietnamese refused to see Mr. Gordon Walker. It is also regrettable that even the Soviet Government are, so far, only willing to contemplate negotiations on Cambodia rather than on Vietnam. But I earnestly believe that our inability to achieve an immediate and total solution of all the problems of South-East Asia should not deter us from tackling them one by one and trying to advance, step by step, to the negotiated solution which remains our objective.

Mr. Maudling: I should like to ask the Foreign Secretary questions on three points arising from that statement. First, will he tell the House what information he has received from Mr. Gordon Walker, or what information Mr. Gordon Walker has given to other Governments in South-East Asia that could not have been transmitted equally well, possibly even better, through the established diplomatic channels?

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman refers to his disappointment that the Chinese and North Vietnamese refused to see Mr. Gordon Walker. Was this not known before Mr. Gordon Walker left, and did it not, in fact, from the start, place him in an impossible position?

Thirdly, the right hon. Gentleman says that Mr. Gordon Walker's main achievement was in persuading certain friendly countries to withdraw their objections to the proposal of a conference on Cambodia, but is it not the fact, to which the Foreign Secretary did not refer, that the Cambodian Government—who, presumably, are the most concerned—had objected to such a conference, and does not that have something to do with Mr. Gordon Walker's own statement that one of the purposes of the conference was to

[Mr. MAUDLING.]
 give a chance to those taking part to discuss outside the conference proper bigger matters, such as Vietnam and Laos?

Mr. Stewart : The report contains a great deal of detailed information which could not have been obtained through the ordinary channels. There was also the importance of explaining fully Her Majesty's Government's attitude on this matter to the Governments concerned. The practice of sending special emissaries is one which has been adopted in the past, and I think that the circumstances on this occasion justified it. It is true that we are still awaiting a final decision of the Government of Cambodia on this matter and I am awaiting a reply from the Soviet Government to our agreement with them that a conference of this kind should be held.

I do not take the view, however, that the statement to which the right hon. Gentleman referred prejudiced that conference. This possibility had been widely canvassed in the Press quite early in the proceedings, but we have made it clear throughout to the Cambodian Government that a conference on that subject would be on that subject alone. It is true that we knew quite early that Hanoi and Peking had refused to receive Mr. Gordon Walker, but I think that it would have been wrong for us to have assumed for certain that that refusal was final.

The view we have always taken—I see that it does not commend itself to right hon. and hon. Members opposite, but it is still the right one—is that we ought, against all difficulties, to put it beyond doubt that it is not our side that is refusing negotiations. A Government who want to make that clear must sometimes expose themselves to refusals, but that is a risk which has to be taken if they want to get a peaceful settlement.

Mr. Maudling : Can I press the Foreign Secretary on the first and, I think, the most important point? He said that Mr. Gordon Walker was able to obtain a lot of detailed information that our ambassadors could not obtain. How can this possibly be true?

Mr. Stewart : Because the Government cannot constantly be summoning ambassadors back here. It is a question, not merely of messages, but of personal con-

versations, and again I wanted to get a comprehensive review of the attitudes of a whole group of Governments. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the sending of emissaries like this has been done before and these circumstances seemed to me to justify it.

Mr. A. Henderson : I welcome the Foreign Secretary's statement about the possible conference on Cambodia. Would not he agree that, if there is to be a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam problem, sooner or later there will have to be direct talks between the political leaders of Vietcong and the South Vietnam Government? Would he bear in mind the possibility of encouraging such talks, with a view to arranging a cease-fire as a preliminary to a full-scale political conference?

Mr. Stewart : That would involve us in what are the internal affairs of South Vietnam. It seems to me that that is a matter which must arise after there has been international discussion. At present, the situation is that the United States Government are prepared to enter into conference without conditions and that we, for our part, would be prepared, if there were willingness on the other side, to co-operate with our Soviet co-chairman in having a conference directly on the Vietnam question.

It is on these matters that at present we get the answer "No"; but, because it is so important, in the end, to get the answer "Yes", it is right to pursue many different channels, of which Mr. Gordon Walker's visit was one, until, in the end, we get the right answer.

Mr. Grimond : As the Foreign Secretary has told us that there is no agreement about a conference on Cambodia, may I ask him whether he proposes any other initiative in that area? Secondly, may I ask him whether he agrees that the situation is altered, in that while, a month or two ago, it was possible to argue that the United States had not made clear their objectives in the area, they have now made a perfectly clear offer of their willingness to negotiate at any time, without strings attached?

The absolute absence of any response to this offer, combined with the refusal of China and North Vietnam to see Mr. Gordon Walker, must cause the gravest concern to all those who want to see a final solution in this area and must cast

grave doubts on the good will or good sense of North Vietnam and China.

Mr. Stewart : I would agree with the right hon. Gentleman's assessment of the situation in that respect. I have now to consider what useful steps we could again take. There are quite a number of possibilities still open. There is still our suggestion for discussions on Laos, for example, on which we are still waiting for a Russian reply. It may be possible to try to get further approaches to them. I hope that I may be able to say something about that a little later.

Mr. Philip Noel-Baker : May I raise with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary the policy of intensified bombing in North and South Vietnam and ask him if it is proving efficacious for the purpose for which it was undertaken? Has he noted the statement of Mr. McNamara that, after three months of this policy, the Vietcong guerrillas have been increased by 20 per cent. or 40 per cent., that infiltration from North Vietnam has been increased, and that the Chinese have supplied new and modern arms? Is it not clear that further fighting cannot help towards a settlement and that it is urgently necessary to have a proposal for unconditional discussions, together with a cessation of hostilities?

Mr. Stewart : My right hon. Friend will remember that there has already been a proposal from the United States Government for unconditional discussions. That, at any rate, is in the field. I took the importance of that to mean that the United States Government were prepared to enter into those discussions whether or not there was a cease-fire; but, if a cessation of hostilities can also be arranged, so much the better. The United States Government have also made it clear that the moment there is an assured cessation of the action taken by North Vietnam their own action against that country will stop.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home : Although everybody shares the anxieties expressed by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mr. Philip Noel-Baker), is it not a fact that the S.E.A.T.O. Council, whose countries know a great deal about this and are affected by it, and the N.A.T.O. Council, have considered this matter and that both Councils thought that there was no alternative to the American action

and approved the American offer of unconditional talks?

Mr. Stewart : There is very widespread approval of the offer of unconditional talks. There is also very widespread feeling throughout the world that it would be quite wrong and dangerous for the United States Government to abandon the assistance they are now giving to South Vietnam. The American Government have made it clear that the military measures they are taking will be measured according to the situation they meet.

Mr. Sydney Silverman : Is not one of my right hon. Friend's difficulties in collecting the necessary information that what he agrees to be the normal channels, namely, our diplomatic representatives in the countries concerned, are available to him in South Vietnam but are not available, and never have been available, to him in North Vietnam? Is not this at least part of the explanation, and would it not be accepted by most reasonable people that it is not an unreasonable attitude if a country refuses to receive the representative of the Foreign Secretary of a country which refuses to recognise the country or Government concerned?

Can my hon. Friend explain on what grounds it is possible to justify the anomaly of recognising, apparently *de jure*, the Government of South Vietnam and not recognising the Government of North Vietnam at all? Can this possibly be right, and is it in any way useful?

Mr. Stewart : This carries us rather further from the content of my statement, I think. These are matters that could usefully be considered if we could once get the parties concerned to a conference table and get a negotiated settlement. But it is—the House must be in no doubt about this—at present the attitudes of the Governments of China and North Vietnam that prevent us getting there.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker : Order. We must make progress with other business.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (SUPPLY)

Ordered. That this day Business other than the Business of Supply may be taken before Ten o'clock.—[Mr. Bowden.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Considered in Committee.

[Dr. HORACE KING in the Chair]

CIVIL ESTIMATES, 1965-66

CLASS I

VOTE 6. POST OFFICE MINISTERS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a sum, not exceeding £7,250, be granted to Her Majesty, to complete the sum necessary to defray the charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March, 1966, for the salaries of Post Office Ministers. [*£5,000 has been voted on account.*]

BROADCASTING

4.1 p.m.

Sir Peter Rawlinson (Epsom): The subject chosen by the Opposition for debate on this Vote is broadcasting. The debate will be very general and we hope that it will be a useful opportunity for the widest discussion and presentation by us to the right hon. Gentleman the Postmaster-General of our broad ideas. We hope to learn from the right hon. Gentleman the specific proposals of Her Majesty's Government.

This is a subject on which, in every sense, every single human being believes himself or herself to be an expert, in the sense that we are all critics of the programmes which they see. We must confess frankly that we, as Members of Parliament, must surely see less television and listen to fewer sound broadcasts than the vast bulk of our constituents. If we do not, then perhaps our constituents would like to know why. The timing and matter of our job and of the proceedings in Parliament necessarily restrict the viewing which we do, or ought to do. I confess at the start that I have attended the television room upstairs on the occasion of a Test Match against Australia when I have found greater unanimity of views there than I have done here on the Floor of the House.

Obviously, the proportion of programmes seen by us must be limited, but

we must all be aware of the intense public interest in television and broadcasting and we must not under-estimate that interest or the importance of it. It appears that as a nation we have become avid television viewers. The number of people who watch it varies from season to season, but it has become a habit and has provided enjoyment and entertainment for many millions of people.

Some say that it is a pastime manufactured by young people for the entertainment of the middle-aged. Whatever it is, we can see and note the extent of the popularity which television certainly enjoys. In the short time in which it has been an effective source of entertainment it has effected a revolution in social life. The wonder of it is, extraordinarily, taken for granted now—even the wonder of the transmission by Early Bird. Without the technical expertise of some of my hon. Friends, I confess to a sensation still of wonder when I am sitting in my home in London, watching contemporaneously life proceeding in New York or Washington and thinking of the hours that it takes to fly by jet aircraft, or the days and nights to travel across the sea by ship to cover those thousands of miles, and then there is the picture of a man actually as he is talking at that very moment.

This is a piece of technological naïveté which the Postmaster-General might find foreign to him, but which the Assistant Postmaster-General might share with me. Television plays an important rôle in our lives, either directly or indirectly, and it affects taste in entertainment of all kinds. It affects our social habits and also political attitudes and allegiances.

We should never fail to emphasise the real power which is concentrated in the hands of those who are able to direct, design or influence programmes or hire and fire producers. If politics are about power, the acknowledgment of the fact of the power of television is now an essential appreciation for a politician. Therefore, as politicians, we must understand the need to ensure that we have set up the fairest and best national system, and we must take the opportunity which we now have of reviewing the working of that system. The mould of broadcasting in this country has been set up and fixed for some time. It is a conception of a degree of control and responsibility free of all political control.

I should imagine that the vast majority of people and of Members of this Committee accept and appreciate that combination. I should assess that it has worked reasonably well. Over 40 years the great pioneering work by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the great characters and personalities of the B.B.C., have determined the continuation of the concept of public service broadcasting. Much later in the day came the entry of independent television, not that we should forget that it was an entry which was hotly opposed by hon. and right hon. Members opposite at the time. I understand that many long and weary days and nights were spent in Committee getting that system approved and the necessary Bill through the House.

Then there came a remarkable *volte-face*, with the late Lord Morrison of Lambeth saying that if a Labour Government were returned independent television would be stopped. That *volte-face* was because of the popular approval which was given to the programmes produced by independent television. Some people even found the production of the advertisements agreeable.

I know that there are some people who would affect to despise the popular programme. It is very odd of us as politicians to do that, because we accept popular judgments. We accept them complacently in our political triumphs or bravely in our political defeats. It is all based upon the approval of the mass of the population, of the population knowing best and the verdict of the majority. While we can accept that in our political life, I do not know why we cannot accept it in our entertainment. I cannot see what is so wrong with the entertainment that is the most popular. Nevertheless, we accept that there should be an arbiter of standards and there was established the Royal Charter, the duties of the Corporation, and the freedom from outside interference.

Mr. J. J. Mendelson (Penistone): I wonder whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman's analogy of our position *vis-à-vis* the electorate holds water. We accept the verdict of the electorate as a body of political wisdom, but we do not approve of those who make the lowest possible appeal to the electorate.

Sir Peter Rawlinson: Possibly not, but we base ourselves on the weight of popular approval.

One reason for the strength of the British Broadcasting Corporation is the manner in which it is financed. I know that the Corporation attaches the greatest importance to it because it is determined, I understand, to maintain its complete independence, with the Advisory Council and the powers of the governors, to whom, I trust, the Corporation pays proper attention. It is the licence fee which is the ark of the covenant for the B.B.C. and public service broadcasting.

The manner of financing the Corporation and broadcasting is, in effect, a poll tax, a tax on sets, whether those sets are tuned to view the programmes of the B.B.C. or not. Therefore, quite apart from any of the other responsibilities which are set out by Statute, that necessarily involves acceptance by the B.B.C. of its especial position and the massive responsibility which it bears. I wonder whether the B.B.C. is sufficiently alert to the sense of proprietorship which the public has over the B.B.C. which this licence system creates.

The Pilkington Report and the decision to give the Corporation a second television channel was, in my view, an important watershed in broadcasting. I was one of those who doubted the wisdom of that and some years earlier had recommended, with some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, that it should be given to independent television. The B.B.C., however, was desperately anxious to obtain it and I understand the Corporation's attitude. It had no wish for relegation, apparently, to a permanent minority audience. Yet again, one wondered whether the quality and influence of the more discriminating kind of audience which the Corporation would then perhaps have might not have been best both for the Corporation and that audience.

Nevertheless, it was the desire of the Corporation to compete in the popular field and its preoccupation, I understand, to drive up the 35 per cent. audience viewing figure to parity which, in my opinion, has influenced some of the judgments on taste which have been made. To the general viewer, there has been, no doubt, a certain degree of change.

[SIR P. RAWLINSON.]

As has been said, the B.B.C. will always be an Aunt Sally. It is inevitable that a high degree of criticism will be directed against it from every quarter. At a time, however, when there has been, apparently, some idea and certainly some sense of change, I think that it would be happier if the B.B.C. appeared more sensitive to critics and did not dismiss those critics, as sometimes happens—in my view, too often—as empty-headed prudes.

No one under-estimates the general difficulties nor the generally high standards which the B.B.C. maintains, but it must appreciate that in seeking the new emphasis and rôle there comes the dilemma arising from, first, its dependence upon the present form of financing—the poll tax, the set tax—and yet, secondly, its desire for full licence to develop new-style entertainment and a reflection of contemporary image in drama and in programmes.

Obviously, some people have felt concerned that personal attitudes and enthusiasms might be used to shift this organisation, with a world-famous reputation, into a pose which could even be thought, rightly or wrongly, to conflict with its especial position and its duty to maintain high standards and real impartiality in slant as well as in material.

The B.B.C. must, presumably, have expected a reaction from many when it set out into the new fields with the new weapons of protest and of contempt of people and ideas which have been introduced recently into public service broadcasting. Opinions can differ, but it is difficult to see how one can challenge the concern that must be felt over the degree of duty which the Corporation has in its especial position to mock and to shock.

There can be in the theatre or in publications entertainment which is patronised only by those who want that kind of approach or attack on ideas or even on people. That kind of presentation is not supported by the public from the public purse; it is not supported by compulsory money. It is obviously right and liberal in our country that people should be permitted to obtain that kind of approach or attack on the stage or in publications. When it comes to the public service system, however, it is not only the people who have been described as busy-bodies who have become concerned.

To give an illustration, believers today may be in a minority, but I believe that the overwhelming majority of the nation, as would be the case in the House of Commons, does not basically approve of public mockery which is partially paid for by those who are being mocked of deeply-held feelings quite apart from and irrespective of the belief of those who are being mocked. There is something generally alien in the exercise by a powerful instrument of influence to shock and mock minorities. I do not believe that generally it is acceptable to the majority.

To switch from that facet to another which may or may not appeal to other right hon. and hon. Members but as an example of judgment, why has the decision been taken to go out of the way, for example, to record and to televise, to transmit not contemporaneously but, I understand, several days later, a provocative undergraduate debate about Queen and country? Why has this debate of these undergraduates been selected for television?

What is the yardstick of decision? Whether it is appreciated or not, this subject has marked overtones for many people who have experience of the last war. Here there is to be a stunt, with undergraduates all falling over each other to shock older people, as has been the traditional rôle of undergraduates from the day the world began. And yet it appears that it is being pandered to by the B.B.C. Sir Roy Harrod, Dr. Goodhart and now, I see, Sir David Lindsey Keir have criticised this. It is not even news, and it is not to be presented as news, because it is to be transmitted some-time later. This is a stunt and it is being given great emphasis and false importance.

I agree very much with the views of the Postmaster-General, as he expressed them at the Dispatch Box, about political interference by Ministers with the Corporation or with the Independent Television Authority. The right hon. Gentleman said it most articulately and completely correctly. It is, however, our right to comment and to criticise and we are entitled to give a criticism of the judgment and the odd emphasis on the immature and on the desire to offend as though the yardstick has become that of the undergraduate.

Mr. Christopher Rowland (Meriden): Do I understand the right hon. and learned Gentleman to suggest that the desire to broadcast the kind of programme to which he has referred is a characteristic of the B.B.C. only? Surely, this is a characteristic of broadcasting on both channels.

Sir P. Rawlinson: The hon. Member may be right. There seems, however, to be more emphasis at present in the B.B.C. on the kind of programme which mocks and attacks, this kind of laughing-at and the stunt. I regret this. It is a matter of judgment and taste. I know that the B.B.C. will always be subject to criticism, and I pay tribute to it for the difficult balancing act that it has to perform. There is, I appreciate, a danger of leaning too far one way or the other—

Sir Harmar Nicholls (Peterborough): Is not the difference between the two channels that the commercial channel has behind it the Independent Television Authority, which intervenes in a more positive way? We had an example of this when there was a suggestion that the inside working of the B.B.C. should be shown.

Sir P. Rawlinson: My hon. Friend will, I hope, have an opportunity of speaking in the debate and of developing that point. All I can say is that this is an example of judgment which I claim the right to criticise.

Of course, there will be persistence of criticism. Of course, it can be said "Switch it off," and I appreciate that. But the people who have switched off in fury know that part of their money is being used to produce that programme. I think that we are entitled sometimes to raise our voices in protest if that is what we think.

In the sphere of current affair programmes, both I.T.V. and B.B.C. have shown imagination and initiative in developing this type of discussion programme. It does, however, create problems. Television is primarily a medium of entertainment. Politicians very rarely entertain other politicians when they are speaking, let alone entertaining people who are not politicians. I think that one of the most enjoyable things about this House is watching other hon. Members

watching the hon. Member speaking so that when he sits down we can all stand up and quickly try and catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

The problem of bringing in a political item on an entertainment medium seems to be one of remarkable difficulty. When politics is transferred to the studio floor it takes with it all the entertainer's gimmicks—the make-up, the back projections, showing the halo behind the head, the teleprompter, so that that frank and open gaze into the viewer's eyes need never wander or waver. All these are gimmicks which are brought into the presentation of politics and which must be brought in because of that medium.

In the case of the interview the star is, of course, the interviewer, and well he knows it. When discussion with politicians is mixed up with the professional entertainer, the politician quite properly comes off second best to the entertainer.

Whatever the form of programme, there is no doubt that influential political debate now takes place not on the Floor of the House of Commons, but upon the studio floor. Formerly, when there was a debate in this House it was reported in the Press by a very wide variety of newspapers. Then the House of Commons was the forum of debate. Now, I suggest, the real forum for influential political debate is the studio floor. I think that we will have to accept that today people are influenced not by what passes on this Floor, but on the floor of the studio.

Mr. Frank Tomney (Hammersmith, North): What I think is particularly alarming is that when British statesmen who have been overseas on missions of extreme political delicacy arrive back in this country they are met by T.V. commentators, often young and immature, who put pointed questions which are not relevant to the issue. Unfortunately, they have a way of alarming the public and forming a false impression. Airport interviews should be stopped finally once and for ever.

Sir P. Rawlinson: I think that many people have had similar experiences to the hon. Gentleman and the difficulties imposed upon responsible leaders of State, but this is something which is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, it has

[SIR P. RAWLINSON.]
to be accepted that this is a new medium of communication. It is no use shutting our eyes to it and trying to cut it out of our lives. We have to live with it and to do so sensibly.

As I say, I regret that what I believe to be real political debate is moving away from this building. As I have said elsewhere—and this is a purely personal view ; I do not speak for my hon. and right hon. Friends in this part of my speech—I personally have always favoured the televising of Parliament. I know that some of my right hon. Friends here will disagree, and maybe some hon. Members opposite will agree, but I think that this is a matter essentially for an individual, as a Member of Parliament ; and it is a decision that we might be about to make shortly. It is something we should debate. There are, of course, great technical difficulties and there may be need for experiment, but I have been very impressed by the B.B.C.s proposals and the way in which it overcomes—

The Chairman : May I make quite clear to the Committee that the hon. Gentleman the Member who drew a place in the Ballot yesterday stated that he would raise the question of televising Parliament. By the rule of anticipation it is not in order for any Member to anticipate that debate today.

Sir P. Rawlinson : I appreciate that, Dr. King. We have here a debate on broadcasting and we cannot, apparently, deal with one of the matters of great importance.

Sir Harmor Nicholls : On a point of order. Since this debate was announced before the Ballot was drawn, should not this debate have priority over the Ballot? We now have on the record one point of view, but I think that we should have the other one, too.

The Chairman : This is not only a question of order, but also of justice and fairness. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, we have a very broad subject to discuss today. As an hon. Gentleman has won the privilege of initiating a debate on whether Parliament should be broadcast or televised, I should say, not only in the interests of order but also of common decency, that he should be allowed to exercise the privilege. I hope

that the Committee will take notice of what I have said.

Sir P. Rawlinson : I shall, of course, accept that Ruling, Dr. King.

I turn now to other matters. The programmes available—

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing (Hendon, North) : I was not here when the Ballot was drawn yesterday. Could you tell me, Dr. King, whether the Motion on televising Parliamentary proceedings drew first place in the Ballot?

The Chairman : I hope that hon. Members will not ask the Chair to do jobs which hon. Members ought to do for themselves. But, as this is the first occasion when the Chair has been asked to act as HANSARD, the hon. Gentleman was the first in the Ballot.

Sir P. Rawlinson : I was turning to the programmes available to the public in the main sectors of population. We are entitled to ask ourselves whether they are adequate. Is what is available at present adequate for a nation which had the first television service about 30 years ago? Are we entitled, sitting here, arbitrarily to restrict access to more programmes if more could be provided? Are we satisfied, in maintaining the present commercial monopoly? As I understand the position, there is, technically, room for six television services. There could be B.B.C. 1, and I.T.V. 1 on V.H.F. 405 lines, on Bands 1 and 3, and on U.H.F. 625 lines, Bands 4 and 5, B.B.C. 2, as there is now, and three further services, although the sixth would not have complete coverage. If B.B.C. 1 and I.T.V. 1 were converted to 625 they would have to duplicate in Bands 4 and 5 and, therefore, there would only be four separate services.

Since the Pilkington Report, technical opinion has been moving against 625. If this is so, it shows how swiftly technical opinion in these matters can shift. Two-thirds of the population live in London, the Midlands and the North and it would only be in those areas where there would be sufficient advertising income to carry two competitive independent television services, if that levy was abolished.

The object we should set ourselves is the creation of two separate companies

in each of the three main areas, which would mean the introduction of two more into television. The significance of this would at first lie in the introduction of direct competition. I make no apology for advocating the idea of competition and its merits. Just as we on this side of the Committee broke one monopoly, it is now right to consider breaking the other.

A technical pattern could be devised, with each of the competing companies at first having access to U.H.F. One company could transmit part-time on v.h.f. while the other transmitted on u.h.f. and *vice versa* until the two audiences had been equated, when the system would cease. Thereafter, one would operate always on v.h.f. and the other on u.h.f.

I believe that the separation between London, the Midlands and the North for weekend transmissions has always been cumbersome. It was brought into existence to prevent one single seven-day television company operating in London, which would have made it the Titan of independent commercial television.

I understand the arguments against giving the fourth television channel to the I.T.A. They are strongly and cogently put. It is said that there is not enough talent available and that standards would be debased. Such arguments have been used before. Yet they are, basically, those of the man with the red flag walking in front of an early motor car. It is certainly not so with theatres and concert halls and I believe that the introduction of the fourth channel would create the talent while education would provide opportunities and there are wider interests that could be televised, all of which would be able to maintain standards. I do not accept the policy of despair in this matter. The fourth channel would introduce another and further element of choice and the policy of the Opposition is that the fourth channel should be devoted to commercial television.

I have never understood the reason for a limitation, under the control of the Postmaster-General, of the permitted hours of television. Whatever the reasons in the past, is it necessary now? Why must we prolong this discipline? I imagine that the I.T.A. is anxious to extend its hours. Will not the right hon.

Gentleman agree that it should be permitted to do so? I ask him to give a categorical assurance that the hours will be extended. If not, he should explain why. Surely there is no need to wait to do this until the inquiry into B.B.C. finances. This discipline should be removed.

Recently, we had a debate on education by television. It was most interesting and, certainly, there seems sufficient scope on the three channels at present—and on the fourth channel which should come into existence—for extensive and imaginative educational programmes. In the United States, the early hours are used very successfully for education.

There have been encouraging developments in Kingston-upon-Hull and Glasgow, by local education authorities, and also by the Universities of Nottingham, Cambridge and Leeds with local experimental stations with low-power transmission and a capital expenditure of only about £50,000, run on 625 lineage by the universities' own faculties. Above all, such a service should be in the hands of teachers themselves. From such centres, there might well develop this very important service. I hope that we shall hear from the right hon. Gentleman his decision about educational television and that we shall hear not only words, but a story of action and achievement.

Now I turn to the question of sound radio. The time has come for its further development. The quality and standard of B.B.C. sound broadcasting has been extremely high, as is acknowledged by all. It is a source of a great deal of enjoyment to many millions of people. It is very skilfully and agreeably produced. The B.B.C. must always have the supreme position in sound broadcasting.

But now is the time to encourage the introduction of local broadcasting. Some people think that this means nothing but "pop" music stations and object for that reason only. I cannot see why one should object for that reason only. "Pop" music may not be to one's own taste, but why object if there are people who would like to listen to it? The intellectual snobs are as objectionable as the pretentious prudes. The broadcastings ships have shown that a demand exists and that an audience waits. Why should such an audience be denied?

[SIR P. RAWLINSON.]

Of course, there are difficulties and objections and these will have to be dealt with carefully. There are objections about copyright, with regard to the recording industry and its over exposure, and there are the objections of the Musicians' Union. But the supreme interest should, of course, be that of the listener. If the ships are dangerous, and their circumstances are such that action must be taken against them in one form or another, then that is all the more reason for meeting the demand from the land.

Apart from that development, however, we believe that the right solution is in low-range local broadcasting stations. These could perform valuable service, not necessarily of poor standard, and could be economically viable. Why should we not have this service without an increased licence fee? We should not under-estimate the effect of the recent increase in the licence fee. It came at a time when there was disquiet about the organisation and alleged extravagance in the B.B.C. Some hon. Members will have seen the articles in the *Daily Mirror* about staff increases from 9,640 to 12,000 in television producing about 6,545 hours' viewing, out of a total staff of 21,000.

On the other side, hon. Members will also have seen Sir Ivan Stedeford's letter in reply in the *Daily Telegraph* of 30th April. It set out his views—very authoritative—about how wrong that criticism is.

But the main point here concerns public relations. The public wanted to be satisfied before the licence was increased that the B.B.C. was running its affairs prudently and sensibly. What is needed is local sound broadcasting by low-range transmitters. This should not be imposed as a burden upon the licence payer. There could be appropriate control over taste and impartiality either by licensing or bringing the stations under the I.T.A., which could be expanded into an independent broadcasting authority.

Mr. Tomney : The hon. and learned Gentleman said that Sir Ivan Stedeford examined the question of the staffing of the B.B.C. in his letter. That is not strictly correct. He was looking at the

financial results appertaining to the B.B.C. What he did not consider was the policy which produced the financial results. This is a matter that we should be dealing with. The finances of the policy seem, as Sir Ivan said, to be adequate.

Sir P. Rawlinson : I am much obliged to the hon. Gentleman. Some hon. Members will have had a copy of the letter. It appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of 30th April and it sets out the point of view of Sir Ivan Stedeford.

Since the publication of the White Paper in 1962 it has surely been demonstrated that an impressive number of people like and want independent radio. I do not believe that the supreme rôle of the B.B.C. nationally should change, but it would not be suitable for local broadcasting. Nor do I believe that it would be jeopardised by independent local broadcasting, which would be as healthy for it as was the effect on the B.B.C. of the arrival of independent television.

Mr. Rowland : The right hon. and learned Gentleman is making generalisations about the alleged success of Radio Caroline, but what local need has been shown to be served by Radio Caroline?

Sir P. Rawlinson : I am told by my hon. Friends to whose constituencies it is beamed that there is considerable and even extensive liking for this form of programme. All I am saying is that this surely demonstrates, whether hon. Members think that it is a good or bad thing, that there is this taste. Who are we to say that it should be forbidden?

Mr. Bernard Floud (Acton) rose—

The Chairman : I have no power to prevent interventions, but giving way to them is in the power of the hon. Member who possesses the Floor. However, I remind both sides of the Committee that interventions prolong speeches and that I have a very long list of would-be-speakers.

Sir P. Rawlinson : I am prepared to give way to the hon. Member.

Mr. Floud : Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman trying to claim that Radio Caroline is a local broadcasting station?

Sir P. Rawlinson : I must have been particularly confusing in my arguments to the Committee, especially to the hon. Members who have just intervened.

I was saying that Radio Caroline shows that there is a liking for this kind of music and an audience for it which should not be written off and ignored and not tolerated. My proposal for sound broadcasting is that there should be low-power transmissions of a local nature which should not be a burden on the licence holders and, therefore, not a burden on the licence payers. I believe that there is a demand for such local stations which can be met, perhaps not wholly, but certainly to a great extent.

There are many other things to discuss in this very wide subject and you have told us, Dr. King, as we probably knew, that there are many hon. Members who wish to catch your eye during the course of the debate. The time is now ripe for a change in the fixed pattern which we now have. The first thing for which we should call is greater competition in commercial television, the extra choice of viewing which should be provided by the fourth and commercial channel. That is our proposal and I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether the Government accept that proposition and what their proposals are. Secondly, there should be a wider choice in sound broadcasting by local stations and without an increase in the licence fee.

This is a matter which deals with the extension of the choice of the people at the receiving ends of the radio and television sets. The time has probably come for a completely new look at this position and perhaps for a Minister of communications with a duty to consider wavelengths and the general discipline of services. The field is ripe for this further development.

I hope that we shall not hear—and I am sure that we will not be put off by—talk of having yet one more of the Government's interminable committees. The picture of the groups and committees of Ministers which has been painted by right hon. and hon. Gentlemen opposite is becoming alarming. This is not the pose of dynamic government of which we heard so much in the halcyon days of October, 1964, when the Government said that they were poised to swing their plans into instant operation or, in the more recent elegant phrase of the Prime

Minister, "Knock the hell out of them". I do not know who "them" is, or what "the hell" is to be, but perhaps we have been suffering it a little already.

What were the views of the Labour Party in October, 1964, and what are the Government's proposals now, and how instant is to be the operation in which they are to swing their plans into orbit? The time has come when we shall hear from the right hon. Gentleman in his own inimitable fashion. I hope that that we shall be told that the people are entitled to have an extensive choice of that to which they listen and what they see, and that is what we expect to hear from the right hon. Gentleman.

4.45 p.m.

The Postmaster-General (Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn) : Today's debate is the first covering the whole range of broadcasting policy which has been held in the House of Commons since the Pilkington Report was debated in 1962. There have been other debates more recently on specialised aspects of broadcasting, like the television levy and other subjects, but none has covered the whole range, as can be done today. I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) that when one considers the influence and power of broadcasting on the lives of all of us, it is surprising that the House of Commons, at any rate, should devote so little time to it. I should like to thank the Opposition for having given us the opportunity to hold the debate today and to say how much the Government welcome it.

There are many controversial issues to be argued out. Some have been already mentioned by the right hon. and learned Gentleman and others will, no doubt, emerge in the course of the debate. Not all of them follow strict party lines. There are many differences and different streams in broadcasting views.

However, I think that the Committee is united on two things: first, in the enjoyment which it gets out of broadcasting and its gratitude to the B.B.C., the I.T.A., the programme companies and the people who make the programmes for the skill and ability which they show in preparing the programmes which we see and hear; and, secondly, in our desire to develop the best possible system, although we may not always agree about

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what that system should be. In so far as I am utterly convinced that my children are better educated than I was, I would attribute half of that to the development of education in our schools and half to the development of television, and I think that most parents of my generation would agree.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I told the Committee the way in which I propose to deal with the subjects which are relevant today. I should like, first, to describe the broadcasting problems which were awaiting decision when we took office and why we have thought it necessary to undertake a major review; secondly, I should like to deal with the problems of B.B.C. finance; and, thirdly, to indicate the principles which will guide the Government in the reviews which they are now undertaking.

It is inevitable that while the reviews are in progress debates or statements of Government opinion will be tentative, but this is a positive advantage for the Committee, since it is often argued that subjects are debated only when the Government have made up their mind. On this occasion, all the views expressed in the debate will come in good time to be fully considered. It would be helpful in dealing with some of the controversial issues if I aired alternative possibilities without commitment specifically in order to invite comment upon them. On the clear understanding that what I say would be taken on that basis, I should like to focus attention on the factors which should weigh with us in reaching our decisions.

I come, first, to the broadcasting problems which were awaiting decision when we came to power. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has referred, as I did in the debate in March, to my Department as a sort of Ministry of Communications. Certainly, the responsibility of the Post Office is very natural in this respect, not in the day-to-day management or content of the programmes, but in the structure and development of broadcasting. The job of the Government is to create the conditions in which broadcasting can flourish. This places responsibility for broadcasting policy upon my office and upon the Government as a whole.

When I came to office in October I discovered that there were many problems which had to be decided. Probably the most urgent was the financial crisis as it affected the B.B.C., to which I shall return later. The other main issues were the allocation of the fourth channel, educational broadcasting, colour television, pay television, the pirate radio issue and sound broadcasting, particularly local sound broadcasting. It seemed to me that as many of these issues were linked together it would be foolish to try to tackle them separately and even more foolish to rush a decision until the full implications and alternative policies had been fully explored.

May I deal, first, with the allocation of the fourth channel? The right hon. and learned Member for Epsom posed the technical problem absolutely correctly—that the decision to move into U.H.F. and 625 lines, taken by his colleagues, makes four channels available. One of these is already in use for the B.B.C., two are earmarked against the possibility of duplication of B.B.C.1 and I.T.A.—we do not want a double line standard for ever—and that leaves only one unallocated channel, the so-called fourth channel. The question which confronts us: who should have it?

The last Government foreshadowed the allocation of this channel to the commercial companies and the I.T.A. We are not committed to this view, although naturally, we have noted what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said—that he and his party are committed to it. The disposition of scarce and valuable wavelengths is a matter of high policy, and the decision must also take account of the effect on physical resources. It seems to me absolutely essential that before we reach a decision of this kind we must be clear in our own minds as to what purposes the fourth channel should be required to meet.

It is not any good simply saying that television is primarily entertainment without considering alternative possibilities. I believe that the debate would justify itself if it did no more than provide a forum for the House of Commons to consider this one point. We have to decide whether the fourth channel is to be built principally upon public entertainment in a general service or whether it should be reserved for education or for

community programmes developed regionally and networked together. Views may differ about this, but no one, I think, would deny the importance of the decision that we would be taking one way or the other.

I must say—and the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom was a little naïve in not mentioning this—that broadcasting policy is a jungle of special interests and we must not forget that the fourth channel is a very valuable piece of public property, the disposition of which can easily make fortunes for those to whom it is granted. Although I do not want to reopen the controversies of 1954, the plain fact is that by their decision to institute commercial television in the way in which it was done, the last Government made possible, as one contract holder said, a licence to print money which has been utilised very fully.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing : On a matter of history, that point was made from the Labour benches in the House of Commons. At the time it was a minority view. It was very farsighted of the Labour Member to make it. Although the remark was made in this House, it was picked up by a right hon. and noble Lord in another place later. However, it first originated in this House.

Mr. Benn : I should be the last to be surprised that one of my hon. Friends was the first person to think of the phrase. We were invited earlier today to admit our error in the view that we took then. It seems that one of the prophecies made by one of my hon. Friends on that occasion turned out to be fully justified.

Sir Harmar Nicholls : Would it not be fair to say that the question about the licence to print money, whether rightly or wrongly, was put right in the last Television Act? Also, would it not be true to say that, as we were then in virgin territory, if we give the fourth channel we shall have that experience to go on and we shall not make the same mistake again?

Mr. Benn : It is true that the Conservative Party recognised rather late exactly the character of the decision which it had made, and the television levy goes some way to meet this point.

I am not trying to reopen this particular 1954 controversy. All that I am saying

is that this is a very valuable piece of property and that we should be deceiving ourselves if we did not admit that there were a large number of people who, for their own reasons, would like access to it. We must also remember that those in commercial television do not actually make their money by selling programmes. They make their money by selling to advertisers a part of the time which the Government gave them when they gave them the channel.

It is sometimes said that these programmes are free. I have heard hon. Members opposite attack the idea that the Welfare State is free. Similarly, the idea that independent television is free is a complete illusion. Both the Welfare State and independent television programmes have to be paid for. There is no concept of something for nothing here.

Some hon. Members suggested recently that people who did not watch B.B.C. television should not need to pay the licence fee. I wonder what would happen if a man went into a shop and asked for his soap, detergents or chocolate at a lower price on the ground that he never watched I.T.A. and saw no reason why he should contribute towards the advertising budget of the firm which sold them.

Mr. James Dance (Bromsgrove) : I raised this question last week. Suppose that I had an electric fire or a gas fire. If I did not use the nationalised gas or electricity, I should not pay for it.

Mr. Benn : I have dealt with this point. If one argued that those who did not watch I.T.A. television could get a special rebate on all the purchases which they made in shops selling goods which were advertised on commercial television, one would be arguing from the same premise. I am merely attacking the idea that the community can get the fourth channel free if only it accepts the recommendations made today by the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom.

There are a number of other issues which hang on this decision about the fourth channel. One is the question of the current I.T.V. contracts which expire in 1967 and another is the control of hours. The right hon. and learned Member for Epsom knows very well that control

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of hours of broadcasting was exercised throughout the entire period of his own party's time in office. In the first White Paper on the Pilkington Report, it was made absolutely clear that the Postmaster-General's control of hours of broadcasting would continue. Of course, it is true that the hours of broadcasting which are authorised, or those which are not authorised, are real resources available to the community for a variety of purposes and that any decision about them is a fundamental policy decision.

Similarly, we must take account of the fact that as a result of the way in which independent television was set up in 1955 the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. are in a very different position about extended hours. More hours for I.T.A. makes money. More hours for the B.B.C. loses or costs money without any comparable increase in revenue. This is a matter which must be looked at in terms of the purposes which we wish to see served.

I come to the possibilities of educational broadcasting, to which the right hon. and learned Member referred. This is closely tied to the question of the fourth channel, and, although the subject of the university of the air, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has advocated, falls within the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Office and, therefore, I cannot comment on it in any detail, this is under very urgent consideration and a number of alternative possibilities, including the use of unused hours, are now being considered. There is interest among universities and local authorities about ways and means of using television and radio to realise local educational needs. I think that what I have said certainly justifies the necessity of reaching a decision after the most careful consideration of the alternatives.

I turn for a moment to the question of colour television. It is not necessary for me to say much about this subject, because it was very fully aired in the House yesterday and has been during recent weeks. We are anxious to make an early start ourselves. The B.B.C. is anxious to get on with it. The I.T.A. is interested. There are export possibilities here, not only in terms of sets but also in terms of programmes. The communications satellites are, of course, capable of

transmitting colour just as well as black and white.

When can we expect to see it? We had all hoped that the Vienna conference would clear the way for an acceptable uniform colour system in Europe. The British delegation, on technical grounds, was briefed to support the N.T.S.C. system, which had the advantage of having been used and tested in America for some years and which, we thought, was more capable of developing a greater potential than its rivals in the future. But, as the House knows, the Vienna conference did not reach an agreement. It set back our hopes of European standardisation, to which we attach the highest importance. It would be a real tragedy if Europe were to abandon standardisation just at the moment when the exchange of programmes is becoming so much easier.

For this country, the choice, if one has to be made, between America and Europe, or between American and European systems, will be a particularly difficult one, for, technical standards aside, we are linked to America by a common language and to Europe by geographical proximity. There would be no satisfaction in having to make a choice of this kind. It would be made even harder if there were two different systems on the Continent of Europe, not just one. I must, therefore, ask the Committee to be patient for a little longer. In this case, it is better to be right than to be first.

When colour comes in, we shall also have to consider how to pay for it. The high cost of sets and the additional cost of colour transmissions raise new considerations which must be faced. In the past, B.B.C. television developments have been financed by all licence holders, whether or not the new service had yet reached them. This was quite justifiable on the ground that those in more remote areas were financing the development of the transmitters which would bring the new service to them. But this may not apply to colour television. It may not be right to ask the main body of licence holders to pay for a colour service which they may never wish or be able to afford to receive themselves, and we might have to consider the introduction of a separate licence fee for colour receivers, for the reasons I have given.

A few words now about pay-television. Although the Pilkington Committee recommended against pay-television, the previous Government issued licences, just before they went out of office in October, to several pay-television companies on an experimental basis. These licences were binding upon the present Government, and we have done nothing to interfere with them. The last Government were not permitted to authorise a general pay-TV service, and neither are we. In fact, all but one of the pay-television licensees have now withdrawn, and we are bound to honour the licence granted to the remaining company; but we cannot yet say, any more than the previous Government could, what future, if any, pay-television may have.

I turn now to the question of pirate radio, which has been aired in the House in the past and on which there is very little new which I can say today. Whatever future there may be for local sound broadcasting in this country, the pirate radios have no part in it. These stations, which started last year, were designed to force the hand of this Parliament on the future development of sound radio. That has been made crystal clear time and again, and, indeed, without making the arguments respectable in any way, the drift of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own argument today pointed, I thought, in the same direction.

As I have said time and again in the House, the stealing of copyright, the endangering of the livelihood of musicians, the appropriation of wavelengths, the interference with foreign stations and the danger to shipping and ship-to-shore radio make the pirates a menace. This led the previous Government, like ourselves, to seek to negotiate with European countries a convention which would eliminate the pirates altogether. We shall certainly follow this through. The pirate stations have no future whatever in the further development of broadcasting in this country or Europe.

But, of course, there is raised in this connection the question whether or not there are new issues which ought to be confronted in sound broadcasting policy. One of these is the undoubted public demand for light music programmes running through the day. It is sometimes said that this demand has been produced

by the pirate radios, but I suspect that it has always existed.

Sir John Rodgers (Sevenoaks):
"Muzak".

Mr. Benn: "Muzak" is one example.

This wish to have a background of music, sometimes rather disrespectfully called "audible wallpaper", is a feature of public demand which cannot be left out of account. But it is essentially a national demand which can be met only by the use of a national wavelength. It would be an appalling waste of the potentialities of local radio to have a multiplicity of "pop" stations duplicating each other in different areas. In any case, neither the record companies nor the musicians could possibly tolerate the unlimited "needle" time which would absolutely destroy the livelihood of the one and the business of the other, which, in the case of the record companies, of course, includes a substantial export business.

Local v.h.f. "pop" stations could not even be received by the "transistor" audience who buy cheap transistor sets which are capable of receiving only the medium-wave band. Therefore, any idea that there is a relationship between the demand which the pirates may have revealed—though they did not create it—and the future pattern of local sound broadcasting in this country seems to me to be an illusion.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing: I am following the right hon. Gentleman very carefully. I think that he will agree that during the daytime, when there is no interference with Continental stations, these local stations could use the medium-wave frequencies without interference or trouble, and this is, in fact, what has been done by the pirate stations. I am not supporting them. I am saying only that it is possible for local radio stations to use the medium-wave band during the day.

Mr. Benn: Yes, but the pirate stations are interfering with other countries' reception, and the development of a really serious pattern of local sound stations in this country depends upon the use of v.h.f. which makes a great number of channels available.

Mr. Tomney : I would like to get this right, if I can. As I understand, the European Broadcasting Commission has disagreed about pirate off-shore radio stations. Some countries are now receiving revenue direct from pirate off-shore radio stations. Is my right hon. Friend saying that he intends to take action on behalf of this country in defence of, or in association with, the European Broadcasting Commission, although he does not agree about what should be done?

Mr. Benn : With respect, I think that my hon. Friend has misunderstood the position. A convention has been signed by this country and others which binds us to introduce legislation to eliminate the pirate stations, and there is no question of a disagreement between ourselves and European countries on this particular issue. This is a matter which the previous Government took up. They started the negotiations, which we have carried on for the reasons I have given, and there is no question but that we shall go ahead.

But if this demand is to be met for music programmes, it will have to be met by the B.B.C., and we should certainly be interested to see how it could be done by the Corporation, so long as the interests of live music and the musicians who provide it and the legitimate rights of the recording companies are safeguarded.

Local radio made possible by the use of v.h.f. channels could play a most useful part in community life. The B.B.C. is anxious to run some pilot stations, and the Director of Sound Broadcasting, Mr. Frank Gillard, has made this his special concern and has conducted some valuable and encouraging experiments. Similarly, some universities and local authorities have expressed interest in the value of these stations in community development, locally run and locally supported, and hon. Members of this House, seeing the value of such a service, have been pressing for a start.

The decision to go ahead raises the same sort of issues about the allocation of resources which I mentioned in connection with the fourth channel.

Sir Harmar Nicholls : Do I understand that the right hon. Gentleman does

not rule out the local sound radio station providing the service which he has described?

Mr. Benn : I said that the allocation raised the same considerations as were raised by the allocation of the fourth channel, and I said that it did not meet the point made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman about music programmes.

Sir J. Rodgers : I understood the right hon. Gentleman to say that "pop" music could be provided only by the B.B.C. Does he adhere to that view?

Mr. Benn : I said that if there was a demand for music programmes throughout the day this could not be met by local commercial sound stations of the kind mentioned by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. It had to be met nationally by the B.B.C.—this is not only recorded music, but live music as well—because it was only in this way that we could make it available to the sort of audience which wants it, with the sort of sets that they have. The rôle, the functions, and the programming of community stations are things on which I have not given any indication in detail at all.

Sir J. Rodgers : Does the right hon. Gentleman mean that he is giving no consideration to the possibility of breaking the sound monopoly of the B.B.C.?

Mr. Benn : I do not think that the hon. Gentleman quite understood what I was saying. I was dealing with the question of meeting this demand. I was also considering all sorts of other possibilities, which I had mentioned in my speech, including the possibility of genuinely locally-run and locally-supported stations. But, as we are reviewing this, it is impossible to do more than consider alternatives. I hope that the House will take it in that spirit.

Now we come to the structure and control of broadcasting, which has been highlighted for me by the large number of Questions which have been asked in the House about programme standards and political impartiality. These all raise the question of the constitutional relationship which ought to exist between the Government and the broadcasting authorities. The right hon. and learned Gentleman

today has mentioned a number of these questions, and of course he is right in saying that the freedom of comment must be preserved within this pattern in the House itself.

In answering all these questions I have always restated the traditional doctrine which has been accepted by all Governments, and is designed as a safeguard against political interference. I would remind the House of the great danger of going beyond this limit with regard to Ministerial interference. I recall very well—and I reminded myself of the actual words—what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said at the time of Suez. Admittedly he was dealing with overseas broadcasts, but he said that overseas broadcasts of the B.B.C. should reflect only the policy of the Government of the day. Although we are not discussing overseas broadcasts today, I think there is a real danger that if we allowed ourselves to be carried along too far in considering this problem, we might find that, for the best reasons, it was the Government of the day who decided these things, and they were not decided by more independent bodies vested with that responsibility.

Sir P. Rawlinson : The right hon. Gentleman has referred to the debate at the time of Suez. I repeat that that is my view with regard to overseas broadcasts. I hold the view that when British soldiers are in action the B.B.C. should speak in the name of the Government of the day.

Mr. Benn : This is within the terms of reference of the debate, and perhaps I might read the part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech which struck me most forcibly. He said :

"I speak here of the overseas broadcasts, and in regard to foreign policy. That should be the policy of the Government of the day approved by this House ; the foreign policy of the Government which is maintained by a majority of this House. That should be the only thing that should be sent out in the name of this country."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 14th November, 1956 ; Vol. 560, c. 1030.]

That means that were any difference to develop between this side of the House and that on foreign policy, the B.B.C. could not reflect it in its overseas broadcasts. I think that on reflection the right hon. and learned Gentleman might have second thoughts about this for, among other things, he would destroy the reputation of the B.B.C. for independence. It is listened to all over the world, just

because from Britain come different voices. This is why people in countries where alternatives are not available listen so keenly to what we have to say.

Sir P. Rawlinson : The right hon. Gentleman must not be too clever by three-quarters. My statement was made at a particular time when, as he knows, the forces of this country were in action. I adhere to what I said in the context of what was happening at that time. If the Government of the day, supported by a majority of the House, commit the forces of this country, in the name of this country, to action, I think that it is right that the B.B.C. should reflect in its overseas broadcasts on foreign policy the views of the Government who have sent those forces into action.

Mr. Benn : I think that I have said enough to show that this is a sensitive area. It is exactly this sort of problem to which we would have to turn our minds in great detail if we were to accept the idea of any sort of political interference, because many of the programmes that we hear are also broadcast abroad, and it would immediately begin to have implications for the sort of things that we could hear. If committing our troops abroad meant that only the Government's view could be heard abroad, the same might apply at home.

This is a real problem, and I have done the best I can, in discussing it with the chairmen of the B.B.C. and the I.T.V., to see that criticisms made in the House of the two broadcasting authorities are brought to the attention of the boards of governors. I think that I have made some progress, because I have received an assurance that HANSARD is on the agenda of meetings of the Governors of the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. I have tried to clarify the position with regard to the supply of scripts, to satisfy myself that they are made available. I have inquired to see whether the general Advisory Councils, which help both the B.B.C. and the I.T.A., could be used for independent appeals of this kind, but I am told that this would not be acceptable to either the B.B.C. or the I.T.A.

This problem remains, and if, as I hope, broadcasting development proceeds, with a multiplicity of new channels and new stations, the problem

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of some form of real public accountability will arise, and it may well be necessary to create new institutions and authorities to meet this need. The Government have an open mind on the question whether some other machinery might be desirable in the future.

I turn now to the central problem of B.B.C. finance as it was presented to us on taking office. I was astonished to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman deal with B.B.C. finance in the way that he did, for the simple truth is that within a matter of hours almost of coming into office urgent representations were made by the B.B.C. to see me to present to me the full nature of the financial crisis which the previous Government had left the Corporation.

What did this amount to? It amounted to this, that, following the Pilkington Report, the party opposite, which then formed the Government, asked the B.B.C. to undertake a whole host of new functions, such as B.B.C. 2, to which reference has been made, independent television programmes for Scotland and Wales, more adult education, colour programmes, longer hours of broadcasting, and so on, with a pledge to provide the money. That pledge simply was not honoured.

The B.B.C. gave me the figures showing how the situation would develop. By 31st March of this year, there would have been a deficit of £10 million, but this was reduced to £5 million because of the repayment of money dealing with Income Tax. By 31st March, 1966, there would have been an accumulated deficit of £25 million. By 31st March, 1967, there would have been a deficit of £52 million. By 31st March, 1968, the deficit would have been £87 million, and at the end of the five year period there would have been a deficit of about £120 million.

The situation was extremely serious. The B.B.C. was handed over, as it were, to the incoming Administration with a deficit running at about £40,000 a day. In the light of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, I think there was no doubt whatever that it was necessary for us to take serious action, and this is what we have done.

Mr. Stratton Mills (Belfast, North):
Has the right hon. Gentleman checked

the forward projection figures which he has given, and does he accept responsibility for their complete accuracy?

Mr. Benn : I am not responsible for the finances of the B.B.C. as such, but these figures were available to the last Government just as they were available to this Government. All that I am saying is that in this matter, as in certain others with which I have had experience, the last Government failed to take the necessary action early enough, for political reasons. This has just made the problem more difficult for us. It has also made nonsense of the claim that they costed their programme, because the provision of television for the public was part of the general programme of social improvement that the party opposite advanced in the election.

At any rate, it fell to us to take action. We had these alternatives—either to raise the licence fee by £2, which would have covered expenditure until the late 1960s, or to have made such drastic cuts in B.B.C. services as would have enabled it to continue with the present fee of £4, or to grant an interim increase and to review the problems of broadcasting finance more fully. We absolutely rejected the idea that the problem could be solved and the position held with a licence fee of £4. To have done that would have involved the virtual destruction of B.B.C.2, the abandonment of the growth of a fourth channel and the transmitters associated with it, and it would have crippled existing television and sound services. At the same time, we did not feel able to go right up to the £2 increase without further consideration. The £1 will only hold the present position and keep the B.B.C. within its present borrowing limits.

The need for a review arises from a new situation. Hitherto, as the B.B.C. has developed it has been able to rely not only upon occasional increases in the licence fee but also upon the fact that an increasing number of new viewers have been buying licences every year. Now that we have reached the point where there is virtually complete coverage the B.B.C. can no longer rely to anything like the same extent on increased revenue arising from new licence holders. From now on, on this basis, that expenditure would have to be

financed by increased licence fees rather than by new licence holders.

The position is that the prospects have radically altered for increased revenue for the B.B.C., and the Government felt it was quite right to look at the whole problem afresh. Some people have criticised us for raising the licence fee to the extent that we have done, at a time when we are trying to hold prices stable, but the majority of the need for this increase arises not just from certain increases in cost that the B.B.C. has had to bear. The true fact is that this money will be used for the expansion programme that the B.B.C. is undertaking. We have asked the B.B.C. to co-operate with us in this review and are naturally concerned to see that the best possible system of financial control is exercised within the B.B.C., and all reasonable economy.

Previous inquiries that have taken place have given us no reason to believe that this prudent economy does not take place, but we felt it our duty to reassure ourselves on this point. Many of the criticisms of B.B.C. expenditure arise from the payments made to entertainers who command a very high fee.

We are also looking at the problem of evasion to see whether it can be reduced. I have suggested to the B.B.C. that in its programmes and announcements, which reach into millions of homes, it could do a little more to remind viewers and listeners of their obligations and to publicise prosecutions—because every extra penny which can be brought in from a person who has hitherto evaded paying his licence is, from the point of view of the B.B.C., a pure gain.

We are also considering other measures in the Post Office. We spend £2½ million a year already, and we spend it out of licence payers' money, in order to issue the licences and to do the policing and to check evasion, and beyond a certain point, the cost of stricter policing has to be set against the gain derived from it.

I must make it clear that even if we were absolutely satisfied that there was no evasion this would not be sufficient, in terms of money, to meet the B.B.C.'s growing needs.

Mr. William Shepherd (Cheadle) : Will the Minister give the Committee the breakdown between the administrative cost of issuing licences and of policing? The figure of £2½ million seems rather large.

Mr. Benn : It does seem large, and if the hon. Member puts down a Question I will try to provide him with the breakdown. But there is a comprehensive system for sending reminders and for checking those who do not renew. There are combs of areas. There are the detector vans. It is a measure of the seriousness with which we take this task that we should be doing it in such a comprehensive way.

Mr. Stratton Mills *rose*—

Mr. Benn : I cannot give way again. If the hon. Member is fortunate in catching your eye, Mr. Mallalieu, he will no doubt be able to make his point.

What are the alternatives open to us? A number of suggestions have been pressed upon the Government and I want to mention them. Some people have suggested that the answer lies in seeking to finance the B.B.C. entirely by advertising, thus transferring it into a commercial organisation. The B.B.C. has circulated a memorandum to hon. Members for today's debate in which it has given its arguments against such a course.

Another alternative would be to raise the licence fee by £2, to £6, and thereafter to accept that it would tend to rise annually; by an amount which would depend upon the rise in costs experienced by the B.B.C. and the extent of the new tasks placed on it by the Government. Others argue that there might be a middle way, which would leave the B.B.C. as a public service corporation, drawing its main revenue from licence fees but supplementing this income by a strictly limited degree of advertising on one television channel and one sound programme—say, B.B.C. 1 and the Light Programme—leaving the others as now. This would be a radical departure from existing practice and would raise a number of important questions. In particular, should the B.B.C. be asked to undertake this advertising itself, or would it be better for it to be done quite separately—using B.B.C. time but with the money accruing directly to the

[MR. BENN.]

Exchequer for transfer back to the B.B.C. together with the licence revenue in the normal way?

These alternatives are some of those which have been urged upon us, and they are obvious to anyone who sits down to consider the problem. Any comments that hon. Members and others outside would like to make upon the suggestions, or others that may occur to them, will be studied. We do not think it right to exclude automatically any serious proposals that are put forward.

Before I finish, in view of the necessarily tentative nature of what I have said, I want to try to make clear the principles which will guide us in the reaching our decisions.

I have mentioned, first, a profound belief in the growing importance of radio and television to the community and the world. In this I am at one with the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Secondly, the Government wish to see television and radio expand, as rapidly as national resources permit, to meet important national needs and to develop still further their potential for education, information and entertainment. Thirdly, there is the recognition that technological changes have opened up new possibilities that were hitherto entirely excluded—for example, the possibility of making more wavelengths available, the scope for an international exchange of programmes, colour, and new means of recording programmes. These all promise to revolutionise broadcasting, and must be used to the full.

Fourthly, there is our determination to uphold and entrench the principle of public service in all future television and radio development. This public service principle must be reflected in terms of the purposes to be served by broadcasting; in the allocation of channels; in the maintenance of programme standards; in public accountability without political interference, and in the integrity and independence of programme planning.

The next principle arises from our desire to permit the greatest possible freedom and scope for creative talents to express itself through radio and television and, hence, the encouragement of a diversity of outlets.

The sixth principle concerns the Government's readiness to consider various methods by which broadcasting can be financed, including one or more, or a combination of, broadcast licences, grants in aid, local government grants and advertising revenue under proper supervision. If hon. Members will study those principles they will see the way in which our minds are working. I hope that they will realise that the Government are seeking to exercise their responsibility with a wider purpose in mind.

Admittedly, the application of these principles will not be easy and will leave room for much public argument and discussion. But one thing is clear. It would be absurd to be rushed into decisions without considering their full technical and social implications. I hope that I have said enough to indicate that we are genuinely receptive to new ideas, and do not intend to be locked for ever into the pattern of past controversies and the rigid attitudes which they encouraged on both sides.

The sort of broadcasting system we evolve is of deep concern to all those who make and watch and listen. It concerns script writers, producers, educationists, schoolchildren, parents, cameramen, film makers, politicians, and indeed everyone who cares about the influence of mass media on the minds and character of our people. We have had enough experience of broadcasting in this country to know how true this is. The intricate fabric of intercommunications in Britain is now very largely made up of radio and television. We are now on the eve of world developments which will mean that the whole of mankind may be able to participate in an extended structure encompassing the globe.

The technical developments that make this possible are amazing enough, but it is the political and social implications which really dazzle the imagination. I think it no exaggeration to say that future historians assessing the significance of space research may conclude that the real dividend it brought to man was not that it prompted him to learn about his universe so much as to learn about himself, to understand better the choice that confronts mankind and to realise the common interests that unite him and to see the necessity of common action to serve those interests. This process

is what scientists call feed-back or the control mechanism that enables us to correct our mistakes before it is too late. Broadcasting offers to humanity this same mechanism of feed-back. It is up to us to use it in such a way that its full potential can be realised.

5.31 p.m.

Mr. William Shepherd (Cheadle): I listened, as did the whole Committee, to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman, and I would agree that he covered a great deal of the ground in a manner which was generally agreeable. I was somewhat disturbed towards the end of his speech, before the final perforation, to hear something which vaguely reminded me of the offer of the First Secretary and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs to listen to proposals, but largely, and I think rather more honourably, he was prepared to listen only on the basis of 100 per cent. public ownership. I hope that as he grows more accustomed to his office the right hon. Gentleman will mellow and broaden in his view. I am perfectly satisfied that most hon. Members will take the view that there is no room for dogmatism in the many varied and conflicting issues besetting us in the field of radio and television.

I believe that both the I.T.V. and the B.B.C. have served us well over the years. As one who was originally a critic of I.T.V. may I say that I think that in recent years the Independent Television Authority has done a remarkably fine job, and competition between these two bodies has, on the whole, benefited both. When he considers the allocation of the fourth channel I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear in mind that competition has a most stimulating effect on the efficiency of bodies whether they be connected with television or industry.

I wish to make one comment on the nature of political interviewing on television and on sound radio. I believe that hon. Members, on this side of the Committee and on the Government side, are often far too sensitive to political criticism and comment on radio and television. If we are in the somewhat rough and tough business of politics I think that we have to accept a certain amount of criticism from television and radio, and to realise that while on one day the television or radio may be rather hard on the party of

our choice, on the next day it may be very hard on the party with whom we disagree. I think that there has been—I say this freely about my own party—far too much sensitivity on this point.

It is very desirable, in my opinion, that we should take a somewhat blasé attitude, bearing in mind that on the whole the individuals at the B.B.C. and I.T.V. do very well to conceal the nature of their own personal opinions. When one bears in mind how magnified is television as a medium, it is a remarkable achievement that interviewers and others should manage to keep from the public, in the main, their own personal views. I know that I should find it extremely difficult in similar circumstances to be as successful as they are in that direction.

I should like to make one minor criticism and that is to protest against the insulting manner of some younger interviewers. I do not want to claim an undue measure of respect for politicians or others, but I feel that when a politician of high standing, like the Prime Minister, appears on television, he should be accorded the proper respect which is due to his Office. I do not like to see a Prime Minister, of whatever party, treated in an insulting manner in the House of Commons, and I hope that not only shall we improve our attitude here, but that the B.B.C. and the I.T.V. will try to restrain the somewhat disagreeable attitude of some of the younger, less competent and less sensitive interviewers.

I turn now to the case for the fourth channel. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not completely close his mind on this. As I have said, I was not a supporter of I.T.V. originally, because I thought that one might better conduct this operation on the basis of a public institution. Having gone into I.T.V., I feel that we ought to make the fourth channel a commercial channel, if only for the overwhelming reason that it is wrong to allow commercial operators to enjoy a monopoly. I want to see it made harder—much harder—for those at present running I.T.V. to make a living. The only way in which to do that is to provide them with competition against which they would have to fight. Having said that, I should add that I think there are some safeguards to which I would draw the attention of the Committee.

[MR. SHEPHERD.]

First, I do not want to see this decision rushed. I want to see it given mature consideration. Secondly, I do not want to see existing contractors—save in the matter of exchange—given any more scope. I should regard the giving of further contracts to existing contractors as an absolute disaster. If we cannot get other contractors than those who are now operating to take on these stations, I should prefer that they be not operated. I think it essential, from the point of view of commercial competition and from the wider issue of the influence on public opinion, that we should not allow a large slice of the public-opinion-forming and influencing bodies to get into the hands of fewer and fewer people. It is essential, therefore, that contractors for the fourth channel shall be new contractors and not old ones. I would accept some degree of exchange to deal with the situation mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Thirdly, I hope we shall try to get as contractors people who have not made fortunes in other directions. Many of the shortcomings of I.T.V. in the early days sprang from the fact that people had already made fortunes in other directions and were not living the business as intensely as would someone for whom it was the sole source of income and purpose in life. I hope that we shall try to get people who fulfil this requirement. It was difficult to do so when we instituted I.T.V. originally, but it should not be as difficult now. I hope that in selecting the new contractors we shall try to get people who are prepared to make it their life work.

Obviously, when the new channel is to be opened there will be an appeal to reduce the existing levy. I take the view that under no circumstances should it be reduced. We should look to the increase in advertising revenue spreading from the general development in the economy, which even right hon. Gentlemen opposite will not be able to prevent, to give us the necessary added revenue, without requiring a reduction in the existing levy.

I turn now to a point which has given me a great deal of concern in the past year or so. This is the decline, in many respects, of the British Broadcasting Cor-

poration. I have always held, and have expressed in the House many times, a very great regard for the Corporation, which has set a standard which is equalled in no country in the world, which on the whole has reflected very well the spirit and temper of this country and which has been an example to institutions of its kind in every corner of the world. Yet in the last few years there has been a very serious decline in its standards. This decline has come from within.

I am not speaking about the possibilities that the administrative costs of the B.B.C. are higher than they should be, and I am still not wholly impressed by the arguments put forward by certain people about this. I should like to see the B.B.C. subjected to a method study in the same way as the Post Office, because I am not satisfied that the statements made by various people reflect the entire truth.

Mr. Robert Cooke (Bristol, West): Is my hon. Friend suggesting that another team of American consultants should be brought into the picture?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. I think that it would be refreshing to have someone look at an organisation which tends to be rather inward-looking. I think that that is a very good idea. When my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Robert Cooke) has been engaged in activities himself, he will realise that he is apt to think that all he does is the best in the best of all possible worlds and that he cannot be taught anything about its operation. This is not true. As one who does not think that the B.B.C. is inefficient, I would like to see a commercial organisation look at this set-up. I am convinced that some administrative savings could readily be made.

It is not that point of criticism with which I am concerned, nor with the apparent failure to judge things as well now as they used to do. There have been two examples of faulty judgment in the B.B.C. which give rise to some concern. The first was the planning of B.B.C.2. Many people without all the knowledge of those within the B.B.C. and without their experience could have said that the original concept of shoving one lot of programmes on one night and another on the next night was calculated

to invite failure. But the B.B.C. went into this, hook, line and sinker, with a very large investment of money. It has been, on the whole, a badly designed programme which has caused a great deal of loss of morale in the B.B.C. It is an example of the faulty judgment which has pervaded the Corporation in the last few years.

Another programme which caused a great deal of concern was "Not so Much a Programme . . .". I shall not here refer to the contents of the programme, but surely anyone with any reasonable measure of understanding of the problems of producing this sort of entertainment—if entertainment it be—would not say that this was a programme which they would produce three nights a week. But the B.B.C. again rushed into a decision which was clearly faulty and which any reasonably intelligent layman outside would have regarded as being extremely questionable.

The matter to which I particularly want to address myself is not faulty judgments—we all make mistakes in life and those who do not are those who do nothing—but the deplorable level to which B.B.C. taste has sunk in recent years. I am concerned about this because, whether it likes it or not, the B.B.C. is the mirror of life in this community. It must act in the knowledge that what it does and says is looked upon as reflecting the standards of our existence in Great Britain. Frankly, in these last years, there has been a deplorable failure to maintain the levels which could reasonably be expected from a national institution of this kind.

Mr. Rowland : I am not sure of the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he suggesting that the B.B.C. is inaccurately reflecting public taste or that it is accurately reflecting public taste?

Mr. Shepherd : I do not know how to treat that intervention, but I think that I had better develop my argument and the matter may become clear, even to the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Rowland).

I do not support those who say that the B.B.C. must pursue a purely puritanical path and that it must, under no circumstances, indulge in wit, satire or challenge; that it must not be experimental and that it must be a service produced by maiden aunts for maiden aunts.

That is not what I believe. I believe that, in the past few years, we have seen a gratuitous disregard of the standards of taste which it is reasonable to expect in public entertainment. If we look at the kind of plays to which we have been subjected, we see a whole series of mediocre plays with torture scenes and unseemly dialogue reflecting life in this country about as much as the Daleks do. In fact, I would not pay most of the playwrights concerned. If one goes into other programmes, one sees again and again the failure to maintain a reasonable standard which is essential in public entertainment.

I would remind the Committee that when Miss Hermione Gingold was asked in a programme a few weeks ago what struck her most on her return to this country after an absence of five years, she replied:

"The thing that strikes me most is the low level of entertainment on the television." Miss Gingold, as people who have been in the theatre know, was not purveying fairy stories in her own work—

Mr. Norman Buchan (Renfrew, West) : Does the hon. Member know exactly to what Miss Hermione Gingold was referring? Was it the "torture scenes in plays", was it the satire, or was it the continual purveying of "pop" and mock "pop" on television?

Mr. Shepherd : I do not think that there is much purveying of "pop" on television. There is more on sound radio than there is on television. Miss Gingold said that this was her main impression of the change in England in the intervening years, and I think that she is quite right in taking that view.

What the B.B.C. should do is to maintain the standard which the best professionals would maintain in respect of public entertainment, and to realise that it is, on the whole, a mass medium. It is no good the Director-General telling me, "You should put all your children to bed at 8.30", and then turning out filth at 9 o'clock. This is not satisfactory. The B.B.C. is a medium of mass entertainment, and, in the same way that the most uncouth people tend to regulate their behaviour according to their company, so must the B.B.C. regulate its behaviour according to the fact that it is essentially a mass medium.

Mr. Maurice Edelman (Coventry, North): The hon. Member has made a grave attack on the Director-General. He says that the Director-General has urged him to put his children to bed early and then proceeds to purvey filth at 9 o'clock. Would he give an example of the filth which the Director-General purveys?

Mr. Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman tempts me to repeat my conversation with the Director-General of the B.B.C. on this matter. For the benefit of the Committee, it might help if I refer to a small sequence of my conversation to illustrate the difficulties which the Committee faces in discussing this issue.

Mr. Eric Lubbock (Orpington): On a point of order. Is the hon. Gentleman entitled to repeat a private conversation such as the one he had with the Director-General?

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. E. L. Mallalieu): He is quite entitled to do that.

Mr. Shepherd: I went to see the Director-General as a result of complaints which I had received from constituents. It is not entirely improper that I should give an extract—although I am not relating the exact words used—of our conversation, because it illustrates the problem which faces the Committee. After we had discussed the matter for some time the Director-General asked, "What was wrong with last week's programme?" [*Interruption.*]

Sir Stephen McAdden (Southend, East): I am interested in what my hon. Friend is saying. Am I right in assuming that responsibility for determining what is in order rests with you, Mr. Mallalieu, and not with the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Lubbock)?

The Temporary Chairman: That is correct.

Sir S. McAdden: Then I hope that the hon. Member for Orpington will be quiet and allow me to listen to what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mr. Shepherd: After discussing the complaints I had received, the Director-General said, "Let us forget the past and will you tell me what was wrong

with that programme?" He was referring to "That Was The Week That Was". I then gave an example to him of what I considered to be objectionable in the programme. Lance Percival was dressed up as Father Christmas and was singing a song about children. He referred to children in the song as "little bleeders". I said to the Director-General, "First, as one who is engaged in the entertainment business, 'little horrors' would have been artistically a better phrase to have used and, secondly, many parents would not wish to have children referred to as 'little bleeders' on television, especially when children were present, as they were likely to be."

I invite the Committee to consider the Director-General's reply. He said, "You know, I have children, but it has never occurred to me to think that there was anything objectionable in children being referred to as 'little bleeders'." [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] There may be—clearly there are—people who also take that view. It explains the difficulty of getting better standards on the B.B.C. if a man at the top of the B.B.C. for administrative purposes takes that attitude of mind. I do not believe that it is an attitude which should be allowed to prevail and I agree with the Postmaster-General that we may have to consider alternative means of supervising television. Immediately, I think that the right hon. Gentleman's task is to strengthen the Board of the B.B.C. If one has an immensely strong director and a not so strong board, the great danger is that the director will have all his own way and the board's position will be eroded.

What I have said about the treatment by the B.B.C. of certain material in no way detracts from my admiration for the Corporation as a whole. I regard the decline of the past few years as regrettable and I hope that it will not be allowed to damage the reputation of the Corporation permanently. Neither do I wish it to be felt that I am opposed to adult treatment of subjects by the B.B.C. or to any reasonable presentation of life. What I object to is the gratuitous bad taste to which we have been consistently subjected by the B.B.C. I hope that the Committee will make it clear that while it wants no prudish attitude, it does want an attitude which is

consistent with the good name of this country.

5.55 p.m.

Mr. T. G. Boston (Faversham): When the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Shepherd) began his speech I thought I was going to be placed in the embarrassing position of having to agree with him all the way through. I support what he said about the political sensitivity of hon. Members. A lot of us are a little sensitive when we see and hear ourselves criticised. I have always thought, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees, that criticism is a healthy sign.

I was sorry that the hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to make the sort of personal attack he made about someone who is in no position to reply. Perhaps this issue will be taken up by other hon. Members later, because there are other matters on which I will concentrate my remarks.

Mr. Shepherd: I was not talking about a person who is in no position to reply, because no one would say that the present Director-General is silent.

Mr. Boston: I leave the hon. Gentleman to reflect on the sort of attack he made.

This is an appropriate moment for this debate to take place. I will concentrate on sound broadcasting, and it is a particularly appropriate time to be talking about that. I gather that listening is in fashion at the moment. It is probably true to say that we now have more listeners than we had this time last week. My right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General has more "listening" at his command than any other hon. or right hon. Member. One might say that he has a monopoly of listeners.

I must refer, first, to the rather alarming statement of my right hon. Friend that this is the first full general broadcasting debate we have had since the Pilkington Report was debated. Perhaps my right hon. Friend might consult the usual channels to see whether a regular broadcasting debate could take place at least once a year in view of the tremendous amount of interest there is in the subject generally.

As I said, I wish to concentrate on sound broadcasting, local broadcasting in particular, although some of what I have to say is related to television. Is

there a demand for local sound broadcasting? When the Pilkington Report was published in 1962 it stated that at that time there was no evidence of spontaneous public demand. However, the Report was careful to point out that if people did not know what they were missing they could not be said not to want it. That is an important point to bear in mind.

We had from the former Government a White Paper, in July 1962, which stated that the Government would prefer to take cognisance of public reaction to the Pilkington Report before reaching a decision. A few months later, in December 1962, a second White Paper stated that the Government did not discount a possible latent demand for local sound services. In this connection, I was glad to hear the comment of the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) that he has now come down firmly for local broadcasting.

Many of my hon. Friends are glad that my right hon. Friend is including this matter in his review. It is to be hoped that something will be done in the near future. It should also be remembered that pirate radio stations have been established, which goes to show that there has been a certain demand for extra sound broadcasting—or perhaps one should refer to an uncertain demand. However, I do not wish to refer at length to pirate stations today.

We have had general evidence in the form of comments and Questions over the last six months from both sides of the House. There have been requests for local stations in some areas, and even though each hon. Member who has raised the matter has seemed particularly concerned with one potential station, the subject has been brought forward as a result of feeling in the constituencies. There is a growing feeling in favour of local sound broadcasting, but, in deciding whether or not we should start local sound broadcasting, we have to discover whether or not, technically, it can be done. The information given to us today by the Postmaster-General completely allays any anxiety on that score. There is no problem there at all. With v.h.f., local sound broadcasting can be developed over a limited range with very good reception.

[MR. BOSTON.]

The next question is how, physically, it could be done. The B.B.C. suggested to the Pilkington Committee that 80 or 90 stations might be set up to cover the whole of the country in stages, perhaps leading to 100 or more stations throughout the country. It suggested that for an initial period of, say, five years about 60 stations might be built. The firm of Pye, at Cambridge, has produced a very interesting and useful booklet listing towns of over 50,000 population in order to indicate the sort of places where local broadcasting stations could be set up. One proposal was that these stations should have a range of between two and ten miles, or slightly more.

That brings us to the definition of local sound broadcasting. The Pilkington Report states:

“But we distinguish at once between two possible definitions of local broadcasting. In one, ‘local’ means only that a large number of stations would each serve a small area. In the other, ‘local’ means that the material broadcast by a local station would, for a sufficient part of the broadcasting day, be of particular interest to the locality served by that station rather than to other localities. It seems to us that, if the word ‘local’ in the expression ‘local sound broadcasting’ is really to mean what it implies, the second of the two definitions is the right one.”

It is important to bear those definitions in mind, because most estimates so far show that local material could produce only about five hours of good broadcasting. I will come back to the question of what to do with the remainder of the time a little later. In deciding exactly what local broadcast stations should mean, the aim should be the second definition given by the Pilkington Committee.

Cost has to be considered. We have here a potential development that is not too expensive. Local broadcasting, whether sound or television, is the one remaining field, setting aside colour television, remaining to be developed, so it is important that we should give it more urgent attention than some other developments in broadcasting generally. The B.B.C. estimates that the capital cost of a station would be about £35,000 and the revenue cost, or running cost, would be about £40,000. In considering the urgency of getting on with the job, we should remember that in 1962 the capital cost per station was reckoned to be about £17,500. That the figure should now be

about £35,000 is a very strong reason why, whatever final form local broadcasting takes, we should get on with the job quickly.

We should also bear in mind that the running costs have not increased at the same rate—

Mr. Stratton Mills : Can the hon. Member give us his authority for that figure of £35,000? My own information is that, even now, it would be about £20,000.

Mr. Boston : I know that in Pye's booklet a figure of about £20,000 is suggested, but there are one or two ancillary services. For instance, an outside broadcast van would cost about £5,000. It is better to err on the high side, if anything. In any case, I do not think that £35,000 would be considered a desperately high price to start a local service.

When the Pilkington Committee was hearing evidence, it was estimated that if local sound broadcasting was done by the B.B.C. the extra cost on the licence fee would be about 5s. Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall have pointed out in the *Spectator* on 4th July, 1964, that even if the additional cost was 10s., as one licence covers the entertainment of a number of people, it represented only $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week per person.

If local broadcasting is done in this way, what about those who do not have a local station near them? We have some experience to guide us. For instance, when the Third Programme was started it took some considerable time for it to extend to the whole country. Again, television did not at first cover the whole country with good reception at any particular time. We have some evidence of the way in which this problem has been handled previously.

Can a scheme like this be made to work? We all know of closed circuits, and experiments have been carried out in 16 different places by the B.B.C., and the churches, local industry, educational and social organisations, and voluntary bodies of all kinds, were found to be very enthusiastic about the experiments. The powerful Association of Municipal Corporations has also given its support to the idea of local broadcasting, and evidence of various kinds was given to the Pilkington Committee.

It has been suggested that there would not be enough local material for more than, perhaps, five hours' broadcasting per day. If local broadcasting is to be run by the B.B.C., material from the national and regional sound networks could be fed in for the rest of the time. This would be the great advantage of doing it in this way. The alternative would be to provide endless canned music. I agree that canned music has a part to play, but the danger is that if other material is not to be fed in the rest of the time—perhaps 12 hours—might be devoted solely to canned music. If the service is run commercially and we have this difficulty about endless canned music, we would face problems with the gramophone companies and the Musicians' Union. I mention that to draw attention to the difficulty.

Various estimates have been made of the number of staff who would be required on each station. I have heard mention of 12 or 15. The important point here is that one would hope that many of those employed at local stations—not necessarily the station managers, because one might want to draw them from the wider national professional field—would be recruited locally. It is important that these stations should have a considerable number of local people, with knowledge of local affairs, running them.

I have a few brief comments on the uses to which local broadcasting might be put. It is important to put on record the ways in which local broadcasting could be of help to local communities. For instance, it will be of great value in reflecting local events—sporting events and social events of various types. Local broadcasting will be of particular value to a whole range of organisations. Local universities, colleges and schools would no doubt wish to contribute.

There could be broadcasts of local church services of various denominations. Hospitals could take part, with messages to patients being broadcast and with special request programmes for local hospitals. There could be local weather reports specially designed for the farming community. There could be special reports for holiday makers. These would be of particular importance in holiday towns

where holiday events could be publicised in the form, possibly, of holiday bulletins. Local shopping advice could be broadcast. Clubs and societies—drama and operatic groups, for example—could take part. No doubt pop groups would be encouraged by this type of broadcasting. Sports clubs and youth clubs of all kinds would no doubt contribute to the ideas and operation of this type of programme.

One would think that news would play an important part. Local emergency announcements and local police messages could serve an important local need. Information about local traffic conditions could be broadcast. Undoubtedly there is a vast amount of material which could adequately fill at least five hours per day.

On the question of schools, there could be local debating knock out competitions between local schools. This could be carried out on a regional basis. This is the value of feeding in regional and national material of the type to which I was referring earlier, carried out on a regional and national basis and perhaps on an international basis as well as between towns which are twinned with other towns either in other parts of the Commonwealth or in foreign countries. In my area we would certainly look forward to an arrangement of this type between Sittingbourne and Ypres and Faversham and Hazebruck.

Local journalists would be expected to contribute to a fairly substantial extent. They would have a considerable outlet, as they do on the national television and sound networks, as chairmen of discussions, as commentators on events, and as interviewers. We could also expect to see local employment opportunities publicised. There is an almost unlimited scope as to the type and amount of material.

I want to utter a word of caution about the way local broadcasting is organised. The various stations, whether they are run by one of the national organisations or by separate local organisations, must not be stereotyped. "Radio Faversham" must mean what it says; it must be "Radio Faversham" and be distinguishable from other local stations. We would all agree that "Radio St. Marylebone" would be nothing like any other station,

[MR. BOSTON.]
even in the absence of the right hon. Member for St. Marylebone (Mr. Hogg).

I want to refer to one or two other difficulties in connection with the way the stations should be set up. First, it has been suggested that local newspapers ought to be allowed to apply for licences. There is a great danger that, if the stations were run commercially, this might endanger local newspapers. It depends entirely on how the stations are run. In other words, should the stations be commercial? The great danger which local newspapers would face is that inevitably, if the stations were to be run commercially, they would siphon off much of the local advertising revenue from local newspapers. As we have seen, over recent years there has been a reduction in the number of local newspapers. We would not want that trend to continue.

Mr. Robert Cooke : The hon. Member will concede that he is advocating the extension of a monopoly in public communication.

Mr. Boston : I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned that point, because I intend to deal with it briefly in a few moments. It is important to bear in mind that this proposition would endanger the revenue of local newspapers and affect their circulation. This might conceivably create a dangerous monopoly, for instance, in a certain area. Many areas have only one newspaper. If a station were to be run by that one newspaper, it would create a dangerous monopoly but still affect the circulation of the local newspaper.

Newspapers would certainly benefit if these stations were run non-commercially, whether by the B.B.C. or by another independent body, because they would not be competing with advertising; the newspapers would derive benefit from their reporters or commentators appearing on the programmes and conducting interviews. As is the case with national networks, no doubt local newspapers would be mentioned on the stations. Therefore, they would be helped to some extent.

Here, again, I utter a word of caution. Great care would have to be taken about political balance in people appearing on local stations. The experience of the

national broadcasting services is an important guide.

I come now to the question of monopoly. This is the question whether the B.B.C.'s monopoly of sound broadcasting should be broken. If local broadcasting stations are to be set up anyway—let us say, for the sake of argument, commercially—a local sound monopoly is being created in fact, unless there are two stations, either two commercial stations or one station run by the B.B.C., say, and one run by a commercial set-up.

The difficulty about that would be that we want more choice, as has been suggested earlier; but it would be difficult to run more than one station locally and provide an adequate amount of material. It is important to bear in mind that, whether a station is to be run by the B.B.C. or commercially, the public pays in the end and it will cost twice as much in the end to set up a whole chain of double stations in all these towns which we are suggesting. This is why there need be no misgivings about this. If it were decided to break the B.B.C.'s monopoly of sound broadcasting, a local monopoly would be created anyway. Therefore, one would be getting nowhere by breaking the B.B.C.'s monopoly. There are many counter-balances within the broadcasting organisation which can help in the running of local stations.

It has been suggested that the way out of the dilemma whether there is a commercial set-up or whether there is a B.B.C. or other independent broadcasting set-up is to have local stations run by local authorities—that is, by locally elected authorities, local universities, and so on. The difficulty about this is that there is probably not a great deal of professional broadcasting expertise in the local authorities and other organisations which have been suggested. Such professionalism is essential in local broadcasting stations. There is no reason why the suggestion of local authority control should not be considered, but there are serious objections to this way of doing it.

I should think that in view of the various reasons suggested, and particularly in view of the point about what is to be done with the hours of time after the five hours, probably the most satisfactory solution is to have local

stations run by the B.B.C. But these other suggestions have been put forward and no doubt will be considered by the Government in the course of the review which they are now undertaking.

There is no doubt at all that there is a real demand for local broadcasting. The increase in capital costs, as opposed to revenue costs, is a matter which means we ought to get on with this very quickly. Finally, and perhaps the most important reason of all is that as this is a field which we have not developed at all, and apart from colour television is the one remaining which we can develop in this country, it is one which we ought to get on with urgently.

6.21 p.m.

Sir John Rodgers (Sevenoaks): I am sure that the whole Committee is indebted to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir Peter Rawlinson) and the right hon. Gentleman the Postmaster-General for the lucid, far-ranging and responsible way in which they have introduced this enormously important subject of sound and television broadcasting. The House of Commons pays far too little attention to this fantastically important medium. It is far and away the most important medium of communication yet invented by man.

I had hoped to develop arguments today in an attempt to convert the Leader of the House to my belief that democracy itself will not survive unless it harnesses itself more than it now does to this medium. I shall not now, of course, pursue the question of starting immediate experiments in televising the proceedings of Parliament because you, Mr. Mallalieu, would rule me out of order if I attempted to do so, but the whole debate underlines the significance and importance of that matter. Scientific changes have been enormously rapid, and we must all be on our guard against shackling ourselves with systems which are out of date before we can change them.

This was what happened originally when the B.B.C. was set up. We embarrassed ourselves with a system, however good the B.B.C. was, and towards the end of its monopoly position the B.B.C. was holding back technical progress in order to preserve its own

monopoly position. In the years immediately after the war, France, Germany and particularly America were much more forward in technical developments. These had been held back, Canute-like, by the B.B.C., because it thought that that was a great argument for the retention of its own monopoly position.

Those of us who sought to break that monopoly in 1964 did so on two grounds. One was that this important medium of communication could not be entrusted solely to one set of people however well-intentioned or public-spirited they thought they were. We felt that there must be opportunities for other groups of people holding other views to present a viewpoint which differed from that of the monopoly. We therefore took the stand that we did to try to break the B.B.C. monopoly. We believed that the B.B.C. would be stimulated and helped, as has proved the case, by the production of some form of competition.

I believe greatly in competition in all fields of human endeavour. I believe that it operates in sound and television broadcasting as in any other sphere. We did not labour to break the B.B.C. monopoly, however, to create, as we have done, a monopoly of commercial television. Therefore, I urge the Postmaster-General when he considers the allocation of the fourth channel to see that at least part, not necessarily the whole, of that channel is given to commercial purposes in order that the monopoly of the commercial companies operating under the I.T.A. should be broken. Nothing could be worse than to break one monopoly only to create another.

The thing that interested me about the Postmaster-General's speech was that this was the first time that I had heard from the party opposite the idea that one need not necessarily tie oneself down to any one system. It is quite possible to conceive a situation part-commercial, part-educational, part-cultural and part-religious. This medium of mass communication should be open to everybody. It should be open to people advocating sport, religion, politics, entertainment, the commercial sale of goods and company news. All these things are part of life, and this is a medium for the transmission of things to do with life. I hope that the

[SIR J. RODGERS.]
right hon. Gentleman will remember this when he comes to the difficult problem of allocating channels.

Equally, I should like to support my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom on the question of the extension of hours, of television broadcasts particularly, but also of sound broadcasting. I see no reason why in the state of society in which we live we should seek to say arbitrarily how many hours a station should be on the air. We are urging people to work a three-shift system and to keep machinery working throughout the day to ensure the maximum amortisation and efficient production, yet at the same time we penalise those who do this by not enabling them to look at their favourite programmes.

It has been argued that we have not enough writers, artists and script talent to televise for 24 hours. At least let stations be able to repeat their programmes more often than they do. Because of the hours that we keep in this place I often find my constituents talking about various programmes which I ought to have seen or heard and which I could have seen if I had been able to pick my time. Everybody should have the opportunity to listen to the Prime Minister or to the Leader of the Opposition, if they want politics, or to programmes of public interest which our constituents see or hear. I strongly urge, therefore, that we should not try to keep the I.T.A. and the B.B.C. in parallel in the matter of hours. If the I.T.A. can double its output now, let it go ahead, and if it wants to broadcast all the hours of the day, let it do so.

My third point is in support of the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Boston) in his urging that an immediate start should be made on local broadcasting stations. I do not want to go into the many and various arguments about how these should be controlled. I am sure that there is a real need for them and that it is a democratic demand on the part of the people that they should have these. I also agree that to have them as purely local stations would be wrong. There must be national hook-ups and things of that kind.

I make a passionate plea here that whatever system hon. Members favour

we should realise that this medium, particularly television—though sound is more important than some people realise—must have a great variety of people in control. I disagree with the hon. Member for Faversham that there should be no more than two stations to a locality. A number of channels are available to New York on both sound and television. Therefore, this can be done and there is a demand for it. Do not let us say that there should be one station and not two because two would be too expensive.

Mr. Rowland: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that the multiplicity of channels in television and radio in the United States has led to a higher standard of programmes?

Sir J. Rodgers: I purposely left out of the whole of my argument the question of taste to which some hon. Members have devoted themselves. It is a subject to which I do not intend to be diverted. All I say is that the system appears to suit the Americans. They are a democratic country. If it did not suit them, presumably they would change it. Perhaps that same system would not necessarily suit us.

My fourth point is to agree with the Postmaster-General against my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom concerning intervention by Ministers on control of any of these broadcasting authorities. This must be viewed with the greatest suspicion. There should be the minimum interference by this House or by Ministers in the conduct of these stations, whether B.B.C., I.T.A., or a new organisation yet to be set up.

Mr. David Gibson-Watt (Hereford): In the absence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson), I should like to repeat what he said: that he takes exactly the view of my hon. Friend that the Postmaster-General should not interfere and that the B.B.C. should be free. The only point which my right hon. and learned Friend made—and this is important to stress—is that at a time of national emergency, such as might well apply in the case of our forces in Malaya at the present time, was to state his view, as he did at the time of Suez, that he considered it wrong for the B.B.C. consistently to take an anti-Government view. I repeat that because it is important.

Sir J. Rodgers: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the position clearer than I did. I should like to go on to say that this would not arise if the debates in the House of Commons on Malaya, Vietnam or, say, on Suez were broadcast to the country. The selection is not the job of the B.B.C. That is one of the most potent arguments for televising and editing live broadcasts and television appearances from this House.

I am tempted by that intervention to recall that in 1931 the then Director-General of the B.B.C., Lord Reith, suggested that the three political parties should broadcast their views on that year's Budget. The Chancellor of the Exchequer insisted upon a regal sanctity of a solo broadcast with no competition. He was the Socialist, Mr. Philip Snowden. To redress the balance in 1934, it was suggested again that there should be a radio debate on the Budget. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer said that a

“ought not to be the subject of a wireless debate before an unrestricted audience. The Chancellor should be treated not so much as a party leader, but as a national figure talking impartially.”

That was a Conservative, Neville Chamberlain. That was the attitude then, and that it still the attitude today.

The fight that was conducted in this country, and in this House particularly, to free the Press is now being fought for broadcasting and television. That is the note on which I end, urging the Postmaster-General to do his utmost to give the greatest possible degree of freedom to the use of this medium and to make it available to all sections of the community.

6.33 p.m.

Mr. Maurice Edelman (Coventry, North): The hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Sir J. Rodgers) was one of the most enthusiastic and effective supporters of the commercial television lobby. I am interested tonight to hear that his voice has not lost its cunning. On the one hand, the hon. Member has argued in favour of an extension of commercial radio, suggesting that in some way it is a public service. On the other hand, he has made it clear that there are interests concerned with commercial radio who consider it not as a public service but simply as a normal means of profit-making.

Indeed, the whole case for commercial radio, the reason for the general enthusiasm for it on the benches opposite and the reason why, under all the rather bland statements of hon. Members opposite, we can hear the grinding of the axes of the commercial radio lobby is precisely because here there seems to be a rich field for great pickings.

The hon. Member said that he had just returned from the United States. I was there at the same time and I have had some small experience of American radio. In my opinion, American commercial radio is an abomination. It confuses advertising with opinion, it blurs thought and it creates confusion in the mind of the listener about what is being promoted commercially and what is being put forward objectively as an opinion. The result is that apart from the drug of the steady stream of pop music which pours out of American commercial radio—that stream of popular radio which somehow creates a sort of hebetude in the mind of the American public—I see nothing to commend it. I can, however, imagine that those who run the stations make extremely great profits out of it and I understand perfectly well why there are those in this country who would like to imitate the system of American commercial radio and to profit from it.

Sir J. Rodgers: On no account must the hon. Member say that I am advocating the adoption in this country of American television or radio methods. I hope that he will absolve me from that.

Mr. Edelman: The hon. Member knows very well that I am not suggesting that what he is proposing is a blueprint of the American radio. I believe, however, that if we were to imitate the United States' commercial radio in any form, or even in principle, some of the greatest evils which exist in American radio would be translated to this country. For that reason, I oppose commercial radio in this country.

I have some interest in radio and television. I have been associated with it as a writer and broadcaster for a number of years. I think it necessary to say that in advance, although perhaps in what I am about to say I will be biting some of the hands that have fed me. What is certainly true—and this has emerged in the debate—is that radio

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and television are an all-pervasive element in our lives. They enter our homes whether we like it or not. We even hear our neighbours' radio. It is constantly at work, fashioning opinion and determining even the country's moral climate. It is something which affects children and adults alike. It is an element in the lives of all of us which is of incomparable importance. Therefore, while welcoming this debate, I regret that debates on the subject of broadcasting are so rare. What I hope to propose during my few remarks is that adequate machinery should be established so that there can be a growing and continuing study of radio and television and that there should be adequate communication between the public and the broadcasters.

One thing which is certain is that with the power of radio and television an enormous amount of resource is concentrated in very few hands. The administrators of radio and television are ordinary vulnerable people and yet they have to make major decisions which reach right into the lives of millions of people. The great problem of our times is to match the power of the administrators of radio with an appropriate responsibility.

The public, on the other hand, are extraordinarily vulnerable to the effect of television. The young are hypnotised by this box at which they stare, sometimes for hours. For adults, the television box is what Andre Malraux called a dream factory. Every night, millions of people enter this world of dreams which are concocted by a very few people. Therefore, there is a great responsibility on those responsible for creating the myths and images of television that they should be myths and images which are elevating and not degrading to our society.

In addition to that, the television box is what has been called the hidden persuader. It is something which is capable of influencing our subconscious and even our unconscious mind. Although in the television code there is a provision against subliminal advertising, nevertheless the fact remains that such is the impact of television that, whether we

like it or not, we are all subconsciously or unconsciously influenced by it.

Who is it who stands between the public and the administrators and projectors of television and radio? Fundamentally it is our own critical sense.

More immediately, however, there are the critics. I mean the professional critics in the Press and television who have some responsibility for the assessment of programmes and the criticism of them. They have a responsibility for discouraging the bad and encouraging the good, but I am obliged to say that the status and the performance of television and radio critics in this country is extremely low. With one or two exceptions, the television and radio critics are people chosen by editors to find an interesting story for the day after, when the programme itself is cold potatoes. All they have to do is to try to extract something from the programme, something accessory, which may interest the public. So the critic is a failure in establishing that the programmes should be of an adequate quality for the age that we live in and for the tremendous amount of technical and mechanical achievement which goes into the production of television output.

One of the remarkable things about television and radio today is that while, on the one hand, there is this tremendous development of the technical, the mechanical and scientific technique of television, on the other, there is the quality of output which I do not believe matches in any way the technical development. I say this as someone who has some responsibility for television.

There is, of course, tremendous competition for viewers. Although I accept what the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sevenoaks said about competition, and although I believe that in a sense competition, even in the arts, is capable of stimulating other performers, I think that on the whole the effect of I.T.V. has been to degrade and to debase the quality of performance as such. Many times in this House I have drawn attention to the violence which has been shown, and continues to be shown for that matter, despite all I.T.A. codes, on television. In the general climate of violence in which we live, I believe the development of violence in crime has

something directly to do with the impact of violent crime as it has been consistently represented on television.

It is perfectly true, especially among the groups of vigilantes, who number some of hon. Gentlemen opposite, that there is concern about sexual morality and its representations on television. I believe that they have narrowed the concept of morality within too fine a limit. I would have thought that the kind of pornography of violence which is shown on television is much more sinister, much more degrading and debasing than even the representation of sexual offences. I would say that I.T.V., which has been a pacemaker and a trend setter in this kind of representation, has a very grave responsibility. Although the B.B.C. was attacked this afternoon, the responsibility of the B.B.C. is really a secondary one. The B.B.C., in fact, follows the trend and the pattern set by I.T.V.

In the competition for audiences a milk bottle thrown through a plate glass window or the crunch of a cosh on somebody's head is obviously going to attract attention, perhaps break up the conversation at the tea party, and in the competition for viewers it is necessary to use this particular technique. This is a debasing form used in the struggle for audiences and it is a reflection of an attitude among the television promoters which is concerned with finding the lowest common denominator in order to have the greatest mass audience. This technique, so widespread and continuing, is something to which we should give our attention and which should be deplored.

How is the public to be protected from the debasing of standards in television? At the moment we have been talking about the mechanics and machinery of television, but we have said very little about the internal organisation of television by which the viewers can be protected and can express an opinion. It is perfectly true that there are advisory councils of one kind and another, appointed variously by the organisations concerned. This is wholly inadequate, for the advisory councils are often nominated by the organisation which is directly concerned and which may, or even should, be subject to criticism. The problem of the Postmaster-

General must be to consider in what way he can really find some representation of consumer opinion. Pilkington, of course, discouraged the idea of a consumer council, I think wrongly. I do not believe everything in Pilkington is right by any means.

I would have thought myself that what is necessary in order to have a dialogue between the administrators of television and radio and the general public, if the views of the public are to be heard, is some kind of broadly based broadcasting assembly, perhaps even elected indirectly from the major bodies who are concerned with expression of public opinion such as churches, trade unions and all kinds of bodies concerned with the safeguarding of public standards. Vigilante bodies, who rise up in wrath when a particular programme seems to offend them, are the least desirable of the bodies to deal with problems of this kind. They are usually obscurantists concerned with censorship, people who have some particular axe to grind or even who have some private psychological difficulty. These people are certainly not the most desirable to represent the public interest in my view.

What is necessary is a reflection of the broad views of the public as a whole. The right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Epsom spoke about television and radio as being the mirror of the public. To the extent that he meant it reflects the public mood or should reflect the public mood I think that is true. What is happening now is that there is a great gulf between the administrators of radio and television and the public at large. The Postmaster-General is answering today in the first debate for seven years after the Pilkington Report. After this the whole subject will lapse into a silence which will be broken perhaps in the Press by somebody being outraged by some particular programme. But the broad, constructive and worth while things which are being done in radio and television will not be referred to.

Questions like education in television, which is of the highest importance, will not be mentioned, or will only be mentioned by specialists. The result will be that in the absence of any form of

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communication between the administrators of broadcasting and the general public, such as ourselves, there will be a ragged discussion which would emphasise the trivial and would not deal with the central questions.

Sir J. Rodgers : I agree with what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but I wonder whether he has ruled out altogether, as Pilkington did, the use of market research. It has always struck me that the bodies existing do a great deal of research, not just into the size of audiences but into programme reactions and public taste, and I feel that if these could be published it would be a great safeguard and would help the hon. Gentleman in what he is questing for.

Mr. Edelman : I am not very sympathetic either with Gallup polls or market research. This method of sampling things is wholly inadequate to express the broad public view. I suggest a broadcasting council which would be elective and open to the Press—and I agree with the hon. Gentleman in this respect—so that its proceedings and discussions were reported. If we did that, we would not have this extraordinary division which exists between the administrators of the I.T.A. and B.B.C. and the public, which is, after all, most vitally concerned day by day and which would thereby be brought democratically into contact with those who hold the levers of power in radio and television.

Then there is the question of advertising. The I.T.A., in its report, reproduced the code it recommends to advertisers. It is my observation that it is not adhered to. For example, one provision deals with cigarette advertising. It lays down that the attraction of cigarette smoking should be not enhanced by putting those taking part in the advertising in romantic circumstances which will somehow or other associate cigarette smoking with romance. However, if hon. Members see television even tonight, they will see that this most important provision is simply ignored in encouraging the young to take up smoking. Many other provisions are also ignored in practice. I hope that there will be general concurrence in the Committee with the view that the code of advertising, although in itself fairly innocuous, will

be made effective as far as it can be and will not be ignored.

We have not reached the depths that I have observed on television in the United States. I have referred before to my radio experiences with the hon. Member for Sevenoaks. On television I saw a child dressed in white emerge with a bunch of flowers and then trot through the flower beds, finally putting the flowers on the tomb of her father, saying, "This is for you, Daddy". The advertisement was for an American mortician. I thought it had touched rock bottom. I hope that no one here will be encouraged to imitate American examples.

There has been a flow from America of programmes wholly unsuitable and, in my judgment, debasing to standards in this country. People talk about Wild West programmes as though they are part of the mythology on which children are reared. In fact what one sees in them are thugs in American fancy dress. Their manners and habits are imitated in high streets in our provincial cities and in London as well. The B.B.C. and the I.T.A., because of their unseemly competition to get as low as they can, follow each other's programmes in search of the mass audience. The result is that a lot of the thuggery which seems now to be characteristic of our age is derived from the screen. We talk about the screen being the best educator, and that may well be true to some degree, but if it becomes a school for violence for organised crime, then indeed something sinister is happening which should be resisted.

The campaign for local sound broadcasting will have my support if it results in the B.B.C. having responsibility for it, but I would oppose any attempt to introduce local commercial sound stations, especially—and I say this with all due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Boston)—if the local commercial stations were associated with local newspapers. I find that doctrine pernicious. It has already been rejected by Pilkington and I reaffirm my own opposition to it.

Speaking as a journalist, I say that the situation in which we find ourselves, whereby great newspaper chains have put their heavy hands on commercial television, is thoroughly undesirable. If that

situation were to extend, it might even be disastrous and add to the monopolies which now exist. If the newspapers were to go into commercial local radio I believe that we would see a serious encroachment of the rights of free speech. It is because I believe in free speech that I want to see the local radio stations controlled by the B.B.C. I want to see standards preserved. Only in this way will those standards be preserved in local radio.

6.55 p.m.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing (Hendon, North): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Coventry, North (Mr. Edelman) since I listened to his remarks with great interest. I would not agree with his condemnation of all American programmes that we see. I find great pleasure, as does my family, in "I Love Lucy". I have formed a great endearment for her and I hope she lives for ever. Many American programmes are harmless and engaging. Both the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. put on quite a lot of these good American programmes during popular hours and they are widely appreciated.

Just as the hon. Gentleman declared a mild interest, I have to declare no interest at all. I was connected with an electronics company eight years ago but left it on becoming a junior Minister and have not rejoined any company, so I am not speaking with any connection or interest.

The principle which motivates me and many others on this side of the Committee—and, I suspect, many hon. Members opposite—is that there is no reason, now that scientific progress allows us adequate channels in a very much larger spectrum, to stop people who want to do so from risking their own money in trying to entertain the public by singing, acting, writing or speaking. This seems to me a natural freedom in a democracy.

I cannot understand those who say that we should not allow this and should control it. What are we so suspicious of? As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) said, we are democrats and utterly dependent on the 50,000 voters that we each try to convert in our constituencies. Surely the judgment of the people can be left to be applied sensibly to broadcasting as it is left to be applied to

politics. My only qualification—and it is shared by my right hon. Friends but not by many hon. Members opposite—is that I do not believe in monopoly. I want to make certain suggestions whereby we can break up a monopoly which has grown up since we broke the B.B.C. monopoly.

I think that it was unfortunate, but I did not appreciate that it had happened, that, after this very important Supply day was chosen by the Opposition for a debate on broadcasting, and after many of us had taken a great deal of trouble to prepare speeches about televising the House in order to keep up to date, a private Member selected for debate the subject of televising the House and that this has somehow silenced us on the subject today.

I ask you, Sir Samuel, and the Chairman to think about this Ruling, because it means that every time there is a Supply debate on a certain subject a private Member successful in the Ballot could put down a Motion on much the same thing. Indeed, the Government and the Committee could be muzzled, for he need not turn up on the Friday and speak in the debate and so let the subject go without discussion. That would not be in accordance with the wishes of the House and its general procedure. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Iremonger) will discuss televising the House on 28th May, but I doubt whether that debate will be as well attended as this one is. That will be a pity.

I hope that the Postmaster-General himself will be present on that occasion, because this is a very important subject and we ought to have a well attended debate with a responsible Minister present. I suspect that my hon. Friends and perhaps some hon. Members opposite will want to speak in that debate which may well last too long for the debate on the second subject, a Motion on House of Lords reform by the hon. Member for Fife, West (Mr. William Hamilton), to take place.

The Postmaster-General constantly stressed national resources, but did not underline the adequate and sensible use of wavebands available for broadcasting on an international basis. He said that we would have to make provision in the

[SIR I. ORR-EWING.]
ultra high frequency bands—bands 4 and 5—to repeat programmes now going out on bands 1 and 3, the B.B.C. and I.T.A. programmes, because, he said, we did not want switchable sets for the future.

Since this recommendation was made by the Technical Committee of the Television Advisory Committee to the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor, we have had some experience with bands 4 and 5, rather unhappy experience for the B.B.C., through no fault of its own, because of the physical properties of these bands. If we are concerned with the best use of national resources, I would have thought that we ought to keep the basic B.B.C. service going on band 1, where it gives very good coverage and a perfectly adequate picture and on which it can be received by most people in black and white and by those, who for many decades will be the great majority, who cannot afford to buy the more sophisticated sets, let alone colour television sets. It seems sensible that we should not rush in to repeat these programmes and to spend money on taking up extra channels on bands 4 and 5, but that we should continue to use bands 1 and 3 up to the limit.

I did not altogether agree with what the Postmaster-General said about hours. He said that there was a divergence of views and that extra hours would cost the B.B.C. extra money and so it did not want them, while extra hours would get the I.T.A. programme companies extra money and so they did want them. Surely it is the consumer about whom we should be thinking in the House of Commons. If the shift worker wants these programmes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir J. Rodgers) said, must we always go at the pace of the slowest? If this argument is carried to its extremes, we would say that the Palladium cannot run three shows on a Saturday because the Coliseum does not do so.

This is a complete fallacy and I hope that now that the B.B.C. has extra money—and we are examining whether it is using it correctly—we should consider what happens if the I.T.A. wants to entertain people and to use its capital equipment and studios to do so at other

hours. Have we any right to say that the shift worker who sleeps during the day must be denied television entertainment which comes outside normal hours and at times when most people have gone to bed? If someone wants to risk his money entertaining outside normal hours, there is no reason why he should not do so.

I should like to refer to B.B.C. finances. The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that this was a matter to be considered. Many of us on this side of the Committee believe that an outside audit would be a good arrangement for examining whether these vast sums of money are being used in the most economical way. The B.B.C. has always said that it does not wish to finance from borrowing, feeling that somehow that is to forgo its independence. Our universities are financed by Government grant through the U.G.C. and I do not think that anyone has suggested that their views are not very independent.

Because the B.B.C. borrowed from the Government in order to spend capital on equipping new stations and perhaps to spread B.B.C. 2, it would not in any way forgo its traditional independence of the Government of the day. Borrowing would seem to be the normal way to finance a capital programme, not always putting it on the licence fee. This is something which should be re-examined and we ought to make sure that old bogies are not being brought up by the B.B.C. when the tradition is outdated. I very well remember that the B.B.C. said that it would be able to run its second programme provided that it was allowed to keep the whole of the £4 licence fee. I concede that prices have risen quite a lot in the intervening years, but that statement was made long before the present Director-General was in the chair.

I now turn to the subject of the streamlining of B.B.C. staff. I think that it is the experience of most hon. Members who have broadcast on radio or television—and I speak as someone who was a television producer before I came to the House—that B.B.C. standards of manning are much more generous than those of I.T.A., and I think over-generous. The figures show a discrepancy of about two to one. This is out of all proportion to the programme quality

which the B.B.C. might claim is rather better. The quality of the administration is better and the entertainment which one gets when one goes there undoubtedly is better. But none of these things would justify a two to one ratio of the staff required for programmes by the B.B.C. and by I.T.A.

The Postmaster-General did not make what is perhaps the most important point of all. He did not say that he would expect the B.B.C. to increase the productivity of its staff, as we expect the nationalised industries and everyone else to do. Every Minister who stands at the Box says that it is hoped that the latest wage increase—in this instance a licence fee increase—will be linked to more productivity. The more sophisticated equipment, the better and more sensitive cameras with less lighting needed as a result and fewer breakdowns and more sophisticated arrangements coming to be used in television studios ought to result in far greater productivity. This covers the technical engineers and studio staffs and so on. This is a factor which ought to be taken into consideration.

I was a member of the group on this side of the House which wanted to break the B.B.C. monopoly. An hon. Member opposite referred to that group. Although people like to say that this was done for commercial purposes, I know of no instance in which any of those people has gained financially out of it. We believed at the same time that we should keep public service broadcasting going in this country. We believed that this was the task of the B.B.C., the task for which it had world-wide renown.

It is for this reason that I do not altogether like the idea that the B.B.C. should start to accept advertisements. This seems to lead to a rather slippery slope, because advertisements would be linked to certain types of programmes. The B.B.C. would say that it could not accept advertisements with religious programmes, or serious plays, or Shakespeare programmes, and that would begin to push the advertising into a hole and corner. This is undesirable and I prefer to keep the B.B.C. as a public service. It accepts advertisements very widely in its publications—the figure used to be more than £1 million a year and is now, I think, more than £2 million a year—

and I have no objection to that, but I do not believe that the way to finance the B.B.C. is through advertising on programmes.

I ask the Government not to think always in terms of an increase of £1 in the licence fee, from £3 to £4 to £5 to £6. Each £1 means £13½ million extra. The £5 might become five guineas. It does not seem necessary automatically to raise the increase by £1 to provide a total of £13½ million when an increase is justified.

I want now to deal with the breaking of the monopoly. I said that one of my motivations behind my attitude in broadcasting and television was that I did not believe that a monopoly by the B.B.C., or anyone else, was right. For the same reason, I do not think it right that the independent television companies should have an advertising monopoly in the areas where they operate. I believe that the next move should be a fourth channel used by commercial stations, financed by advertisements but which does not make use of the same programme contractors, because I like diversification.

I am not against monopoly merely because of the evil that some undertakings may grow lush and perhaps lazy and over-careful. In broadcasting artists should have a choice of employment. If an artist offends one group, he should be able to sack his boss and go next door and have the chance of getting a job in another television or broadcasting system. I could quote instances from my life in the B.B.C. Perhaps I have made mistakes myself. One might have a flaming row with a commentator or an artist and say, "That man is so awkward I will not employ him again." It is not right that a person's talent should be denied because his personality clashes with that of someone else. This is very important and is another reason why a second set of independent stations should be started.

It has been said—and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom dealt with this point—that there would not be enough talent. This is an argument which I have heard used every time it is proposed to expand television. When I first joined the B.B.C. T.V. in 1937 it broadcast from 7 until 9 every night. When we extended these hours we heard arguments to the effect that it lowered standards and that there were not

[SIR J. ORR-EWING.]

enough writers, actors, script writers, music people, and so on, to go round. Of course, this is not true. The artistic world expands as opportunities are offered and extra hours are required. If a person like Lew Grade—and who am I to challenge his commercial judgment—thinks that there is enough artistic talent available to man a second commercial network, I should not like to contradict him.

I turn to the question of independent sound stations. The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Boston) dealt with this point. My figures show that the cost of starting a sound station would be cheaper than the figure which he quoted. I should have thought that £20,000 was adequate. I spoke to the man running the Manx local station, and he told me that he did it all with a total staff of eight, which included doormen and sweepers. I think that the figure of 15 which the hon. Member quoted is on the large side.

Mr. Boston : The figures which I suggested were 12 or 15.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing : I make this point only because the whole purpose of a small broadcasting station is to do it quickly and cheaply. It is the equivalent of a cyclostyle press. I do not mind if the quality is not very good or whether it broadcasts for only five hours a day. Five hours is more than enough. If those running the station can derive a living from it and entertain people and arouse enough local interest for perhaps two hours during the mornings and evenings and an hour at lunchtime, why should they be denied the right to do it?

I agree with all that the hon. Member for Faversham said about the opportunities which exist for local sound radio stations. I do not think that we should assume that there is room for only one in any town. I was recently in Boston, where there are seven local broadcasting stations. I know that that is a large town, but we should not assume that there is room for only one station in a town and plan on that basis.

Speaking as someone who represents a dormitory area, I should like to mention another respect in which a local broadcasting station can be of tremendous value. I refer to the broadcasting of traffic information morning and evening. In Boston a helicopter could hover

over our heads to which we listened all the way. We could hear perhaps that there had been a smash at a certain bridge and that all traffic was asked to divert this way or that. This is essentially a local matter. Timing is important. It is no good feeding such information back to the B.B.C., because it is of interest only to the local community.

Another reason why I am in favour of the local stations, apart from my general philosophy as to why people should be allowed to entertain people, is the potential in the export market. Clearly under-developed countries can afford this type of equipment. For television, the cost of the initial transmitting equipment and the receivers may be far beyond the reach of most under-developed countries, but the cost of transistor receivers and simple local broadcasting and transmitting equipment is not beyond their reach.

I come to the question of who is to control the second I.T.A. channel? Who is to oversee it? I am not talking in terms of censorship. Who is to administer it, as the I.T.A. tries to do now with the present contractors? The way to do it is to broaden the I.T.A. so that it becomes a Broadcasting Authority. It would then have a general oversight over the standards of the B.B.C., of the I.T.A. and of local broadcasting stations. If people say that this is too near censorship, I would point out that we have long accepted the British Board of Film Censors which we do not find undesirable and which most of us support. Most countries have some sort of broadcasting authority.

This would also have the tremendous merit to which reference was made earlier that it would decentralise from the responsibility of the Postmaster-General any Questions in the House concerning particular programmes, bias or slant. The Postmaster-General should be very careful before he interferes. This is the sort of function which could be properly carried out by a broadcasting authority on the lines which I have suggested.

Up to now the Postmaster-General has been the authority on powers, wavelengths, the allocation of time and hours. Some of these responsibilities could also be decentralised to the broadcasting authority.

On the use of wavelengths, the Post Office is a tremendous user of the radio spectrum. It has a vested interest in it. I do not believe that it is in the long-term interest, or making the optimum use of wavelengths, that they should be concentrated in the hands of someone who is a very considerable user. It might well be that we should set up something like the Federal Communications Commission which looks after these matters in the United States. This is exactly the solution which was recommended in the Beveridge Report, which constituted a very much more thorough examination of broadcasting problems than the more recent Pilkington Report.

May I summarise what I have said? I believe that the time has come to get on with the second channel in commercial television. It would be wrong to encourage the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. to spend money in duplicating on u.h.f. the programmes which exist on bands 1 and 3. I support the development of local broadcasting, because I believe that it could be of service to the people. Lastly, we should broaden the I.T.A. so that it has a general oversight over all broadcasting in this country and to make sure that the standards of all the authorities are roughly equal and fair.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Charles Mapp (Oldham, East): I have listened to all the debate, apart from about 15 minutes, and I have heard very thin arguments called in aid to support the views advanced in the opening speech from the Opposition Front Bench. The policy put forward by the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson), followed by other Opposition speakers, reveals the bald fact—it was underlined by the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir Ian Orr-Ewing)—that the recommendations of right hon. and hon. Members opposite are that the fourth channel should go to I.T.V., that local sound broadcasting should go to the independents and, apparently, that additional hours should be conceded in face of what the Postmaster-General has said. In addition, we have heard observations from individual hon. Members opposite to the effect that the B.B.C. should institute time and motion study or have some new auditors. In the final analysis,

the policy of the Opposition is wholly and exclusively based on the profit motive—not so much a policy as a way of profit. That seems to be their whole idea.

I wonder whether my hon. Friends noted the significant fact that, when the hon. Member for Hendon, North was speaking about advertising, he quickly and automatically assumed that the B.B.C. should not enter that field, and there were some approving noises in his support from other hon. Gentlemen opposite. Plainly, on that side of the House the dogma is held that advertising as such should be confined to the area which already holds it. I shall discuss later in my speech whether there is a case for the B.B.C., in any or all of its media, coming in on the commercial advertising side.

Mr. Robert Cooke: The hon. Gentleman will concede that, in saying that the B.B.C. should not advertise, we are following the view strongly expressed by the B.B.C. itself in a document issued to both sides of the House today.

Mr. Mapp: I know that the hon. Gentleman will call in aid every argument he can think of to avoid the logic of what I was saying. At one moment, hon. and right hon. Members opposite want to break the monopoly situation, but I have not heard any argument about breaking the monopoly in television advertising.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing: Yes, certainly; that is what has been said.

Mr. Mapp: But the point was made by him that the way to break it would be to set up another commercial agency, not break it by permitting the B.B.C., for instance, to come in. The thinking of the Opposition is very significant on this issue all the time.

I have limited willingness and opportunity to look at television or to listen to broadcasting generally, but, in passing, I must say that I take strong exception to the exotic nature of many of the advertisements one sees on television. I do not say that of all of them; some are quite acceptable in one's dining room. A few of them, on the other hand, are outrageous, and a good many are much over-coloured in presentation. In my view, something should be done about it.

[MR. MAPP.]

When independent television pretends to put on serious programmes, one can sense behind them a patronising and superficial attitude. When its programmes are light and on the surface, they are over-sophisticated. When they are light but go beneath the surface, they are usually sordid and based on a certain amount of disordered morality.

Another matter which disturbs me about both the B.B.C. and independent television, though it applies more to the independent channel, is that their programmes seem to be moving more and more in the direction of the feminine audience. As a mere male, I regret that half the nation which likes to see sport and manly things, as it were, is not properly catered for. This certainly applies to commercial television, and I much regret it. I have discussed the matter with I.T.V. officials. If our television is to take on more and more of a feminine background, they should let us know, because, for me, it will then be just as welcome as the women's journals. One will lose interest. These things should be produced for a special audience, if it is so desired.

In my view, the achievement of B.B.C. programmes generally—I shall come to a reservation on this point in a few moments—is that they are fairly well balanced, exceedingly good on national occasions of sport and entertainment and on national events. But, while I should not particularly approve of the comments made by the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Shepherd), I must say that there are many of us, on both sides of the House, I am sure, who do not approve of the growing and fairly indiscriminate use of bad language on television, in more ways than one. I think that this ought to be said, and I say it from a family point of view, not with any narrow-minded approach. The B.B.C. is no exception in this respect.

I suggested that there were blemishes, and I think that the weekend programme we have heard so much about was produced in the main out of what I would call the late harvesting of perverse university habits of young men who, more or less, take 10 years to settle down. It is time that our television programme compilers and producers reflected more strongly in their personnel the personality

and experience which comes at about 40 years of age. We do not want in our dining rooms programmes which exhibit excessive or exotic ideas of sex and sadism. This is not what one wants to have brought into the ordinary home. I can understand it in the young. We have all been young men, and I fully understand it, but we are entitled to expect from both broadcasting authorities the kind of balanced responsibility and experience which come somewhere after 35 years of age or so. As things are, however, it seems that the programmes are almost consistently dominated by young people.

I turn now to a totally different aspect of television. On page 101 of the Annual Report and Accounts of the British Broadcasting Corporation for 1963-64, one can see the breakdown of the regional figures for television. I find that, including publications, the revenue, which reflected the viewing public nationally in 1963-64, was £32.6 million, and expenditure was £34.8 million, giving a deficit. The regional impact of these figures is as follows. In the North—I wish to make this point beyond all argument—the revenue is 30 per cent. and the expenditure is 27 per cent., greater than London's figures, which are 26 per cent. revenue and 24 per cent. expenditure. I put it to the regions in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the West and even the Midlands, that these figures are most illuminating. In the North region, we have the largest revenue, one-sixth greater even than the London revenue, and twice as much as the revenue of Scotland and Wales combined. The point of these figures, of course, is that they reflect the number of licence holders. How is the money spent, and what does the policy seem to be in respect of the North region?

The North is three times as profitable as London, but together the gains of both London and the North are out-done 10 times by the deficits in the other regions, and ultimately we face that deficit of £2.23 million. I give those figures because the North as we know it is the only real counter-magnet to London. We can study the figures to see what is happening. Because of the need for economy in the B.B.C., its board room is looking round for ways and means of making those economies, and it is feared in the

North that there will be a big attack on that region to break it down into 10 or 12 splinter areas. This would be economic foolishness. It would certainly be socially undesirable.

The North region covers a vast area. It includes Newcastle, and both sides of the hills. It covers a large part of the country. The capital investment there must not be wasted. Is our region—as well as the Welsh, the Scottish, and all the others—to become totally, or largely, dependent on the capital city? Is it right that, although in the North we have the offices, the equipment, and the technical knowledge that is necessary, everything should be centralised in London?

I concede that the services to some areas in the North should be increased, but that increase could be provided without killing the heart of the North and making it even more remote from London. People in the North are apprehensive about what is going to happen, and I should like some assurance that anything which is done will not be to the detriment of the region about which I am concerned, which is not just the North-West, but the North generally.

I turn now to the long-term problem of B.B.C. financing. I notice that hon. Gentlemen opposite had little or nothing to contribute to this problem. I think the duty rests on us to decide the best method of dealing with this issue. The volume of B.B.C. new viewers has reached almost saturation point. It has reached the stage when it cannot look forward to an increase in revenue. Its revenue is likely to be constant and static, and this is an impediment in an era when money values are changing, and the cost of employing artists and providing entertainment is rising rapidly.

We are all asking for increased services. How can the B.B.C. provide them without coming to the House to ask for more money, or by getting it in some other way? Is it to be given a grant? This idea was, I think, tentatively put forward from the benches opposite. Is it to be done by cutting down the service it provides? Is it to be done by increasing the licence fee to the point where the average man objects to paying it? I think that at the moment we are getting the best and cheapest television in the world, but we

have to take account of the views of the people whom we represent, and I have no doubt that if the licence fee was increased many people would ask why they were being called on to pay an additional sum for a vehicle of communication which they seldom used.

We face a dilemma when we have a nationalised industry competing with private enterprise, as we have in broadcasting. We ensure that the pricing structure of the nationalised industry is governed by social criteria; but private enterprise on the other hand, is allowed to base its pricing structure purely on profitability. If one examines the precedents—and there are many of them; transport is one, and power is another—one sees this built-in contradiction in every case. We expect our nationalised, or socialised, bodies to be viable—I think that is the word—yet they have a built-in structure of social criteria for social purposes.

If the private enterprise sector is to be allowed, as it always will be, to have profitability as its criterion, plus selectivity of service—the second of those is very important—the social agency, whatever it may be, will lose in the long run. Therefore, distasteful though it is to me, I have had to consider whether in this modern age, we should permit the B.B.C. to earn revenue by advertising. I do not want advertising to be brought into people's dining rooms, but we have to decide whether to continue as purists, or to allow the B.B.C. to earn money by advertising.

If we allow the B.B.C. to advertise, we will bring in a totally new and equitable factor vis-à-vis its competitor. I believe that if we do we will break a monopoly in the sense of advertising on television, not by putting in another competing private interest, but by introducing a State agency. Secondly, the B.B.C. would have the right of veto, which would cut both ways, and this would ensure that advertising standards reached a certain minimum, which would eliminate some of the worst forms which we see today.

If we accept the principle that the B.B.C., under the terms laid down by the House, should be allowed to advertise, we will introduce a new source of revenue. It has been argued that this would interfere with the editorial chair.

[MR. MAPP.]

Would it? Do I take it that the argument is that when I read *The Times*, or *The Guardian*, or the *Daily Worker*, or any other paper, I am over-influenced by the pages that I never read, namely, the pages carrying the advertisements? We have come to accept newspaper advertisements for what they are, and take no notice of them. They do not influence our judgment. I am sure that they do not influence the judgment of ordinary people.

The central problem that arises in any sphere of activities where a utility is produced by a nationalised or similar body on the one hand and by a private enterprise organisation on the other, is that ultimately the position is always reached when the nationalised body, operating as a social agent, ceases to become viable, I say with some regret that I am prepared to compromise. I hope that the committee examining the question will say, "Let us be pragmatic in solving this. Do not let us be dogmatic." In the 'seventies we shall be able to look at the matter again. Last year the I.T.A. had between 7,000 and 8,000 advertising customers, and that number could be doubled in the next two or three years. We should spread our broadcasting arrangements throughout the system, involving all the possible advertisers, from the princes of industry down to the regional captains of industry. If it still remained necessary for some help to come from the public purse I would not object to that help being given, because the public purse could operate equitably as between the two.

Mr. Charles Curran (Uxbridge): I am interested in the hon. Member's argument and I should like to know how far he takes it. Does he say that he would like the B.B.C. to take advertising on both radio and television?

Mr. Mapp: I did say that I wanted the B.B.C. to have advertising on all its mediums. If that were to come about it should share a veto with I.T.V. This House would impose on both certain overriding considerations.

I was saying that twice as much money, if not more, would go into the world of broadcasting if advertising were allowed in this way. There is no reason

why this should not be considered. I hope that the two major points that I have made will be considered. The first was a regional one, but nevertheless an important one, namely, that London should not be the only magnet. There are other magnets. The life of our country would be imperilled if everything rotated round London when the largest region is the North. My second point was that we must be broad-minded about the way in which we meet future financial requirements. If we are to have expansion we should be courageous enough to take all the opportunities available.

7.44 p.m.

Mr. David Steel (Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles): I very much appreciated the clarity of the opening exposition of the Postmaster-General. Before proceeding further, I should declare a minor interest in the matter. Immediately prior to coming to the House I was under contract to the B.B.C. I still appear occasionally in Scottish programmes, both on the B.B.C. and the Independent channels.

I disagree with the Postmaster-General on only one point—the question of a variation in the licence fee. I am interested to note that the argument for variation is under consideration in respect of colour television. I do not accept the argument that those of us who live in areas which do not receive B.B.C.2 should be expected to pay the increase in the fee on the ground that they are paying for a service that they will receive at some time in the future. This is completely illogical. The people in the South-East region did not have to pay an increased fee when their additional service was in preparation. They paid it only when the service was available. To say that it will be more expensive to extend it to other areas, and therefore that the people in those areas should pay more for it, is an odd argument from a Socialist, especially when we accept a flat rate postal charge.

The Government's presentation of their case completely omitted the question of an extension of the existing basic broadcasting services to parts of the country where it is either unsatisfactory or non-existent. It should have been a priority of the last Government, and certainly of this one, to make sure that before there

is any further discussion of a fourth channel, or an extension of B.B.C.2 services, the existing services are improved or are created in areas which now receive bad services or none at all.

Parts of Welsh-speaking Wales do not yet receive the Welsh Home services, and there are parts of Galloway which, even when the new scheme is introduced, will not receive B.B.C. Scottish television, and parts of northern Scotland which are still without any television at all. I hope that we shall hear something tonight about the extension of existing basic services.

In my view, if there is a fourth channel it should be given to the B.B.C., and advertising should be allowed on it. It is interesting to read the B.B.C.'s objections to taking advertising, and to hear some of the arguments that are used against it. I would like those who are against it to remember that we are faced with the fact that if we are to have a fourth channel it must be financed. If we are not to have advertising on the B.B.C. we must either bump up the licence fee—somebody said that we could possibly raise the licence fee by £5 in the future—or give the fourth channel to commercial television. The B.B.C. should be very careful about expressing the view that it wants to be free of advertising lest it loses the channel altogether.

Some hon. Members, and certainly some members of the public, will feel that on balance the fourth channel should go to commercial television rather than that there should be a substantial increase in the licence fee. That is why, when I say that it is desirable that the channel should go to the B.B.C. I also say that it is desirable that an independent advertising authority should be set up to regulate advertising on that channel.

The right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) advanced the peculiar argument that the new channel should go to commercial television because we must break the monopoly that exists in commercial television. I found that argument very difficult to follow. I thought that we had broken the monopoly in television when we first introduced commercial television. If we are to say that we must have more competition the process could go on

indefinitely. Why stop at two commercial channels? Why not go on to three or four? Some hon. Members have advocated this. My contention is that if we have unlimited competition for advertising, the more competition there will be for viewers and listeners, and there will be a general lowering of standards of programmes. That would be undesirable.

On the question of sound radio and local broadcasting stations, we might open a new sound wavelength, under the control of the B.B.C. on a national basis, with local stations having set "opt-out" periods, rather than establish a complete gaggle of independent stations throughout the country. If they were really local stations they would be extremely numerous.

I also support the idea that the B.B.C. should open up a "pop" channel to replace pirate services. Consideration might also be given to the question of all-night radio programmes. These could largely be repeats of programmes that had been broadcast during the day. It seems odd that we do not cater at all for those on night shift. The radio services which are in operation have never undergone a radical change since the introduction of television. We still have the basic radio framework which we had in this country before television came into being. The advent of television has changed completely, I would think, the purpose and object of the radio services. Certainly we should welcome a Government proposal to have a completely different radio framework on the lines of the demands for local broadcasting "pop" channels, night-shift work, for the increasing number of people who use radio in cars, and so on.

In connection with local broadcasting, I wish to draw the attention of the Committee to the success in the sphere of independent television of Border Television at Carlisle. I think this is the smallest of the television stations. It is the only one which managed to keep going during the recent television strike. Oddly enough, its own local early evening programme after the six o'clock news has the highest viewing record of any of these programmes, either on B.B.C. or I.T.V. That is, I believe, due partly to the small area it covers and, there-

[MR. STEEL.]

fore, the purely local content of the programme.

Border Television has introduced a new experiment in which, I am glad to say, the Conservative Chief Whip and I took part a week or two ago. It has broken into the middle peak viewing period on Saturday night to put on a discussion programme. Lest it be thought that I am giving Border Television a mild pat on the back with a view to the future, I must also make the point that its fees are the lowest I have ever come across.

Regarding the standard of programmes generally, my main criticism would be that we have too much imported and bought film which is of dubious quality and frequently of even more dubious age. Apart from that, I do not think that the B.B.C. or I.T.V., while they should certainly listen to the criticisms which are made, should draw in their horns and cease to cater for minority tastes. Surely there is room late at night on weekend nights for programmes of the type of "Not So Much A Programme . . ." just as there is room for "Lift Up Your Hearts" early in the morning. I cannot support the argument of the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom that the Oxford Union debate on Queen and country should not be televised. It is a matter which has been raised in public, the public is aware of it and there is a certain amount of interest in it. If people are offended by these programmes, or do not like them, they do not have to watch them. I often suspect that there is in this country a kind of person who gets a perverse kick out of watching these things deliberately and then writing furious letters to the B.B.C. or to *The Times*.

I come finally to two points which have not so far been raised in the debate. One of the recommendations made in the Beveridge Report which has been raised subsequently on other occasions is the need for greater devolution in the broadcasting regions. I think this is particularly necessary in the natural regions—or nations—of Scotland and Wales. Certainly broadcasting in Scotland suffers greatly from lack of funds and lack of overall control in Scotland. It has been argued that looking at the accounts—to take the British Broadcasting Corporation as an

example—this would not be justified because regions of the B.B.C. like Scotland are at present subsidised. This is a fallacious argument, and if the accounts were prepared on a different basis it would be seen that this is not the case. To give one example, there is a popular Scottish programme which is seen throughout the nation—"Dr. Finlay's Casebook." This programme is produced in England, not in Scotland. If we had autonomous or, at any rate, a greater control over broadcasting in Scotland, it could be produced in Scotland and sold—showing no doubt a huge profit in the balance sheet—to authorities south of the Border.

I do not accept the argument that it is financially impossible to do this. I reiterate the point made frequently by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal Party that the output of broadcasting from Scotland to the rest of the country and the rest of the world seems to fall into two categories. One is the 1920 picture of Scotland as seen in, "Dr. Finlay's Casebook". The other is the sort of kilted dressed Andy Stewart type of programme, which certainly has its place—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad to hear that vociferous support as I had thought that this was the part of my speech which would be received most coldly.

The rest of Scottish radio and television broadcasting is of a pretty poor level, both within Scotland and in the programmes which go out of Scotland. There is, for example, criticism from Equity and other unions of insufficient use of Scottish talent in drama programmes, and so on. Certainly there is insufficient discussion of Scottish politics in current affairs programmes in Scotland. To give one example, with which I had some connection, it was considered that during the Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles by-election viewers on B.B.C.2 saw more of the campaign than viewers on B.B.C. in Scotland, which seems extremely odd.

Mr. Buchan : The hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that that is the reason why he won the by-election?

Mr. Steel : No, nor am I suggesting it is the reason why the candidate of the hon. Member's party lost his deposit.

The conferences of the three parties in Scotland received very little attention from the broadcasting media, certainly nothing like the attention given to conferences South of the Border. In mitigation, I must say that one of the most successful innovations in broadcasting north of the Border has been the television reports of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. They have been of a very high standard.

It is partly a question of cash and partly of control, and also facilities given or available. The broadcasting facilities in Scotland are very poor indeed. We have a magnificent studio in Glasgow for B.B.C.2. We do not have even a small studio in the capital, Edinburgh, either for B.B.C. or Independent Television. That clearly is much needed.

A matter to which I should like to draw attention, and which interests me very much, is the whole question of current affairs and political broadcasting. An hon. Member who has now left the Chamber said that he wanted interviews with politicians at airports to be stopped because they were open to so much misrepresentation and politicians said foolish things. Television is a most penetrating medium and shows politicians for what they are. If a politician says something stupid it is because he is given to saying stupid things. If he loses his temper it is because he is prone to lose his temper, and no one can blame television or television interviewers for showing this to be so.

I should be grateful to have an answer to this next point. I believe that transcripts or recordings should be kept of programmes of a current affairs or a discussion nature which go out "live". I know that this is customary in the case of many programmes, but it is not mandatory. There was a case only two or three weeks ago in a Scottish current affairs programme where a remark by the right hon. Member for Argyll (Mr. Noble) was disputed later by the person to whom he referred who was his Liberal opponent in the General Election. The matter could not be gone into further because the right hon. Member for Argyll thought that he said something different from what other people thought and there was no proof on either side. The question of retaining

recordings or making a recorded transcript of broadcasts which could be contentious is extremely important.

I wish to touch on Section 63 of the Representation of the People Act. I am sure that this is a matter which will be discussed at length by Mr. Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform. I think that in the realm of broadcasting we might consider whether an immediate change could not be introduced to give the broadcasting authorities the same exemption which newspapers have from the consequences of presenting one candidate and not another in a certain election. It seems to me to be quite wrong that a radio or television authority is not free to report a particular constituency election or by-election referring to the progress of the campaign in an objective manner. They are already under an obligation to keep a balance. A ludicrous situation arises out of the failure to bring our law up to date in this matter.

For example, I believe that there has been a tendency of late for certain people to offer themselves as independent candidates for elections, because they know that they can demand, as a right, certain television time if there is any televising of that contest. This seems to be entirely wrong. Far more important, I am sure that most people would accept now that the television authorities present a reasonable balance. They receive, I suppose, more complaints from the Liberal Party than from any other, but on the whole it must be said that they provide a reasonable balance between the parties. There is no reason that this freedom should not be extended to the reporting of election campaigns, particularly after the Scottish court case, that of the election of the right hon. Member for Kinross and West Perthshire (Sir Alec Douglas-Home). These are two points—on devolution in the broadcasting authorities and political broadcasting—on which I should be grateful for a reply.

8.02 p.m.

Mr. Arthur Blenkinsop (South Shields): I should like to start by supporting the hon. Member for Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles (Mr. David Steel) in calling for some revision of the Representation of the People Act in this respect. All

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kinds of absurdities come out of it as it stands and, patently, the television companies, both B.B.C. and I.T.V., now have a wide experience of how balance can be properly kept. They do not require, in my view, the kind of regulation which has applied up till now. Perhaps it was natural that there should be anxiety about how they would use their powers in the initial stages, but surely now that should be passed and we should approach the matter in a rather more grown-up way. I hope that my hon. Friends will look at this matter seriously and immediately.

There has been some criticism of the B.B.C. and its finances and some suggestion that there has never been any sort of independent investigation of its finances. I do not think that that is true. They have, of course, their own internal O. and M. organisation. Apart from that, there were the investigations and major enquiries, commissions and their reports, and investigations into their financial affairs, but there have also been independent investigations which the B.B.C. have themselves commissioned. Therefore, there does not appear to be on their part any unwillingness to have their system of finance investigated. Indeed, the investigations which have been carried out so far suggest that they do their work efficiently.

We have had displayed in the Committee a split mind attitude from hon. Members on the opposite benches. On the one hand, we had, particularly from the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) a demand, as far as I could understand it, that the B.B.C. should pay more attention to mass audiences in some respects. He criticised the B.B.C. for not doing so and for apparently turning its back on the mass audiences which were there for the having. Yet he also complained that they were not providing for a more selective audience and that they were not adequately meeting the wide range of needs which there are in the community. I think that there is some justification for the complaints which have been made, both about the B.B.C. and the I.T.V., on grounds of quality of programmes. But one must look to see what the cause of this could be. I suggest that to some extent, we—particularly hon. Members

opposite—must accept some responsibility for this.

To start with, the introduction of commercial television itself—whatever its rights and wrongs—was bound to concentrate more and more attention on the mass audience. It was bound to make the needs of minority audiences less easy to satisfy. It is no use saying that the B.B.C. is not subject to the kind of pressures which the I.T.V. is. Obviously, one cannot isolate the B.B.C. in this way. Once the provision of commercial television began, bringing with it the necessity to estimate the audience if advertising is to be secured at all, then clearly this has its effect upon the B.B.C. as well. They are bound to find it necessary to give more attention to the size of their audience for particular programmes than we might normally think is desirable. Therefore, I think that questions of quality are to some extent due to the very changes which were brought in when commercial television was introduced.

Secondly, as there has been this pressure for extending programme time—whatever hon. Members may say—I think that it is again quite inevitable that, as programme time is extended, it is likely to have some effect upon the quality of transmissions. Whatever a few may say, there is some limitation—at any rate at the top level—on quality and performance. Therefore, we must not be altogether surprised if we find that, over the past five years or so, there has been some change, and not altogether a happy one.

I think that this is a matter worth considering when we are thinking about further extension of time of service. We should consider carefully what form that extension should take and what kind of audience we want to satisfy. That is why I hope that, in considering the possibility of a fourth channel, my right hon. Friends will still keep in mind the possibility of educational television. There is also a big opportunity within existing channels, which are not fully occupied at the moment. I believe that there is a need for a largely educational national programme and that there is still a strong case for the devotion of the fourth channel to it.

I also believe in discussing possible further educational uses of broadcasting,

that a very great contribution can be made by sound broadcasting and certainly by local programmes. I support what has been said about the desirability of the development as rapidly as possible of local sound broadcasting stations. I would suggest that there is a great opportunity for their development for educational purposes.

The whole question of the independence of the B.B.C. has not been fully developed in the debate. It is, of course, relevant to the question of how the Corporation is to be financed and I doubt whether there is any possibility of introducing an element of financing from advertising without damaging the independence of the Corporation's home services as well as its reputation abroad.

I was concerned by what the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) repeated as being his view about the opinion of the opposition being expressed by the B.B.C. in overseas broadcasts in times of crisis. Although his hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Gibson-Watt) tried to recover the position, the right hon. and learned Gentleman repeated his view that the Government of the day should have the whole use of B.B.C. time to present their case in times of crisis abroad. The hon. Member for Hereford tried to explain his right hon. and learned Friend's remarks away by saying that he had merely been saying that opinions contrary to those of the Government should not be the only view heard abroad.

I happened to be in India at the time of the Suez affair. I was on my way further into the Far East, and at that time a great many B.B.C. programmes were being put out. There was no question of only opposition views being expressed. The B.B.C. attempted to have a reasonable balance of view, giving both the Government's case and the contrary view. This was immensely welcomed in those countries. It was an outstanding example of the independence of the B.B.C. It proved the Corporation's independence as nothing else could. It was of enormous benefit to the standing of Britain abroad—that even in a crisis of that sort, when it was known that opinion here was divided, it was still possible for the B.B.C. to give other than the Government point

of view. It would be a tragedy if we were to accept the view, which was strongly pressed on the B.B.C. at that time, that it should give only the Government case.

Mr. Gibson-Watt : The hon. Gentleman has thrown the fly in my direction on several occasions and I now rise to it. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) was referring to this matter—and it is unfortunate that he is not in his place at the moment to answer—he was saying that he entirely agreed that the Postmaster-General should not exert his authority over the B.B.C. but that it was a different thing in times of a national emergency such as Suez. I added in my short intervention that if such a thing were to happen in the situation in, say, Malaysia today, then this might also apply. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be careful in quoting what my right hon. and learned Friend said in his absence.

Mr. Blenkinsop : Hon. Members will see in the OFFICIAL REPORT tomorrow just what was said. It is precisely on points of this sort that the independence of the B.B.C. rests. Whether we talk about Malaysia or Suez, it is right that it should be seen at all times to be independent and to be able to declare, in as balanced a way as possible, the attitudes which are current in the country. I welcomed the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General on this issue, which were in clear contradistinction to the view of the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom.

8.15 p.m.

Mr. Stratton Mills (Belfast, North): While I do not wish to closely follow the remarks of the hon. Member for South Shields (Mr. Blenkinsop), I believe that he somewhat misrepresented the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson). My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Gibson-Watt) gave as an example the possibility of war breaking out in Malaysia. That is relevant to the situation to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred.

I will give another example. Would the B.B.C. have been justified during, say, the 1939-45 war, particularly at the time of Dunkirk, in giving time in its

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external services for the expression of the views of the very small Fascist minority in Britain, particularly since the people comprising that minority were at the time interned? In a national emergency we must consider these matters in very special terms. I will not pursue the matter further, because I wish to be brief.

The debate has been much concerned with the question of standards. The Independent Television Authority, by exercising the rôle of policeman, has had a considerable effect on keeping up standards in independent television. The main concern now is over the standards of the B.B.C., which are, perhaps, not as acceptable to all sections of the community as they might be.

Donald Baverstock was recently pushed out of a leading job in the B.B.C. and many people feel, rightly or wrongly, that he was to some extent made a scapegoat for the criticism which was going on in the B.B.C. His removal from a leading post at a young age caused a good deal of offence and concern to many other people of his generation working in television. While I do not expect a reply from the Government on this point, I have made these remarks so that they will be on the record.

Many people wonder whether Sir Hugh Greene, the Director-General of the B.B.C., is the right person for the job. I have no doubt that Sir Hugh is a man of very many qualities, but I have considerable doubts about whether both his judgment and general standards are, as head of this great organisation, altogether suitable. I am not convinced that Sir Hugh is fully in touch with what ordinary people are thinking or that he is properly interpreting the rôle which the Director-General of the B.B.C. should take.

The B.B.C. has built up its position in Britain to a tremendous extent due to the work of Lord Reith. If at the beginning of its life the B.B.C. had not had someone of the stature of Lord Reith in command it would not have become as broadly accepted in the community as it has. I doubt whether it would have attained its present position had it started off with Sir Hugh Greene as its first Director-General.

The question of standards in the B.B.C. is not an easy matter and I agree

that it would be undesirable if the Postmaster-General or any politician acted as general policeman. The case has been strongly made, and the Postmaster-General several times hinted that there is a case for some kind of overall broadcasting authority for the Independent Television Authority, the B.B.C., and local sound radio, when it comes.

I have grave doubts as to the general value of the advisory committee structure of the B.B.C. which has recently been extending to the Independent Television Authority. I believe that an advisory committee is not suitable for the kind of general supervision which is required. The Postmaster-General might consider having a Select Committee composed of members from both sides of the House, to which complaints about standards could be put. As hon. Members have the advantage of being, perhaps, more closely in touch with public opinion than has the advisory committee type of organisation, they might be able to help in this way. A case has in my view definitely been made out for some new form of advisory procedure.

The Postmaster-General referred briefly to the overseas broadcasting service. Apart from one slightly contentious matter that has come into the debate, I think that we can agree, that, broadly speaking, this is a most useful service. It is, of course, very hard in any particular case to assess its value, but I am sure that hon. Members who have travelled abroad or who have taken part in it will know that it is greatly welcomed and highly regarded abroad. While it is difficult to judge it in hard terms, I am sure that it plays a very useful rôle.

The right hon. Gentleman gave a five-year projection of what the B.B.C.'s potential deficit would have been if the licence fee had stayed as it was when he took office. He put the total deficit at, I think, £121 million, but when I intervened he took great care not necessarily to accept those figures himself. He repeated that those were the figures that had been given to him by the B.B.C., and he neither accepted them fully nor rejected them.

Mr. Benn: I have no reason whatsoever to doubt the figures, but since they were not my figures I could not take responsibility for them.

Mr. Stratton Mills : Yes, I appreciate that point. The right hon. Gentleman finds himself at a sort of half-way house.

The right hon. Gentleman announced the increase in the licence fee as an interim measure, and he took the further step of having a review undertaken to see that the B.B.C. was operating efficiently, just as he did in the Post Office when the postal charges were increased. But why did it take six months to come to his decision? Why, if he was so convinced that the figures put on his desk were right when he took office, did he wait six months before making his announcement? If the right hon. Gentleman wants to intervene on this point, I shall gladly give way.

Mr. Benn : That is a question that the hon. Gentleman should really ask of his own colleagues. Matters of this kind are bound to be considered very carefully. This position was not new when we came into office. It was known fully to the party opposite. Repeated representations had been made by the B.B.C. to the party opposite. I do not think that this is a question that can be put to the incoming administration in the critical terms that the hon. Gentleman has used.

Mr. Stratton Mills : The right hon. Gentleman's reply would be relevant if he had acted in the first month of taking office, but if he felt that the figures were so absolutely pointed and clear I do not understand why he took six months to reach a decision. I will not pursue the point further, but it is obvious that the Postmaster-General did not necessarily accept that the figures were quite as clear as he tried to make out this afternoon.

It would have been generally welcomed if he had used the facilities provided by his right hon. Friend the First Secretary of State to put this price increase to the National Board for Prices and Incomes. He declined to do that in regard to his one-third price increase in the postal services, and he could have taken this opportunity to put the licence fee increase to that body. The opportunity was not taken, and we must all draw our own conclusions from it.

I think that all hon. Members will agree that, first, local sound radio must be truly local—this is essential. Secondly,

it must give a wide variety of choice to the listener. Thirdly, such a service can only be achieved by its not being part of a national organisation. It should, essentially, be built on a local basis, perhaps with the help of the universities, local business, newspapers, and the like. But it must be truly local. It would be damaging to this development if it were to be a B.B.C. preserve. These aims can best be attained by other methods.

I thought that the Postmaster-General, though he obviously was not in a position to make any definite announcement, made it fairly clear that he did not intend to break the B.B.C. monopoly. He indicated that continuous music of a "pop" nature could be provided by the B.B.C., and that B.B.C. local sound radio experiments were continuing. I may be wrong, but I thought that his mind was moving very much in the direction of the B.B.C. entering firmly into the field of local sound radio. That could be harmful to its development.

Again, I felt that the right hon. Gentleman was moving towards giving the fourth channel to the B.B.C. In this connection, I would remind him of what was said by the late Mr. W. R. Williams on 27th June, 1963, as the Opposition spokesman. The debate was about the allocation of the fourth channel. He said this :

"I am very glad that the Postmaster-General has said that the Government will review the position. I have no objection whatever to Independent Television reviewing the situation and all its aspects between now and 1965 and presenting its case to whoever happens to be Postmaster-General at the time. I think that this House would be failing in its constitutional responsibilities if it failed to recognise that a matter of this magnitude was one proper for the I.T.A. and not for the Government of the Day."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th June, 1963 ; Vol. 679, c. 1817.]

At the time when the Television Bill went through Parliament in 1963, the Labour Party supported the Bill. I argue very strongly that the words of the late Mr. Williams which I have quoted constituted a very strong commitment by the Labour Party to support independent television having the fourth channel. I hope that the Government will not renege on this in the year ahead.

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Renfrew, West) : The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Stratton Mills) ventured on to slightly

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dangerous ground when he attacked, in rather general terms, the Director-General of the B.B.C. Earlier a similar attack was made, commenting on the Director-General's sense of humour when he used the phrase "little bleeders". This was when the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Shepherd) was talking about "low taste".

The whole debate, gentle in tone as it has been, has been an exercise with one objective. It has been an exercise to secure the maximum amount of time on radio and television as quickly as possible for commercial interests. This is gentle seduction of the innocent. I hate to admit that there are one or two innocents on this side who have been seduced in regard to the question of advertising on B.B.C. and, above all, the development of what is known as a permanent kind of "pop" programme on television and especially on radio. I sometimes wondered whether we were living in cloud-cuckoo-land as I listened to the analysis of the different forms of control and authority, with suggestions made for control over the B.B.C. and I.T.V. This is not a gentle process. Behind it all is the straightforward, grim, hard, businessman.

We were not in fact discussing the central core of television or of radio, which has things to say to us. It talks to us. It gives us music and drama. All that these people were concerned with was methods of control which would allow the hard-faced men who have done well out of "pop" to get an even firmer grip upon it. The sooner we realise that this is what the debate has been about, gentle as the accents have been, the sooner we shall understand the question at issue.

It seems to me that already the pressure which has been building up is having some effect on the Government. I hope that before the night is out my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General will deny reports which have been appearing—for example in *The Times* and the *Sun* last week—to the effect that

"The Government have decided that when the pirate radios are driven off the air by the effects of the legislation they intend to introduce next session, some equivalent programmes must be provided by the B.B.C."

The argument is that there is a demand for a form of permanent "pop" programme. Hon. Members opposite are offering to do it for money. There is pressure on the Government and on the B.B.C. to provide this kind of music. I hope that the Postmaster-General will keep in mind his own characterisation when he referred to sounding wallpaper, because the whole of our musical and cultural standards are being degraded on the altar of the great god profit. On these kites in the air I shall want some reassurance before the night is out.

Just as we are getting this kind of accent tonight, we are getting the same kind of accent on the general projection of television. People tend to refer to "our television" and "their television", "our television" being the commercial station. We get this permanent kind of "phoney" projection of being at one with all these nice gentlemen. It is the "phoney" accent of bonhomie, with a kind of popularism behind it.

In this kind of drive by the commercial interests at present and the scampering after it by the B.B.C., which is much more serious, I am reminded of the story of the two young producers who put in front of a more senior producer of the B.B.C. a model of the battleship "Potemkin" in order to remind him of what happened when the ratings got out of control. I hope that we shall not indulge in this kind of scampering any longer.

The difficulty in dealing with this matter is that we are accused of two things. We are accused, on the one hand, of having a paternalistic attitude, of being long-haired, of knowing what is best for the people, and of handing it down as if we were standing on the top of a shute and merely dropping little parcels of culture down to those waiting below. On the other hand, we are accused of being killjoys, as though the tycoons behind the "pop" singers, behind Denmark Street, behind commercial television, were concerned with people's fun. They are not concerned with their fun, but with their money. They would not know Joan Littlewood if they saw her walking in the street. They have had no dealings with her. Those of us who are trying to defend standards against what we see happening by way of "pop" are those of

us who are interested in fun and in joy, and not those on the other side attached to commercial interests outside.

The Pilkington Report said that commercial television had two tasks to perform. One was to sell advertising space and the other was to produce programmes. The Report said that these two things did not coincide. The Committee was far too kind. These things are mutually contradictory. When actors are paid to appear on advertising and a few minutes later they appear in a programme they are treated with the same kind of disbelief and scepticism, and the truth of the play is destroyed. After having created the demand in these popular markets those concerned now want permission to fulfil the demand. This was the point of Tory Party Questions yesterday.

This is the exploitation of young people. We are told that young people make this world of "pop" and are demanding it. I have been in this business. People in the business make this world. They call these young people "the mugs". I have, God help me, taken part in all this. Young people who believe that this is the world of "pop" are a mirror image of the hard men who are projecting this world upon them. I do not think that the B.B.C. should have anything to do with this kind of destruction of culture.

We are all affected by this, not only at the top level but at all levels of art at the present time. The best possible example is the kind of deference that has been paid in the Sunday quality papers to the worst writer of the age, Ian Fleming of James Bond fame. This is the kind of effect that kow-towing to the world of "pop" has on our total of culture.

Mr. David Steel : One big development of radio broadcasting recently is the broadcasting of serious music throughout the day. No one suggests that "pop" should replace it, but if broadcasting is able to offer serious music all day, why not "pop" music?

Mr. Buchan : There are great doubts among many people, including the Musicians' Union, whether there should be a permanent non-stop music programme, because it tends to create indifference in reaction. There is a differ-

ence between music created to be listened to and music created for decoration behind the scenes or as the Postmaster-General has described it, sounding "wall-paper" music.

The point is that by having this permanent music we are degrading the rôle and importance of art, including music. I do not want the B.B.C. to fall into this trap. If it does it will sell the pass totally. The B.B.C. is part of society. The rôle of the B.B.C. Light Music Department is not just to reflect the taste of society as the head of B.B.C. sound broadcasting has said. The programmes broadcast by the B.B.C. should help to create the attitudes and taste of society. In this sense the B.B.C. has an important rôle to play.

This leads me to another extremely important point. We are rapidly approaching a crisis as a result of the growth in the use of recorded music in programmes. This use not only degrades the function of music, but it is now beginning directly to affect the livelihood of musicians. Two things are happening. First, the music itself is increasingly being distorted by recording. Those hon. Members who have been to a recording session will know what I mean. The sound put in bears no relation to the sound as it come out on the record. The sound that comes out is nearly 100 per cent. synthetic sound. It is engineers' sound. This is beginning to happen in serious music as well. The tendency is for even a single performance not to go out live but to be recorded; and as soon as it is recorded there is a tendency to use synthetic methods to get a better result. This method of discontinuous recording, 2 or 3 minutes of the piece followed by a retake, is destructive of the aptitudes of the musicians themselves, who detest it.

More important is that by having "pop" programmes and canned music to such an extent, the livelihood as well as the artistic qualities of the musicians is affected. I must warn my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General and those representing commercial interests that there is extremely strong pressure at all levels within the Musicians' Union, among both the "pop" boys and the more serious musicians, to abandon the making of gramophone records altogether. I can say with the authority of the Secretary of the Musicians' Union that the

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position is so worrying that we must not overlook the possible consequences of disregarding what is happening with recordings. One consequence, which, again, I can state with the authority of the Secretary of the Musicians' Union, is that it is not only a possibility, but a probability, that if this trend of the provision of permanent canned music goes on, we will find within the next 12 months that gramophone records are not being made at all. This is a serious probability.

We have seen this problem increasing since Radio Caroline began. The piracy of Radio Caroline is now legalised piracy, because all sorts of livelihoods are involved in this through Radio Manx. There has been nice talk about Radio Manx being a local broadcasting station. It has not, however, provided a local service. Its sponsors are appearing before the Performing Rights Tribunal to ask for something like 8 or 9 hours of canned music—not to provide a local service, not to stimulate local cultural activities and not to project the local scene, but to provide 8 or 9 hours of canned music to attract advertisements. That is their rôle.

It was said in evidence at the Performing Rights Tribunal that if the station broadcast more than 45 minutes of local material in every 8 hours, it would not be attractive to advertisers and, hence, it would not be a viable proposition. Therefore, after all the argument in favour of the establishment of local stations which would serve and stimulate the local community, we find in practice when these matters are left to the commercial boys that we are reduced to a bare 45 minutes of local material, otherwise, it is said, the project will not be a commercial proposition. We must, therefore, take carefully the arguments which have been put forward about advertising and the sponsoring of local radio stations by commercial interests. Above all, we want to avoid the hybrid concept of B.B.C. control plus advertising in this way, because it would be a very thick thin end of the wedge for the commercial interests.

My comment about the serious position which the Musicians' Union is facing and the possibility of action being taken within the next 12 months reminds me

that it has already been taken in America for exactly the same reason. If it takes place—and this, perhaps, at least will appeal to hon. Members opposite—it will affect the export market, because we make about £5 million from exporting the Beatles' and other records. If the bottom were to fall out of this market, the Americans would take over and this kind of investment would go. We must, therefore, watch carefully.

I want to look at the effect of advertising on programmes. We are told that advertising is a means of supporting local radio stations. We shall see. We are told that advertising would not affect the programmes themselves. I wonder whether this is true. Certainly, we have set up a system of safeguards. We have written in a method of preventing commercial advertisers from affecting the programmes which are put out. Lord Thomson, of Scottish Television, said, however, that because advertisers paid for viewers,

“it is inevitable in the system that you should be reaching generally for the maximum number of viewers.”

Even more seriously, Southern Television's representative stated that it was “impracticable” to put out opera, because no advertiser would be prepared to buy advertising time knowing that the audience would be small. In fact the presence of advertising, despite the written-in safeguards, also writes into it an effect and a control over the nature of the programme. Opera will not be put on because the audience would be too small.

The Postmaster-General should have a look at some of the advertisements we are seeing at the present time. They are just within the meaning of the Act, according to how you define the word “clean” in the I.T.V. Act. The advertising material for one pair of shoes and a pair of trousers called, God help us, James Bond trousers, are ten-second pieces of concentrated sadism and violence. Not the kind of violence which some of the Members opposite have been objecting to—violence as an essential part of life, but violence in order to sell a pair of shoes or a pair of trousers. I hope he will look at this aspect seriously.

In this sphere of advertisements one has to look not only at the nature of the advertisements but the gap between

them. We should now seriously consider reducing the amount of advertising to provide a gap of at least one hour between advertisements. This quarter of an hour break is beginning to be destructive of programmes and programme planning.

The Postmaster-General has also to look at the radio position because radio is beginning to give up the struggle in view of the attacks it is facing. To consider regional broadcasting. The National Broadcasting Council has a particular function. This is to operate "with full regard to the distinctive culture, language, interests and tastes of our people in the county for which the Council is established."

As the Liberal Member for Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles (Mr. Steel) has pointed out, to a very great extent these local councils have failed in their purposes. Scottish B.B.C. has singularly failed to serve the Scottish people and this is equally true of commercial Scottish television, both in quality and in quantity. We find there is more American material than Scottish material. We are told, for example, in the B.B.C. Report, and I like the sound of it:

"The Council welcomed the arrangement to produce drama serials for B.B.C.2 in the new Studio 'A' at Glasgow. The Council hopes that it will promote creative effort and inspire ideas, for there is still a lack of new drama for radio and television."

So we have now perhaps the most modern television studio in Europe in Glasgow for Scottish T.V. But how many plays have been produced by Scottish B.B.C. in the last year? The answer is none. The story is that they propose to double that figure next year. With this new studio they have in fact been working for B.B.C.2. So with the expenditure, for which we are all paying, we are assisting B.B.C.2 which serves one area, already well served and the regional expenditure is cut down. When the breakdown of expenditure in Scottish broadcasting is examined it is found that about £1 million is spent. Of this a very great deal is related to engineering and transmitter problems. They have just spent a £¼ million in building new transmitters for an area which will serve 16,000 people.

When we break down that £1 million, we find that the expenditure on programming by B.B.C. Scottish Television

has been £151,000, or 7d. per head of the population, per annum. This situation has occurred under a council which has the duty of fertilising and stimulating the culture of the region. Scottish Television—the commercial company—has managed to produce only seven plays in its eight years' existence, although we were promised that it would develop local drama and music. The Programme Director of Scottish Television, Mr. Noel Stevenson, in a letter to Equity, last year, said,

"It is not our present policy to produce drama."

In other words, one organisation does not produce it and the other says that it is not its policy to produce it. That is the kind of service that we in Scotland are receiving in television. The question of money for regional broadcasting becomes increasingly important.

Recently I was to do a radio programme, a montage of many hours of speech, building up the programme by using tapes. I was asked by the Glasgow studio of the B.B.C. how many tapes I would need. I said that if they were small I would need about 200. When the B.B.C. representative rose up from the floor he said that that was more than the B.B.C. had in all its Scottish studios. We had to get tapes from Birmingham and London to get sufficient to do the programme, lasting ½ hour.

The B.B.C. must see its duties as resisting the siren voices of commercialism. It must take seriously its duty to fertilise and develop cultural attitudes and to develop and fertilise regional culture. This is a more important task than spending money on developing colour television. We are told that this raises money in exports. I do not know about that, but I do know that it will not contribute much in the meantime to the artistic level of broadcasting. How many colour films do hon. Members remember as good films? There have been very few, if any, good colour films. The tendency will be to exploit the medium as a gimmick. Someone said that the first picture to go out on colour would probably be the Black and White Minstrel Show, and last night I conjured up a picture of the Prime Minister appearing in a nice combination of silvery-grey and pink. The real task is to develop the artistic quality of the

[Mr. BUCHAN.]
average programme. Where the B.B.C. is erring, it is doing so where it is attempting to imitate commercial television. I would be a lot more critical if I were discussing commercial T.V.

When my right hon. Friend is considering local broadcasting stations, I hope, first that he will remember the effect of Radio Manx on the livelihood of musicians and its failure to develop local interests before he takes firm decisions. Secondly before he takes decisions following on this review, I hope that he will first of all consult musicians and artistes whose livelihood will be involved. Thirdly, I hope that he will investigate the purpose and the rôle of regional broadcasting, the appointment of officials and so on. Some recent appointments have disturbed me—and the establishment nature of the council. Fourthly, he should repudiate all rumours that the Government intend to introduce a “permanent pop” radio programme.

At the present time we are getting into a crisis but crises always lead to sunnier and lusher pastures. If we do nothing and leave the field to those whose concept of television is as a means of printing their own bank notes, this will lead to eventual decay and destruction of the standards we have developed so far.

8.55 p.m.

Mr. James Dance (Bromsgrove): I hope that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West (Mr. Buchan) will forgive me if I do not comment on his speech, but we are short of time and I should like to get straight on to my own.

I am extremely grateful to have the opportunity of speaking in the debate, because I want to clear up a misunderstanding among many hon. Members opposite and people outside the House who are under the impression that my colleagues inside the House and the Viewers and Listeners Association are gunning for the B.B.C. Nothing could be further from the truth. All we are endeavouring to do is to see that broadcasting and television are brought up to a better standard than is now sometimes the case. When we started to form this group, I sincerely hoped that hon. Members opposite would join us. They did

at the beginning, and I hope that they will come back in future, because this should be an all-party matter.

Nevertheless, it appears to many of us that some programmes produced by the B.B.C. are of a lower standard than those put out by the independents. This is very likely due, as has been said, to the fact that there is the Independent Television Authority which has power over all the 12 producing companies. It uses that power to say, “This is not a good programme; we do not like it.” It also has the sanction of taking away the company’s licence at the end. It might have a beneficial effect if the whole of broadcasting and television came under the same type of umbrella, in other words, if there were a British Broadcasting and Television Authority. This might be a good idea. I am not having a go at the B.B.C. on this matter, but the independents have the protection of this umbrella of the Authority and I should like it to be extended.

The other point I want to make clear is that in no way do we want to set ourselves up as censors. That is not the idea. It is merely that we wish to convey to those who put out television and radio broadcasts the genuine views and feelings of the nation as a whole, and we feel that we are in a good position to get those views. I want to make it quite clear that it is not censorship, but merely conveying our views to the authorities concerned.

I do not believe that Lord Normanbrook and the governors of the B.B.C. are doing their jobs properly. They are there to do the job which I.T.A. is doing, but they are failing abysmally. Can the Postmaster-General tell us what has happened to the Noble Committee, which was set up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead (Mr. Brooke)? Has it made a report and has any action been taken?

I firmly believe that the public is sick and tired of bad taste on some programmes. Nobody can deny that there are many excellent programmes, especially from the B.B.C., whose programme about the Great War was magnificent. Nothing could have been handled more beautifully and with greater dignity than the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill. Our sports programmes are second to none and great compliments should be

paid to the B.B.C. for that sort of work. Technical achievements have been fantastic.

What a great pity it is to spoil these excellent programmes and the excellent showing which we get from the B.B.C. by distasteful programmes, chiefly plays. Some of the plays are extremely unpleasant. Many people have also been offended by the satirical reviews, in particular, "Not So Much A Programme, More A Way of Life".

I was delighted to read in the newspapers some time ago that this programme was to be removed, and one hoped that it would not come back. In a way I was just as horrified to read the other day that it is coming back again with Mr. Frost as the compère. It certainly was a "Frost" and apparently a rather expensive "Frost" in New York. I feel that we should not have this type of programme.

Let us consider what it did. It gave offence to very many people. I want to make it clear that I am a member of the Church of England, but I saw the programme about Roman Catholics and, frankly, I was absolutely appalled at the offensive way in which it was put over. I remind hon. Members that it was only a short time before this programme about Roman Catholics that there was a programme which made a mockery of our Holy Communion. I took very great offence at it and took the trouble to ring up the duty officer at the B.B.C. immediately it was over.

No words of mine would be anything like as adequate as the words of Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror* of 16th November:

"The successor of 'That Was The Week That Was' bears the elephantine title of 'Not So Much a Programme More a Way of Life'. I think I can say with all the restraint that I can muster that rarely on television have I seen such an embarrassing performance. As a mixture of pretentiousness, bathos and approved-school humour, nothing I can recall has ever been served up more calculated to make one writhe and retch. In its least offensive moments it was owlish and oafish. The self-conscious artificers of this epic combination of facetiousness and fatuity have one consolation. No matter how they strain every nerve in their bodies and rack every cell in their brains, they cannot do worse than this. This is the bottom and the end. This is the absolute and ultimate zero of what can be committed on the television screen."

A great multitude of the public have very much the same view as Cassandra about this programme, and I sincerely hope that it does not come back.

What would happen if we had a modern Rip Van Winkle who woke up and said, "How can I find out what life is like now? What is going on?". Suppose he were told to look at television for a day or two and that that would put him in the picture. What a horrible shock he would have. He would see sick humour in bad taste, undue violence, condonation of homosexuality and free love, many of our churches and religion being ridiculed and attacks on our most beloved institutions and traditions. He might think that what he saw really represented modern British life. Of course, it would not be true. He would be seeing only what a very small proportion of the British people indulge in and like. The vast majority of our nation are as fine and good as they ever were. Why, then, must we show this sort of thing which is a representation of the life of only a minority of people in this country? What effect does this have on overseas visitors? If they look at the television, they get a very wrong impression of the sort of people we are.

There appears to be an extremely unco-operative attitude on the part of members of the B.B.C. towards individuals and various institutions. If members of the public take up with the B.B.C. criticisms of various programmes, they are apt to get a complete brush off. I read on page 130 of the B.B.C. Handbook for 1965:

"It is the duty of the Corporation to keep in touch with public opinion and to weigh such representations as may be made to them."

Yet I read in a book written by Sir Hugh Greene:

"The attempts at censorship come nowadays also from groups—Hoggart calls them the 'new Populists'—(one might call them the 'new Puritans')—which do not claim to be 'Guardians' but claim to speak for 'ordinary decent people' and to be 'forced to take a stand against' what they arbitrarily call unnecessary dirt, gratuitous sex, excessive violence—and so on. These 'new Populists' will attack whatever does not underwrite a set of prior assumptions, assumptions which are anti-intellectual and unimaginative. Superficially this seems, and likes to think of itself as, a 'grass roots' movement. In practice it can threaten a dangerous form of censorship—censorship which works by causing artists and writers not to take risks . . ."

[MR. DANCE.]

This is the point. These modern-thinking humanists are undermining all the things which most people believe in. Indeed they are. Let hon. Members go round the country and hear what is being said. This is factual. It is true. The humanist attitude which is creeping into our society is undermining it very badly.

I was horrified the other day to learn that the programme, "Lift Up Your Hearts" was to be taken off. I quote from a letter written to the *Scotsman* and signed by Alick Buchanan-Smith, Michael Clark Hutchison and W. H. K. Baker:

"A motion was tabled today in the House of Commons deploring the decision of the B.B.C. to withdraw the programme 'Lift up your Hearts'. This motion has been signed by many members. Whilst appreciating that it is desirable from time to time to alter the form of such programmes, we deprecate the implications which underlie the statement by the Director of Religious Broadcasting that this type of programme is not in keeping with modern conditions. If society is more pagan than 25 years ago, then, surely, the need for the programme is greater than ever before."

I entirely agree.

The unco-operative attitude of the B.B.C. goes further. Earlier this year, there was a programme on farming which ran down the farmers completely, saying that they were feather-bedded, going on about the subsidies they received and so on, utterly ignoring and failing to bring out the fact that those subsidies are very largely consumer subsidies. Sir Harold Woolley, President of the National Farmers' Union, saw a preview of the programme and complained, insisting that the farmers' viewpoint should be given. But, although there is a farmers' sub-committee in the B.B.C., their view was not allowed to be heard. I understand also that the religious committee was not consulted and its views were not heard about taking off that fine programme, "Lift Up Your Hearts".

When the Viewers and Listeners Association was formed, Sir Hugh Greene that evening called it "a lunatic fringe". What does this so-called lunatic fringe consist of? Among its members are an Anglican bishop, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, a high official of the British Medical Association, many chief constables and many Members of Parliament. I submit that the lunatic

fringe, who ought to look at their own misconduct, are the minority to whom I have referred, not the people who are trying to get things put right.

Mr. Hugh Jenkins (Putney): The hon. Gentleman has been speaking about the programme "Not So Much A Programme More A Way of Life", and describing it in some detail. I assume from what he has said that he has watched this programme fairly closely over the past few months. What would be his attitude if the programme returned? Would it be his intention to watch it constantly instead of enjoying the many sweet and clean programmes on which he could well concentrate?

Mr. Dance: What a very stupid argument. I think that it is my duty to watch this sort of programme. [Laughter.] Of course it is. I am here to object to things which I regard as offensive to the majority of the public. I would much rather look at other programmes which would appeal to me. That is a very poor argument.

We have not much time, so I will conclude. The people and bodies to whom I have referred deplore what is going on. The police are certain that violence on television increases violence outside. The B.M.A. feels that programmes which condone or, indeed, sometimes advocate pre-marital or promiscuous sexual intercourse increase the incidence of abortion and venereal disease. Is this really what we want? Is this the sort of programme that we want? Is it not time that we made strong representations to Lord Normanbrook to get on with his job? I do not think that the public will be satisfied until the Director-General, Sir Hugh Greene is replaced, and replaced immediately.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. David Gibson-Watt (Hereford): This has been a good debate, and a very worth-while one, on a subject rightly chosen by the Opposition, because it is a long time since we discussed this all-important question. That view has been supported by both sides of the Committee.

During the debate we have listened to the accumulated wisdom of a number of hon. Members on a number of subjects. We have listened to those who have

experience of the B.B.C., both on the technical side and on the programme side, and, indeed, those who have been on the Advisory Council. We have also listened to the hon. Member for Refrew, West (Mr. Buchan) who, I believe, has a particular knowledge of the problems of the Musicians' Union.

We introduced this subject for debate for one very good reason. The Government made some fairly strong remarks during the election, but they have now been in office for six months and we have not heard very much from them. When we are considering the two major participants in telecommunications, the B.B.C. and the I.T.A., although it is the undoubted right of every hon. Member to voice disagreement and criticism where it is necessary, no one should be in any doubt that the standards of the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. are far higher than any other standards in the telecommunications world. Later in my speech I shall discuss some of the programmes and some of the criticisms which have been made about them.

The Postmaster-General, my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir Ian Orr-Ewing), who has a long experience of television matters, and others, referred to the possibility of having an overall broadcasting authority. I believe there is a possibility that we may evolve to this eventually. This question of overseeing—control is too strong a word—is one which is probably going to change over the years.

Throughout the debate there has been one great difference between the two sides of the House, as one can well understand. Time and again hon. Gentlemen opposite referred to, and ran down, the profit motive in commercial television. Let us be in no doubt about the fact that on this matter there is a fundamental difference between Conservatives and Socialists. There is nothing wrong in an interest being commercial. Hon. Gentlemen opposite have commercial interests in their private lives. But let us be honest about this. Profit is not a bad thing. If this country had a few more profits, and larger profits, it would be a good deal better off today.

The reason for raising this debate is that we feel that the Government should be franker with the people on this

subject. The first Secretary used the expression "We, the nation", the other night. If the Government are so close to the nation let them tell it what they are thinking about these all-important matters concerning telecommunications.

Many subjects have been touched upon this afternoon. I hope that the Lord President of the Council will be able to give us some of the fruit of the workings of his Committee and the thinking of the Government on this matter. I hope that he will not say that this is a situation that the Government inherited. We all inherited the situation. The fact remains that the Government have now been in for six months. We hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to say a little more than the Postmaster-General said earlier.

When we consider the question of telecommunications we are aware that Britain first produced television. We led in the field, although it is difficult to convince any American that it was Britain which took the first step. [An HON. MEMBER: "A Scotsman."] I am told that it was a Scotsman. The Scots were responsible for many things, including the invention of the steam engine. [*Interruption.*] I would not wish to get into an argument, Sir Ronald, on the question who discovered the steam engine—but since the gentleman concerned happened to be my great-great-grandfather, on this subject at least I think that this is a matter on which I would be right for once.

The experimentation and work that has to go into the discovery of new avenues of invention in this important field must be carried out by Government and free enterprise together. Nothing could be a better example of this than the launching of the Early Bird project in the United States of America. Only last week we were able to see the American President talking about his ideas of an Atlantic Community, and Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery at it again—and a very enjoyable programme it was. It came to us as a result of the launching of the Early Bird satellite at Andover, Maine, by a corporation called Comsat, in which government money provided some of the backing, although many private citizens have a stake in the satellite.

[MR. GIBSON-WATT.]

That is a factor which ought to be considered, especially by those hon. Members opposite who continually harp on the question of profits. Do not let us be in any doubt that a British project of the Early Bird type would require money from many people. I hope that it will be possible for the Government to see that free enterprise plays its part in any experimentation of this kind that may take place. A good example is to be found in pay television. I must disclose an interest in this matter. I was once associated with pay television in a small way, although I am not now. This was an avenue which needed exploring, but the Conservative Government of the day did not wish to see public money put at risk in order to discover what was the answer. Therefore, the last Government gave permission for five separate companies to make experiments to find out whether it would be successful. The Postmaster-General did not say very much about it this afternoon, perhaps advisedly, for I know it is a difficult problem. When the previous Government gave their permission they had no idea whether the experiment would be successful. Equally, when they gave permission to the regional commercial companies they had no idea whether the companies would make money. As we know, for the first years they made considerable losses.

We do not yet know the result of the pay television experiment, but we have no regrets and no apologies to make to the country for allowing the experiments to take place. I am sure that there will be many occasions when this type of free enterprise should be encouraged by the Government of the day. I hope it will be possible for right hon. Gentlemen opposite to say that this will happen whatever may be the view of their party.

We have today discussed whether a fourth channel should go to the Independent Television. This is a difficult question. The Conservative Party had agreed that in this year, 1965, commercial interests would be allowed to take the fourth channel. Arguments have been advanced from this side of the Committee about why the fourth channel should go to commercial television. I shall not repeat the excellent technical exposition

given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Epsom (Sir P. Rawlinson) on how the various wavelengths and channels could be suited so that we might have a fourth television programme. I reinforce the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir I. Orr-Ewing). The party on this side of the Committee broke the monopoly of the B.B.C. We believe, and have done for some time, that it would be right to break the monopoly of commercial television. The more companies we have in this sphere—it would certainly be possible to have two more companies—the more competition there would be. I say this knowing only too well that many hon. Members opposite do not share my view.

In this country we have two different forms of creature which produce television programmes. There is the B.B.C., the national organisation, and the I.T.A., a number of commercial companies competing one with another, and therefore, for reasons which have already been given, I hope that the fourth channel will come.

I referred earlier to an interest in pay television, and I should also admit an interest in the B.B.C., as I was once a member of the General Advisory Council. A number of rather hard things have been said about the B.B.C. during this debate. Having worked fairly continuously and closely with the Corporation over a period of two or three years, although, admittedly, the G.A.C. does not meet very often, one gets a shrewd idea of how things are going. The B.B.C. does not do everything which I should wish it to do, but I believe that the amount of good done by those who work in the B.B.C. and administer it definitely counteracts the mistakes which any human men are bound to make. May I comment on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Dance)? It is something on which a Member of Parliament gets a good deal of correspondence from his constituents. I believe that it is something which those responsible for television and broadcasting programmes must continually keep in mind.

I should like to say something about the religious programme, "Lift Up Your Hearts". On two or three occasions in the House I have criticised the B.B.C. over religious programmes. It would not

be out of place, possibly, if on this occasion I supported them. The new Director of Religious Programmes is fairly new to the job. He has not been there long, but those who know him have a very high opinion of him. This programme appeared, I believe, at 7.50 in the morning. I will not pretend that I always saw it—[HON. MEMBERS: “The hon. Gentleman never saw it.”]—I am grateful to hon. Members opposite for saying that, because it is obvious that some of them do not see it—[An HON. MEMBER: “One would hear it.”]—exactly, hear it. They were not about to hear it on Wednesday morning last.

The reason that this programme has now been taken off and another programme put in its place called “Ten to Eight” is that those responsible for religious programmes have not only to consider the minority—an unfortunate word to have to use—of Christians. They have also to consider the other great number of people who do not believe in the Christian religion. Therefore, we must give some latitude—I say this with all sincerity to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove—particularly to a new man trying to do a new job and to bring a new look to this programme.

Mr. Dance : Does my hon. Friend not agree that we should give a lead and an example and that this very short period of time at the beginning of the day gives comfort to people who believe in Christianity? Would it not be a good thing to keep it?

Mr. Gibson-Watt : I am only giving to my hon. Friend the reasons, as I have them, that the programme was taken off and another put in its place. I would not disagree with him at all. I feel quite certain that if there is enough genuine feeling about this matter, I have enough faith in the Director of Religious Programmes—I am sure that the Postmaster-General would agree with this—to believe that if he thought it necessary, he would change it. But as I say, there has been a genuine reason for the change in this programme.

A good deal has been said today about local sound. Here again, we have said fairly strongly that we hope that the Government will go ahead on local sound fairly soon. We hope that here, too, it will be a job of finding what local

needs are for sound broadcasting. Certainly, it should not necessarily be run by the B.B.C. Much can be learned from what I would call the regional stations, both on television and broadcasting. They are complicated problems. I would not go into the question of how local broadcasting should be provided nor of what type of programme we should have. With the going of the pirate radio stations, to which the Postmaster-General referred, there will be a certain amount of demand for the type of programmes—not all day, of course, but some of the day—which have become popular while the pirate radio stations have been operating. I feel certain, however awkward the pirates may have been to the Government, that the Postmaster-General will have listened to Caroline sometimes. He must feel a little sad to see her go. What will be put in the place of the pirates? I hope that the Leader of the House will tell us something about Government thinking on this matter.

We have heard a lot recently about a so-called University of the Air. It is a rather blown-up concept, and we know that a great deal is already being done from the educational point of view on closed circuit and in other ways. An extremely good pamphlet on this subject was written by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, North (Mr. Chataway). We debated the subject not long ago. It is a highly complicated matter, and I hope that the Leader of the House will comment on it.

I hope that the Government will hasten slowly over colour television. I appreciate some of the difficult problems involved. I have had the benefit of seeing S.E.C.A.M., P.A.L. as well as the N.T.S.C. system in Paris and in this country at the B.B.C. and some of the commercial companies. There are a great number of matters to be taken into account when considering colour television, including exports, a matter which has been raised in the debate.

Exports will probably be concentrated to cameras and other equipment rather than T.V. sets. I do not imagine, certainly during the initial years, that many colour sets will be exported from this country. Colour television was at first a technical problem. It was clear that the G.P.O., the B.B.C. and B.R.E.M.A.

[MR. GIBSON-WATT.]

—the British Radio Equipment Manufacturers' Association—were in favour of the American N.T.S.C. system. Indeed, the Postmaster-General went so far as to say on 3rd February:

“The fact is rather that developments over the last few months have served rather to strengthen the Government's view that the N.T.S.C. system should be adopted”—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 3rd February, 1965; Vol. 705, c. 289.]

Although at that time, for technical reasons, the Government thought that that system should be adopted, since then their view must have been affected by what has happened at Vienna and also because of the coming meeting at Bonn. I therefore acquit the Leader of the House from having to make an announcement on this subject tonight. I appreciate that it is a difficult technical as well as political matter.

The Postmaster-General in his speech touched lightly on all the matters of telecommunications we have been discussing. I hope that the Leader of the House, who is in rather a different position from the Postmaster-General, will be able to comment further on some matters. I think I am right in saying that he is the chairman of a committee which is looking into the overall position of the B.B.C. and that for the past 10 years he has held an unrivalled position in the Socialist Party in regard to the decisions as to who should represent his party on television and sound radio. It might be fair to say that it was he, rather than Transport House, who decided who should retain the image of the Socialist Party before and during the last election. I congratulate him on his success. In being able to keep some of the pretty embarrassing specimens off the radio the right hon. Gentleman certainly did a great deal for his own party. The House will forgive me for going into such detail.

I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has not argued on the facts I have put before him, but it is right that he should make clear this evening, with his vast knowledge of broadcasting and television problems, what he and his right hon. Friends are deciding. We have been waiting for six months, and we do not want to go another six months before we are told what the Government intend to do. Tonight, we shall listen to what the right hon. Gentleman has to say—

and, on this side, the word “listen” really has a meaning.

9.35 p.m.

The Lord President of the Council (Mr. Herbert Bowden): I do not want to waste too many of my precious minutes in replying to the eulogy of myself expressed by the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Gibson-Watt). I can assure him that if I was responsible for keeping anyone off the air during the election I was responsible for keeping myself off as well—except on one occasion, when I appeared with the then Government Chief Whip.

This has been a very excellent debate. It has not been a political debate, and that is probably right. The Opposition are entitled to credit for using a Supply Day for this purpose. It has already been suggested that there should be a debate on broadcasting each year. I think that is right and, as Leader of the House, I will bear it in mind on a future occasion. As I say, this has been a good debate, and the exchanges we have had and the views that have been expressed are of great value to the Government.

Before I reply to the major part of the debate, I should like to deal with one or two points that are, in a sense, extraneous, to the general run. The hon. Member for Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles (Mr. David Steel) made a point on Section 63 of the Representation of the People Act. I absolutely agree with him that it is rather fantastic in 1965 that, because one candidate in a by-election refuses to go on the air, the other candidates are prevented from so doing. That view was taken by the former Government and it is the view of this Government, but to alter the situation needs amending legislation. We felt in the last Parliament, and we feel now, that this should not be done piecemeal, but yesterday we heard Mr. Speaker state that broadcasting would come within the terms of reference of his Conference on Electoral Reform.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to recording. As former Opposition Chief Whip, I know that there were many occasions when I wanted scripts of current affairs programmes, party political broadcasts, and so on. In the main the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. were extremely helpful, and provided them on every occasion. There may be technical difficulties in

having tape recordings of every current affairs programme, but we shall pass on the idea, and see what can be done.

A great part of the debate has dealt, and rightly dealt, I think, with programme standards. The more one thinks of defining a standard of programme or taste the more difficult one realises it is. The Pilkington Committee tried, and did not succeed very well. I do not think that anyone could define taste or standard with any degree of accuracy, or could give a description that would suit everyone, because tastes differ. I think that it would be easier to define bad taste than good taste or good standard.

The House will recall some recent exchanges on business, arising out of an early-day Motion, when criticism was made of a B.B.C. programme and I used the expression "sick humour". I received a number of postcards about that, and was criticised in the normal way, but my personal view—and I express a personal view here—is that satirical programmes are good. We should not cut them out—there is always room for a measure of experimentation—but when questions of personal taste, and particularly when matters of religion and race are affected, exceptional care should be taken. I do not think that one could define it in a way which would suit everyone.

My right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General has reserve powers, but it would not be a very good thing for the Postmaster-General to use those reserve powers, except in very extreme cases. If these powers were used, the Government would be involving themselves in a censorship of television, whether it be B.B.C. or I.T.A., which I am sure would not be the wish of the House of Commons or of the country.

The hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Shepherd) said that he felt that politicians are too sensitive and I was inclined to agree with him; but if there is any section of the public in this country or, for that matter, in any other country, which ought to have skins like rhinoceroses it should be politicians. If we have not got them, we jolly well ought to have them. If we cannot take what the music hall, the comedians, or television do to us, we should think again

about whether we ought to have come here. I do not think that politicians are particularly over-sensitive, with one or two exceptions.

Perhaps the best way of dealing with programmes of this type, where public opinion is often upset by some chance remark, is the method already adopted. The B.B.C. and the I.T.A. must receive thousands of protests from listeners or viewers when anything is said or done on television to which people take exception. When a Member of Parliament receives a complaint from a constituent, he either raises it in the House of Commons or tables an early-day Motion. The Postmaster-General sees it, it is replied to at some point from this Box, often in business exchanges on a Thursday afternoon. The B.B.C. and the I.T.A. are well aware of what happens in the House. These are the things that can be done to draw to the attention of the authorities the importance of maintaining a reasonable standard, without destroying the value of their programme by cutting out satire entirely. I think that this is as far as one should go.

There may be a case for a sort of watchdog committee composed of representatives of both authorities, outside people, advisers, and representatives of religious bodies. I know that the Pilkington Committee turned this down, but the idea should be examined. It should not go out from here tonight, as a result of our debate, that it is the view of the House of Commons that all programmes on the B.B.C. and I.T.A. are not good. In fact, they are exceptionally good. I agree with the hon. Member for Hereford that our standard is probably higher than that in any other country, although I must admit that I myself have seen examples in only a few other countries.

The hon. Member for Hereford said that we have been six months in office and that it was only on 14th April that my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General made the statement that the Government were engaging in a general review of broadcasting. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Pilkington Committee reported in June, 1962. It took almost exactly the same amount of time—six months—before the second White Paper was issued indicating what line the then Government were taking on B.B.C. 2, on local broadcasting, on colour television,

[Mr. Bowden.]

and so on. From December, 1962, until the election in October, 1964, the former Government made no provision whatsoever for this additional expenditure that had to be met by the B.B.C.

Having had some experience of this during the last six months we know how difficult this subject is. That is why we are carrying out this review. It would have been possible for my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General to have come to the House of Commons two or three days after the General Election and increased the B.B.C. licence to £6. We took the view that we had to examine every possible aspect of the case before the increase took place. The recommendation that the increase should be £1 to £5 is purely a holding operation to enable us to get the review completed and report to Parliament in time.

Sir Douglas Glover (Ormskirk): Does that mean that we can expect it to go up to £6.

Mr. Bowden: If we had faced the position in October, 1964, and had given the increase for which the B.B.C. asked, it would have been a £6 licence and 25s. for sound. That would not have been too much. It would have given the B.B.C. what it wanted, to cover additional expenditure and the work which, quite rightly, it was carrying out on instructions from the former Administration. The question was what should be done immediately. We decided to increase the licence fee to £5, which happens later this year. In the meantime we are reviewing the whole position.

It has been said on two or three occasions but it cannot be said too often that the ceiling of licences having been probably reached at about 13½ million, every additional penny that the B.B.C. requires for the additional work that it carries out, or because of increased costs, has to come out of an increased licence fee or from a Government subsidy or perhaps from advertising revenue. The money has to be found. The review is therefore looking at the whole position from that point of view.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing: Or from better organisation and increased productivity, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will agree.

Mr. Bowden: I am not convinced at this stage that the organisation in the B.B.C. is not a good one. I have said that we are looking at this. The Pilkington Committee did it and the Beveridge Committee did it, and both were very satisfied about the organisation within the B.B.C. It is true that one has heard criticisms, but the matter must be looked at before we accept a generalisation.

This mounting deficit will have to be met somehow. This means that changes will have to take place. It is impossible at this stage, despite the request made by the right hon. and learned Member for Epsom, to say what these changes are likely to be. He has had Ministerial experience and he knows that one never indicates who are the members of the committee, or what is happening in the committee until that committee reports to the Cabinet.

We accept at once the constitutional position of the B.B.C. *vis-à-vis* the Government, but the Government are also in a different position in that they have to consider the consumer, the licence buyer, and to what extent one can continue to increase the licence fee. This is the main problem on the financial side of the question which we hope to look at.

Included in our review will be consideration of the fourth channel. The hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir Ian Orr-Ewing) made the point that it ought not to be necessary to continue B.B.C.1 on 405 lines v.h.f. It might not be for all time, but it is very necessary at the moment when the majority of sets in the country are still 405-line sets.

Sir Ian Orr-Ewing: I am sorry if the right hon. Gentleman gathered that I put it like that. It is not what will be in HANSARD. I said that we should re-examine the matter to see whether it is necessary to repeat on bands 4 and 5 the existing B.B.C.1 programmes, and the same for independent television.

Mr. Bowden: There may be more channels available but that might or might not happen for years.

One suggestion of great importance is that the channel should be used if not mainly then to a considerable extent for educational purposes. There is a need for increased educational facilities. The

educational programmes now put out by the B.B.C. and I.T.A. are excellent, but if one thinks in terms of a university of the air, in the way indicated by the Prime Minister during the General Election, one visualises a programme which will enable people to accept courses at a university and to become graduates through television and partly through postal courses, which means that there will have to be hours available on one channel or other at times of the day when people can study. This is not an easy problem. It may be early morning or it may be hours that at present are not normally used for television. All these things will have to be looked at. The fourth channel comes very much into this. The Government have made it clear that we do not accept the decision of the former Administration that this fourth channel should be handed over to I.T.A. as a commercial channel or developed in some other way as a commercial channel. On the other hand, the whole situation is being reviewed. But we do not automatically accept that.

Again, I do not think that the concept which one has heard from one or two sides of the House tonight about local broadcasting really holds good. The pirates will be forced by legislation to close down, because they are stealing frequencies that ought to be used for other purposes. They are interfering, and they may interfere still more, with shipping and the shipping lines and they are stealing copyright. At some point when legislation is introduced, in conformity with the Strasbourg agreement, and the pirates are closed down, there will undoubtedly be a demand for popular music programmes. I know that this idea is not accepted generally. It is a view which I hold because, whatever one may feel about it, the so-called "pop" programmes are enjoyed by thousands of young people. I am not absolutely sure that every young man or woman who carries a transistor set that is blaring its way along the street as they walk along is listening. It may be a status symbol. Nevertheless, it is switched on.

From the point of view of standards, one should not be unduly worried about this sort of programme. It may be that in a different generation "pop" music today with the groups is what the Strauss waltz was in those days. I prefer the

Strauss waltz, but that, I should think, is something to do with my age.

When these pirate stations are off the air, one cannot assume that there will be a full day's popular programme from any form of station in this country, one of the main difficulties being what is known as needle time. Needle time is the time that is available to the broadcasting authorities, by arrangement with the manufacturers of records and the Musicians' Union, during which the records can be broadcast. On the other hand, I do not think that one wants a continuous programme all day of canned music. If we are to have a full day's music of a light type or of the less popular but not quite highbrow type of music, surely a great deal of it has to be light. Again, however, I do not think that this will be met by local broadcasting stations. We are looking into the matter. We do not have closed minds about it.

I understand that some of the local broadcasting stations would have a radius of from 5 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ or 10 miles and that there might be as many as 250 or 300. To have popular musical programmes being broadcast all at the same time in that way, apart from being a horrible thing to think of, would not achieve the objective. Therefore, if we are to have a light music programme with more music than at present, part of which must be live and part canned, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Postmaster-General that it can be done only by a national programme such as the Light Programme.

That does not mean that there is no function for local broadcasting. This is a problem which we are examining. I like the example given by the hon. Member for Hendon, North of traffic control. This sort of thing would be extremely valuable and needs to be considered. Do not, however, let us run away with the idea that the local broadcasting stations, whoever may own them, will be easy or cheap. They are not. The hon. Member for Hendon, North suggested that the capital cost of a station would be something like £18,000 to £20,000. One possibly could if it was simply broadcasting. But it would be important that a local station of this sort should broadcast local news. One would then have to think in terms of outside broadcasting units, and I am advised that the average cost would be

[MR. BOWDEN.] something like £35,000 capital cost per station, with an annual revenue of something like £40,000.

This is quite a costly thing. It is not an impossible figure. But, despite the fact that the former Administration made no decision on local sound broadcasting, we have not a closed mind and are still looking at it. It fulfils only part of the function.

Included in this review we shall, of course, look at almost every aspect of broadcasting, including colour. I agree with what the hon. Member for Hereford said about colour, in that it is premature to make a decision and take any independent action. If this were done we might find ourselves landed with a system not acceptable to the rest of Europe. There could be no interchange of programmes and there might be a loss of revenue in the industry because it was unable to sell overseas sets of the type used in this country overseas. We must tread softly, quietly and slowly here. I hope that we will not be accused of dragging our feet again on this particular issue.

The main debate has centred on the B.B.C. One or two things have been said about independent television, and I think it should be clearly stated here—I may perhaps speak for myself and say that I voted against commercial television—that the programmes, and the content of the programmes, on commercial television in this country are of quite a high standard. One sometimes disagrees with the advertisements, becomes bored with them in a more accurate description. One sometimes disagrees with them, but there is a safeguard in that the I.T.A. has machinery of its own for checking them, and one could extend it still further.

I understand that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has in mind the introduction some time of some legislation on merchandise marks, which will have an effect on the control of advertising and its quality, and which could easily affect television.

The whole question of advertising on television is an important one, and I think that it ought to be reiterated here that, as my right hon. Friend the

Postmaster-General said, many people in this country have the idea that commercial television is something for which they pay nothing at all and that it is free, whereas they pay or will be paying a £5 licence fee for B.B.C. The fact is of course that they pay for commercial television indirectly. This is the old argument of direct and indirect taxation. When they buy a packet of detergent, 1½d. or 2d. perhaps—some fraction of the cost—pays for their commercial television, but it is not generally recognised. There is nothing free under the sun and I am sure that commercial television is not either.

This has been an excellent debate. The views exchanged have been of great value to the Government and we will continue with the review and will report to the House as soon as possible. I hope that, as a result of this good debate, the Opposition Front Bench will not move for a reduction in the salary of my right hon. Friend.

Whereupon Motion made, and Question, That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again—[Mr. George Rogers]—put and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again Tomorrow.

CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS (LEVY)

10.0 p.m.

The Minister of State, Board of Trade (Mr. Roy Mason): I beg to move,

That the Cinematograph Films (Collection of Levy) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations, 1965, a draft of which was laid before this House on 29th April, be approved.

As hon. Members will know, the levy, which is a proportion of cinema takings, is paid into a fund and distributed to producers of British films. In order to improve the condition of cinemas whose box office receipts are small the levy is not payable in any week when receipts fall below a prescribed limit, which is now £300.

The purpose of the new Regulations is to increase to £350 the amount which a cinema may take in any week before incurring levy liability. The reason for the proposed change is that the value of the existing exemption has been eroded by increased cinema operating costs of some 15 per cent. since it was fixed in November, 1962. The proposed increase to £350

will merely restore the *status quo* and thus assist small exhibitors who remain in business.

The levy yield in the year which ended in October, 1964, was the record sum of £4.2 million. It has been estimated that the change in the exemption limit will reduce the yield by about £100,000 in a full year but that this reduction is likely to be at least partially offset as a result of increased takings in cinemas generally. This Measure should benefit producers and distributors as well as exhibitors, especially if it enables more cinemas to be kept open. The Cinematograph Films Council has been consulted and agrees with the proposal and I am confident that it will prove acceptable to the House.

10.2 p.m.

Mr. Peter Emery (Reading): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his short explanation of the draft Statutory Instrument, but there are one or two questions I wish to pose. Obviously, the main exercise of the change is to give benefit—only a fringe benefit, but certainly of some value—to smaller cinemas.

The Cinematograph Films Act constituted the British Film Fund, a statutory fund, as successor to the voluntary British Film Production Fund. The statutory scheme, as the voluntary scheme before it, provided for the transfer of payments as between different branches of the United Kingdom film industry specifically for the benefit of British film production.

It is important to make it clear that this is not a subsidy. It consists of sums paid into the film industry and allocated in the same manner in which certain other sections of the film industry obtain the rebate or distribution of various sums. The Regulations made under the 1957 Act require cinemas, with certain exceptions, to pay into the British Film Fund sums calculated—and I would like confirmation of this—at one-ninth, I believe, of the amount over 11d. of each payment for admission. What are the exact exemptions which are provided for at the moment? Will there be any increase in those exemptions under this Statutory Instrument?

There are trading arrangements whereby exhibitors pass back to the distributors and the distributors to the producers a proportion of the burden of the levy

and exhibitors thus bear about 65 per cent. of the levy and the distributors and producers of British as well as foreign firms—and this is worth noting—bear the rest.

Could the Minister of State tell us how much of the sum he mentioned is to be borne by the showing of foreign films as the second part of the 35 per cent. not borne by the exhibitors themselves? I accept that the total paid into the fund last year was just over £4 million, and I think that it is indicated that the fund will be at about this level for the next 12 months. However, I wonder whether the Minister can say what he believes will be the level of the fund in the 12 months afterwards. He suggested that there would be a drop of only about £100,000. Can he say on what basis that is calculated? There is some concern, especially among the members of the British Film Producers Association, that the fund may drop below that figure.

The change to be effected by the passage of the Statutory Instrument will therefore exclude those cinemas which are not able to take £350 as opposed to £300. It seems impossible to assess the likely effect of the change on the British Film Fund since at the end of 1964 there were widespread adjustments in prices of admission to cinemas. This will mean that many cinemas will no longer have to pay into the fund as they were paying in previous years. Has that been taken into account in the assessment of the total which may accrue in the fund for the year 1965-66? Has the British Film Producers Association been consulted on this matter? I know that there have been consultations with the statutory body, but has the Board of Trade consulted the Association and, if it has, can the Minister tell the House what has been the outcome?

I am informed that the Association is concerned about possible loss of revenue and claims that it may not be in its interests for this Statutory Instrument to go through. Obviously there are conflicts of interest in this matter. There is the position of the exhibitors and that of the producers, and it must be obvious that the producers would not wish small cinemas and small exhibitors to close down, because that would close down their outlets for the films they are making. We on this side of the

[MR. EMERY.]

House do not want to take sides in this conflict, but we want to ensure that there is a fair measure of agreement between both sides.

Have the Government considered the possibility of taking steps to make up the fund to the £5 million mark, which was the sum initially discussed when the Cinematograph Films Act, 1957, was going through the House and which has been the level which the British Film Producers Association has considered essential if it was to function as healthily in the production of British films as it would like? The Minister will realise that there are certain powers under Section 6 of the Act which allow the Board of Trade to assist if it so desires. I wondered whether the Government would be willing to hear representations from the Association on this matter if the film producers wished to go to the Board of Trade. I should have thought that there could be no reason why the Board of Trade would be unwilling to hear representations from them.

If I could have answers to these three questions and an assurance that the Board of Trade would be willing to hear any representations from the producers, I believe that hon. Members on this side would be more than pleased to support the Government in the passage of this Statutory Instrument.

10.11 p.m.

Mr. Mason: I wish with your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House to speak again and to reply, in particular, to the points raised by the hon. Member for Reading (Mr. Peter Emery).

As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the Cinematograph Films Act became a statutory scheme in 1957. The levy is collected by the Customs and Excise and is one-ninth of the amount by which cinema seats exceed elevenpence after, under the new Regulation, takings of £350 in any one week. The exemptions are for educational and charity films. Providing that they are shown, these exemptions will continue. I cannot give the numbers. I do not think that they are even on record. They may be, but I am not aware of them. I cannot say on how many occasions cinemas show educational and charity films and therefore are exempt from the levy.

The hon. Gentleman correctly said that the levy goes to the British Film Fund Agency, a Statutory Board appointed by the Board of Trade. I should remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that the makers of British films benefit under the scheme. They are the main recipients. In 1962-63 they received £3.6 million from the levy. In recognition of the work done by the Children's Film Foundation last year, they received £137,500 from the levy. The yield of the levy in 1964 was a record £4.2 million.

There is one very interesting factor which has emerged recently. Cinema admissions have continued to decline. In 1964, they were 367 million as against 383 million in 1963. On the other hand, receipts increased. In 1963, receipts were £59 million, but by 1964 they had increased to £62 million—an increase of £3 million, in spite of the fact that cinema admissions were falling. The loss is an estimate. As I said in my opening remarks, initially it means a loss of £100,000 per year in the levy yield. But this is a small price to pay for helping to keep some of the small cinemas in business. Indeed, it is in the interests of the producers, distributors and exhibitors to keep open as many outlets as possible. This is precisely what the Regulation is designed to do.

The third point which the hon. Gentleman raised was on consultation. This has arisen because the smaller of the two trade associations representing exhibitors, the Association of Independent Cinemas, provided figures showing that costs had risen by 15 per cent. and requested that the exemption limit should be raised to £350. The main exhibitors' association, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, expressed agreement with the proposal. The main producers' associations indicated that they could not support the change, and this was reflected in the speech of the hon. Gentleman. The renters' association was neutral. The Cinematograph Films Council, which represents all branches of the industry and includes several independent members which the Board of Trade is statutorily required to consult on changes in the levy regulations, recommended by a majority that the change should be made.

The fourth question the hon. Gentleman asked was, whether provision was being made to make the levy up to £5 million? As he knows, it is based on a minimum take of £2 million and a maximum take of £5 million. It has never reached that. As I said, last year it came to £4·2 million. But I think that the point should be made here that the British film producers have their income increased by 80 per cent. via the levy, so in that sense the levy is helping them tremendously.

Rising costs having brought about the erosion in the value of the levy over the past few years, it is essential to make the limit £350 now, and this will really be for the benefit and in the interests of producers, distributors and exhibitors.

Mr. Peter Emery : The hon. Gentleman will realise, of course, that the limits of £2 million and £5 million were set in 1957. Just as costs for exhibitors have risen, so they have for producers. My question is this. If the British film producers wanted to come to see the hon. Gentle-

man in order to make certain that he fully understands their position, would he be willing to see them?

Mr. Mason : I have no objection whatever.

Mr. Emery : I am much obliged.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Cinematograph Films (Collection of Levy) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 1965, a draft of which was laid before this House on 29th April, be approved.

WAYS AND MEANS

[10th May]

ANCHORS AND CHAIN CABLES

Resolution reported.

That it is expedient to authorise the payment into the Exchequer of any fees required to be so paid by any Act of the present Session to make new provision in substitution for the Anchors and Chain Cables Act 1899.

Resolution agreed to.

MERSEYSIDE SPECIAL REVIEW AREA

10.17 p.m.

Sir Douglas Glover (Ormskirk): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Merseyside Special Review Area Order 1965 (S.I., 1965, No. 905), dated 9th April, 1965, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th April, be annulled.

There is a tradition in the House that the Parliamentary Secretary replies to a debate on a Prayer. I sympathise with the Joint Parliamentary Secretary, who is the hon. Member for Widnes (Mr. MacColl), because the borough of Widnes is included in the Order. In the circumstances, bearing in mind that the Order deals with a very large and important segment of Lancashire, I should have expected the Minister himself to think it his duty to come to the House to justify the making of the Order.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (Mr. James MacColl): May I make matters clear at the outset? My right hon. Friend was most anxious to speak on this Order. He was informed in categorical terms that it would come on next Tuesday.

Mr. Charles Fletcher-Cooke (Darwen): So was I.

Mr. MacColl: My right hon. Friend made all arrangements to keep himself free to be here on Tuesday. He is in the unfortunate position now that he had a prior engagement with the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Powell), which is taking place at this very moment, and it would really have been most churlish to have tried to back out of it at short notice. It is a little unfortunate, therefore, that the hon. Member for Ormskirk (Sir D. Glover) should have implied that my right hon. Friend was being discourteous to the House. He had every intention to be here, and the position is as I have explained it.

Sir D. Glover: I accept the explanation which the Parliamentary Secretary has given. I only hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolver-

hampton, South-West and the Minister are enjoying their dinner, or supper, at Prunier's and that no papers will be left lying about when they depart.

Nevertheless—I say this sincerely—it is unfortunate that, through the usual channels, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Darwen (Mr. Fletcher-Cooke) and I were led to understand that the Prayer would come on next week. I do not put any blame for that on the Parliamentary Secretary or on his right hon. Friend. Nevertheless I understood through the usual channels that if it had come on next week we should have had very little time. The debate on a Prayer must finish at 11.30 and I am told that if it had come on next week two items of Government business would almost certainly have taken up the time until 11.20 so that we should have had only about 10 minutes for this important Order.

Therefore, as a back bencher, I think that I am still justified in complaining that, although I understand and am not criticising the Minister in his personal capacity, an Order of this importance is to be debated when the Minister who is responsible cannot be present.

Mr. MacColl: So far as I know, this is the hon. Gentleman's Motion. I do not know what happened between the usual channels. We were under the impression that this Prayer was to come on on Tuesday and my right hon. Friend, at considerable inconvenience, was intending to be here.

Mr. Fletcher-Cooke: I wished to take it next Tuesday, but I was under considerable pressure from the Government Whips to bring it forward to today. I did not want to do so, but, in view of the circumstances outlined by my hon. Friend, we agreed to take it today. Three or four of our Members from Lancashire and Cheshire would have wished to have been here, but owing to the change cannot attend. It is not our fault that this situation has arisen. I do not say that it is the Government's fault, but it is certainly not ours that this has happened.

Sir D. Glover: I think that we had better leave the usual channels in the sort of fog in which both sides think they spend most of their time. We are not very fond of the usual channels.

I think that we are in danger—and I know that when I say this I am speaking to a Prayer concerning a problem which has been produced as a result of the 1958 Act—of forgetting that people are individuals and that we are inclined to treat them as digits. My main reason for praying against this Order is that in my view people are people and the great Departments of State, which try to decide that 60,000 people should be in one area and 250,000 should be in another, are likely to try to treat people not as people but as digits.

The Order is a great advance on the original proposals put forward by the Local Government Commission. I hope I am in order in saying that the original proposal of the Local Government Commission considering the Special Review Area of Merseyside and south-east Lancashire was that the area of these two conurbations should be increased, in the orbit that it was allowed to consider, by 800,000 people, an area bigger than most of the conurbations with which it is dealing elsewhere in the country. The hon. Gentleman can perhaps refresh my memory, but I think that it is Clause 25 which allows the Commission to do this without coming back to the House. If this had been done under Clause 17, I think it is, the Commission would have had to come back to the House and we would have had a debate on the matter.

The method adopted seems to be the wrong way of dealing with a problem of this magnitude. I am supported in this by the fact that the Minister has turned down the greater part of the Commission's proposals and has left in only these two areas which form a comparatively small part of what the Commission originally asked for. It would be right to place on record the fact that it did this in a most unfortunate manner.

Therefore, being a very conciliatory and broadminded person, I thank the Minister for dealing pretty roughly with the proposals of the Commission and removing the greater part of the proposed extensions from its consideration. It is most unfortunate from my point of view, in dealing with this Order, that the bulk of the areas which are not to be removed are in the Parliamentary Secretary's constituency. Whatever he says at the Box tonight, I shall always think

that he was in a very unfortunate position. I do not know whether he will declare an interest before he speaks. My constituency and his are the two which are principally governed by the Order. It includes the borough of Widnes, the urban district of Formby, for which I am the Member, and certain parts of the urban districts of Prescot and Runcorn. The next largest area consists of parishes of the west Lancashire rural district, for which I am the Member.

The original proposals of the Commission would have increased the population by 800,000. I congratulate the Minister on his wisdom in dealing with these proposals. I am sure that this would have been quite contrary to the spirit of the 1958 Act. I want to speak on behalf of my constituency. I want to devote my time to the problems of the urban district council of Formby and the parishes in the rural district of west Lancashire—the parishes of Altcar, Downholland, Ince Blundell, Lydiate, Maghull, Melling, Netherton, Sefton and Thornton.

I want to deal first with the problems of the West Lancashire District Council. Under these proposals the Minister is allowing the special review body to include eleven out of 20 parishes which make up that district. I want to take this opportunity—because it is not very often that one has such an opportunity—of paying my tribute to the West Lancashire Rural District Council, which is either the largest or second largest rural district council in Britain. I have had wide experience of local government, and in my view this is one of the most efficient councils of its size in Britain.

It is at present a very large body. It has a population of 62,000 and a rateable value of £2 million. This is not a rural district council in the generally accepted term, with a population of perhaps 4,000 or 5,000 and a rateable value of a few thousand £s. This council has a highly efficient body of officials and a very able elected assembly, dealing with 62,000 people and a rateable value of £2 million per year, as I have said.

But the important thing is that it is a homogeneous authority. The people there all want to live in one community. Whichever way they vote in elections they regard themselves as belonging to one community, and they have very much the

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same attitude of mind. It would be a disaster to local government to break up this efficient organisation. During my twelve years as a Member of Parliament I have never had a single complaint that could be put down to the inefficiency of this body.

It is a first-class authority. Its staff is good; it is forward-looking and faces the problems of the future. It has never been dogmatic about the question of the overspill from Liverpool and other areas. The population of the area has increased in the last 10 years by 10,000 or 15,000. When the pressure is put on, they do not object to the provision of space to accommodate overspill from Liverpool. They did not object to part of their area being taken for the new town of Skelmersdale. They have shown a responsible attitude to the problems of the modern age.

I know that the inclusion of these parishes in the Special Review Area does not mean that they will automatically be merged with some other new authority created as a result of the Commission's deliberations, but the population of west Lancashire and Formby are very suspicious of what their future will be. Somebody said to me the other day, "There is usually no smoke without fire." If they are included in this Special Review Area there is a very strong feeling that the Minister will support the Review Commission in the proposal to include them in some vast conurbation to deal with the Merseyside problem.

If the Review Area disrupts the West Lancashire Rural District Council by taking in the 11 parishes, it will almost certainly disrupt the efficient working of this very efficient local authority. As a person who visits his constituency nearly every week, who is in close touch with the local authority in every parish council, I think I can speak with some knowledge in saying that the wish of the inhabitants, as expressed by the rural district and parish councils, is that their present arrangements should not be altered again because there is little or no community interest with Liverpool.

I am not trying to be dogmatic. The Joint Parliamentary Secretary might have noticed that so far I have not mentioned the parish of Aintree, which is in my

constituency and was in the original Review Area. I believe that in the parish of Aintree there is a community of interest with Liverpool, but in the remainder of my constituency I do not believe there is any real community of interest between the rural parishes and the Liverpool and Merseyside conurbation generally.

If the Commission decided that these 11 parishes were to be incorporated in this much larger Liverpool conurbation or the Merseyside conurbation, the population of the west Lancashire rural district would be reduced from 62,000 to just over 22,000. But, far more important, the rateable value would be reduced from just under £2 million to £617,000. The most important part of the district, from a rateable value and population point of view, would be taken, leaving the rural district council to deal with all the problems of the rural community without the rateable value of a semi-urban community such as exists in the southern parishes.

I should like to get on the record that, having dealt with the Lancashire County Council in connection with the whole problem of the two Special Review Areas, and having fought their battle to prevent the extension of these Review Areas, I am appalled to find that the Lancashire County Council, having saved as it were three-quarters of the ship from the wreck, is prepared to sacrifice the West Lancashire Rural District Council, Formby Rural District Council and Widnes, because under the Minister's policy it still means that the Lancashire County Council area is still a viable authority. For some moments they thought Lancashire County Council was no longer going to be a viable authority. On a smaller scale, the West Lancashire Rural District Council certainly will no longer be a viable authority in anything like the degree it is at present if the Special Review Commission incorporates it in this special Merseyside conurbation.

I would like to come to the district of Formby. The problem of Formby is different from that of the West Lancashire Rural District Council. Under this Order the West Lancashire Rural District Council would lose what are, from the rateable point of view, its most attractive parishes, and be left with the problems of sewerage, drainage and so on in the

sparsely populated, green belt areas, with very much reduced rateable value. Formby Urban District Council has an entirely different problem. It is another very good authority, efficiently run, with an almost entirely residential area, with hardly any industry, but with a rapidly growing population almost entirely with owner-occupied houses. The present population is 14,000. By the early nineteen-seventies it will have risen to 27,500.

It is true—I want to be fair about this—as is the case with quite a number of the people in the west Lancashire authority's area, that quite a lot of the population, in both Formby and West Lancashire, work in Liverpool, but there is no identity of interest, apart from the fact that they work there, between the problems of west Lancashire rural district and Formby district and the problems of the conurbation of Liverpool.

If Formby looks anywhere, it looks north to Southport, whilst it might be equally strongly opposed to any amalgamation, because it is a virile, active, growing community and does not want to be amalgamated with anybody and is an area where local government is in fact local government. If the Joint Parliamentary Secretary should feel that I am supporting a Tory-dominated council he will be glad to know that we have a strong ratepayers' association which won a seat at the local elections, and although I as a Tory deplore this, I am very glad indeed that there is live local government activity in the community. It is not a moribund community but a live community interested in local government, and that sort of community ought to be allowed to continue in the future. I speak with great sincerity when I say that we are here dealing with people, and I can tell the Joint Parliamentary Secretary that the eyes of those people, if they have their eyes on any other areas, do not turn south to the Liverpool conurbation: they turn north to Southport. They would not like to lose their independence. They are proud of their independence, and proud of their efficiency, but if in these days of economy-scale philosophy we are all developing there did arise a tendency towards amalgamation with somebody, their eyes would turn north to South-

port and not turn south towards the Liverpool conurbation.

Knowing that this matter was coming up, I have gone round trying to discover views, but not those of councillors. Let me be quite honest. One of the great problems in any reform of local government is that any councillor has a vested interest in remaining a councillor, whether he is an urban or a parish councillor. I would not take the views of councillors in a community, because they have this vested interest that the *status quo* should continue. They say, "After all, in five years' time, if God is favourable, I could be the chairman of the council, wear a chain around my neck and be a good citizen, and my children will revere me for years to come." This is a human ambition and one which we should applaud. Let it not be thought that I am sneering at it: it is one of the things which make local life work. Anybody with that ambition should be encouraged to achieve it, but it is one of the reasons that the councillor is inclined to be against change.

I have gone deeply into this, and I have found nobody to say, "Douglas, do not oppose this Order; we think that our future lies in going into the conurbation." The reaction in my constituency, in the West Lancashire Rural District Council and in the Formby Urban District Council is that they are convinced that they are running a good show. I am not speaking as a party politician when I say that I believe honestly and truthfully that they are running a good show. I do not think that their efficiency would be increased by including them in some vast conurbation. Not only do most of the people in Formby and west Lancashire look north, but when they go out in the evening they are much more likely to go to Southport than ever to go to Liverpool.

I know it can be argued that half of these people make their living in Liverpool, and I except that the Parliamentary Secretary will use this argument tonight. But we are dealing now with a growing collectivist organisation in society. I think that the rights of the people in these communities ought to have a far greater weight in the view

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and thinking of any Government, whether it is Conservative or Socialist, than they receive at present. These authorities are efficient. It would be very difficult to say that there would be any increase in efficiency for the people of those areas if they were included in some vast conurbation dealing with docks, ports and transport in the Merseyside conurbation. Whatever authority is produced as a result of this Commission, that authority will be devoting its thought to producing an authority to deal with the modernisation of the Liverpool docks, the transportation to the Liverpool docks and the problems of a great manufacturing industrial area.

It will not be devoting much of its time to thinking whether this would be beneficial to my rural farmers, my rural residential areas, my urban district of Formby, and, if I might say so, to a great deal of the Parliamentary Secretary's constituency at Widnes. There will be all the great industrial problems of forming this authority, and what will happen when it is created? I know that it will probably finish up as a two-tier authority. There will be a top tier whose job on paper will be to look after water, sewerage, transport and so on. We are supposed then to have a second tier which will, it is said, look after the interests of the populations concerned.

But all my instincts, experience and knowledge of what happens when these changes take place suggests that we will finish up with this position; that whereas now in the West Lancashire Rural District Council we have 20 or 30 people looking after the interests of the local inhabitants—and the same goes for Formby—if those inhabitants are taken into the conurbation there will be one representative to look after them all. Is it really suggested that the people of those two areas will be as well looked after as they are now?

I ask the Minister, since I do not believe that he is dogmatic in this case—I would ask his right hon. Friend if he were here—to have another look at this whole matter, because I am sure that such a change would not be in the best interests of the populations concerned.

10.46 p.m.

Mr. Eric Ogden (Liverpool, West Derby): There are times when it is very difficult to disagree with the hon. Member for Ormskirk (Sir D. Glover). He always puts his case with such charm and, as he said, with broadmindedness. Therein lies his very great danger. His case was powerful, and although I, too, would seek to annul the Order, I would do so for very different reasons.

Sir D. Glover: I am always willing to make an allowance for anybody who puts right injustices.

Mr. Ogden: There are many definitions of the phrase "righting an injustice".

As I was saying, my reasons would be different. I would seek to extend the area of the Special Review Order much broader than it is now, much broader than was suggested by the Local Government Commission and much broader than has been agreed by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the suspicions of his people. He was right to say that there is no smoke without fire, but I suggest, with respect—and the hon. Gentleman has been here a lot longer than I have—that what he has done tonight is deliberately to fan the smoke and produce the flames, anticipating the recommendations of the Local Government Commission. The Commission started work in the North-West in October 1962. In December 1963, it asked for an extension of the areas and permission was rightly deferred.

Sir D. Glover: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman unduly, but when he has been in the House a bit longer he will realise that this is probably the last opportunity I shall get to make these remarks.

Mr. Ogden: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, with his great experience of this place, will find a way, here or elsewhere, of making his case.

As I said, permission was deferred. Obviously someone had to make the decision when permission was sought, and we sometimes agree that deferment is

necessary on certain plans. There was the Minister of Housing and Local Government being shot at, so to speak, from one side and the Lancashire County Council being shot at from all sides. Meanwhile, Professor Devons resigned from the Local Government Commission because he said that the Minister had acceded to pressure from the Lancashire County Council. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman's own constituents have been saying that the Lancashire County Council has betrayed them; that they have been sold out. Because the council wants to maintain a fairly large area it has been willing to sell out its own people. That is the suggestion.

My own city council wanted the extension of the area to include Southport—where the sun seems to shine, or very largely shines, on some of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, Ormskirk rural district, Skelmersdale—and the hon. Gentleman must admit that there is a very close link between Skelmersdale new town and the Merseyside conurbation, parts of St. Helens, Warrington, Runcorn and Widnes, where, again, there is talk of a new town, in order to round off the whole area, and make an area roughly 15 or 20 miles from the pierhead.

The hon. Gentleman said that there is no identity of interest and went out of his way to suggest that we are very different. I travel fairly frequently from one end of the east Lancashire road to the other through parts of the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I see no difference in the people there. He suggested that while people in his own area are willing to work and earn their living in Liverpool, or Bootle, or Birkenhead or Ellesmere Port, they seek to spend their money in Southport. It comes back to the fact that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to anticipate the decision of the Local Government Commission.

I suggest that when the Lancashire County Council is attacked from both sides and the Minister is being attacked from both sides, it might be reasonable to expect them to tread the middle path and not anticipate any decision which can only be made by the Local Government Commission; and that it would not be doing any great harm to see what the Commission's recommendations are before protesting.

10.52 p.m.

Mr. Charles Fletcher-Cooke (Darwen): I beg to support my hon. Friend the Member for Ormskirk (Sir D. Glover) in his Prayer against the Merseyside Order, and I beg to move to annul the second Prayer—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The only Question before the House is the Prayer to annul the Merseyside Order. No doubt the hon. and learned Member will have an opportunity later on, if time permits.

Mr. Fletcher-Cooke: Further to that point, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister is to reply separately to these two Orders I doubt whether time will permit. In fact, these two Orders are closely linked.

Mr. Speaker: Had I been asked to invite the House to discuss the two together, I might have taken a view. I do not know that the view of the Government would be about reverting to that course now?

Mr. J. MacColl: As is normal in the case of a Prayer, Mr. Speaker, the one thing we want to do is to facilitate a free and full discussion of the whole issue. If anything I have to say could have any influence on your decision, I would be happy to see the two Prayers discussed together; and they are both included in the Minister's conclusions.

Mr. Speaker: A Minister's views must affect me, because I can only do this by agreement. Therefore, let the discussion extend to both, but the Prayers must be put separately.

Mr. Fletcher-Cooke: I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Originally, Special Commissioners were given two fairly closely defined areas, one for Merseyside and one around Manchester. Then the Commissioners, like so many people once they have got their teeth into a subject, became somewhat imperialistic and wished to join the two areas together in one vast review area containing millions of souls. This the Minister quite properly rejected, and it is my complaint that in order to gild the pill of rejection the Minister is giving the Commissioners a sort of weedy compromise.

He has gilded the pill by including the sort of areas which my hon. Friend has described, and, even more, in the

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south-east Lancashire area he has added on to the original area of their review great chunks not merely of Lancashire and Cheshire but of Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Is there any justification in law for clapping on to the South-East Lancashire Review Area, areas not merely from the two counties I have mentioned but from two other counties as well?

Of course, my chief concern in this matter is a very large and important part of my constituency, the Turton urban district. I must briefly describe this area because, although it is called an urban district, it is, in fact, to the eye of the beholder a rural area of an extreme kind in the sense that I suppose that 90 per cent. of it is given over to the countryside, to moor land and agriculture. It is, I think, the second largest urban district in the country in so far as superficial area is concerned, and it is an agricultural and rural district. I have never understood historically why it was classed as an urban district.

I have the suspicion that one of the reasons why this area was granted to the Special Commissioners was that it may have been considered, having a nomenclature of urban district, that it might be in some way urban; but it is not. It is true that many of its people work in Bolton and Manchester, but I should have thought that in these days that could be considered a sufficient reason even to contemplate merging the area with Bolton or Manchester. A lot of people who live in Hayward's Heath or Woking work in London and it would be a new doctrine that, because one goes to another centre to work, one should be included for local government purposes in such a grouping. Of course, it is a consideration, but not a vital one.

The Turton Urban District Council has passed a resolution protesting against its inclusion at this rather late stage in the South-East Lancashire Special Review Area. It resents it, and I do not blame it. I have no doubt that the area, like that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ormskirk in the west Lancashire rural district is well administered. Its rates are relatively low. The people there have a great patriotism. They are proud of what they have done and do not want to be absorbed in this vast conurbation,

made potentially vaster by the decision in this Order. I therefore ask the Joint Parliamentary Secretary to think whether this compromise can really be justified except as a compromise and I suggest that that is not a sufficient reason.

The other areas concerned in the South-East Lancs Special Review Area Board are even larger than those referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Ormskirk. I cannot speak for them. There is in the constituency of the Colonial Secretary; there are areas of Yorkshire, in whose constituency I do not know. But I know that two of the areas—those, I think, of Chapel en le Frith and the urban district of Whaley Bridge—are in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for The High Peak (Mr. Walder), who wishes to protest as vigorously as I do and who would have wished to be here but for the suggestion of the Government that the Prayers be taken tonight rather than on Tuesday, which we had originally expected. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Sir A. V. Harvey), who is also concerned in this, also wishes it to be known that the inclusion of a small area of his constituency in the Review Area is not in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants and has been included for reasons which he cannot comprehend.

One need not labour the point further. These are areas which have a life of their own and which have a good record of local government already and which, if added even potentially to the south-east Lancashire conurbation, will enormously increase what is already an enormous area for which there has so far been no conceivable justification. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to look at it again.

It is true that in some of these areas cross hatched on the map which the hon Gentleman has sent us, for which we are grateful and we are grateful also for the early warning and extremely grateful for the general courtesy which he personally has extended to us—there are places where neither the local authority nor the inhabitants have shown particular opposition and may even show a certain willingness to be absorbed and wish to become part of a larger unit. That, of course, is their affair and, if they wish it, so be it. But the people of

Turton, by their elected representatives, by an enormous majority do not. Taking into account their physical position, their way of life, their geography and the fact that they live in a rural area and are on the fringe of this enormous conurbation, as defined in the original plan, they surely have the right not to be put in peril.

Of course we recognise that this is not a concluded pattern and only a review, but they and I fear that once included in the review area, their area will be a *prima facie* case and that somehow the view of authority, as expressed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government and by the Commissioners themselves, who have shown a great desire to extend their empire, will prevail and that somehow there will be a shifting of the onus of proof, to put it no higher, and that hereafter they will be regarded as included in this conurbation unless they can show special reasons why they should not be included.

That is a very serious danger in their position because hitherto the onus of proof has been on the other side and now, if not in law then in fact and in spirit, they will be regarded as having been sucked into this vast monster and, unless they can show reason why they should not be included, they will find themselves swallowed up for good and all. They do not want it and do not believe that the people of Ramsbottom want it, although I cannot speak for them. Nor do I believe that the people who live in the area shown on the eastern part of the map want it, the people who live in Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

Sir D. Glover: Can my hon. and learned Friend conceive of any Yorkshireman wishing to become a Lancastrian, or *vice versa*?

Mr. Fletcher-Cooke: I regard the whole matter with the utmost suspicion and I am very surprised that there has not been the most tremendous explosion and reaction from whoever is the Member for that area. I can only assume that he must be gagged, if I may use that word, by the fact that he is among the 80, 90 or 100 Members of the Government Front Bench. I am guessing now, but I can speculate of no further reason why Yorkshire men who are find-

ing themselves threatened with being sucked into the South-East Lancashire Special Review Area are not making protests, not merely in the House but in the dales and fields.

For all these, among other reasons, I ask that these fringe areas should be considered. I believe they have been thrown in only to salve the conscience and save the position of the Special Commissioners who have made such greater claims previously. It would give ground for great rejoicing, especially in Turton district council's area, if this was looked at again in the vast majority of the fringe areas in the south-east Lancashire district and in the area which my hon. Friend represents.

I hope that it is not too late, because there is no justification for them, and I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary, whose situation in this matter is somewhat delicate but who is accustomed to overcoming situations of delicacy by the fairness of his mind in the official approach which he brings to all such developments, will find a way to give my constituents in Turton an order of release from this cloud which overhangs them.

Mr. Ogden: On a point of order. We were originally concerning ourselves with one Special Review Area. I would appreciate guidance as to whether we are entitled, briefly, to come in on the second.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Sir Samuel Storey): The hon. Gentleman has exhausted his right to speak and can only do so again by the leave of the House, but as it has been decided to discuss the two Orders together, I hope that the House will grant him that leave.

Mr. Ogden: Thank you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker. Up to nine o'clock tonight I was a member of a local council—

Sir D. Glover: Was the hon. Gentleman defeated?

Mr. Ogden: No, I was not defeated, but I want to say, in a very few moments, that I think there is nothing here to do with efficiency and independence. The real fact is that the smaller authority will stand up to a larger authority at any time. I have here a letter from the Lancashire

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County Council dated 26th April, which states:

"The Parliamentary Committee of the County Council have considered the new position, and whilst, of course, they would have preferred to see the two Special Review Areas left as defined in the Act, seeing that Section 25(2) permits of a reasonable amount of flexibility, they were not unhappy about the Minister's decision."

With that, I agree.

Sir D. Glover: Lancashire County Council is so relieved at the Minister's decision that they are prepared to "shop" the remainder because at one moment they thought the Lancashire County Council had ceased to exist.

11.8 p.m.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (Mr. James MacColl): I speak with some feeling about this, because I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister regards this as a matter for which he has very special responsibility, the more so that I am an interested party. At the same time, the decision is one for the Minister and not only in a notional and constitutional sense. It is a decision for which he takes personal responsibility.

Sir D. Glover: The hon. Gentleman need not waste his time in that way. We on this side certainly accept fully what he has just said.

Mr. MacColl: The hon. Member for Ormskirk (Sir D. Glover) says that these proposals represent a great advance on the original proposals and that the Lancashire County Council has not behaved very well as regards its responsibilities towards some of the district councils in its area. That is a matter for him, and it would not be right for me to make any comment about that; but I would like to put before the House the situation with which my right hon. Friend the Minister was faced.

The Local Government Act was passed by the previous Government. The Local Government Commission was set up by the previous Government and produced its original proposals for extension, the complete scheme, during the time that the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) was Minister. My right

hon. Friend had to take the position as he found it against that background.

The Commission felt that to do a proper job, it should have the whole area reviewed. The hon. and gallant Member for Ormskirk said—

Sir D. Glover: I am not "gallant".

Mr. MacColl: The hon. Member's defence on behalf of his constituency in this matter almost entitles him to that style of title. He said, speaking with knowledge of his constituency, that there was a great deal of suspicion about the ultimate decision in this matter, that there was no smoke without fire and that the Minister would support the Commission. The hon. and learned Member for Darwen (Mr. Fletcher-Cooke) implied—"the view of the authority" was the phrase which he thought that his constituents were using—that that was what would happen.

This is part of the difficulty which faces my right hon. Friend, because, without going into a great deal of detailed examination of statistics, and so on, it is extremely difficult for him to make up his mind on a matter which has to go through the machinery of the Act and come back to him eventually for ultimate decision.

The procedure, as hon. Members know, is that the Local Government Commission will now proceed to make preliminary proposals. There will be face-to-face discussions in which all the interested bodies can have their say with the Commission, which will then come to its final decision of those proposals. It will then submit those proposals to my right hon. Friend the Minister, who will have another inquiry if he thinks fit and come to a final decision. There is, therefore, a long and complicated procedure for looking at the whole position before a final decision is taken. It would be quite wrong for my right hon. Friend to get himself involved now in making decisions which may in any way commit him in regard to the future.

I hope that one of the things which hon. Members opposite will try to do is to remove the suspicion either that my right hon. Friend has in any way been the subject of pressure behind the scenes on either side or that his decision has been taken other than as an attempt

to arrive at the most expeditious solution of these problems.

Sir D. Glover : Now that the Minister has arrived, I should like to say that I cannot think of anybody in the House who is less likely to give way to pressure. He may lose papers at Prunier's, but he is certainly not likely to give way to pressure.

Mr. MacColl : That was rather my view.

This is an important point, because some of the things that have been said during the discussions—not by hon. Members opposite—have been most unfortunate. Some of the things which have been said outside this House may create a lack of confidence in the working of the procedure which we have inherited and which we are trying to make work.

That is one side of the picture—that my right hon. Friend was faced with these proposals which he knew were arousing a great deal of opposition. The obverse of that picture was that when my right hon. Friend looked at his responsibilities he was faced with a number of undertakings which had been given by the right hon. Member for Hampstead (Mr. Brooke) at the time the Bill was in Standing Committee. I was a member of that Standing Committee and I recall the long and anxious hours during which we discussed these points.

But I do not want to take the time of the House in reading the details of the Standing Committee Report only to say that my right hon. Friend is of the opinion that the undertakings given by the right hon. Member for Hampstead—that the extension powers in Section 25 would not be used to rewrite and reconstruct the special review areas and to invent new conurbations, but were to be used only for marginal extensions to give the Local Government Commission greater flexibility—prohibited him from taking such a decision.

This point has led to suggestions outside the House that pressure was put on my right hon. Friend by interested parties which led him to take this decision. That is a most unfortunate thing to say, because it reflects on my right hon. Friend's integrity in judging on these matters. We

all know how often we have a Minister making a personal undertaking in Standing Committee. Hon. Members immediately rise and say, "Suppose there is a change of Government? We know that you are all right, but what if one of the other crowd get in? What would happen?" That is precisely what has happened. I do not like to think of my right hon. Friend as a member of a crowd, but he is of a different political party from the right hon. Member for Hampstead and, therefore, is all the more under an obligation to be absolutely punctilious in accepting those undertakings. He therefore felt that it was not within his powers to go in for the wider schemes.

The difficulties arise when one looks at a particular part of the proposed extension, for it is always easy to say on the boundary, "Why did you not go a little further?" or, "Why did you not stop a little short?" The difficulty is that once my right hon. Friend begins such a process he gets himself involved in expressing views and in getting what are to be the opinions of the Commission.

In view of what has been said, I should like to make it clear that I have no reason to suppose that the Local Government Commission has made up its minds what it intends to do. I have no information which gives me any ground for believing that. I say categorically that neither my right hon. Friend nor his Department have had any kind of understanding or agreement in any way to interfere with his freedom to review these proposals. I emphasise that these are in no way a reflection on the efficiency of the local authorities who have been included in the area. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden) said, a good local authority, even if it is small, need have no fear; it can look after itself, and it has plenty of opportunities to make its views felt before a final decision is reached.

The hon. and learned Member for Darwen accused my right hon. Friend of a pharmaceutical atrocity in that he accused him of gilding the pill with a weedy compromise. My right hon. Friend has not approached this problem with the idea of just trying to get something which would pass muster. His primary object in this whole matter is to get things moving, to get the Commission moving,

[MR. MACCOLL.]

to get on with the review, to remove some of the uncertainties which are bound to exist in Lancashire until a decision is reached on these questions.

The test of my right hon. Friend's success in the matter lies in the fact that, whereas we should have had, or might have had, a proposal which was keenly and bitterly resented by both the county councils and by a large number of district councils, we now have something which has received grudging consent—perhaps that is too positive a word—something which it has been decided by the county councils not to oppose. It has had from the hon. Gentleman the tribute that it is a great advance on the original proposals, and I think that it gives to my hon. Friend the Member for West Derby the assurance that the problems of the Merseyside conurbation and the Manchester conurbation can be looked at constructively.

Whatever the final decision is, if there is in the area, for example, an urban district on the boundary which is not coming into the new proposals, it can be excluded from the special review area, it can go back into the general review, which will be taking place more or less at the same time, and can be treated as part of the general review of the county.

I very much welcome this debate. I repeat that my right hon. Friend has shown his concern and desire to associate himself with his decision by coming back to the House as soon as he could manage it. The point here is that we want to get on with the proposals, see what the Local Government Commission produce, and enable the inquiries to take place. My right hon. Friend will then take his decision. What we want is the best possible atmosphere and climate in which to reach a solution of these extremely difficult and complicated problems.

Mr. Fletcher-Cooke: Will the hon. Gentleman deal with the question of Yorkshire and Derbyshire? Is there any difficulty about it? It seems very odd to include in the south-east Lancashire review, slices of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although we all want to get on with it, the quickest way of getting on is simply to follow the original proposals as laid down in the Act?

Mr. MacColl: The answer to the second question is easy. If the Local Government Commission, the body charged by the previous Government with responsibility here, says, "We want to extend the area in order to make a success of our job", it is a little difficult to say that we shall give it no flexibility at all. My right hon. Friend has tried to give the Commission some flexibility within the terms of the undertaking given by the right hon. Member for Hampstead.

On the first point, there is no reason why a special review area should not go over into other counties. Already, it is going into Cheshire, and there is no reason why it should not go into others. But I hope that it will not be thought that every Yorkshireman will now become a Lancashireman. It does not mean that at all. It is done merely to make it possible for these problems to be looked at as a whole by the Commission.

Sir D. Glover: I do not want to be awkward about this. I was a little rough about the right hon. Gentleman before he came in, and I should like to welcome him now and thank him for coming to listen to the debate, if only just to the end of it. I understand why he was not here earlier. I just wanted to say that because, otherwise, he might think that I was discourteous.

May we have an assurance from the right hon. Gentleman that the fact that he has included these conurbations within the purview of the Commission does not prejudice their future in any way whatever?

11.24 p.m.

The Minister of Housing and Local Government (Mr. Richard Crossman): I can give that assurance absolutely unreservedly. It merely means exactly what it says, that in considering the future of the conurbations the Commission is entitled to take these areas into consideration. It in no way predetermines either what the Commission will say, even less what I will say when I receive its report.

Sir D. Glover: In view of that assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the Motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

TRANSPORT (NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Harper.]

11.25 p.m.

Mr. Gordon Campbell (Moray and Nairn): Having listened with interest to the affairs of Lancashire, I would now like to move about 300 miles north of that area and draw attention to transport problems in the north-east of Scotland.

These problems have become worse during the last few weeks. The area mainly affected is in four counties, Inverness-shire, Moray, Nairn, and Banffshire. Broadly, the problem is one of communication between this area and the South, and, as the main routes lie through my constituency, it is, I think, appropriate that I should raise this question in the House.

I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary has studied a map, and preferably a map with contours, or even a relief map, to see what these problems are. There is the obstacle of the Cairngorm mountains immediately to the south of the area in question. There is no road, far less a railway, through the massif of the Cairngorms, and, therefore, access to the North must be either round the east coast, or else up the centre of Scotland. For example, if someone is travelling north from Glasgow, the most populated area of Scotland he would proceed up the centre of Scotland and then, if going to Moray, Nairn or Banffshire, he would need to go on along Speyside or over Dava Moor, whether he was going by rail or by road.

This area is extremely high. It is at the foot of the Cairngorms, and in winter can be covered with deep snow. The routes are blocked from time to time in winter, both road and rail, but I am sure the hon. Gentleman will realise that the railways are blocked much less frequently than the roads.

Last year a decision was taken to close what is called the Speyside line, that is, the line from Aviemore to Craigellachie. It was, I think, recognised generally in the area that this was feasible, provided that the more important line from Aviemore to Forres over Dava Moor remained. The decision to close

the line was taken despite what we now see in the T.U.C.C.'s annual report that there would be hardship in the Knockando area if that line was closed, and despite, also, the fact that the road bridge at Craigellachie over the River Spey is a narrow one, and one on which there is a limit of 14 tons. There is a very acute bend at the end of the bridge, with a traffic light, and long vehicles have to go back and forth before they can get round this bend at the end of the bridge.

It therefore came as a shock when it was decided, more recently, towards the end of March of this year, that this line, the Aviemore to Forres line, should be closed; or, rather, the position was that the passenger service should be discontinued, but now I learn that British Railways are approaching merchants in the area with a view to closing the freight service, also. It is this recent decision by the Minister which has raised problems of both rail and road in this area.

The Aviemore-Forres line is the kind of railway line which the Government could have decided to retain in the way that the Conservative Government decided last year to retain the lines west and north of Inverness, for four reasons: first, as the Minister's letter states, because the T.U.C.C. reported that there would be "extreme hardship" in the Grantown area if the passenger service were discontinued; secondly, because of the conditions of snow and ice in this high area in the winter; thirdly, because no adequate alternative transport would be practicable; and, fourthly, because of the important winter sports development in this area.

The Minister's decision included conditions and, in the way in which the previous Government had stated that no railway line would be closed unless there was adequate alternative transport, I hope that it was the intention of the Minister in imposing these conditions that the alternative bus services, which are part of the conditions, would constitute adequate alternative transport. But these bus services seem extremely doubtful, and one of them is on a route which, as far as I know, within living memory has never had a bus service on it before. That is the route over Dava Moor. I should like to know what happens if the alternative bus services proposed in these

[MR. CAMPBELL.]

conditions later disappear. I know from paragraph 3 of the Ministry's letter that the Minister has to be informed of such a development, but there is nothing to indicate whether he has to take any action. Further, if the additional and revised bus services never come into operation, am I right in assuming that the closure will not take place at all? It is, after all, an essential ingredient of the Minister's decision that these conditions should be fulfilled. I know that the Parliamentary Secretary will probably say that it is then a matter for British Railways, and that they will be responsible for running these bus services, but surely the Minister of Transport himself must still be involved, as the conditions are part of his decision. I would, therefore, like the Parliamentary Secretary to tell me what the position is.

On the question of winter conditions, this road over Dava Moor has had for years, every 50 yards or so, permanently, 8 ft. posts painted red and black, on each side of the road, and if the Parliamentary Secretary has not guessed what these are for I will tell him. It is because of the snow conditions in the winter. These posts are necessary so that the driver of any vehicle can see where the road is, because in conditions of snow very often one cannot see the edges of this road and know where the hard surface is. It is foreseen by the merchants concerned that it will be difficult in winter conditions, to bring supplies, particularly of fuel, such as coal, from the station at Aviemore 14 miles away to Grantown-on-Spey.

I should like to speak, also, about the development aspects. The decision was announced by the Minister less than a week before he made the statement in this House, on 31st March, that in future any such decisions for closing passenger services would be considered first by the economic planning boards or councils. So that this decision will not fall into the category of those being considered by an economic board or council.

The winter sports development which I mentioned, and which has occurred during the last eight years, is centred upon Grantown-on-Spey. The headquarters of the Winter Sports Development Board had been there, and Grantown-on-Spey has been a pioneer in this

field. The snow, of which there is a great deal in the winter, enables skiing to take place up to the end of April, and this year into this month of May.

On a day such as we have had here in London today, the Joint Parliamentary Secretary will, I think, be interested to know that there will still be snow in the Cairngorms, and that I shall be seeing how much tomorrow morning when I pass them on my way north. The snow, which has been an asset, and has brought so much in the way of employment and prosperity through the development of winter sports, can also, in such a high area, be a hazard to winter travel.

From the development point of view, it would seem shortsighted to remove this most reliable means of transport in winter conditions when, at the same time, both sides of the House and the country as a whole are in favour of developing winter sports and using these resources to the best possible extent. A great deal is being said at present by the Government side of the House about the development of the Highlands—but what is being done? Here is an example in the reverse direction. This is something which will detract from development in the Highlands.

The burden which will fall upon the roads, which are not adequate, is a matter, I know, for the Secretary of State for Scotland. Two Ministers are involved, and there is a danger of the effect of a decision to close these railway lines not being fully realised by the other Minister who has responsibility for the roads. I hope that the Joint Parliamentary Secretary will ensure that the Scottish Office is apprised of the effects upon the roads of these decisions.

As to the adequacy of the alternative transport proposed, I have said that it is doubtful whether it can be brought into effect. It is also doubtful whether it will last once it has been brought into effect. But it cannot be regarded as adequate if bus services do not include shelters, proper luggage facilities, porterage, and connections with trains, since the service has to cater for winter holiday-makers as well as other travellers.

I do not know whether the Joint Parliamentary Secretary has himself been as far north as this. The Minister of Transport is himself a Scot, but his constituency is 200 miles south of this area.

I hope that perhaps the two Ministers responsible, who are both Scots, may visit the area—perhaps in January next, when they will find a flourishing and expanding development of winter sports, but, at the same time, extremely difficult road conditions.

In the meantime, I hope that the Joint Parliamentary Secretary will state that no hasty action will be taken upon a decision which may be later be found to be unwise, for development and other reasons.

11.39 p.m.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport (Mr. Stephen Swingle): It is my responsibility to reply to the hon. Gentleman the Member for Moray and Nairn (Mr. G. Campbell) because we in the Ministry of Transport are responsible for rail communications throughout Great Britain. As the hon. Gentleman has said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has responsibility for other forms of communication in Scotland, but there is the closest consultation between us on these matters.

The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that his points will be reported to him.

As he has also said, my right hon. Friend—who is at the moment on his way to Darlington to open tomorrow a most important by-pass scheme—is a very notable and prominent Scot. It happens that I am a half-Scot, on the maternal side, so there is no lack of sympathy in the Ministry of Transport for the problems of communications and transport in Scotland.

It is often represented that the people in the remoter parts of the country get a raw deal, especially in the provision of transport facilities. I hope to show tonight that, even if this were the case in the not-so-distant past, we are planning for it to be very different in the future. The previous Government produced no plan of any kind for North-East Scotland. This was the major reason—as the hon. Gentleman will know—for their failure to deal adequately with the problems of the area in general, and, in particular, with its transport problems.

Her Majesty's Government have established a Regional Economic Planning Council for Scotland, supported by a Regional Economic Planning Board. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State

for Scotland is the Chairman of the Council, and its terms of reference are: first, to assist in the formulation of plans for the development of the Scottish economy, having regard to the best use of Scotland's resources; secondly, to advise on the steps necessary to implement the plans on the basis of information and assessments provided by the Scottish Economic Planning Board; and, thirdly, to advise on the regional implications of national economic policies.

An important element in the economic work of the Board and Council will undoubtedly be the provision of transport. Both we and the British Railways Board are represented on the Economic Planning Board, which is now working on a study of north-east Scotland, which will be put before the Economic Planning Council later this year. This study will reveal the possibilities for development in the area, of which a part is represented by the hon. Member, and enable the Council to consider the transport implications and transport provision which is to be made.

In addition to this work, the Council and the Board will be consulted about the economic and physical implications of any withdrawals of passenger services which may in future be proposed by the Railways Board. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, this was announced by my right hon. Friend at the earliest opportunity after the establishment of the apparatus, on 31st March. Of course, all these planning arrangements, which we have needed for a long time past, are entirely new. They are a start towards getting a proper assessment of the transport needs, among others, in areas like that represented by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he recognises that this represents a great step forward.

The hon. Gentleman has raised especially the problem of the proposed closure of the Aviemore-Forres railway line. I want to be clear about one thing, to be perfectly frank with the hon. Gentleman and the House. The closure of this line is a prime example of the sort of mess which things got into when his right hon. Friends—the Government which he supported—were in control. I admit straight away that it is a difficult case: it bristles with difficulties.

[MR. SWINGLER.]

It was a case about which the previous Government dithered, dallied and delayed for a considerable time, because this proposal was first published on 25th November, 1963. Yet no decision on it had been taken by the time we assumed office. They were apparently unable to apply their own Act and criteria to this case. We had to come to grips with the problem. Indeed, we had to put a large number of matters on a proper footing.

The basic facts about this line are that it was losing about £114,000 a year. It was hardly used. Something had to be done, and fairly quickly. We had the obligation to formulate a new and more positive policy for dealing with railway closures, starting from scratch in this case, to obtain full and detailed advice on it from all the interests concerned, including my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Highland Transport Board. From the day we took office, it took until 24th March, five months, for us to come to a conclusion about this line.

Even on peak Saturdays last summer only 125 people at the most, some of them local residents, were alighting at Grantown, the main tourist centre. More and more tourists, especially the winter skiers mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, are using their own transport. We had to consider the kind of subsidy involved in the maintenance of the line in relation to the benefits to be gained. My right hon. Friend came to the conclusion, and laid down conditions, that new bus services should be organised. The new bus services between Inverness and Grantown are actually quicker than the trains.

The additional and revised bus services are a condition of the closure being effected. If, for any reason—for example, operators being unwilling or unable to provide them, or the traffic commissioners not licensing them—they are not provided, the closure cannot take place, unless or until my right hon. Friend varies the conditions. Let that be perfectly plain. The conditions are laid down and they must be satisfied according to these terms.

Moreover, the Railways Board must keep itself informed in future of any proposed alterations in bus services and tell us about them. If the proposals relate to a service provided as a condition of

consent, the Board is expected to arrange for its replacement, unless my right hon. Friend thought it right, in the circumstances of the time, to vary the conditions. It is clear that the power is retained in the hands of my right hon. Friend in regard to the conditions covering the closure.

My right hon. Friend must have this flexibility. We certainly cannot, and do not, claim that the decision that has been taken now about the substitution of services will be right for all time but, as time goes on, the work of the Regional Planning Council will enable us to see more clearly what the right pattern of transport for the area will be for the future.

I have explained that the Regional Planning Council is not examining closures consented to before it came into being, but if its work shows that, in future, the service ought to be restored, it would be physically possible to do so. That is because we have arranged that the Board should tell my right hon. Friend if it wants to lift the track, so that, if it does apply to do so, my right hon. Friend can have regard to the Council's work before giving a decision. This means that the essential structure of the line can be kept, even if the Railways Board decides to close the freight service, until it is clear that the alternative services are satisfactory and that future planning will not require the rail service at all.

I therefore assure the hon. Member that, at least from last October, the Government intend to take every possible step to see that the development of regions like North-East Scotland proceeds on proper economically sound lines, with full account being taken of the social needs of the area, including the transport needs. In taking a decision, on the grounds I have stated, to consent to the closure of the line, my right hon. Friend has ensured that safeguards are provided that will mean that the Regional Planning Council for Scotland and the Regional Planning Board in their surveys of the future economic and transport needs can ensure the restoration of this service if that is regarded as desirable for the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Twelve o'clock.

Thursday, 13th May, 1965

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Minor Works

11. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will exclude from minor capital expenditure control and restriction those local education authority projects designed to replace seriously sub-standard outside lavatories and toilet facilities in schools.

Mr. Prentice : No. My right hon. Friend thinks it best that local education authorities should themselves decide their priorities within their allocation for minor works.

Social Studies (D.S.I.R. Awards)

12. **Mr. Robert Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many awards in the field of social studies have been made by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in the year 1964-65 ; and how this compares with previous years.

Mr. Crosland : In 1964-65 the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research made 44 postgraduate training awards for work in social studies related to industry. This compares with 32 in 1963-64 and 13 in 1962-63. In other areas of the human sciences related to the needs of industry, the corresponding figures were 84, 52 and 33 respectively. In the same year my Department awarded 149 postgraduate State Studentships in social studies, compared with 61 in 1963-64 and 36 in 1962-63.

Primary Schools

13. **Mr. Hawkins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to improve the primary schools, both as to buildings and general facilities.

Mr. Crosland : The school building programmes already announced for 1965-66 and 1966-67 include about £64 million worth of primary school building.

School Milk

21. **Mr. Talbot** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is aware that children up to the age of

five years are entitled to free milk, and that as the Staffordshire Education Authority is unable to accept five-year-old children at school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday, a hiatus exists in which a child slightly over five is for three or four months unable to receive any cheap milk ; and if he will take steps to remedy this administrative defect.

Mr. Prentice : My right hon. Friend is aware that children over the age of five years and one month are not normally entitled to welfare milk at a reduced price. He is also aware that in certain parts of the country a small number of children are not being admitted to school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. He could not, however, make arrangements within the existing law for free school milk to be supplied to such children.

Symphony Orchestras

27. **Sir J. Eden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for improving the educational work of symphony orchestras ; and if he will consider the proposals of the Western Orchestral Society Limited which were discussed last year at a conference of local authorities held in Bournemouth.

Miss Jennie Lee : It is Government policy to rely on the initiative of local education authorities to give school children in their areas the opportunity to hear and to learn to appreciate good music well played. It is for the authorities represented at the Bournemouth conference to take action.

Public Schools

30. **Mr. Newens** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the changes he proposes to make in the public school system.

Mr. Crosland : I have nothing at present to add to the Answer which I gave on 6th May to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Marten), and my hon. Friends, the Members for Derbyshire, South-East (Mr. Park), and Fife, West (Mr. William Hamilton).

Local Authorities (Sporting and Recreational Facilities)

31. **Mr. Newens** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response has been made by local authorities to his proposals on the establishment of sporting and recreational facilities.

Mr. Denis Howell: The proposals in the joint circular of August, 1964, on co-ordination and joint planning of facilities have been acted upon in a number of areas, but I am anxious to see a greater urgency throughout the country. The Sports Council is advising my right hon. Friend on further possible action.

Independent Schools

32. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with present standards demanded by his Department for private fee-paying schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Crosland: I have powers under Part III of the Education Act 1944, which, subject to a right of appeal to an Independent Schools Tribunal, enable me to impose certain requirements on such schools and, if they do not comply, to close them. I am examining the way these powers are used.

Universities (Apprentices and Trade Unions)

34. **Sir C. Osborne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is aware that rebellions of apprentices against the official policies of their unions are being fomented at certain universities, including those of Nottingham, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester, by the staff as well as the students; and if he will seek power to enable him to investigate and control such activities.

Mr. Crosland: No.

Welsh College of Advanced Technology

37. **Mr. Hooson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Welsh College of Advanced Technology will receive its grant from the University Grants Committee through the Council of the University of Wales.

Mr. Crosland: The Welsh College of Advanced Technology is not part of the

University of Wales. The future of the college is being considered by the governing body and its academic advisory committee.

Entertainment (Employment of Children)

38. **Mr. Hugh Jenkins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy regarding the employment of children under the age of 13 in any capacity; to what extent children under 13 have been employed under the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1963, relating to the employment of children in entertainment under certain circumstances; and to what extent licences have been granted to permit the employment of babies in commercial television films under that Act.

Mr. Prentice: My right hon. Friend's responsibilities are limited to the employment of children over the age of 12 in entertainment, and derive from the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933. I am sending my hon. Friend copies of the Statutory Instruments made under that Act and of the related documents of guidance issued to local authorities. Responsibility for administering the 1963 Act rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Commonwealth Immigrants

39. **Sir C. Osborne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of children of Commonwealth immigrants in primary and secondary schools, respectively, broken down by the countries of origin of the parents.

Mr. Denis Howell: This information is not available.

Music and Drama

41. **Mr. Robert Cooke** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what facilities exist in his Department for the study of the needs of young people in the fields of music and the theatre; and whether he will make a statement.

Miss Jennie Lee: The needs in each neighbourhood can best be assessed by local bodies. Her Majesty's Inspectors keep under review the educational provision made by local education authorities both for music and drama. The hon. Member may also be interested to know

that a Committee appointed by the Arts Council, on which the Department is represented, is at present making a special study of the provision of theatre for young people.

Retired Teachers (Re-employment)

40. **Mr. Goodhart** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now alter the regulations by which the earnings of re-employed retired teachers are assessed each quarter for pension purposes.

Mr. Prentice: The quarterly basis of assessment is not in itself a serious obstacle to regular part-time employment. Most public service pension schemes are based upon the actual period of re-employment, and the quarterly basis for part-time teachers already represents a concession.

Henniker-Heaton Report

42. **Mr. Hamling** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made with the implementation of the Henniker-Heaton Report; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Crosland: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster (Mr. Harold Walker) on 14th April. The Department has now received replies from most of the Regional Advisory Councils and I understand that the National Advisory Council on Education for Industry and Commerce will be reviewing the position at its meeting in July.

School Dental Service, Leicestershire

43. **Mr. Wyatt** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he proposes to take with regard to the shortage of dentists in the School Dental Service in Leicestershire; how the ratio of dentists to schoolchildren in Leicestershire compares with that elsewhere in the country; and if he will hold consultations with the Leicestershire Educational Authority on this subject.

Mr. Crosland: The approximate ratio of School Dental Service dentists to schoolchildren in Leicestershire is 1:48,000 compared to an average of 1:5,700 in the rest of England and Wales.

My senior dental officer has recently carried out a further inspection on the Leicestershire School Dental Service and recommendations for its improvement will shortly be sent to the authority by means of a joint letter from myself and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Health. I will consider what further steps should be taken when the authority has replied to the letter.

Liverpool

44. **Mr. Tilney** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now receive an all-party delegation from the Liverpool City Council to discuss education in Liverpool.

Mr. Crosland: I hope to meet representatives of the Liverpool authority at the beginning of next month to discuss its published proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education. It is for the authority to decide the composition of its deputation.

Starcross School, Kingsway Day College and Risinghill School

45. **Mrs. Lena Jeger** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of the uncertainties for pupils, staff and parents, he will announce his decision about the future of Starcross School, Kingsway Day College and Risinghill School at an early date.

Mr. Crosland: Yes.

Radio-strontium

46. **Mr. Garrow** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is aware that the monitoring services of the Medical Research Council have reported an increase in the amount of radio-strontium found in the bones of young children in Glasgow; and if he will make inquiries into the matter.

Mr. Crosland: Yes. The Medical Research Council report published on 6th May, 1965, deals with the findings of Strontium 90 in samples of human bone in the first half of 1964. The figures recorded for the Glasgow area are in close agreement with those for other areas of the United Kingdom. A general increase in the amount of radio-strontium in the bones of young children has been expected throughout 1964 as a result of the major nuclear tests carried out in the autumn of 1961 and 1962 but the levels

found remain well within those specified by the Medical Research Council in 1960 as the maximum permissible. The matter is kept under continual review as part of the national arrangements for monitoring levels of radioactivity in this country.

Museums and Libraries Act (Regional Councils)

Mr. Merlyn Rees asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will ensure that any regional organisations set up as a result of the Museums and Libraries Act will conform to the regional areas of the Regional Planning Councils and Boards.

Mr. Crosland : I will bear this in mind in setting up these regional councils but there may prove to be valid reasons why the areas should not conform.

School Transport, Rural Areas

Mr. Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in view of the danger to children involved in walking to school in rural areas, he will issue a circular to local authorities recommending them to take steps to reduce the statutory walking distance.

Mr. Crosland : Local education authorities have recently been reminded of their discretionary powers in this matter and asked to review their school transport arrangements regularly, particularly in areas where traffic dangers are increasing.

World Health Research Centre

Mr. Ted Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has taken the advice of the Council for Scientific Policy in regard to the participation by the United Kingdom in the proposed World Health Research Centre ; and what is the policy of the Council towards this proposal.

Mr. Crosland : As my hon. Friend will know, proposals for the establishment of a World Health Research Centre provide for (i) a laboratory centre for biomedical research, (ii) research on epidemiology and (iii) research in communications science related to medicine. The Council for Scientific Policy endorsed earlier recommendations of the Medical Research Council and the former Advisory Council on Scientific Policy against the first proposal, and approved the two latter proposals in general provided that

the activities were pursued on a reasonable scale and carried out in close association with relevant work of the World Health Organisation in Geneva. The Government have accepted this advice.

Education System, Wales (Mathematics and Science)

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the report on mathematics and science in a balanced system of education in Wales will be published.

Mr. Crosland : I anticipate that this Report will be published about mid-September.

Oral Expression

Mr. Ioan L. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to promote the study of oracy in schools.

Mr. Prentice : The importance of encouraging good oral expression is already well recognised by teachers, and was emphasised in the Newsom Report. Among the means being used to promote it are tape recorders and dramatic activities. A research project by Dr. Basil Bernstein, supported by my Department, is aimed at studying, among other things, the language pattern of children at school and at home.

Italian Children, Bedford

Sir C. Osborne asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the terms of agreement under which the Italian Government contributes to the cost of teaching Italian to Italian children in Bedford ; if he proposes to extend this scheme to all non-English-speaking children in schools ; how many such children he estimates there to be ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Denis Howell : This is a private arrangement between the parents and the Italian Government, and there is no question of extending it to all non-English-speaking children in our schools. I have no estimate of the number of such children.

Leaflet, Birmingham

Sir C. Osborne asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a copy of

the leaflet on education recently issued by the local education authority in Birmingham, which was issued in 13 different languages.

Mr. Crosland: The Birmingham local education authority has issued a leaflet, called "Learn to speak English", giving details of the special classes in English for adult immigrants provided in this area. The leaflet is in 5 languages—English, Arabic, Bengali, Hindi and Urdu. Copies have been placed in the Library. The authority knows of no leaflet in 13 languages.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Nautical Approved Schools

47. **Mr. Hector Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the three nautical approved schools which have boats for training juvenile delinquents, indicating the number and nature of the practical difficulties which confront their management and the success of the methods adopted to overcome those difficulties.

Miss Bacon: Only about half of the boys in the nautical schools receive instruction in seamanship, but they all get other forms of training. Short sea cruises can be undertaken by small parties, but longer cruises by large parties would not be practicable without detracting from other aspects of approved school training.

Universal Health Studios Ltd.

48. **Mr. Dodds** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the reasons for the presence of police officers at the head office of the Universal Health Studios Ltd. on the afternoon of Monday, 12th April;

(2) how many police officers were present and how their services were used at the incident involving four ex-employees at the head office of the Universal Health Studios Ltd., on the afternoon of Monday, 12th April.

Mr. George Thomas: The Commissioner of Police informs me that four police officers attended on the occasion of an interview between some employees and the management, as a result of information that a breach of the peace was apprehended. The officers called

the attention of the employees to the legal remedies open to them, but otherwise took no part in the proceedings.

Child-Care Officers

50. **Mr. Mapp** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional recruitment and training proposals are contemplated to meet the acute shortage of child-care officers and the requirements of the Children and Young Persons Act.

Miss Bacon: Courses of professional training, which produced 187 qualified child-care officers in 1964, are being expanded to an estimated output of 235 in 1965, 300 in 1966 and 400 in 1967.

Safety Regulations (Toys, Carry-Cots, Life-Jackets, and Nightwear)

51. **Mr. Rose** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now use his powers under the Consumer Protection Act to make safety regulations in respect of plastic toys, painted toys, carry-cots, life-jackets, and flammable nightwear, respectively.

Mr. George Thomas: Regulations on the safety of toys, including a restriction on the lead content of the paint used, are in course of preparation. My right hon. and learned Friend is not aware of any serious hazards presented by plastic toys or carry-cots which call for statutory controls, although he is at present considering whether regulations are necessary to ensure the safe design of carry-cot stands. The possibility of extending the scope of the Children's Nightdresses Regulations, 1964, to other kinds of clothing will shortly be considered by a Working Party which my right hon. and learned Friend is setting up for this purpose. The safety of life-jackets is a matter at present under consideration by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. and learned Friend.

Commonwealth Immigrants

Sir C. Osborne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long he proposes to wait for the relevant figures before deciding whether to supplement his measures to control the numbers of Commonwealth immigrants entering this country; what are the

specific figures for which he is waiting ; and if he will make a statement.

Sir F. Soskice : The measures which I announced on 4th February were designed to prevent evasion of the immigration control, and it will be some months before the statistical and other information available will enable me to form a reasonably accurate estimate as to how effective the measures have been in achieving that purpose. I also await the return of the Mountbatten Mission before further decisions can be taken.

BASUTOLAND

Trial, Cape Town (Police Witnesses)

52. **Mr. Ennals** asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies on whose authority two officers and two other ranks of the Basutoland police were flown from Basutoland to Cape Town at the end of March, 1965, to give evidence at a trial of members of the Pan-African Congress ; why their evidence was given in camera and their presence kept secret ; and whether he will make a full inquiry into the circumstances.

Mr. Greenwood : Three members of the Basutoland Mounted Police gave evidence at a trial at Cape Town on March 15th and 16th having been subpoenaed by the South African court. The subpoenas were served in Basutoland under the Basutoland Compulsion of Witnesses Proclamation which provides for the service on witnesses in Basutoland of subpoenas issued by courts in South Africa and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The attendance of such witnesses in the court issuing the subpoena is compulsory. There is reciprocal legislation in the Republic of South Africa.

I am not aware of the reasons why the evidence of the Basutoland police witnesses was heard in camera but it was not at the request of the Basutoland authorities.

BERMUDA

Police Constable Childs

53. **Brigadier Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1) what action he proposes to take to assist Police Constable Childs, who has been

sent to jail for two months in Bermuda, with legal aid for the conduct of his appeal ;

(2) why Police Constable Childs, who has been sentenced in Bermuda to two months imprisonment, has to wait nine months for his appeal to be heard.

Mr. Greenwood : A Court of Appeal for Bermuda was established on the 1st May, 1965. Hitherto the only appellate court in respect of decisions of the Supreme Court was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. There is no reason to suppose that it will take as long as 9 months for an appeal to be heard by the new Court of Appeal.

It is open to P.C. Childs to apply under the Bermuda Court of Appeal Act, 1964, for legal assistance on appeal.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

South-West Regional Council

55. **Mr. Dodds-Parker** asked the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs whether he will appoint a representative of Gloucestershire local government to the South-West Regional Council.

Mr. William Rodgers : No. I am sure that the Council for the South-West Region will take full account of the interests of Gloucestershire.

Short Brothers and Harland

56. **Mr. McMaster** asked the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs which firm of consultants he intends to appoint to look into the affairs of Short Brothers and Harland ; and what estimate he has made of the time to be taken in preparing their report.

Mr. William Rodgers : My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to make an announcement next week.

Housing (Wages and Prices Commission)

57. **Mrs. Lena Jeger** asked the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs if he will refer the price of housing to the Wages and Prices Commission.

Mr. Foley : No. The Government are themselves taking steps to deal with this problem.

TECHNOLOGY

Industrial Liaison Officers

58. **Mr. Robert Howarth** asked the Minister of Technology what expansion has taken place in the establishment of industrial liaison officers.

Mr. Cousins : Since this scheme was introduced in April, 1964, 18 colleges have appointed industrial liaison officers, and 18 other colleges are in the process of making appointments. Four further colleges have the matter under review, and it is proposed very shortly to invite another 20-30 colleges to participate in the scheme.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Rheumatism and Arthritis

59. **Sir M. Galpern** asked the Minister of Health, in view of the fact that rheumatism is now costing the country £120 million a year in lost work and treatment, if he will formally recognise the study of the disease as a special field of medicine in its own right.

Mr. K. Robinson : Recognition of a separate speciality is primarily a matter for the medical profession, but there are a number of consultant appointments in rheumatology in National Health Service hospitals.

60. **Sir M. Galpern** asked the Minister of Health what was the amount of the annual contribution from his Department during each of the last five years for specific research on rheumatism and arthritis.

Mr. K. Robinson : None specifically for this purpose. Medical research is primarily the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Funds are allocated by me to hospital boards for locally organised clinical research but there is no central record of the amounts they devote to particular fields of research.

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS (OVERSEAS TOURS)

61. **Mr. Cordle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what grants have been made to British symphony

orchestras giving performances overseas during the past five years ; and whether it is his policy to publicise internationally the quality of British cultural institutions by facilitating overseas tours by eminent orchestras and artists.

Mr. Padley : In the past five years the British Council has assisted, by way of guarantees against loss, 25 overseas tours by British symphony orchestras and other major musical groups. It is the British Council's object to show the best that this country has to offer and it does so in so far as its priorities and resources allow.

VIETNAM

62. **Mr. Warbey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will publish in the OFFICIAL REPORT the official response of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to his request for information regarding the attitude of the parties concerned towards a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam question.

Mr. M. Stewart : No. So far I have received only four replies of any kind and I think it would be a mistake to publish these in isolation. When I have had some more, I will consider the desirability of publishing them all together.

CAMBODIA (MANILA TREATY)

63. **Mr. Warbey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what decision was taken at the recent meeting of the Council of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation in response to the official request from Prince Sihanouk for the removal of Cambodia from the list of States according protection under the Protocol to the Manila Treaty.

Mr. M. Stewart : The Secretary General replied to Prince Sihanouk's message assuring him that there was, of course, no question of any action being taken on Cambodian territory without the invitation or consent of the Cambodian Government, as paragraph three of Article 4 of the Manila Treaty makes abundantly clear.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rates

65. **Mr. Allason** asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government what were the average county district rates for England and Wales, excluding London, and for Hertfordshire, and for London,

in 1952-53 and yearly from 1961-62; and what the equivalent rates for 1962-63 would have been under the new valuation list.

Mr. Mellish: The average rates weighted by rateable value, are as follows, the figures in brackets for 1962-63 being the estimated equivalent rates under the new valuation list:

	1952-53	1961-62	1962-63	1962-63 Revised	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Administrative counties (excluding London)	20 6	21 2	22 10	(8 3)	9 1	9 8	10 9
London	17 4	17 4	19 1	(6 3)	7 4	7 8	9 9
Hertfordshire	23 6	21 9	24 0	(7 6)	8 8	9 3	Not available

Notes

1. Rate poundage changes from 1952-53 to 1961-62 were affected by rating revaluation in 1956-57, which was based on current values, except as regards dwelling houses which remained on 1939 values: by de-rating of shops and offices by one-fifth in 1957-58, and by re-rating of industry and freight-transport from one-quarter to one-half of net annual value in 1959-60. Poundage changes at the 1963 re-valuation were affected by the adoption of current values for housing and the ending of all de-rating.

2. London is defined in 1965-66 as the London Boroughs and the City of London. In earlier years it is defined as the metropolitan boroughs and the City of London. Thus both the figures given in the 1965-66 column relate to areas which differ from the areas used for preceding years.

General Grant

64. **Mr. Allason** asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government what would be the average county district rate for England and Wales, excluding London, for Hertfordshire, and for London, respectively, if the general grant had been increased by £200 million for 1965-66.

Mr. Mellish: It is impossible to say. If the aggregate of the general grant had been increased, a new formula would have had to be worked out for distributing the money and there is therefore no knowing what any individual local authority would have received.

POST OFFICE

4d. Stamps (Northern Ireland)

66. **Mr. Pounder** asked the Postmaster-General if a Northern Ireland 4d. postage stamp will be available when letter rate changes are increased on 17th May.

Mr. Benn: No. I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 5th May to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Box), regarding the issue of 4d. stamps in the regional series.

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE (REPRESENTATIONS)

Q4. **Mr. Bence** asked the Prime Minister what representations he has received from chambers of trade and chambers of commerce on the need to reduce Government expenditure; and what replies he has sent.

The Prime Minister: None.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

Q7. **Mr. Bence** asked the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The Prime Minister: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made at the opening of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Ministerial Meeting, of which I have placed a copy in the Library.

SECURITY

Q10. **Mr. Onslow** asked the Prime Minister if he will publish in the OFFICIAL REPORT a list of the organisations and societies, active membership of

which precludes civil servants, on security grounds, from continued employment on classified work.

The Prime Minister : No.

Q15. **Dame Irene Ward** asked the Prime Minister what action he has taken to keep himself informed of matters involving security risks.

The Prime Minister : It is not the practice to reveal security procedures.

Q17. **Dame Irene Ward** asked the Prime Minister whether the Security Commission has been invited to consider the security of individuals who have been members of proscribed organisations.

The Prime Minister : I would refer the hon. Lady to my statement on 10th May.

STEEL (GOVERNMENT POLICY)

Q11. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Prime Minister to what extent Her Majesty's Government's policy on steel has been modified since the publication of the Steel White Paper.

The Prime Minister : Not at all.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN (RANN OF KUTCH)

Q12. **Mr. Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister what has been the response to his efforts to end the conflict between India and Pakistan over the Rann of Kutch; and whether he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister : Efforts to bring about a settlement of this conflict are still continuing. I am hopeful that they will soon be successful but, in view of the delicacy of the situation, I would prefer not to add anything at this stage to my statement of 5th May. I shall of course make a further statement to the House as soon as I am in a position to do so.

RHODESIA

Q13. **Mr. Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister whether he will seek an early opportunity of visiting Rhodesia.

The Prime Minister : I have nothing to add to the Answer I gave on 30th March to a Question by the hon. Member.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY AND EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

Q14. **Mr. Grimond** asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the declaration by the Action Committee of the United States of Europe, he will state the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the alternatives of seeking admission to the European Economic Community after appropriate discussions with Great Britain's partners in the Commonwealth and the European Free Trade Association, and building bridges between the European Economic Community and the European Free Trade Association.

The Prime Minister : As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the choice he describes is not in present circumstances a real one. There is at present no question of admission to the European Economic Community. But we are well aware of the dangers of the growing division between the two European economic groupings, and we are therefore about to discuss with our European Free Trade Association partners the possibilities of measures to reduce those dangers.

NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION (DISCUSSIONS)

Q16. **Sir J. Maitland** asked the Prime Minister if he will make a statement in regard to his official conversations with leaders of the agricultural industry on Thursday, 6th May.

The Prime Minister : I would refer the hon. Member to the Answer I gave on 11th May to a Question by the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks. (Mr. Kitson).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Foot-and-Mouth Disease

Mr. Boston asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has completed his inquiries into the cause of the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth

disease at Lamberhurst Farm, Dargate, near Faversham, Kent; and if he will make a statement about the results.

Mr. Peart: Yes. A detailed investigation into possible sources of infection has been made but we have not yet reached a final conclusion. It is not always possible in the case of a single outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in cattle to establish the source of infection with any certainty, and it may be that in the final assessment of this case the origin will have to be classed as obscure.

MINISTRY OF AVIATION

B.E.A. Pilots (Salary Increases)

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Minister of Aviation into which category of exceptions to Her Majesty's Government's incomes policy, as outlined in paragraph 15 in the White Paper on Prices and Incomes Policy, the increase in salary announced on 13th April for 1,100 pilots of British European Airways of 8.2 per cent., back-dated to last October, with provision for a further increase in 1966 of 4½ per cent. and another increase in 1967 of 4 per cent., comes.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: The last previous award to B.E.A. pilots, other than Comet pilots who received an increase in October, 1962, had been in September, 1961. The present settlement was in an advanced stage of negotiation and the terms on which agreement was reached had already been offered before publication of the White Paper. I understand that in return for the salary increases the pilots have undertaken to co-operate in a number of measures which together are expected to achieve an improvement of from 4 to 8 per cent. in productivity.

SCOTLAND

Coatbridge Technical College

Mr. Dempsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will consult Lanarkshire Education Authority with a view to having courses of general education introduced into Coatbridge Technical College, for the benefit of married women and others, which could lead to teacher recruitment; (2) if, arising from the fact that O level standards are being

demanding by more occupations than ever, he will consult Lanarkshire Education Authority with a view to introducing full-time courses leading to O level certificates in Coatbridge Technical College.

Mr. Ross: I understand that the present provision of some part-time courses at Coatbridge and a wider range of full-time and part-time courses at Langside College, Glasgow, for both ordinary and higher grades has so far proved suitable for Lanarkshire students. If, however, there is any evidence that married women aiming at teaching, or others, are unable to use these facilities, I shall be glad to examine with the authority what further provision might be made at Coatbridge.

BOARD OF TRADE

Whit Bank Holiday, 1967

Mr. Blaker asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he will now announce the date of the Whit Bank Holiday in 1967.

Mr. Darling: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce this date shortly.

United States and Canada (Motor Cars)

Mr. Bruce-Gardyne asked the President of the Board of Trade if he will make representations to the United States and Canadian Governments regarding their decision to abolish tariffs on motor cars bilaterally and preferentially in contravention of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Mr. Redhead: British motor cars are already admitted duty free into Canada and the agreement to which the hon. Member refers would therefore not create any preference against them. It might, however, involve the grant of a new tariff preference for Canada in the United States. This, as has been made clear in a report by a Working Party of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, would be inconsistent with Article 1 of the General Agreement.

As I said in reply to a Question from my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Dell) on 3rd February, my

right hon. Friend has already expressed to the Governments of Canada and the United States his concern about the possible effects of this agreement; and he has expressed the hope that the United States Government may be able to make their action consistent with Article 1 of the General Agreement by removing the tariff on imports of motor cars from other sources also.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Married Women Teachers (Domestic Help)

Sir M. Galpern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in view of Her Majesty's Government's present campaign stressing the need for married women ex-teachers to return to teaching in the national interest, he will give the cost of a tax allowance where one cannot be claimed at present, for domestic help necessitated by the engagement of married women in school teaching.

Mr. Diamond: I am afraid that there is not sufficient information on which to base an estimate.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Barnett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an analysis by currencies and countries of the £300 million defence expenditure spent across the exchanges.

Mr. Diamond: In 1964, United Kingdom military expenditure overseas was estimated at £275 million and defence aid at £26 million. The following table shows the main countries and regions to which this expenditure relates, divided into sterling area countries and non-sterling countries. Part of the defence aid was gifts of military equipment. A detailed analysis of payments by the currencies in which they were made is not available. Broadly speaking, payments to non-sterling countries are in foreign currencies and impose a direct burden on the U.K. reserves, whilst those to overseas sterling countries are made in sterling. The burden on our economic resources and the balance of payments is the same, whether they are made initially in sterling or in other currencies, since all such transfers either increase our external liabilities or decrease our external assets.

UNITED KINGDOM OVERSEAS MILITARY EXPENDITURE AND DEFENCE AID IN 1964

	Military* Defence†		£ million
	expendi- ture	aid	Total
<i>Non-Sterling Countries</i>			
North America ...	15	—	15
Latin America ...	1	—	1
Federal Republic of Germany ...	85	—	85
Other Europe ...	15	—	15
Africa, Middle East and Far East ...	6	—	6
	122	—	122
<i>Overseas Sterling Countries</i>			
Caribbean Area ...	1	—	1
Gibraltar ...	7	—	7
Malta ...	15	—	15
Cyprus ...	17	1	18
Libya ...	3	—	3
East Africa ...	6	3	9
Middle East ...	21	6	27
India ...	—	7	7
Malaysia ...	63	8	71
Hong Kong ...	10	—	10
Australia ...	8	—	8
Other countries ...	2	1	3
	153	26	179
TOTAL ...	275	26	301

* Expenditure on military services in the invisibles account of the U.K. balance of payments.

† Part of "other grants" in the invisibles account.

RAILWAYS

Vandalism

Mr. Channon asked the Minister of Transport what steps have been taken, consequent upon his inquiries into recent railway accidents, to deal with the problem of vandalism on the railways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom Fraser: I can assure the hon. Member of the Government's grave concern about the epidemic of wanton obstruction which has led to numerous incidents and to the loss of two lives in the recent rail crash near Elm Park. Government Departments are giving all the help they can to the Railways Board and other bodies concerned in dealing with this serious problem. The Railways Board, which has the immediate responsibility for preventive measures, is, I know, taking vigorous action in ways ranging from intensified police measures to the giving of special talks to schools,

in close collaboration with local police forces and education authorities. In addition, both the Railways Board and the London Transport Board, in Bills now before Parliament, are seeking to increase the penalties for relevant offences under the Railways Acts: and both Boards are making revised byelaws which should take effect within the next few months and will also include raised penalties for relevant offences.

ROADS

M.4 Route (Berkshire)

Mr. Astor asked the Minister of Transport if he will publish the technical reasons which led him to open discussions

for a new route of the M.4 motorway through Berkshire, in preference to either of the two alternative routes previously considered.

Mr. Tom Fraser: I explained why I had asked for the matter to be re-examined in my Answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Francis Noel-Baker), on 17th February. I am now engaged in the usual preliminary confidential discussions with local authorities and hope soon to publish my proposed route, together with an explanatory statement which will enable those affected to understand the reasons for the proposals. There will then be the usual opportunity for the submission of objections or representations.