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File: **LR001162-001 - INTERVIEW WITH FRANK GILLARD.wav**

Duration: **0:52:14**

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START AUDIO

Frank Gillard: But that was how local broadcasting was developed through Pilkington.

0:00:10

Interviewer: Can I just interrupt there and say, in fact, we've got, fortunately, that story at length anyway, which is great? So, I think we could get on to what we haven't got.

Frank Gillard: [Crosstalk 0:00:18] [more of an idea].

Interviewer: If I could just say at this point that what you've been talking about, the committees that you were on while you were Controller in West Region, give me the impression that there was a lot of talk about possible change, but, in fact, radio itself was in a rather moribund position that nothing very much had changed since those changes came in after the war.

And that you were one of the people who felt – who could see – how radio could adapt to the changes in society, which was a quite different society, certainly at the beginning of the end of the '50s and beginning of the '60s, than it had been in the late '40s. Then, when you became Director of the Spoken Word, you had a chance, really, to look at some of these things.

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Frank Gillard: That's exactly right. In 1963, when I became the Director, and I say this without reflecting on my predecessor, he had done a great job of steadfastness. He'd held radio rock-steady under the competition of television, but the radio services were identical in 1963 – identical – to the services he inherited when he took over the job in 1951. That's to say, two full-time services and one evening-only service. That was it, so there were two-and-a-half services. This clearly was inadequate for 1963, when all the media were progressing rapidly and radio had immense potential for development.

I found the whole setup, to be quite fair, I found it in the doldrums. Financially, it was very tight indeed. There was absolutely no money to spare for development that I could find, without cutting down, without pruning, which one had to do.

I found myself saddled with a staff which was far above the average age that one would hope for, and with a much higher proportion of what you might call 'burnt-out people' who'd done splendid work in their days, in the '30s and the '40s, but now had absolutely nothing to give.

Of course, the best people, anyway, had gone across to television by now. These people were serving out their time and were blocking the opportunities of bringing in young people, with new ideas, who would re-energise the service.

Frankly, I considered, when I took radio over, that it was in the doldrums. Certainly, this was the kind of message that I got from Hugh Greene and from the board, and that it was time somebody went in there and did something to waken up radio and, generally speaking, to redecorate and refurbish it.

That was easier said than done, because financially we were in a desperate condition. There was no spare money there at all.

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The only way of making advances in one direction was to cut back in others.

I was saddled with – I found myself saddled with – a very elderly staff of people who'd done meritorious work in the earlier years but who had now long since ceased to have any sort of spark in them. They were burnt out. Not their fault, but they just were. Some of the best of them, of course, had gone over to television.

I felt generally that the mould of radio had been unbroken for too long. The whole thing had become totally rigid so that it was all the more difficult to infiltrate any kind of development or new ideas. They bounced right back at you. Nobody wanted to hear them. It was solid, and it was worthy, but it was desperately dull. Furthermore, it was extremely resentful and bitter about the growth of television. This was infecting everybody with a kind of cynicism that I didn't like at all.

Really, I'm painting a rather grey picture, but I did find it a bit of a handful of snakes when I took it over, really. The bright spots for me were, first of all, the people immediately around me, namely Dick Marriott, who was my Assistant Director, and Michael Standing, who was the Controller of Programme Operations – Programme Operations?

Anyway, Michael Standing, who was the Controller of Programme Organisation and, therefore, was Controller of Administration and of Programme Operations. They were old friends, and they were men of enormous ability. Either of them could have done that job of DSB, and done it on his head. Why I was chosen and not one of them, I don't know.

Then in the departments, they were one or two good people. William Glock was now Controller of Music, and William was first-rate at that job. I don't think he was terribly good at

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organising his department, but he was full of ideas. You can see what he did with 'The Proms', just to illustrate the kind of quality of the man. Martin Esslin had just taken over drama, and that was fizzing away very happily indeed. Some of the other departments really were dying on their feet.

0:05:31

Interviewer: What about the controllers you had?

Frank Gillard: The network people at the time were called 'heads of networks', not 'controllers', oddly enough: Ronald Lewin, Dennis Morris, and Howard Newby. Lewin, in running the Home Service, was unfortunately far from fit and had a succession of nervous breakdowns. Ultimately, we had to persuade him that he should go out of the BBC, find his way out. He went into publishing. Hutchinson's found him a job.

Dennis Morris had come from Birmingham. He was doing a nondescript sort of job with the 'Light Programme'. I felt it was terribly uninspired. I thought he was an awfully old-fashioned sort of man. He didn't cotton on to new ideas. Fortunately, he was within sight of retirement and he served out his term, but I couldn't bring myself to suggest that he stayed on at all.

Howard, [our third programmer, I 0:06:29] very happy about. I always found him extremely cooperative and very open-minded, but there were some real problems. There was a planning department, with Rooney Pelletier as Controller of it. This meant that the hierarchy was enormous. A producer in some department, having an idea, would put it to the head of the department. It would be subject to the veto of Rooney, as

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Controller of the programme planning side. Above Rooney sat Dick Marriott, and above Dick Marriott sat me.

This, really, was too ridiculous a structure. We didn't need a programme operations – programme planning – department anyway. The heads of the networks were quite capable of running their networks, so I abolished the Rooney Pelletier post. I put him in charge of presentation, keeping his rank as Controller because one felt Rooney had to do that. Otherwise, it would break his heart.

I upgraded the three network chiefs and called them 'chiefs', in fact, I think. They'd been heads before. I called them 'chiefs'. Couldn't call them 'controller' without board consent, you see, because the board insists on appointing anybody called 'controller'.

Then my other problems were the Features Department and the Children's Department. If I wanted to expand, I was faced with colossal headaches over needle time because one couldn't enlarge the broadcasting services as I wanted to without greatly increased availability of the gramophone record.

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0:08:13

Interviewer: Shall we concentrate on what you cut back, before we concentrate on how you enlarged [Crosstalk]?

Frank Gillard: What I wanted to do, really, I wanted to… What did I do? Somebody said to me, "The first thing you must do is make everybody aware of the fact that you're there. Do something, never mind what. Do something. Do something crazy if you like, but do something to make everybody aware that there's a

new director." I thought, "My God, what can I do to make everybody aware there's a new director?" Then I thought, "I know. I would tell the announcers that they can use their names again."

During the war, you'd had the great days of Frank Phillips, and Alvar Lidell and so forth. The minute war was over, that was withdrawn. I knew the announcers wanted to name themselves and so, in appointing Rooney as Head of Announcers, I said, "And you can tell them that they can use their names, the newsreaders and the others. They can become known radio personalities." Of course, in the trivial way that happens, this was headline news in every newspaper at once. Everybody knew there was a new director – so stupid.

Then I abolished the Planning Department. That saved me a few posts which were quite useful, but all these people merely reinforced it. I couldn't take any immediate steps in August and September 1963, because [Gilliam 0:09:30] was away, ill. I didn't know what his sickness was.

He came back in the late autumn. Of course, I saw him and enquired after his health, and he said he was now quite fit, but he'd been suffering from an inflamed coccyx, which was a part of the human anatomy I didn't know existed, but he said he was now quite fit. So, I said, shortly, I'd be wanting to have a good talk with him.

Immediately after Christmas, in the very first week of the New Year 1964, I got him to come along and I told him, frankly, that I thought Features Department should now be disbanded, that I didn't propose that there should be any reduction in the number of features on the air. I didn't propose there should be any reduction in staff. I did not propose that we should be in any way saving money.

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It was purely an organisational thing, but I thought that we would know best serve our needs for features and documentaries if the people who produced them were concentrated in fewer units. I didn't want a features department.

He took this extremely well. He said, “We were set up as a commando group. When a commando group has done its job, it's time to shut it down. I agree with you. We've done our job. We've shown everybody what radio can do that is unique to this medium. All sorts of other people are doing it now, and we aren't necessary. I agree with you. Provided people are properly treated, go ahead.”

We agreed between us that that would be the line we would, over the next few months, progressively follow. At a suitable moment, we would talk to the department about it and take whatever steps we could work out with the men concerned, and the women, in consultation.

I asked him to come again and see me a week or so later to discuss his own personal position. I asked him to think about it first. When he came the next time, I offered him six alternatives, one of which was that he could take over, if he wished, the Home Service. He said that, on the whole, he would like to take early retirement on suitable terms and then to be offered a contract as the BBC’s number one documentarian in radio, which pleased me very much. I think we would have got some very fine work out of Laurence.

Let me say know that, before we could implement anything completely about the Features Department, Laurence was dead because his trouble was cancer. His operation had not succeeded in doing anything more than merely postponing the end by a few weeks, but Laurence was unable, after our second conversation, to keep it to himself, though I had asked

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him to. So, the word was going around, in the inevitable way, that Features Department was going to be toast.

So, instantly, I called a meeting of the department and I told them what the plans were. I said I had hoped to be able to work out proposals for each member of the department individually before I saw them, but that this had happened prematurely, so I could only tell them in a group. We would now proceed, having given them in general an indication of what we proposed to do. We would now proceed to work out each person's destiny with that individual, and so we did.

They didn't like it, a lot of them. They had good connections with Fleet Street, of course, and Fleet Street played up the story, but I knew that I had the board and the DG behind me, so it didn't matter at all what the headlines were. Really, it doesn't matter. If you've got your bosses behind you, you can sit tight and let the storm rage. You're foolish if you go home and worry about it.

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I didn't, because I knew we were doing the right thing. Nobody in the department lost his job. Those who produced pure documentaries were moved into talks, where they were working alongside a lot of other people who were interested in the kind of fields of activity that interested them.

We had two assistant heads of talks, one who looked after just straightforward talks, and the other one who looked after the documentary side. This man was Geoffrey Bridson, who was one of the features producers. I'm eternally grateful to Geoffrey, who I think had some misgivings about it all but who said he would, for two years, be the Assistant Head of Talks on the feature side, and who did a very good job there, and then, at the end of two years, came to me and said, “I don't want to go on being an administrator. I like making programmes.” So, he went back as a senior producer.

His book doesn't treat me very kindly over all this. Indeed, it misrepresents me in some ways, but, nevertheless, I expressed my gratitude to Geoffrey. He helped me through this very difficult period. Those producers, like [Nestor Payne 0:14:03] and others, who normally in Features Department produced dramatised work, went to where they belonged properly, into Drama Department, were immediately absorbed and loved it. A few others, like John Bridges, who were rather maverick figures, finished up in other places. Bridges finished up in variety, where he still is, and has enjoyed his life in variety.

When I meet these people, most of them today, they don't hesitate to say, “On the whole, it was a good thing you did,” but they were, of course, rather disgruntled at the time. This is understandable. We did have a rough ride over it. From time to time, even today, the issue comes up in the press and so on, and would go on.

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It's usually misrepresented as if, by carrying out an organisational change, we had somehow suppressed the features documentary type of activity on the air. In fact, there were far more of them. Every bit as much encouragement is given to writers and such people today as was ever done under the Features Department.

I think some people felt that, in disbanding the Features Department and closing it down, one was in fact extinguishing a great hive of creative and generative programming, but that truly wasn't the case. In earlier years, yes, features had produced most distinguished work, but now the department, quite frankly, it had still a few people who were doing… I think of Douglas Cleverdon, for example, but there are others, too, who were producing programmes of considerable excellence, but the general run of the stuff was really no better than

material one got from anywhere, and a good deal worse than a lot of the programmes coming up from other departments.

It was not any longer a department of distinction and so, really, it was a kindness to the department to terminate it before all the glory of its past was overwhelmed by I won't say, “Mediocrity,” but the ordinariness – is that the right word? – by the ordinariness of its present.

0:16:17

Interviewer: Can I just put one point in opposition to what you did, because I think it's a point which, certainly, people like Jack Dylan would make? It was a department which was full of ageing people, as you said, you found in other areas. Certainly the only person who had been appointed within the last five or six years was Sasha Moorsom, who was appointed straight from Cambridge. Other than that, there were just general trainees going through.

0:16:45 I'm not sure that the next youngest person wasn't Nestor Payne, but they would all have retired, wouldn't they, within, maybe, five years? Not all of them, but certainly a number of them. New blood would have come in. Would that have made any difference? I mean was it really a matter of statistics rather than…? And people running down all at the same time.

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Frank Gillard: No, I'm afraid we couldn't wait that long. It was just like that. The thing had got so bad. You see, the rest of the BBC, the rest of sound radio, the other departments had got to the point at which simply they regarded features almost as an outrage.

They were in every other department, in talks and so on. Mostly, they were hard-working people. They may not have

been particularly inspired people, but they worked hard. They did not abuse BBC privileges and that sort of thing.

In Features Department, you had very highly paid staff who were hardly ever in their offices, and many of them were hardly ever sober, who just took the BBC for a ride and whose expense accounts were notorious. The administration of the department was a disgrace.

However, we simply couldn't get Laurence even to sign annual reports on his people, so that it could not be allowed to continue. It would have contaminated, I fear, the rest of the corporation No, everybody agreed with me, really, that it was time to take a grip on this situation. It had been allowed to slide for too long.

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0:18:20

Interviewer: Was that true of Children's Hour? Why did that have to come to an end?

Frank Gillard: No, it wasn't true of Children's Hour. This is a different story altogether. Children’s television, this was misunderstood all over the place. Again, I don't suppose I presented it properly. The resentment within the BBC wasn't very great, and the department itself took it rather well. Nobody was sacked. Nobody was terminated. David Davis went with great distinction into Drama Department and became a senior producer.

I think so did both his assistants if I remember rightly, Claire Chovil and who the devil was he? He had a man there, too. I forget his name now, but he went over, whoever it was. Anyway, they were happily relocated.

Interviewer: John Lane.

Frank Gillard: John Lane. John had gone to Birmingham by this time, I think. John was out of Children's Hour, but at any rate, there was no redundancy of staff. They were all accommodated without too much trouble, in posts which were not outrageously different from the jobs they had been doing.

No, the trouble was outside. All sorts of people looked on this and remembered their days of Children's Hour and all the kind of lovely, middle-class entertainment that was poured out, and the sweet, unctuous kind of standards that were set up by Uncle Mac and everybody else, and David Davis playing mazurkas by Chopin on the piano, and somebody reading a bit of poetry and all that.

Interviewer: 'Worzel Gummidge', and 'Norman and Henry Bones'.

Frank Gillard: All that, and they felt that a part of their childhood was being torn up and destroyed and that their children were never going to get the kind of opportunities that they had had, regardless of the fact their children had not used them when the opportunity was there.

This, again, I had Hugh Greene's support on and the board's support on. If there's anything I would say to my successors, it is, "If you ever contemplate a revolutionary development, make sure you've got your bosses on your side before you advance on it," because you can batten down the hatches then, but this resulted in endless deputations from angry women's

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organisations. They really laid it on thick, and I had to see every single one of them, and try and talk to them. I, of course, got nowhere with them. They vilified me.

Then one or two of them were wives of Members of Parliament, and they got their husbands to put down motions on the order paper. At one time, a motion on the order paper condemning this had 60 members' names on it. Then I started receiving deputations of Members of Parliament, as well.

Of course, the press loved this story and played it up, so we had a really rough ride. Hugh Greene said to me that this, the Features Department thing, and the 'Nine O'Clock News' thing, which happened just before I came along, caused more trouble to him, as Director-General, than anything that ever happened in television. It certainly caused a lot of trouble to me, but, however, it had to be done, and it was done.

Now, another of the steps I had to take if we were to increase the amount of broadcasting in radio was, of course, to get more needle time. The situation which I inherited was that we had 27 hours of needle time allowed us, for all purposes, per week.

Of course, the needle time is under the copyright control of the record companies. They were prepared to concede a lot more, provided we paid for it, but the Musicians' Union would not. The Musicians' Union flatly refused a single extra hour of additional needle time.

I felt this had to be brought to a head. DA, John Arkell, Director of Administration, who was the man who was primarily responsible for dealing with unions, was a bit reluctant about making an issue of anything, but this had gone on for so many years that I felt we had to break this iron embargo.

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So, we pressed it on the union and finally said to them that, if they rejected our case, we would take it to the Performing Rights Tribunal, which is a statutory body which you can invoke when you encounter refusal by a licensing authority to license the use of its products to you, if you think you have a legitimate case.

Now, we couldn't proceed against the Musicians' Union at the tribune. We could proceed against the record companies, but the record companies would say, “We're perfectly willing to give these people the needle time. It is the Musicians' Union who won't.” We would get a ruling from that tribunal that the union couldn't ignore.

The union brushed this aside because they thought we were bluffing. In the end, we got a date fixed for a tribunal hearing. The tribunal was mobilised. We got all our paperwork done, and the union began to realise that we meant business.

About 10 days before the tribunal was due to sit, the union began to say, “Can't we have one last shot at resolving this?” Arkell and I said, “Right, certainly.” This was on a Friday afternoon, and we said, “We'll start with you at 10:30 on Monday morning. Will we agree that we'll sit there, day and night, until we come through with something?” So, okay, that was how we did it.

We started in Arkell's office at 9:30 on the Monday morning. We took about 6 hours a night off, or 7 hours. We went on until the small hours and then started again at 9:00 in the morning. On the Thursday evening, we finally reached a resolution with them, which raised our quota of needle time from 27 hours a week to 75.

In return, we had to make various concessions to them. We agreed to set up a training orchestra, which was one of the… It

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was my idea, but this was something that they leapt on as a concession. We agreed that we would spend not more than £2.5m a year on the employment of musicians. We agreed that we would maintain the scale of employment on the house orchestras as they were and wouldn't cut it back.

All sorts of other things we agreed as part of the deal. We had to make great and expensive concessions, but we got the needle time. The record companies were quite prepared to give it to us, provided the MU agreed, so the way was now open for doing great advances. We could now operate the third channel right through the day, and we brought in the 'Music Programme', starting at 8:00 – or was it 7:00 in the morning? – and running right through to evening time, of serious music.

We could enlarge the broadcasting time of the 'Light Programme'. We could bring it up at 5:00 in the morning instead of 7:30 or whatever time it started, and we could run it on until 2:00am instead of shutting it down at midnight. So, this this really was a very great development, but, by goodness, it took some extremely hard bargaining.

It was a great achievement, really, in the end. I thought it was a good first step. We'd broken the rigid mould, you see. There was a new feeling now that radio was on the march. People began to feel that the peaks which had been reached in the early post-war years were not the end of everything. There were new heights yet to be scaled. Radio was moving again.

I wrote articles, and made speeches and talked to staff endlessly on this particular kind of theme. I was very, very encouraged by the reaction of my senior colleagues – I'm talking now of my weekly programme heads' meeting – at the news that we'd got this extra needle time.

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The man who least of all I would have expected to make such a statement proposed a vote of congratulation to me, which was really tremendously gratifying. I began to feel that perhaps we could infuse some life into the system again, because it had been pretty moribund, really.

0:26:05

Interviewer: Would you say, just going off that, that this was a great morale boost?

Frank Gillard: Unquestionably.

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0:26:12

Interviewer: Right down to [the Producer]?

Frank Gillard: Unquestionably. It showed, as I say, that things were not as rigid as they had appeared to be, that you could break out of these boundaries which had surrounded radio for too long.

0:26:26

Interviewer: Could I just ask a supplementary here? Was it ever considered then that we might actually break this agreement? You had extended the amount of needle time. There really is no reason why, is there, that the BBC shouldn't take on the MU and say, “Okay, you have your strike, we can manage for three months, six months, however long, and you're out of work,” as, indeed, [Manx 0:26:54] did, I believe?

Frank Gillard: We didn't at that time think of confrontation with the union in the future. Having got what we wanted by discussion and argument, arduous as it had been, I think I certainly formed the opinion that on future occasions that's how we would have to proceed. Indeed, we did when we came to introduce Radio 1 and needed more needle time for that. That's how we proceeded, but we did establish a kind of precedent, which still holds good.

We're talking now 1977 and which is, I'm afraid, an embarrassment to the BBC, which was that, anytime the BBC was to get a concession of additional needle time from the union, that part of the price of that would be that it would, at the same time, offer additional employment to musicians. That is the principle which the union regards as having been established in those negotiations we had in 1964. It may be unfortunate, but that was the price we had to pay.

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Interviewer: It's the price. We're the only organisation that pays that price, aren't we?

Frank Gillard: Yes, but we're the only organisation which is subject to copyright control of gramophone records.

0:28:05

Interviewer: Exactly. I wonder, should we be?

Frank Gillard: That’s a matter for the government.

Interviewer: Indeed.

Frank Gillard: And the Copyright Act.

0:28:12

Interviewer: Yes. So, what happened next?

Frank Gillard: Of course, there was always local radio, and the campaign for that was continuing. Local radio was still a long way off, two years and more, but we were still pressing for it, but there was a second major thrust, I think you might say, in radio, which we were developing.

Here, the timetable was dictated by circumstances rather than by ourselves. This was the idea of the introduction of a special service of some kind for people who preferred most of all to have pop music, popular music.

Many other countries had introduced this. It was, of course, a commonplace in America, Australia, Canada, and so on. I was convinced that the BBC ought to be doing such a thing. Many other people felt that it ought to be beneath the BBC’s contempt. I didn't take that view, personally.

I remember that we had, one Tuesday, this meeting of department heads. The meeting, I'd actually said, “That's the end of the meeting,” and we were getting up to go when Philip Monson, who was the Chief Engineer for Radio, said, “Just a minute. There's one thing I forgot.” He said, “I just ought to tell

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you that we've heard that there's yet another of these ships getting ready to broadcast from somewhere in the English Channel. We don't know where.”

In the past, these things had come and gone. They'd had their brief day. They'd never been very successful. They'd been no more than fleabites. The BBC disregarded them, so we all gave a happy little laugh and we went off to our lunches. Little did we know, because this was the end of – the beginning of – the really big pirate attack on us. This, of course, was the precipitating factor which led, in the end, to the introduction of Radio 1.

So, there, that was the situation. We, of course, wanted to shut down these pirates. We put all the pressure we could on the government, but the government wasn't going to be bothered by a little fleabite like this. Certainly wasn't inclined to take any particular action, until it began to get protests from European countries. Italy protested to the British Government because one of these pirate ships was using the wavelength properly assigned to Rome Radio and was blotting out Rome Radio after dark in many of its service areas, many parts of its service area.

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Of course, the British Government's reply was, “We can do nothing about it, because these ships are outside our jurisdiction. They’re beyond the three-mile limit. They're in international waters.” That really was a pretty feeble excuse, everybody felt.

In any case, there was a real danger that these ships were interfering with the safety services of Mercantile Marines, and operations and that sort of thing. SOS messages were getting blotted out, so it was said, and so on, so it was felt that really the time was coming when something would have to be done about it.

0:31:01

Interviewer: Just two supplementaries on that, which we might be able to edit in. One is, was there really a movement in the BBC for what would later become Radio 1, before the pirates?

Frank Gillard: Yes, I think the answer to that is, "Yes," but it was a very… It was in the minds of a few people that we ought to be doing this, that other countries had shown that there was a large audience for this kind of thing and that the BBC should put its stuffiness aside and tackle it. That's the answer, I think.

Interviewer: Secondly, you say, "It was said they interfered with SOS messages [Crosstalk 0:31:40]."

Frank Gillard: Yes.

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0:31:41

Interviewer: Was this ever proved? I mean this-

Frank Gillard: Yes, there was a certain amount of evidence. There were one or two cases where it appeared that they were doing it. After all, they were putting out 50kW of power in Coast Guard areas and that sort of thing, so it was inevitable that they would blot out some of the older and more inefficient Coast Guard receiving and transmitting equipment. That was the sort of thing that happened.

0:32:02

Interviewer: So, then, the wavelength interference, did that prompt the government to do something?

Frank Gillard: Yes. You see, since they were outside our territorial waters, it had to be done by international agreement. It couldn't be done by national moves. It was quite obvious that this would take time. International legislation is a very lengthy process indeed.

Meanwhile, of course, our main instrument at that time was the ‘Light Programme’. The ‘Light Programme’ mix carried a great deal of pop music. It carried also a great deal of light music, but it also carried quite a quantity of spoken-word stuff. It carried ‘Woman's Hour’. It carried ‘Morning Story’. It carried soap operas. There was quite a lot of talk in the ‘Light Programme’.

Interviewer: ‘Radio Newsreel’.

Frank Gillard: I think ‘Radio Newsreel’, you’re right. It all went out on three separate channels. It went out on Long Wave, it went out on Medium Wave 261 metres, and it went out on VHF. So, I went to the board one day and said, “What I would like to propose is that, when the Long Wave and the VHF ‘Light Programme’ is doing talk of any kind, the Medium Wave 261 detaches itself and carries on with music so that anybody wanting nothing but music – pop or light music – would listen to 261.”

The board didn't like this at all. They threw it out on principle. They took this beneath contempt attitude, “This popular music

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stuff, [we oughtn't 0:33:36] to be doing it," and all the rest of it. My reply to that, of course, was, "But look, we've given our first priority to serious music. We've brought in an all-day, serious music programme. It's only fair that the much larger audience that loves light music should now have our attention," but at this stage the board really wouldn't listen to me. They bounced me out. I never got such treatment from the board before or since, but they just bounced me out. I was really rather hurt by it.

It was quite clear the board was wrong. Someone had to go back to them with Hugh Greene's backing, support. I went back this time with a new strategy. I said, "Look, something has got to counter these pirates. They'll go off the air sooner or later by government action. Something has got to replace them. If we aren't doing it, the government will look to somebody else to do it."

I put to them a stronger proposal about 261 this time: that we should take it away permanently from the 'Light Programme' network, and we should establish it as a network on its own and make a fourth programme out of it.

This time, rather reluctantly, they agreed and so we sent this proposal to the Postmaster General, who was Ted Short. Now, Ted Short had already been thinking over this problem with his people, and he had gone to the Cabinet, we subsequently learned, with quite a different proposal.

That autumn – and I'm talking about 1966 – I had gone up to Blackpool to be at the Conservative Party Conference, where I was greatly embarrassed by an emergency resolution, which the conference discussed and passed overwhelmingly, that the next Tory government should bring in commercial radio, since the BBC was not doing a total job.

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Hardly had that finished at Blackpool than I got an urgent message from Hugh Greene to return to London. I came shooting back here and he said to me, “Look, I just found out that this draft white paper which Ted Short has put to the Cabinet and which, in principle, they've approved, though not in detail, contains, would you believe it, a recommendation that a completely new broadcasting authority should be formed for radio, that it should operate a pop music network, and all local radio? It should be paid for out of advertising, but on a non-profit basis. What do you think of that?”

Of course, I was very dismayed by it, and so was Hugh. He really was very upset by this. He’s not a man to use expletives, but he said, “I think it’s bloody awful.” Then he went on and said something that was very uncharacteristic. He said, “But I suppose you can't win them all.” I thought this a bit defeatist, especially coming from him, so I said, “I don't see why we should give up on this.” He said, “Oh, no, of course we won't give up.”

So, what we did was this: we just leaked this little bit of private information to all our friends. We leaked it to political groups. We leaked it to educational groups. We leaked it to educational people, to municipal groups, to social groups, to all the people, in fact, who we thought would be alarmed about this, and even to the unions.

As a result of this, we got them all geared up to go one after another to the Postmaster General and to say, “Look, we hear that this is what the government is thinking of, and it would be a great mistake. We're not going to support you on it.”

There's a story I'm told is perfectly true that Ted Short had been to a meeting with a group of protesters. I don't know who they were, educational people, I think. University people, I believe.

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Anyway, as he was walking back from this protest group to his private office, with his private secretary, he said to his private secretary, “I think I've heard from just about everybody on this now, except the two Archbishops.” When he got back to his desk, there was a letter from the two Archbishops, requesting that he meet them on this subject. (Laughter) So, we really were very effective in our propaganda.

The outcome of all that was that Ted Short decided to redraft his white paper. He, in fact, consulted us and redrafted it on exactly the lines that we hoped he would. Namely, to recommend to the Cabinet the BBC should be authorised to introduce a popular music network, and that we should start local radio, which of course is another story, with eight experimental stations, or a small number – it wasn't defined – of experimental stations. The whole idea of another authority and so forth was discarded.

I remember this very vividly: this white paper was to be put to the Cabinet on a Thursday in December. On the Wednesday, Dick Crossman came to lunch at Broadcasting House. There were just three of us: Hugh Greene, Dick Crossman, and me.

Dick was in his most mischievous mood, and he decided that he would bait me and he would bait Hugh Greene for all he was worth. So, he attacked me and said that radio was no longer a medium of any account, and that I’d let it disintegrate, and so on and so on.

He derided Hugh Greene about it, too, and then said, “And, Hugh, I've got in my briefcase over there the paper that's going to the Cabinet tomorrow. Don't worry,” he said. “Don't worry. It'll be passed. I'll tell you all the people in the Cabinet who are going to vote for it.”

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Then he reeled off all the Cabinet ministers for whom one had no time whatsoever, all the people we thought were so feeble and ineffective. He said, “All of them will vote for you. I tell you who’ll voted against it,” and then he listed all the bright and lively ones: Tony Crosland, and himself, and Tony Benn and so forth. He said, “That's alright. You'll get your white paper. You will get your white paper. You'll get your new services, but it doesn't really in the country's interests.”

But, of course, whether it was in the country's interests or not, I don't know, but we got the white paper. We got the authorisation, and off we went. We got Radio 1 on the air in September of 1967, which was eight or nine months after the authorisation, which was pretty good going, really.

I had the problem of finding the right man to run it, because there really was nobody in the existing ranks of conventional BBC people who, in my opinion, had the kind of expertise, or approach, or experience, or vision. I was at my wit's end.

Providence was on my side. It can't have been anything else, because a very fortuitous chain of circumstances developed. Back in the late ‘40s, I had got to know a young producer who was then in European productions at Bush House, who I thought was a very bright boy indeed.

He was then doing a series of programmes which linked together twin cities: a city in Britain that had a link with some city on the continent. He’d do a programme about the two, and he came down to Bristol to do a programme about Bristol and Bordeaux, which was Bristol’s twin city in France. I was greatly impressed by him. Then he did some other twin cities in my region.

He went on to become… He went into television as an OB producer. He became Parish Representative for a bit because

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he was bilingual in French. Then he went out of the BBC to try his own venture, which failed in television, an independent production venture.

He had just come back into the BBC and was in a very lonely job in the Presentation Department of the Television Service. In that position, he applied for a vacancy we had in radio at that time, of Assistant Head of the Gramophone Department, which he would have been very well qualified for.

I was on this board to find an assistant head of gramophones, and suddenly in came this man, Robin Scott. I thought at once, "But Robin is the man I want for the new pop music service." Robin must have been bitterly disappointed when he received a turndown for the AHP gramophone job, but within a week I sent for him and said, "How would you like to be Controller of this new thing?" Of course, he jumped at the chance. He was perfect for it, absolutely perfect.

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0:41:52

Interviewer: Tell me why he was perfect. You've said you were impressed. You've said he was bright. Why was he perfect for this?

Frank Gillard: To begin with, he had written pop songs which had been top of the charts. He was a guy who was entirely in tune with the new style of broadcasting that this service would call for. He wasn't rooted in the old, traditional 'Light Programme' style, you see.

He was going to come in with completely new ideas and yet with a firm BBC, traditional background, which is what I wanted. One wanted BBC standards, but there had to be enormous flexibility and quite a new approach to broadcast, the informal as against the formal. This really sums up what I'm

talking about. Robin, I knew, had it, so, of course, he got it and he made an enormous success of it. He really did terribly well.

0:42:47

Interviewer: Do you think – it's a question that's being discussed at the moment because of the 10-year anniversary – do you think the BBC's heart really has been in Radio 1, was from the beginning? Robin, as you've said, was an ideal head. Do you think the BBC had to be dragged screaming into it, and did it eventually arrive there?

Frank Gillard: It depends entirely on what you mean by 'the BBC'. My heart was in it, absolutely, and Dick Marriott, my assistant's, heart was in it. Michael Standing's heart was in it. He was Controller of Programme Operations. The radio hierarchy's heart was in it.

I would say that a considerable number of these rather stuffier and old-fashioned departmental heads in radio regarded it with an enormous amount of alarm. They thought it was a great degradation of the BBC.

I think some of the governors felt that, too, and especially when they heard it and heard some of the disc jockeys, (Laughter) because they were awfully raw in the early days. They're raw enough now, for goodness knows.

The answer is it depends what you mean by 'the BBC', but there were enough of us in it to see that Radio 1 got a good chance. That's what we did our best to achieve.

0:44:00

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Interviewer: We haven't covered, have we, exactly how the pirates were killed off?

Frank Gillard: No.

Interviewer: I think, perhaps-

Frank Gillard: While all this was going on – and I took that first because I'm taking it chronologically – this international legislation was introduced. It was brought in through the Council of Europe, and it was legislation which was supported by almost all the nations of Northern Europe. I think only Holland didn't sign it. They all ratified it very quickly so that they were able to bring it into effect quite speedily.

In Britain, the government introduced legislation called the 'Marine Broadcasting Offences Bill.' This made it an offence to give any kind of succour or service to these offshore broadcasters, so that they couldn't come ashore to get their victuals, their fuel. If they were in trouble at sea, no lifeboat or anything else could go out to help them. No record company could supply them with records. Most of all, no British advertiser could sell time on them.

This effectively put them off the air, and they signed off. They announced their going-off day, which was the day before the bill came into effect. They signed off with a flourish. We recorded them. We broadcast them over the BBC. We made a great event of their departure, and that was how they came to an end.

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Others have followed them, but they're only fleabites. They hardly count for anything, but that was the end, effectively, of the pirate broadcasters. So, then the question arose off how we allocated these 1, 2, 3, 4 things. It seemed to me quite obvious that the third programme should stick to the numeral 3, which meant that Radio 3 was going to be the old third programme.

It seemed to me also obvious that that, since the old 'Light Programme' and the pop music service would be SB – would be simultaneously broadcast for certain hours of the day – that they ought to be adjacent numerals. The only adjacencies we had available were 1 and 2, so I said, "Okay, the new service Radio 1, 'Light Programme' Radio 2. That means that the old Home Service must be Radio 4," though this took a lot of explaining around the place. You'd be surprised. People said that one was degrading the Home Service. Nothing of the sort, ridiculous.

Most of all, the manufacturers of radio sets were upset about this – upset about the whole new naming – because they said, "We've got two or three years' supply of new sets, which will go out of date the minute you introduce these 1, 2, 3, 4 things, because all the dials are marked 'Home Service', 'Light Programme', and so on."

So, I agreed with them that, for a period of two years, we would announce Radio 4 as Radio 4, the Home Service, and we did that. Then, at the end of two years, the Home Service title practically went out of existence. A silly little thing, but it's typical of how broadcasting can get involved in, really, trivialities.

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Interviewer: I think it is one of the problems that, whenever we reorganise wavelengths, which is an efficient reorganisation from our point of view, one always meets this problem of the radio set and the manufacturers' labelling, of course.

Frank Gillard: You do, yes.

0:47:15

Interviewer: Do you not think that some of the antagonism would have been…? It was about the time, I think I'm right in saying, that the Post Office was changing over to all numerals, and there was a feeling against this sort of depersonalisation, in a way, that the figures were taking over.

Frank Gillard: I think you're probably right. In that sense, it was a nice response. In the end, they gave way quite gracefully, but I had to go and address annual meetings at both BREMA – B-R-E-M-A, British Radio and Electrical Manufacturers' Association or whatever it is – and the RTRA, the Radio and Television Retailers' Association. I expected to get a good scrubbing in each. We had a lively discussion, but in the end they saw the sense of it.

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0:48:00

Interviewer: Can I ask you one supplementary question here which occurs to me? Going back to the white paper, which was eventually put to the Cabinet, it seems to me that we hear a lot about the pressure group which eventually got Independent Television started. A number of books have been written on it.

This seems very near that. I mean you virtually started by leaking a pressure group. One could criticise this and say, "A large monopoly organisation, with its contacts, has this sort of power, which perhaps it can misuse."

Frank Gillard: Yes, you can criticise it. I agree. You see, there was a fundamental difference between the pressure groups which came later and the one I'm talking about, because the pressure groups which came later wanted to introduce radio for private profit.

Interviewer: Yes, I'm talking about the early one [for, yes, which is 0:48:56] [Crosstalk].

Frank Gillard: The earlier on was a non-profit thing. It was to be a public service institution, but, instead of being financed out of licence revenue, would be financed out of advertising. We just felt that we could do the job better. We thought that another public service corporation in the field would create unbelievable problems, rightly or wrongly, but everybody has got a right to self-preservation and to take every possible step to bring that about. You can criticise it. Of course, yes, I accept that.

Interviewer: But the more powerful you are, the more chance [you have 0:49:31] [Crosstalk].

Frank Gillard: The more interesting conjecture is, had that kind of commercial radio been introduced non-profit, would there ever have been commercial radio for profit?

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Interviewer: Unlikely, I think.

Frank Gillard: This is the point that Dick Crossman was, in fact, making at the lunch. He said, “Commercial radio is bound to come one day. Would you prefer to see it come for profit or not for profit?” I said, “That's a political question and I'm not prepared to give you the answer.”

Interviewer: So, we get a four-network system.

Frank Gillard: Yes.

Interviewer: And we're up to 1967.

Frank Gillard: Yes.

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0:50:07

Interviewer: It was a pretty mighty upheaval and change, wasn't it? You must be rather proud of it.

Frank Gillard: I think I am, but I'm bound to say, “I think we took it in stride.” We didn't see it at the time as being quite as historic as, perhaps, one sees it now.

Interviewer: That sounds very modest.

Frank Gillard: No, I don't mean it so at all. When you're right up against a thing, you do not get the perspective on it. You get the perspective later.

0:50:36

Interviewer: Okay. (Laughter) So, we come on to four services, a completely new pop service. You've got your pressure group going, so there's no advertising, so where is the money coming from?

Frank Gillard: This was a great problem because the board wasn't going to allot any additional revenue to us, so we had to go in for a large-scale redistribution of the cash we had, and we had to go in for strict economy.

I think it was too strict, really. There was no alternative, but it meant that there was very little latitude by which I could encourage what was new, and what was imaginative, and what was innovative in the way of ideas and that sort of thing.

The Television Service at this juncture was always able to find a little money in the kitty to encourage somebody who came up with some unorthodox idea. That's how BBC television grew and became strong. I had very little cash of that kind to play with; in fact, virtually none.

What the board did agree was that I could overspend on the overall long-term BBC budget. It looked as if television was going to come out inside the budget, long term. As the BBC is allowed certain borrowing powers, it was agreed that we could

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overspend a little bit in radio in order… Without upsetting, without rocking the boat too much, because, as you know, unless the BBC is overspent, the government will never increase the licence. So, we were allowed to overspend a bit. Of course, Radio 1 wasn't a big expense.

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