TWEEDLEDEE

At least Foot had some clear idea of what he wanted to tackle first: the sheer number of Controllers under his employ (and he had to get used to that idea fast). Since the outbreak of war the number had doubled from the relatively supple and comprehensible four - Administration, Programmes, Public Relations and Engineering, essentially covering the main concerns of the BBC at the time - to a confusing and often overlapping eight, in three subdivisions just to make things harder. These were officially designated as Geographical, consisting of Home, European and Overseas; Functional, consisting of Co-ordination, Engineering and Programmes; and the hopelessly unhelpful General which split into Administration and Finance, which happened to be Foot's specialties. This sprawling, complicated system had greeted him when he arrived in November 1941 as a consultant. Now, though God knows how, he was in charge, at least of this part of the Corporation. As such he was determined, now he had the opportunity, to change the damn thing back into something that worked and made sense.

For this purpose at least, the new setup was perfect. The division was summed up internally as between "machinery" and "output". Foot could concentrate on the financial and human resources side of things while Graves worried about the programming. Foot maintained the manufacturing machine while Graves was responsible for what went in and came out. That was the plan. The idea was inevitably subjected to its fair share, or more, of derision in the bowels of the Corporation, with Graves and Foot being surreptitiously nicknamed "Tweedledeegee and Tweedledumgee", but if nothing else the theory *was* sound - no pun intended. Foot retrospectively defended the diarchy *qua idea* in an unpublished autobiography later quoted by Asa Briggs:

"*Together Graves and I commanded more confidence both inside and outside the BBC than at that time either one of us alone would have been able to command - he with his long and successful experience in the control and direction of BBC programmes of all kinds - and I with my equally long, and I hope equally successful, experience in management of a large Public Utility [..]*"††

The Government were also much happier to work with Foot and Graves than with the ultimately unknowable Ogilvie - not least because it had been the Ministry of Information's idea to involve Foot with the BBC in the first place. The first communications between Foot as joint DG and the Minister of Information Brendan Bracken was almost shockingly smooth compared with certain exchanges between their respective predecessors Oglvie and Duff Cooper, and ultimately resulted in Bracken deciding to ease off a little from the Ministry's close scrutiny of the Corporation's affairs and running, trusting in both Foot's organisational abilities and the plans he'd already drawn up.

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The first step was to prune back those sprawling branches of the BBC’s internal structure, beginning with the abolition of the post of Controller of Administration. Given the nature of the diarchy, Foot reasoned, it was redundant, as indeed was the idea of the whole Administration Division, which swiftly followed its Controller out the door. The ruthless efficiency installed by Reith - which largely relied on his iron will - had long since mutated into a thicket of committees reporting to other committees about other committees, often in circles. Ogilvie hadn’t really known what to do about it, and it had worsened under his Directorship. Cecil Graves wasn’t truly equipped to solve the problem either, and so the Diarchy justified itself: only a businessman could tidy up the BBC, and it happened to be Robert W. Foot.

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