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Every Friday. TWO PENCE.

**THIS IS DAVENTRY CALLING THE BRITISH EMPIRE**



On December 19, the new Empire Broadcasting Station at Daventry opens a regular service of special programmes for the Dominions and Colonies. Our photograph shows the aerials for the Australasian Zone.



# PROGRAMMES FOR THE EMPIRE

The B.B.C. Empire Service Director explains how they will work



**A**LTHOUGH listeners in this country will not be able to hear the programmes radiated from the Empire transmitters, those readers of *The Radio Times* who have relations and friends in the Dominions and Colonies may be interested in learning something of the scheme of broadcasts which will start on December 19.

The problem of satisfying close on five million licence holders in this country is not an enviable one, but the B.B.C.'s home programme builders can congratulate themselves on the fact that they have not to take into consideration an area comprising three hundred degrees of longitude, and involving a time difference of twenty hours. Of course, on the technical side there are problems just as difficult, if not more so, to be faced, but they are outside the scope of this article.

The first decision taken was an easy one, *qua* decision—namely, that the Empire transmitters should provide a two hours' programme to all listeners throughout the Empire between the hours of 6 p.m. and midnight, local time. But the interpretation of decisions is a harder task than the mere making of them. The question arose, how could the Empire be provided with a service of broadcast programmes which could be heard with equal convenience by Canada, South Africa and New Zealand—to take only three, but three very distinctive, examples? The situation could only be met by directing programmes from the Empire transmitters at Daventry at those times of day which are equivalent to the most satisfactory listening times in the zone to which they were directed. For the purposes of Empire broadcasting, therefore, the whole world was provisionally divided into five zones. The divisions, to meet technical as well as programme requirements, were based on the following factors:—

- (a) Time of transmission.
- (b) Direction of transmission.
- (c) Distance from this country.

These five zones may be defined approximately as follows:—

1. *The Australasian Zone*, covering Australia, New Zealand, British North Borneo, the Pacific Islands, etc.
2. *The Indian Zone*, covering India, Burma, Malay States, Straits Settlements, and Ceylon.
3. *The African Zone*, covering South Africa, East Africa, Aden, the Seychelles and certain islands in the Indian Ocean and includes also Malta, Cyprus, and Palestine.
4. *The West African Zone*, covering West Africa, Ascension Island, St. Helena, and the Falkland Islands.
5. *The Canadian Zone*, covering Canada, British Guiana, British Honduras, the West Indies, and Newfoundland.

So far, so good. A zonal division of the world was decided upon, and the general principle with regard to broadcasting hours was made, but a considerable part of the problem still remained to be solved. One would not imagine it difficult to determine what broadcasting hours in London were equivalent to satisfactory listening hours in each zone. But it is not as simple as it looks, because within each zone there is a very large variation

of time. In the Australasian zone, for example, there is a difference of four hours between Sarawak on the west and New Zealand on the east.

So a focus had to be selected for each zone, and then it had to be discovered, taking time variation within a zone into account, how this would affect listeners at either extremity of the zone. If it were discovered that any particular section would be asked to listen at a hopelessly inconvenient hour, the focus had to be adjusted accordingly. It seemed reasonable to assume that if a period of two hours' broadcasting was to take place between 6 p.m. and 12 midnight (local time), the hours 8-10 p.m. (local time) were the fairest and most generally acceptable throughout the Empire as a whole. Starting from this premise and adjusting where necessary, it was found that a generally satisfactory result could be obtained, if the following broadcasting hours in London were selected:—

Australasian Zone: 9.30-11.30 a.m. (G.M.T.)  
 Indian Zone: 2.30-4.30 p.m. (G.M.T.)  
 African Zone: 6.0-8.0 p.m. (G.M.T.)  
 West African Zone: 8.30-10.30 p.m. (G.M.T.)  
 Canadian Zone: 1.0-3.0 a.m. (G.M.T.)

This arrangement admittedly leaves some listeners less favourably placed than others, but whatever choice was made this would be inevitable. The endeavour was to select times which would result in no particular section being asked to listen at a totally unreasonable time.

This is how these hours worked out in practice in each zone. In the Australasian Zone, 9.30-11.30 a.m. (G.M.T.) means that in Western Australia, Sarawak, and North Borneo Empire programmes will be heard at approximately between 5 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.; in the populated districts of Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane between 7.30 and 9.30 p.m. (local time); and in New Zealand between 9.30 and 11.30 p.m. (local time). New Zealand's hours would have been better had it not been that summer time is in force from October to March. Fortunately, their clocks are only put forward half an hour during this period.

In the Indian Zone, Karachi on the west will have a programme from 8.0-10.0 p.m. (local time), Calcutta from 8.30-10.30 p.m. (local time), and the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements from 9.30-11.30 p.m. (local time).

In the African Zone, the time differences across is only one hour, if Mauritius and certain islands in the Indian Ocean are left out of account, and by broadcasting in London from 6.0-8.0 p.m. (G.M.T.), Cape Town and the western borders of the zone would receive the programmes from 8.0-10.0 p.m. (local time), and the eastern edge of the zone from 9.0-11.0 p.m. (local time).

In the West African Zone those districts described by the title of the zone will be listening to London between approximately 7.30 and 11.30, whereas the Falkland Islands on the

extreme west will not be so well served, their listening hours being from 4.30-6.30 p.m. (local time).

The arrangements for the Canadian Zone provide for a two hours' broadcast to Newfoundland between the hours of 9.30 and 11.30 p.m. (local time), and on the extreme west to Vancouver from 5.0-7.0 p.m. (local time)—again, not quite as satisfactory as could be wished.

In articles and statements which have already appeared regarding the Empire broadcasting service emphasis has been laid on the fact that during the first few months everything must be experimental. From the technical point of view there is much to be found out. The ultimate choice of programmes depends in large measure on the potentialities of the transmitters and to a great extent on what listeners overseas indicate with regard to their likes and dislikes; the actual choice of times is equally a matter of experiment, and if, after a period of testing, it is found that some of the hours selected are generally inconvenient, every effort will be made to adjust them.

With regard to the programmes themselves, it is obviously undesirable, until the technical experts have acquired all the necessary knowledge with regard to the efficiency of their transmitters, wavelengths, and aerial arrays, to embark upon any elaborate scheme of specialization. In the early stages all that is necessary is to provide a sufficiently varied type of material for each zone to enable reception conditions to be thoroughly tested, and this will be done by relaying the existing programmes so far as is possible. So far as the three middle zones are concerned, *i.e.*, the Indian, African, and West African, it should not be difficult to provide a varied and attractive programme, even in the interim period, from the main home programmes. It will, however, be less easy to cater for the Canadian and Australasian Zones.

To ensure a successful result, the co-operation of listeners throughout the Empire is essential. Those concerned with the building of programmes for the Empire are starting with open minds, and their chief desire will be to provide a service to meet the requirements of those to whom it is directed. Without constructive criticism and suggestions during the first few months of working, little will be achieved, but it is confidently anticipated that as time goes on there will be an increasing volume of correspondence giving information on reception conditions and making suggestions with regard to the content of the programmes. It should not be forgotten, however, that the latter must bear a very definite reference to the former. It will be no use, for example, for the West Indies to beg for Symphony Concerts unless they have some idea as to how these are received or whether they are receivable at all.

If this brief description of the B.B.C.'s preliminary programme arrangements for Empire broadcasting should arouse the interest of *Radio Times* readers, they can always find fuller and more detailed information in *World-Radio*, while the Empire editions of the same journal (as distinct from the home issues) which will circulate in the Dominions and Colonies, will contain up-to-date information concerning the programmes current at the time of their receipt by overseas purchasers.

