

Supplement to "The Wireless &amp; Electrical Trader," August 26, 1939

# R.M.A. TELEVISION CONVENTION

## TELEVISION EXTENSION DECISION STILL DEFERRED

C. O. Stanley Blames G.P.O. for Delays

**S**TATEMENT that no revelation of the Government's proposals regarding the extension of the television service to the Provinces could yet be made, but that the delay was not due to technical reasons;

An outspoken speech by C. O. Stanley, who said that he blamed the Post Office for the delay in making greater progress with television, and who followed this up by adding that in his personal opinion television had had an adverse effect on small cinemas and would ultimately take away their business entirely;

A tribute from Sir Stephen Tallents to the Television Development Sub-committee of the R.M.A., C. O. Stanley and dealers who had co-operated in the campaign for the extension of television;

A suggestion that dealers in the service area should intensify their television sales efforts to increase sales now and without waiting for news of plans for an extension;

A summary by Sir Noel Ashbridge of technical developments which have been made during the year, including the use of ordinary G.P.O. telephone lines for relaying television up to distances of four miles.

**T**HESE were the features of the Radiolympia Television Convention organised by the Television Development Sub-committee of the Radio Manufacturers' Association and held in the Conference Hall at Olympia on Thursday. About five hundred dealers were present to hear the following speakers:

J. H. Thomas, chairman of the R.M.A. (in the chair);

Dr. E. V. Appleton, member of the Television Advisory Committee;

Sir Stephen Tallents, B.B.C. Controller of Public Relations;

Sir Noel Ashbridge, B.B.C. Chief Engineer and member of the Television Advisory Committee; and

C. O. Stanley, chairman of the R.M.A. Television Development sub-committee.

Col. G. D. Ozanne was also present on the platform but did not speak.

J. H. Thomas, opening the convention, referred to the disturbed political situation, but said that the R.M.A. had had no hesitation in holding the event as arranged. He was gratified to note the number of dealers present.

As R.M.A. chairman he appreciated the development work which had taken place, and particularly the marked improvement in the television programmes.

He welcomed Professor Appleton, who had had great difficulty in arranging to be present but had nevertheless been able to do so.

### Dr. Appleton on Television Extension

Dr. E. V. Appleton, in opening his address, said that apart from his membership of the Television Advisory Committee he had always been a television enthusiast since Mr. Baird's and Mr. Campbell Swinton's early experiments. Despite the progress that had taken place since then, he had not ceased to marvel at the result achieved to-day.

During the short time he had been a member of the Committee, they had had to review the whole television situation, and to consider what should be the next steps to extend the availability of television to other members of the public of this country, and to assist the television industry in its sales of television apparatus. The Committee some time ago sub-

mitted a report to the Postmaster General, and Major Tryon has mentioned in Parliament the receipt of this report and has stated that he is giving it his careful consideration.

Dr. Appleton said that it would be most improper for him to reveal or even hint what the recommendations have been. However, he did feel that he could speak of some matters that had been considered in their attempts to plan for the future.

### "Teething Troubles" Past

It was generally agreed that once the London television service is past its teething troubles, and beyond the experimental stage, it would only be fair to attempt to offer to the rest of the country the same facilities that the London viewer can enjoy. It had never been suggested that there should be separate programmes originating at each provincial centre. That would be wasteful and far too costly. They had had to consider the means available for relaying from a network of stations a programme originating at one station. Two methods, the cable and the ultra-short wave radio link, were possible.

Both have their own special advantages, which had been closely studied. A cautious attitude had to be taken, for the greatest harm would be done to the development of television if it turned out that a provincial population was being offered something inferior in quality to that offered to the London viewer.

Television, he said, costs money, and it had been necessary to consider the various available sources for an extension of television to the provinces. The possibility of obtaining funds from the Treasury, from an increased allocation to the B.B.C. from the ordinary licence fees, from a special television licence, from sponsored programmes, and so on, had all been examined, and they awaited the Government's decision on the report.

### Disappointed at London Response

Dr. Appleton went on to say that he was frankly disappointed with the response of people in the London area to the fine service which was offered. There was a great deal in the arguments advanced by

the R.M.A. deputation to the Television Committee that there was a need for demonstrating, in the most emphatic way possible, that television is now a stable service. The R.M.A. had argued that the first step towards provincial television would in itself do more to convince people in the London area that television had come to stay than any amount of assurance concerning the permanence of the London station itself.

Although this argument was sound, Dr. Appleton thought that there was much which could be done in the period even before such a decision could be given.

The London public had to be convinced, here and now, that they are missing something.

There were only two things which might deter them, the fear that sets would get out of date or the service stopped or altered, and the thought that sets would get cheaper. The London station was a stable one for years to come; the question of receiver costs was the manufacturers' business. Television receivers were hardly matters for the home constructor, but, on the other hand, no one had the right to assume that they were so complicated that they would always be going wrong. His own set had given no trouble over a long period.

The Government believed in television, and that in it there is the germ of a great national industry. The Television Advisory Committee were determined to bring that about. The B.B.C. and the electrical industry had enabled us to lead the world in technical matters and programmes. They had the goodwill of the press. It only remained to make the exhibition give television just the filip it requires to make it advance, and never look back.

Sir Stephen Tallents, who was then introduced, said he had lively recollections of last year's convention, when he had learned a great deal from the questions put from the body of the hall.

The B.B.C., he said, was indebted to dealers for all the work which had been done as part of the television extension campaign, and he congratulated C. O. Stanley and his colleagues on the sub-committee for all their work.

As to the future, he could say that the B.B.C. felt that television was something which would revolutionise the whole entertainment world.

He emphasised the importance of letting potential buyers of sets see them working under home conditions. "Once a set gets past the front door it seldom gets out," he remarked.

Before concluding he referred to the number of dealers who wished to see something of the inside of Alexandra Palace under working conditions. He would like to be able to arrange visits for everybody, but the present accommodation was so limited that he could only apologise that such visits were not possible under the circumstances.

### Improvements Reviewed

Sir Noel Ashbridge devoted his speech to a review of the improvements in the television service during the past year. Speaking of the studio end, there had

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been the addition of one extra studio, which had improved conditions at Alexandra Palace, though both studios were still too small.

A central control room had been installed, which had resulted in smoother presentation of the programmes.

The Emitron cameras had been improved, due to the efforts of the Marconi-E.M.I. laboratories, while considerable progress in the study of studio lighting for television had been made.

It had been hoped that larger studios would have been available by now, but there was obviously great possibilities of development in the future.

Dealing with outside broadcasts, a great deal of progress had been made. An extra O.B. unit, costing many thousands of pounds, had been secured.

Research on portable aerials for use in the O.B. link had resulted in the "fire-escape" type being adopted.

### Vision by Telephone Lines

Sir Noel revealed that it was now possible to transmit O.B. material on ordinary telephone lines up to a distance of four miles, for linking up to a transmitter or to the special television cable.

The Super-Emitrons had been improved for O.B. work, and a second receiving station for the O.B.'s, linked by cable to Alexandra Palace, had been established to minimise the risk of interference sometimes experienced when reception was carried out at the Alexandra Palace.

With regard to the extension of television to the Provinces, the problems of linking had been studied, and no technical difficulty was holding up the extension.

The range of the Alexandra Palace transmitter had been found to be greater than the anticipated 25 miles, and the service area was now up to about 35 miles from the station. Were it not for motor-car interference, the range would be much greater.

Receivers, Sir Noel said, were reliable, but was the public aware of this? There was no more trouble than with ordinary sound receivers, and the tuning adjustments were probably even easier. He thought that the public should be educated to these facts.

### C. O. Stanley's Frank Comments

C. O. Stanley then held the attention of those present with one of his characteristic "fighting" speeches on the television position.

Last year he felt that the Television Development Sub-committee had undertaken a terrible task. Now he felt great satisfaction that it had been successful.

Referring to the anxious political atmosphere in which the convention was being held, he said that if as a country we were going to be involved in a war we had immense scientific resources which would play their part. Television dealers, as pioneers of a new scientific achievement, might feel that they had contributed in some measure to these resources. (*Applause.*)

Twelve months ago, he went on, the

sub-committee was told that the interest in television was so poor that it might even be necessary to stop the service entirely. So the sub-committee called the first convention to launch a drive to sell 15,000 television sets.

That figure had now been exceeded and they felt they could at least expect a start in the extension of the service to the Provinces. The need was vital in order to convince the public that the service had progressed beyond the experimental stage. "While Members of Parliament still ask questions in the House and refer to 'experimental television,'" he remarked, "we cannot convince the public that the preliminary stage is passed."

After reviewing the great work which had been done by members in the Provinces and in Scotland—often at the risk of damaging their sound-radio business—Mr. Stanley said:

"If it were not for the political situation, I am certain we would have had at least one provincial television station by now."

### 20,000 Vision Sets Sold

"What of the future?" he asked, after revealing that 20,000 vision sets had been sold during the last twelve months. He set the next goal before dealers as the sale of another 40,000 sets in the next six months.

A big responsibility lay with dealers. Some had sold fifty, sixty, seventy vision sets, or more. Others still had their original models in stock, and real enthusiasm and "drive" was necessary in such cases.

### "I Blame the G.P.O."

A sensation was caused when Mr. Stanley, saying that he did not think that lack of finance was the primary cause of the hold-up of Provincial television, stated: "I blame the G.P.O. entirely for the lack of television development during the last eighteen months."

He revealed that Sir Stephen Tallents was the real originator of the Provincial television extension campaign. Sir Stephen had made the suggestion to Mr. Stanley during a telephone conversation after last year's television convention at Radiolympia.

After touching upon Mr. Wolfe-Murray's television talks on behalf of dealers and on the R.M.A. television service area map, Mr. Stanley turned to the subject of interference. He read a statement from Major Peter, chairman of the R.M.A. sub-committee on this subject.

The chief points in this statement were that excellent progress had been made although the Postmaster-General was not yet in a position to introduce legislation; that the R.M.A. had agreed with the British Standards Institution regarding specifications for interference-free apparatus; that a pamphlet on the subject was in preparation; and that dealers should fit suppressors to their

own motor vehicles and should only sell equipment which did not cause interference.

### Threat to Small Cinemas

Finally, Mr. Stanley said he wished to express a purely personal opinion. He had been studying the reactions of the cinema industry to television and had noticed that its members had recently dismissed it as being of no importance. He thought that meant there was something in it.

He had then caused enquiries to be made and had discovered that working men who earned £4 or £5 a week and who had bought television receivers had cut down their cinema attendances by 75 per cent. His own view was that in time television would take the business of small cinemas away altogether.

His final remark, which drew applause, was: "I still believe in television as strongly as last year, and I will still put everything I know into it!"

### Dealers' Questions

Following the main speeches, the meeting was thrown open to a discussion.

The first speaker thought that sales should reach 100,000 units in the next six months if conditions were normal. His experience was that sets were not trouble free. The general public had the idea that television was still in the experimental stage—the only solution was to demonstrate in the home of the prospective customer. He urged Mr. Stanley to get up a petition to Parliament on the question of interference suppression.

The next speaker wanted a Government assurance that television would continue in the event of a war.

Several dealers then made criticisms and suggestions regarding the programmes.

Another suggestion was that until a provincial station could be established, the power of the London transmitter should be increased.

Studio technique, discounts over 30 per cent. for dealers, and the programme copyright question were raised by succeeding speakers.

Sir Noel Ashbridge replied to the questions that concerned him. He said that it was not permissible to make a statement regarding the continuance of the service in the event of war.

With regard to increasing the power of the London station, this was an uneconomical method of securing greater coverage.

Sir Stephen Tallents, replying to other points, said that the programme criticisms were ones that were receiving attention. With regard to the copyright question, this could not be avoided. If the B.B.C. did not agree to restrict certain O.B. events to home viewing, they would never get permission to televise them.

Before the meeting ended the chairman read a telegram of good wishes from Lord Hirst, R.M.A. president, who is in Scotland recuperating after an illness.