THE MARCH OF RADIO

NEWS AND INTERPRETATION OF CURRENT RADIO EVENTS

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Radio May Become the Cornerstone of the Amusement Industries

IT IS the privilege of all men to consider the age in which they live as the zenith of human progress. In our little world of radio, the last decade has been a kaleidoscope of evolution and to-day we stand at the brink of a titanic realignment of the communication and entertainment worlds, with the versatile vacuum tube as its cornerstone. We cannot escape the conclusion that this decade will prove the most significant in the history of the stage, the screen, the phonograph, and the broadcasting industry.

Radio has grown from a humble sideline of the electrical industry and a pursuit of the former amateur experimenter, who refused to abandon his hobby, to the position of key industry of the entertainment world. The application of vacuum tube amplification to practically every phase of aural and visual entertainment promises to make broadcast reception only one phase of the many-sided business which will constitute the radio industry of the future.

Five years ago, the prostrate phonograph industry was revitalized by adopting the methods of the broadcast studio in recording and the audio system of the radio receiver for reproduction. More recently, the motion-picture industry, by an almost identical process, has incorporated sound entertainment as an integral part of screen reproduction and is, in consequence, enjoying an amazing revival.

Slowly but surely, drama, concert, vaudeville, motion pictures, phonograph, and broadcasting are being drawn into the vortex to form a huge, unified entertainment business, destined to reach staggering proportions in volume of business and to achieve undreamed of heights in the character of entertainment and education which it brings to the home. By this process, also, the economic problems of broadcasting will be solved definitely and the spasmodic character of production in the industry significantly readjusted.

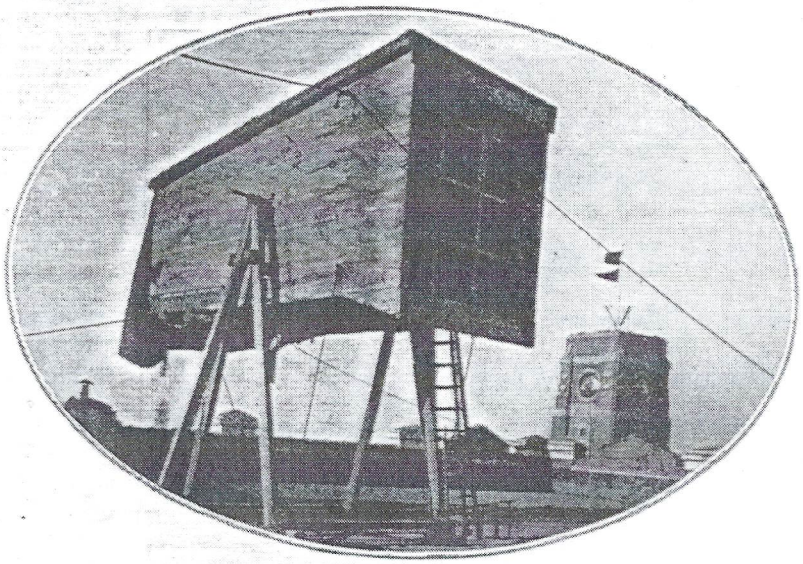
SOME PREVIOUS PREDICTIONS

IN THE January "March of Radio," we ventured some predictions as to an ultimate home-entertainment machine, comprising broadcast receiver, phonograph reproducer, radio picture recorder, film projector and, some day, television reproducer. Nebulous as this conception then appeared, it seemed to us inevitable because of the natural technical and artistic alliance of these once separated fields. In June, we were able to chronicle the first practical step in this direction, the rumored merger of the Radio Corporation of America and the Victor Talking Machine Company. To-day, all the important phonograph companies are in the radio business. Concurrently, came the talking-movie boom, utilizing many of the inventions developed for radio. More recent developments are providing the structure for the actual manufacture of such a device.

The principal motion-picture producers are licensed already by the Bell System to use one or both of their two methods of sound synchronized film systems. Vitaphone uses phonograph records mechanically synchronized with the film; Movietone records sound impressions directly on the edge of the film by means of a light shutter system. These light impressions are converted into sound at the motion-picture theatre by passing light through the sound track, upon a photo-electric cell.

The R. C. A. more recently entered the field by exploiting a system developed by the General Electric Company, using the oscillograph principle to make the sound record on the film. Having entered the field later, there are, as yet, only a few Photophone licensees, as the R. C. A. system is termed, but with the prospective alliance with the Keith-Albee-Orpheum circuits and the Film Booking Offices of America, a huge number of theatre installations by Photophone are in prospect. Several other systems are soon to appear. Acute shortage of equipment exists and there is a feverish rush to speed theatre installations for the reproduction of sound pictures.

At the present time, the R. C. A. and the Bell System are in competition in the sound-picture field. If the precedent of broadcasting is followed, a combination of these rival interests will be effected ultimately. Five years ago, the Bell System laid the foundations for the National Broadcasting Company by operating the first chain of stations with WEAF as the key, while the Radio Corporation and its associates maintained WJZ as the competing key station to a chain connected through telegraph lines. Intense competition proved uneconomic, with the result that the National Broadcasting Company was formed as a merger of the two systems.



NEW SUPER-DIRECTIONAL HORN

The huge loud speaker illustrated above was developed by the Victor Talking Machine Company, Camden, N. J., and was designed to have marked directional characteristics. The horn is used to remove the hazards of landing dirigibles by providing a means of communicating directly with the ship while it is in the air. Successful results have been obtained in tests with the U. S. Navy Dirigible J-4 flying at 1500 feet over the Victor building.

UNIFICATION INCREASES EFFICIENCY

FROM the standpoint of efficient and economic operation, unification of broadcast studio management, concert bureau direction, recording of musical accompaniment for sound pictures, phonograph recording and vaudeville management is a natural alliance. The operation of broadcast input amplifiers, of electrically operated devices for phonograph recording and of sound-film recording devices, as well as of reproducing equipment in theatres and public address systems, is technically similar. Nothing could be more natural and logical than the merger of these activities.

There are, however, some practical obstacles to the joining of so many forces. Political sentiment is against the concentration in a single hand of so many potent means of influencing public opinion as are presented by broadcasting and motion pictures. The leaders in the radio field have, at no time, been in greater need of unified public support and of intelligent management of their public relations. The very fact that all the prospective mergers are announced as being only in the negotiation stage is recognition of the need for public approval in advance of actual consummation.

The principle of unification and concentration in industry is founded upon efficiency in public service. So long as the policies of huge corporations are directed with impartiality, we not only tolerate, but encourage the unification of such important agencies of general welfare as the telephone service. Likewise, we may look forward to centralization of broadcasting, motion pictures, phonograph recording and ultimately television, provided that service to every element of the public, every taste, every strata of society, and every shade of religious and political belief is considered in proportion to their needs. The actual completion of such mergings may have to await additional legal safeguards but, more likely than not, the immense detail of negotiation is the only immediate problem to be met.

The merger of radio, phonograph, and theatre interests by a leading group of the industry will, undoubtedly, result in similar alliances on the part of the other radio manufacturers. There can be no practical monopoly of any artistic effort and, undoubtedly, in the prospectively combined fields, we