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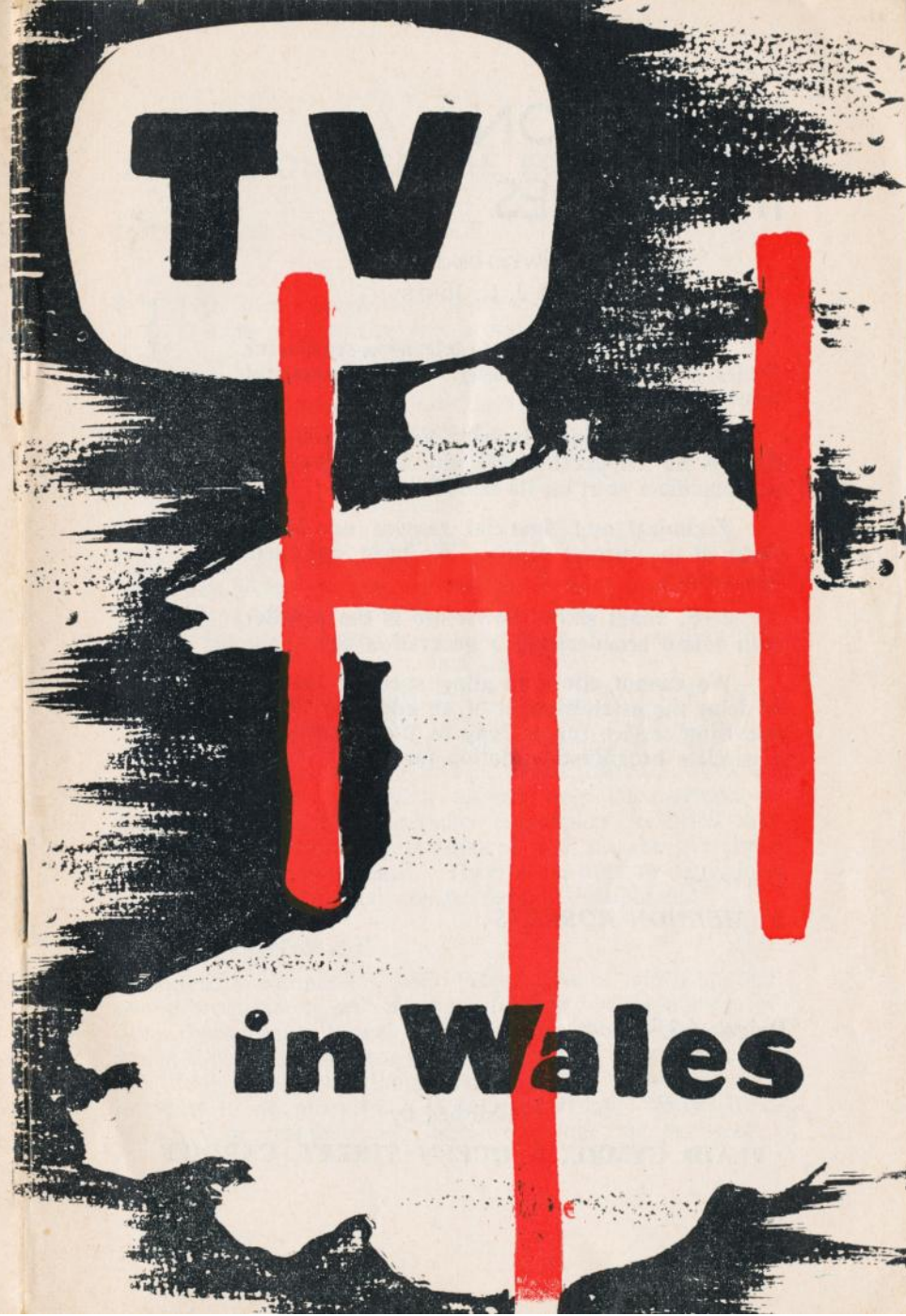
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TELEVISION IN WALES

By GWYNFOR EVANS
and J. E. JONES

A suitable and adequate television service for Wales is an urgent necessity. Is it a practical possibility?

In this pamphlet Gwynfor Evans argues that there is no insuperable difficulty which prevents an immediate start on its establishment.

Technical and financial reasons are being adduced to obstruct action. We have met their like before.

J. E. Jones shows how close is the parallel with sound broadcasting a generation ago.

We cannot afford to allow specious reasons to delay the establishment of an adequate Welsh television service for as long as they obstructed a wireless broadcasting station for Wales.

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E. MEIRION ROBERTS

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I.

TELEVISION SCHEME FOR WALES

IMPERATIVE AND POSSIBLE

THE social importance of television is increasing in a score of countries, but it may be that in no country does as much depend upon it as in Wales. Its consequences here are so profound and far-reaching that one of the important conditions of the continuance of the country's nationality and language is the provision of a Welsh television service which shall be suitable and adequate to Welsh needs. Admittedly costly, many have averred that it is also technically impracticable.

If the retention of traditions which are beyond price is conditional upon an adequate television service, then no sum of money within the capacity of the country is too great a price to pay for it. But if such a service is for technical reasons impossible, then we are no better for spending that money. Is the problem in fact insoluble?

Technical difficulties have before this, as Mr. J. E. Jones shows in his section of this pamphlet, been said to make a separate Welsh broadcasting station an unreal dream. It was the difficulties, not the dream, which melted away when it became clear that Welsh opinion was unconvinced of their finality, and this experience encourages the belief that the technical obstacles now adduced will also be overcome if we press sufficiently hard. There is no need to deny their existence, but they need not be thought insuperable.

DANISH CONTRAST

Countries comparable with Wales have a television and sound broadcasting service whose adequacy in the number of hours broadcast contrasts strikingly with the Welsh service, which even in sound broadcasting, including programmes in the Welsh and English languages, music and schools service, amounts to no more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day. Welsh BBC television programmes cover about half that time *per week*.

In Denmark (population $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions) broadcasting has for a generation covered the whole day of 18 hours. There were in 1956 five VHF stations in the country, which has twice the area of Wales.

This year the television service has been extended to cover the whole country with the sole exception of the Island of Bornholm. Licence fees for sound broadcasting cost 20/-, and for television 8/6. These finance the service, although the total income is very considerably smaller than that collected in Welsh licence fees.

The Government collected nearly $\pounds 1\frac{3}{4}$ millions in Wales during the last year in television and sound broadcasting licence fees. The number of television licences taken out is rapidly increasing, and soon the total sum collected annually for sound and television licences is likely to exceed $\pounds 2,000,000$.

SWITZERLAND SHOWS THE WAY

The position in Switzerland (population 4 millions) shows in a still more striking way how unnecessary and avoidable is the grave injury done to Wales by her incorporation in the English broadcasting and television system. For Switzerland has national minorities which are far smaller than the Welsh-speaking population of Wales: yet the Swiss Government takes great care to treat each one with a justice that the English government considers unnecessary in Wales.

Take for instance the Italian-speaking people of Switzerland, who are found in the canton of Ticino, of which Lugano is the capital. Its population is less than that of Carmarthen-shire or of Caernarvonshire. Yet in broadcasting it has its own station, which has to overcome the difficulties of a very mountainous terrain by expensive methods.

This station is, like the German-speaking and French-speaking Swiss stations, under independent direction and its programmes are independent. To its studios, as to the others, a symphony orchestra is attached; it has, as have each of the studios at Geneva, Lausanne, Berne, Zurich and Basle, its own drama company; and like the others it has its own separate news service. Each of the stations broadcasts for 15 hours a day.

This is possible because they are supported by Government. Wales has no government.

In television one would expect this kind of provision for national minorities to be impossible. But the Government view is that it is essential to do justice to each one. Accordingly each one is furnished with its own television service. The 170,000 people of Italian-speaking Switzerland have their own television programmes for $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day, broadcast from their own station by their own transmitters, and soon they will have enough low-powered transmitters to carry the signal to every valley in the Italian-speaking Alps (which, we should remember, is four times as high as Snowdon). Apart from their own programmes, they are able to view those televised from Northern Italy, which they have received for the past eight years.

The Swiss example shows how inexcusable is the position in Wales, where there is much more at stake. When will the Welsh people realise that such ills are inevitable as long as they lack a government which wills fullness of nationhood, or even survival, for the Welsh nation?

ISSUE IS—POLITICAL

No commercial concern is likely to entertain the idea of providing an adequate service for Wales on a commercial basis, and though a mixed system might be possible at a distant date, it is not practicable now and so need not detain us.

Had Wales her own broadcasting corporation, not only would her sound broadcasting service be more complete, but her position in television, too, would be far less vulnerable.

The Welsh people are paying a heavy price in this field, as in so many others, for their lack of self-government.

The way forward must lie with the B.B.C. At the moment even this corporation is not in a position to take effective action. Nor can the Welsh Broadcasting Council, which is for some purposes the B.B.C. in Wales, do much about it, since its function for engineering and the whole field of television is but advisory.

The issue is a political one and the Government alone can make an effective decision. When this is realised we begin to take the measure of the problem.

MATTER OF FINANCE

The main obstacle seems to be not technical but financial. Everyone knows television to be a costly service which requires a heavy capital outlay and a large annual income. The greatest expenditure is the initial capital needed for the equipment to carry a Welsh service (in the two languages) throughout Wales.

The situation today is complicated by the fact that any programme televised from Wales must, if it is to be received by most of this small country, be transmitted by three high-power transmitters at Wenvoe, Sutton Coldfield and Holme Moss. Apart from serving Wales, these serve twenty-two million people in England, who naturally resent having to view many Welsh programmes.

The B.B.C. may not televise more than 50 hours a week, and English viewers are not going to consent to the allocation of a big proportion of these hours to Wales. As a consequence the hours of Welsh television are so few as to be almost negligible.

An adequate television service for Wales therefore requires transmitters other than those now in use and operating on a channel not yet in use.

"KINGDOM OF ARTHUR" AGAIN

The one high-power transmitter on Welsh soil, at Wenvoe, shares the disadvantage of the other two at Sutton Coldfield and Holme Moss, that the viewers in its service area are outside as well as inside Wales.

Though it is in Wales, it would probably have been more convenient to place it the other side of the Bristol Channel. Television politics influenced the decision to put it at Wenvoe, for clearly the failure to provide any high or medium-power transmitter for Wales would have left the system wide-open to Welsh attack.

We have therefore a repetition of the early history of sound broadcasting in Wales, and the mythical "Kingdom of Arthur" has again been resurrected.

TWO TRANSMITTERS NEEDED

Wenvoe is far from being the best site for area coverage in Wales. If the site had been chosen primarily for that purpose the transmitter would probably have been placed thirty to forty miles inland on the highest convenient ground.

It has a radius of something over 70 miles, as compared with 120 miles for Holme Moss, which serves most of Anglesey and Yorkshire. But Holme Moss is on a mountain 1,700 ft. high, whereas Wenvoe is in the Vale of Glamorgan.

A high-power transmitter on the Brecon Beacons might almost double the area served by Wenvoe, thus including the areas of Wales now served by Sutton Coldfield and the large areas in West and mid-Wales which have now no television service at all. The mountainous nature of Wales will always make reception in some parts difficult, but as the thickly populated valleys of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire run southwards, a survey would probably discover that a signal from a Brecon Beacons' transmitter would be clearly received there.

To cover the whole of Wales, two high-power transmitters would be required, one in the Brecon Beacons and the other somewhere in Snowdonia. Their cost would be the main burden, and would amount to £800,000 to £1,000,000 each. For difficult localities, translators, which are very low-powered transmitters with a radius of 3—5 miles, and communal aerials, might still be needed, but they would cost comparatively little. Further revenue charges would have to be met, and as the running costs are notoriously heavy, they would have to be adapted to Welsh resources.

Today, Wales has no high or medium-power transmitter for her own use, whereas Scotland has high, medium and low-powered transmitters at Kirk O'Shotts, Meldrum and Rosemarkie. Northern Ireland is thoroughly covered by a medium-power transmitter at Divis and a low-power one at Londonderry. A smaller proportion of area and population are covered in Wales than in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

CHANNEL FOR WALES

There remains the difficulty of finding a separate channel for Wales. The frequencies available are the subject of international agreement.

There are five possible groups of them in the United Kingdom, but nothing is available yet in Bands 4 and 5 (a Band is a group of frequencies), on which experimental work is being done.

The five frequencies of Band One were allotted to the B.B.C., and the five are in full use. Band Two is used mainly by V.H.F. stations, and would in any case be technically unsatisfactory.

That leaves Band Three, where there are eight channels, four of which have been allotted to I.T.A. The others may be in partial use by the armed forces and police, but it is said that they are being reserved for a possible second programme by the B.B.C. Reception conditions on this band are less satisfactory than on Band 1, but the use made of some of the channels shows their potentialities.

If Wales is to have a channel of her own, clearly it must be one of these.

These channels in Band Three are at the disposal not of the B.B.C., but of the Postmaster-General. The Government also controls the number of hours which the B.B.C. can televise—now restricted to fifty; and its control also extends of course over expenditure. That is why it is true to say that the establishment of a Welsh television station with adequate facilities is a political matter.

The B.B.C. has distributed the resources available to it upon a population basis, and upon that basis its job has been most successfully and fairly done.

If there were but one nation and one culture in the United Kingdom, there would be little room for criticism. But the one-twentieth of the population which lives in Wales composes a separate nation, with a culture of its own.

The method of counting heads results in injustice and danger to this small nation of two and a half million people.

AN IMPERATIVE NEED

Television's potency has increased, is increasing and will increase much more. It threatens the gravest injury to the Welsh nation by diluting and even destroying its most

cherished traditions. The maintenance of the national language is made immeasurably more difficult by having the equivalent of an English cinema in an ever greater number of homes.

But were this technique assimilated to Welsh life, it could do much to strengthen and enrich it. If Wales is to live, the present situation in television must be quickly and radically improved.

How much is the life of Wales worth to us? Probably the vast majority of our people would agree that it is worth at least the amount necessary to establish and maintain an adequate Welsh television service.

It is not fantastic to compare it in importance with the national university and even the whole structure of formal education. Compared with these and other national services, the large capital outlay is in fact small—it is in the neighbourhood of the cost of new college buildings, of two new large schools or bombing-planes. When spread over twenty years it can be seen to be well within the nation's resources.

The fact is that it must be faced if Wales is to live. It is an imperative need. A Welsh government would take it in its stride, together with the national theatre and opera house that we so badly need.

It is so much more than a medium of entertainment, and even of education, for Wales. It could do more than any other single institution to maintain and stimulate the language and intellectual vitality of the Welsh people, and to ensure that the heritage of millenia will not be eroded away.

GWYNFOR EVANS.

II.

STORY OF THE STRUGGLE

FOR A WELSH STATION

THE story of the fight that Wales had to make, from 1923 to 1935, to obtain a Welsh Broadcasting Station, and of the extreme tardiness of the B.B.C. in granting to Wales the most reasonable and moderate requirements, is one which may have significance for us, now that we must demand a Television Service for Wales.

THE EARLY SET-UP

It may be necessary to recall briefly the position of Wales in respect of broadcasting in that period.

From 1923 to 1931, broadcasting for Wales was as meagre as could be, and from the earliest date the B.B.C. refused to consider her a nation and proceeded to plan the dismemberment of Wales.

In 1931, the B.B.C. "Regional Scheme" was established. Despite hundreds of protests, the Corporation set up a Western Region which made of southern Wales and South-Western England a single broadcasting area. Central and northern Wales were ignored in the scheme, and received no Welsh broadcasting service.

It was not until 1935 that the B.B.C. was brought to deal with Wales as a national entity.

CONSCIOUS ANTAGONISM TO WELSH UNITY AND NATIONALITY

After so many years, it may be difficult for many Welshmen to realise how violent was the conscious antagonism of the B.B.C. in that period to Welsh national unity and to Welsh nationality. I will therefore select a few statements which will serve as evidence.

On August 30, 1927, in the *Western Mail*, Mr. E. R. Appleton, Director of the Western Region, commented on the

plea for an improved broadcasting service which was made in that famous report of the Board of Education, "Welsh in Education and Life." The Report had stated (pp. 174 and 175) :

"We regard the present policy of the British Broadcasting Corporation as one of the most serious menaces to the life of the Welsh language

"It is a rather pathetic comment on the position of Welsh in its own country that the only regular Welsh programme is that given once a week from the Dublin Station by the Irish Government."

Mr. E. R. Appleton replied :

"Wales of her own choice is part of the British Commonwealth of Nations, of which the official language is English. When His Majesty's Government decided to form a corporation for the important function of broadcasting, it was *natural* that the official language be used *throughout*.

"To use the ancient languages regularly—Welsh, Irish, Gaelic and Manx—would be either *to serve propaganda purposes* or to disregard the needs of the greatest number in the interest of those *who use the language for aesthetic and sentimental reasons* rather than for practical purposes

"If the extremists who desire to force the language upon listeners in the area were to have their way, the official language would lose its grip."

Such a statement by a high official of the B.B.C., who administered broadcasting in southern Wales, revealed an unmistakable bigotry against Welsh nationality.

Secondly, a letter from Colonel Dawnay, B.B.C. Controller of Programmes, to the Caernarfon Branch of Plaid Cymru when the "Regional Scheme" was adopted and the "Western Region" was established; it is today difficult to believe that a B.B.C. official could have written thus :

"It is felt that the claims of Wales will thus be *adequately met*, and I can hold out *no hope of any reconsideration* of the scheme of redistribution that has been decided on."

Thirdly, the B.B.C. Year Book for 1934 defended the Western Region set-up in an article entitled "The Kingdom of Arthur," by maintaining that that "kingdom" possessed a cultural unity while, presumably, that of Wales was of no consequence :

"The West Regional Station re-unites the Kingdom of Arthur after centuries of separation by the Bristol Channel. So far as broadcasting is concerned, the barrier of the channel means nothing."

And fourthly, the view of the B.B.C. was epitomised in the *Radio Times* of October 19, 1934 :

"Melville Dinwiddie (Director for Scotland) is in charge of the only Broadcasting Region that is also a nation."

THE WELSH DEMAND

It is necessary to remind ourselves that during this whole period from 1927 to 1935, hundreds—and probably thousands—of requests for an adequate broadcasting service for Wales were made to the B.B.C.

Local authorities, from County Councils to Parish Councils, educational institutions, religious organisations, and all manner of voluntary societies and groups supported the campaign.

In Parliament and outside, Members of Parliament occasionally helped the Welsh efforts.

THE ALLEGED "TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES"

The B.B.C., repeatedly, during these years, in reply to Welsh protests, affirmed that technical, geographical or physical difficulties made a Welsh broadcasting service impossible.

In 1930, Mr. E. G. Bowen put forward a scheme for Wales in an article published with maps and explanatory charts in the *Western Mail* : he proposed a single Welsh programme to be broadcast on one wavelength from two transmitters set up in southern and northern Wales. (This was the scheme eventually adopted and is still, substantially, in operation.)

The B.B.C. replied that it was *technically impossible* to broadcast the same programme on one wavelength from two transmitters.

In 1931, when the Regional Service was adopted, the B.B.C. affirmed (in a pamphlet "Radio in Wales") that the proportion of licence holders to population in Wales *did not justify* providing Wales with a more adequate service.

The E. G. Bowen plan was repeatedly advocated by Welsh organisations; the B.B.C. in 1933 again advanced "technical impossibility" as its reason for refusing a Welsh broadcasting system.

Later in 1933, the B.B.C. made use of the exact scheme advanced by E. G. Bowen to transmit one programme on one wavelength over two transmitters; but not to serve Wales; ironically, the two transmitters used to put over a single programme were those of London and Watchet—the latter being the transmitter of the Western Region serving Wales.

As Mr. E. G. Bowen himself said (*Draig Goch*, Dec., 1933) :

"Each time we present our case (to the B.B.C.) our proposals are rejected as impracticable. Our complaints are brushed aside as irresponsible and puerile—even without giving them a minute of serious consideration.

"Then within a short while, the B.B.C. discovers that our 'impracticable' suggestions are most suitable for their own ends, and they immediately proceed to put them into practice"—but not in or for Wales.

Now that the E. G. Bowen plan was admitted to be practicable, the B.B.C. advanced sparcity of wavelengths in order to reject Welsh demands.

In 1934, however, four wavelengths became redundant. The B.B.C. immediately asserted the *prior claims* of certain areas of England and Scotland. Wales was refused *even one* of them.

It was not until 1935 that the B.B.C. was forced to adopt the E. G. Bowen plan for Wales.

THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE

In 1934, the University of Wales Consultative Committee was established to confer with the B.B.C., to "*be the only recognised channel for Welsh opinion on all matters of policy.*" This Committee, with Mr. E. G. Bowen as its technical adviser, merits great praise.

In his capacity as Vice-Chancellor of the University, Mr. (now Sir) Emrys Evans gave a firm lead on this subject in the University Court at Abergavenny that year, and effectively led the Consultative Committee when it visited Broadcasting House in London.

Time and time again, the Committee met the obdurate overbearing officialdom of the gentlemen of Broadcasting House in London with unrelenting and well-informed determination to win through to justice.

Under constant pressure from this University of Wales Consultative Committee, and under pressure of public indignation in Wales, in May of 1935 the B.B.C. submitted; it agreed to adopt the E. G. Bowen plan, to allocate a wavelength, to set up a northern transmitter, and a studio at Bangor; the separation of Wales from the South-West of England was conceded in principle.

It must be added that the B.B.C. conceded this most righteous demand of the Welsh nation with an ill-grace; its statement suggested that some *new* triumph over technical difficulties had just been achieved although, less than a month before, the B.B.C. were warning the Welsh M.P.'s that there was no change at all in the technical situation.

ON WELSH CULTURE AND STAFFING

The lack of programmes in Welsh has already been referred to. Even as late as November 1934, no more than 3½ to 4 hours a week of broadcasts in the Welsh language were given from the West Regional Station, in spite of hundreds of protests.

The University of Wales Consultative Committee maintained a long and fierce struggle with the authorities of Broadcasting House on this matter of fair treatment to the Welsh language.

Supported by the constant public demands, and after a difficult conference at Broadcasting House late in 1934, when the Committee demanded an immediate minimum of 12 hours, an average of 5½ hours a week was conceded.

The B.B.C. then added that 6 hours a week was the *limit* of possible concession.

The same policy of hostility to Welsh culture naturally governed the staffing of the West Region Station. Even after the establishment of the University Consultative Committee, the B.B.C. *twice* appointed monoglot Englishmen, Mr. Suthery and Mr. Rendall, as Programme Directors. All the senior posts in the West Region were held by monoglot Englishmen with no knowledge of Wales and with no apparent contact with the life of the Welsh people.

The broadcasting arrangements achieved in 1935 in no way provided a final or satisfactory settlement; they were a tardy and very incomplete surrender to common sense and justice.

J. E. JONES.

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