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# NNT

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convey best wishes to the peoples of Nigeria on this momentous day.

a threat to the *Daily Times*, which has become rather staid in recent years, a fact that emphasizes the problems of foreign-owned newspapers in Africa. Experience in Ghana with its *Daily Graphic* since Independence has made the Mirror Group cautious about the editorial policy of the paper, which is still essentially controlled from London. Naturally any young independent African country must be worried if its main newspaper is in the hands of a foreign enterprise, and the Roy Thomson Group may well suffer the

heavy capitalization could overcome these distribution problems. In so vast a country as Nigeria it is almost impossible to serve many of the people who would normally buy newspapers. The *Daily Service*, which announced that it was to become a weekly, significantly just after the Western Region elections in which the Action Group secured the government for another five years, feels that only intensive capitalization could have boosted it to over the 100,000 mark.

Indeed there is no reason why the *Daily Times*, the new *Daily Express* and the *Pilot* should not reach circulations in the 200,000 range within the near future. Each year sees more and more literates turned out from school, and with universal primary education operating in both East and West, and being introduced in parts of the North, the potential readership of newspapers will soar. Distribution still remains a problem with a population density for the federation of only 83.5 to the square mile.

### BIG TOWNS IN WEST

Nevertheless there are important concentrations of population easily accessible to main roads. Eight of the 10 largest towns in Nigeria are situated in the Western Region alone. In many parts of the Eastern Region there is high density of population. The main problem is the North, for between the Western Region and the far North, where the great Hausa walled cities are situated, there is a belt of thinly scattered people only a small proportion of whom has benefited from education. This means that only the major cities of the North, situated on the main railway line, can be easily serviced. The *Daily Times* did once consider the possibility of a Northern edition to solve this problem, but the cost was too high, as was the cost for an experiment in air delivery.

In spite of these problems, the press in Nigeria is expanding rapidly, a fact made clearer from the sale of magazines and weekly newspapers. On the one hand you have *Drum*, a popular picture monthly selling up to 90,000 copies an issue; on the other a quality magazine, dealing with culture and history, like *Nigeria Magazine*, now selling over 10,000. For these and many other maga-

zine, over 115,000. But with all indigenous-owned papers and magazines the problem is one of capital. Two African-owned monthlies have failed in the past months.

The alternative to this is government-sponsored papers. These already exist in the North, where the English language twice-weekly *Nigerian Citizen* and the vernacular *Gaskiya* are published by the Government-owned Gaskiya Corporation. They had circulations respectively of 22,380 and 23,000 in 1959. This corporation also publishes 15 vernacular newspapers with average sales of 3,000 whose aim is primarily educational. Other than this there is remarkably little educational newspaper work done through the medium of the Government, or by its information services—certainly nothing to compare with the wall news-sheets that are put out by the Government information services in Senegal. At present opinion is hostile to government sponsorship of newspapers, largely because it is felt that the editorial side would have intolerable pressures placed on it in such circumstances.

The problems of the newspaper are not those of the Nigerian Broadcasting

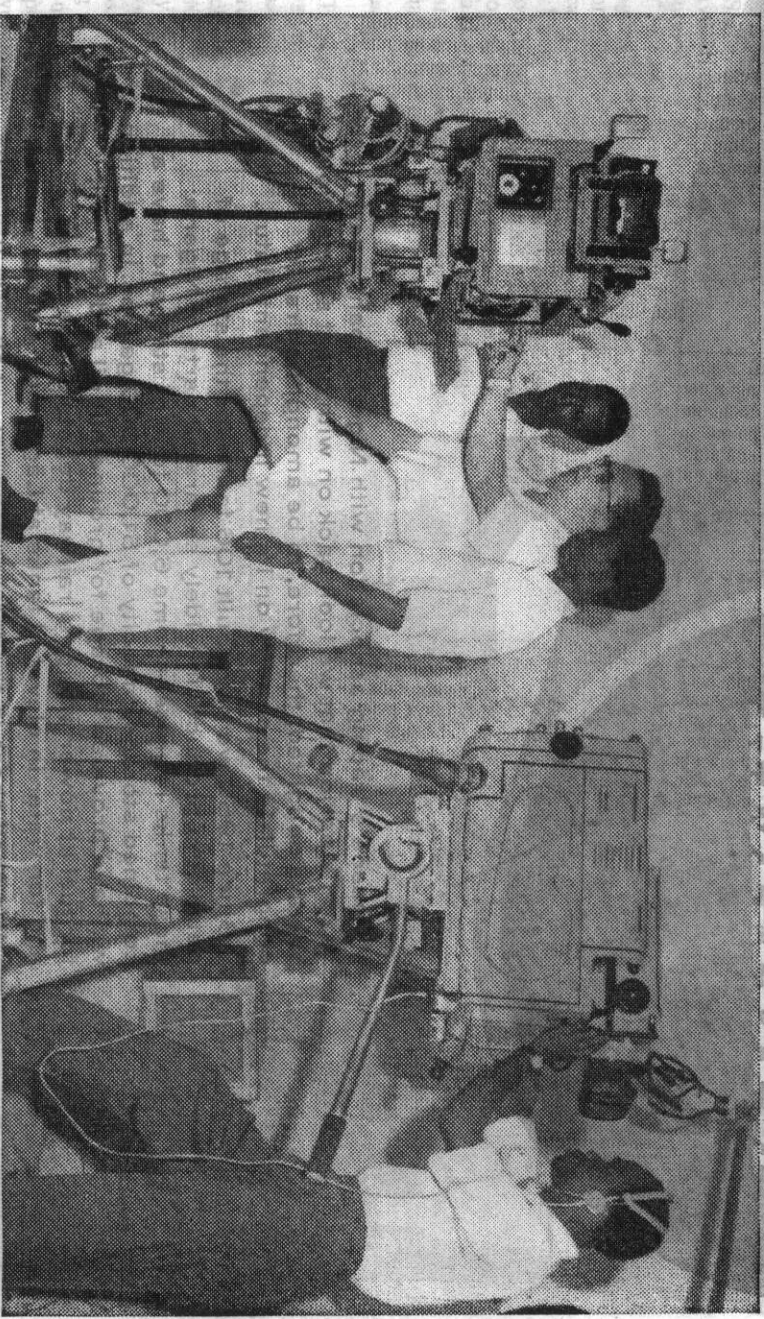
languages, and a dozen or so provincial stations. The main difficulty of the corporation is the embarrassment it presents to a capital hungry federal government that has to supply £4m. a year for its ordinary running as well as carry the burden of the capital expenditure. The N.B.C. desperately needs money for expansion, especially if it is to enter into the field of external broadcasting.

The most serious threat to broadcasting in Nigeria is "balkanization". Already the Western Region runs a commercial radio station, and both East and North are planning to set up stations soon. This has become possible because the constitution makes no provision for national control of broadcasting. Thus, even though the new Western Region television service is finding it very difficult to pay its way, Nigeria is threatened with another three stations, one Federal and two more regional, so that a country that can barely afford one television station will have four bankrupt ones.

The most urgent task of the N.B.C. is to assert its own "Nigerian" personality. As a godchild of the B.B.C., to

Region government with the motto "First in Africa." It was justified largely on the grounds of its educational value. It has, however, proved too expensive for the government to devote very much time to schools transmission, let alone the production of special programmes. The commercial television service, much of its cost being defrayed by advertisers, or kept down by using old American and British television films. As yet the area of reception is limited to Ibadan and Lagos, and the sale of receivers has been disappointing. The cheapest is out of the range of most Nigerians in these areas. Nevertheless, both the Federal Government and Eastern Region government are planning to introduce television. The Northern government has just announced its intention of establishing a Northern Nigeria Radio Corporation to provide broadcasting and television services for the Region.

The future of the press in Nigeria is hopeful. The political balance should preserve its present independence. But whether this will be so



W.N.T.V.'s first broadcast on October 31, 1959.

A weekly Ibo magazine immediately cuts off the Yoruba and Hausa speakers as effectively as does a programme on the music of Bloch the bulk of a population that would prefer high life, or at least a talk that has some direct bearing on the Nigerian or African scene. But these problems are not easy of solution. The radio has to cater for all tastes, as well as fulfil a missionary role in the education of Nigerians. After Independence it is also going to have

for the radio service is still in doubt. The Government may not like to subsidize a radio service that does not fall in line with its own views on politics. There is every indication that one of the bitterest battles in the year after Independence may be over the independence of Radio Nigeria.

The radio transmitting equipment at the Kaduna station.

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