

. SCHOOL BROADCASTING

INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION SERIES

SCHOOL BROADCASTING

**LEAGUE OF NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION
2, RUE DE MONTPENSIER-PALAIS-ROYAL-PARIS I**

1925

INTRODUCTION

THE announcement of any notable discovery in the world of applied science is always the signal for admiration and astonishment, but once these have passed, we realise that the responsibilities and duties already shouldered by mankind have been suddenly increased. Having recognised the existence of a force, the nature of which would seem to be beyond human understanding, we must endeavour to utilise it for a reasonable and practical purpose. The newly discovered scientific means of disseminating knowledge and information and, more particularly, wireless broadcasting, thus give rise to urgent problems of organisation. Broadcasting is developing daily; telephony is becoming inter-continental and, very soon, television will doubtless contribute a new element to these powerful systems of dissemination.

Like the cinematograph, broadcasting was originally intended to provide entertainment and recreation; but the importance of the rôle of these fresh "international forces" that are impressing the public more and more forcibly and which cannot be restrained, is asserting itself with an ever increasing insistence from day to day. It must therefore be controlled and guided into the proper channels.

Broadcasting and the cinematograph are capable of becoming invaluable auxiliary instruments in the field of education. This was recognised by the League of Nations when it founded its International Educational Cinematograph Institute in Rome, an institution which has, in its particular sphere, obtained highly promising results. With regard to the questions with which we are here concerned, several countries have, as the result of an enquiry conducted during

the year by the Rome Institute, agreed that the showing of educational films in programmes of a recreational character should be compulsory.

Further, in pursuance of a decision of the League of Nations Assembly and on the proposal of the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation has collected, with the collaboration of the International Broadcasting Union, voluminous documentary material on the experiments in school broadcasting now being carried out in most countries of the world.

The object of these investigations was to reveal the advantages and possibilities which broadcasting offered, either for instructing youth in the aims of the League of Nations or for the general education of school children and adults.

With this documentation in its possession, the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation will, this year, be able to consult the educational departments of the different governments with a view to standardising methods, in so far as circumstances permit, and to giving, beyond the frontiers, the maximum impetus to this form of instruction which, although only subsidiary, is full of possibilities that are perhaps still unsuspected.

Following out this idea, technical problems to be solved by the schools taking broadcast lessons, for example: the choice of receivers, the distribution of wave-lengths, the arrangement of school time-tables, the acoustic properties of classrooms, etc., will this year be examined in collaboration with the International Broadcasting Union.

This represents, however, only one of the aspects of the part that broadcasting can play in social life. If, on the one hand, it can be used in the service of

education, it can, on the other, be made to serve the passion of political strife, to spread false news and to become an instrument of discord and enmity — but it may also be developed as one of the most valuable auxiliaries at our disposal for the furthering of “moral disarmament”. It will be readily understood, therefore, that the choice of the means best calculated to extract all the advantages from broadcasting and, at the same time, to check its baneful influences, becomes an extremely delicate problem. Rules and customs adapted to these new problems need to be established and agreed upon ; the Moral Disarmament Committee of the Disarmament Conference examined this aspect of the question in collaboration with the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation.

In a comparative study prepared with the help of qualified experts, the Institute has examined the possibilities that broadcasting offers for the rapprochement of nations. It is in this field that the question of the influence exercised by wireless on the mind of the people comes into play with the greatest force, for it is an influence which is far more direct, far more violent, and one that retains a remarkably more human aspect — and consequently of a nature to engender bitterness and hatred — than that exercised by gramophone records or even the cinematograph.

It is obvious that a brief statement mechanically recorded will have incalculably less persuasive force than an address delivered before the microphone. On the other hand, a speaker broadcasting from a studio becomes endowed with the propaganda force of a group of orators or of a society. If he speaks on behalf of an association, a political party for example, the weight of his arguments and suggestions is multiplied many times over by the broadcasting appa-

ratus. Actual facts have already proved the existence, not to mention the dangers, of this unseen power. It is true that, in many countries, the government exerts a controlling influence on wireless transmitters and a relative guarantee of equilibrium is assured; but, in times of crisis, it should be possible to rely on definite laws and regulations, on codified rules and on tradition. Therefore, agreements of principle providing for the preventive as well as the positive measures to be taken are now receiving the attention of the governments.

In connexion with the measures advocated for the promotion of friendly relations between peoples, the methods of education destined for adult listeners may, in years to come, constitute an extremely valuable broadcasting activity. Very little has so far been attempted in this sense. It is of paramount importance that the different countries should devote serious attention to the organisation of post-school instructional courses so that broadcasting may, in that field also, act as a valuable adjuvant and become what has been called the "unseen university of the people".

This book, devoted to the utilisation of broadcasting in primary, secondary and higher education, contains the studies communicated to the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation by educators and by the organisers of instructional courses in twenty-five countries; they represent an accumulation of experience which will enable all who are interested in school broadcasting to make their own comparative analyses and to find useful suggestions.

The general report drawn up by the Institute as the result of this enquiry furnished the material for the first part of this volume, in which, while setting forth opinions which at times are conflicting, an endeavour has been made to stress the fundamental

rules and guiding principles, which, at this stage of the investigations and in the present conditions governing the organisation of educational broadcasting, may be regarded as representing the views held by the majority of educators.

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