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The Quarterly For BBC Engineering Staff

D.E. reports on CBA conference in Sydney



Bryce McCrerrick speaking at 13th CBA Conference in Sydney

“ The thirteenth General Conference of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association was held in Sydney, Australia, from the 16–25 September. It was attended by 101 delegates from national broadcasting organisations throughout the Commonwealth.

The Conference splits up into two separate committees – one dealing with administrative and programme matters and the other engineering. The BBC was represented at the Administrative and Programme Committee by M.D.Tel., Alasdair Milne, M.D.R., Aubrey Singer and Controller International Relations, Noble Wilson. I was present at the Engineering Committee which had, itself, 32 delegates from 24 broadcasting countries.

During the seven days that the Committee sat, we considered 62 technical papers of which 14 had come from the BBC. The papers covered all fields of radio and television broadcasting with particular emphasis on the application of a communications technology for remote areas and the appropriate technology for developing countries. The delegates from the country originating the paper had to give a presentation of ten to fifteen

minutes and then was required to discuss the points which were raised. The great difficulty at this, my first CBA Conference, was the tremendous variation in the technical level of the broadcasters represented. At one end of the scale we had the BBC, Canadian CBC and Australian ABC – all with highly developed television services – and at the other end some of the African countries who only had a very elementary radio service. To be discussing such matters as a possible future television digital standard limited the participation greatly. As a result of this we have agreed to give much more thought to the composition of the agenda for the next Conference so that it can be of more value to the majority of the participants and we thought we may also have one or two teach-ins on specific subjects of interest at the time. Notwithstanding, I found the experience most valuable, renewing some old friendships and making many new ones.

The next General Conference of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association will be held in Canada in 1982. I hope that next time it will not coincide with the IBC.”

Bryce McCrerrick

Olympic Games not forgotten

By now the Olympic Games may seem just a memory in the past. As they missed our first edition and were a ‘special’, we are including a description of our technical involvement in Moscow.

We had to cut our coverage of the Olympic Games to only 45 hours but even so BBC engineers had to put together systems and equipment that ensured that the coverage from Moscow met the high standards that we always set in sports broadcasting. The Olympics condensed so much sporting activity into a single fortnight that it needed a good deal of engineering and production ingenuity to devise systems that ensured that events of particular interest to British viewers were not missed.

To simplify production arrangements virtually all our coverage was produced and presented from a studio that we had hired in the Olympic Television and Radio Complex (OTRC) in Moscow. The programmes put out from this studio reached Britain through one channel of Intelsat IV.

The Moscow studio had access to feeds from all major sports locations and some of them supplied more than one international vision feed. Athletics from the Lenin Stadium, for example, generated three independent international vision feeds covering field and track events.

The job of the studio was to link these sources together into coherent television programmes. The studio was equipped with three cameras and was used for interviews and preview programmes as well as linking coverage to the separate events.

All the television signals from Moscow were originated in SECAM, the colour television system adopted by the USSR and they were still in SECAM when they arrived at the BBC Television Centre in London. There they were transcoded to the British PAL System using ACE, the BBC’s four-field digital standards converter, the most advanced and accurate device of its kind in the world.

With so many events going on at the same time, video-tape played an important part in the coverage. Engineers installed six VPR2 machines in a separate video-tape area one floor above the BBC Moscow studio in the

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