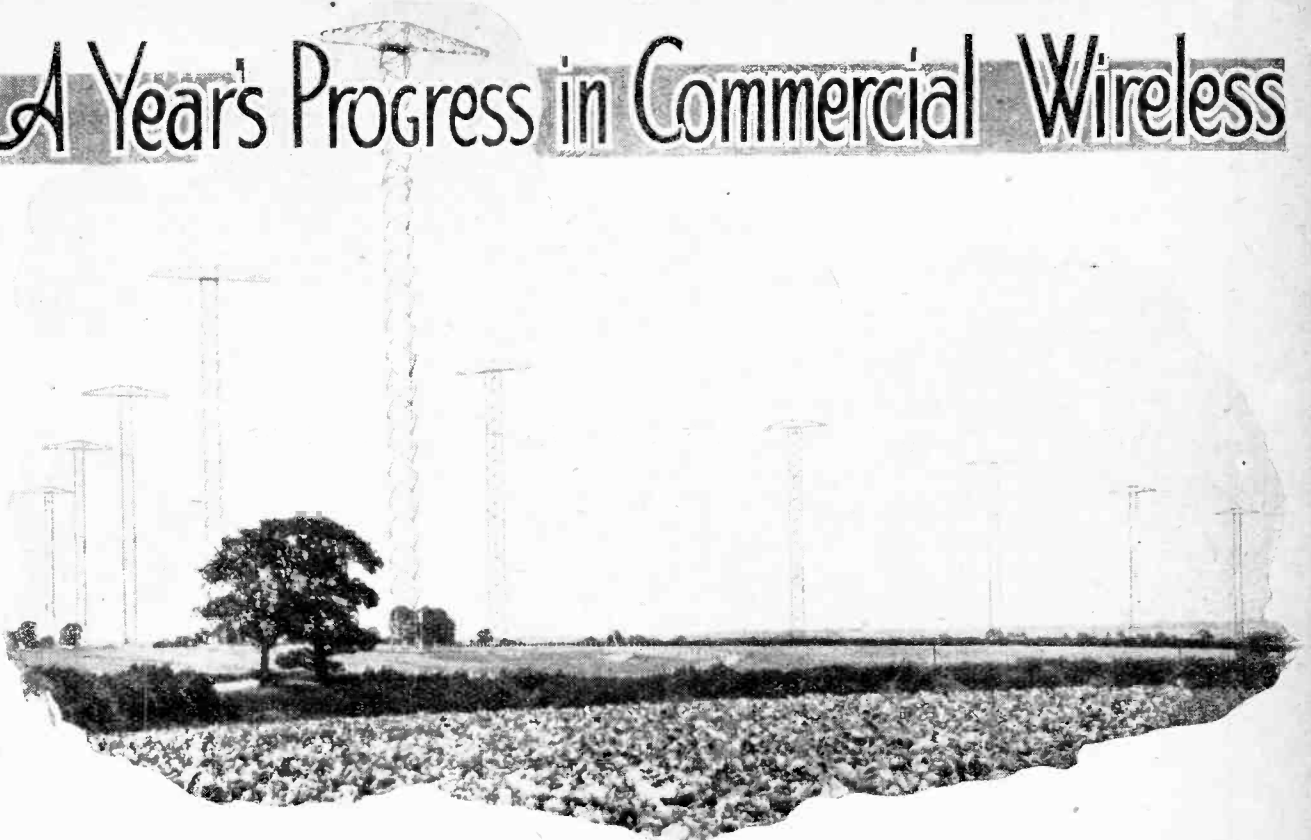


A Year's Progress in Commercial Wireless



Automatic S.O.S., Position Finding, Less Jamming of Broadcast, Beam Telephony.

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THE advances made in all branches of wireless communication during the past year have been quite as extensive, though perhaps rather less spectacular, than in recent years. In fact, the technical side of wireless has now reached a stage where it has time to pause a little and consolidate its position. Of course, the days of "hit or miss" are long past, but the advent of short waves three years ago did have the effect of throwing into the melting-pot many problems which then seemed to have been solved, and it is only during this last year that we have sailed into less troubled waters. But the pause will be short-lived, many new avenues of advance are opening up, and it will not be long before the melting-pot is in use again for facsimile transmission and short-wave telephony. Later on, we shall be asked to struggle with television, and even, perhaps, the distribution of power by wireless; but we must check these alluring visions and come to the more prosaic attainments of 1928.

The International Convention.

In the autumn of 1927 an International Radiotelegraph Conference was held in Washington, and the resulting International Convention was promulgated in the early part of last year. This Convention, which came into force on January 1st this year, supplants the Convention

of 1912. Usually there is a new Convention every five years, but since 1912 it had been found impracticable to arrange for an international radio conference until 1927, although the urgent need for such a conference was apparent to anyone interested in wireless communications.

The 1912 Convention had dealt only with regulations governing the communication of ships with one another and with the shore, as at that time the use of wireless was practically confined to such communication. Now, of course, the situation is quite different, and the new Convention, besides overhauling the old ship and shore regulations, lays down regulations for governing point-to-point communications, aircraft services, broadcasting, and amateur working. As all wireless communication is conducted by means of waves in the ether, it is essential, if interference is to be avoided, that the various services should be confined to definite wavelengths, and this international allocation of waves was the most important, and, indeed, the most difficult, work with which the conference had to deal. The Convention now lays down, for all the different services, definite bands of waves, from 5 to 30,000 metres, some of these bands being exclusively confined to a particular service, others being allocated to two or more services in cases where mutual interference is unlikely, or at any rate is not of great importance.