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Journal Title: Telecommunication Journal

Journal Issue: vol. 44 (no. 2), 1977

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Article Title: Satellite Broadcasting

Page number(s): pp 42-43

Satellite broadcasting *

The Broadcasting Satellite Conference which was held last month in Geneva is of fundamental importance for the development of radiocommunications in the years to come. The agreement it produced is binding on the signatory countries.

Its objective—the planning of satellite broadcasting in the 12 GHz band, already known as band VI—deals with the broadcasting of the future. It is also one of the largest world-wide planning conferences to be held in the field of broadcasting, and the first for more than 25 years.

I would not give the impression that satellite broadcasting is about to supersede all other forms. However, particular countries or groups of countries will in all likelihood find it convenient, at a given stage in their development, to focus their efforts on this new mode of broadcasting which will offer the advantage of providing total or virtually total coverage of their territory in a short space of time.

* Extracts from the opening address by the Secretary-General of the ITU at the World Administrative Broadcasting Satellite Conference (Geneva, 10 January-12 February 1977).

In fact, what holds good for planning also applies to standardization; planning must be carried out neither too early nor too late. For this reason the Conference was not held as the result of a precipitate decision but rather as the consequence of a carefully considered act carried out some years back. It was as a result of certain activities going back to 1962 that the World Administrative Space Conference of 1971 was able, with a full knowledge of the facts, to define a broadcasting-satellite service and allocate frequency bands to it. It was this Conference which, in its Resolution Spa2-2, requested the Administrative Council to consider as soon as possible the convening of an administrative conference for the purpose of establishing agreements and associated plans. It was the 1973 Torremolinos Plenipotentiary Conference that adopted the principle of holding such a conference.

It has occasionally been commented that, for the first time, a planning conference would be dealing with a service for which no routine operating experience has yet been acquired. It should however be noted that we already had

at our disposal a considerable body of theoretical or experimental data resulting both from the activities of the CCIR and from various projects in progress.

The world is changing rapidly and satellite broadcasting will be the best means, for certain countries, of providing coverage for their territories, thus assisting in their development. Hence it is up to us to help them as much as we can by providing them with the relevant material which will, furthermore, constitute guarantees for the future.

We find that many ITU conferences, and this one was no exception, have to work increasingly within a broad frame of reference—the elaboration of an integrated telecommunication policy. The evolution of broadcasting as a whole over the coming decades will therefore depend on the results achieved, and for this reason intensive preparations were made for the Broadcasting Satellite Conference.

First of all, the study of the technical data was carried out by the CCIR. For this purpose, a Joint Working Party prepared, in May-June 1976, a report containing the technical data for planning the use of the 12 GHz band by the broadcasting-satellite service and the technical criteria for the sharing of this band by the various services.

In actual fact, this report is the product of work carried out by the CCIR over

a period of 15 years which contributed greatly, for instance, towards defining the geostationary orbit as a natural resource. This new but fundamental concept in international law is now enshrined in the International Telecommunication Convention.

A second facet of the preparations for the Conference was the work undertaken by the IFRB, which involved gathering information on the foreseeable requirements of administrations for the broadcasting-satellite service and arranging it in a form suitable for a comparative study.

Finally, the third feature was the holding of regional seminars ** designed to familiarize the administrations concerned with the various factors which would have to be taken into consideration as the work of the Conference progressed.

Such careful preparations for a conference, foreseen five years ago, amply prove that this Conference was a timely one and that everything was done to ensure its full success, despite the difficulties of all kinds which it had to overcome to reach an agreement that will constitute one of the keystones of broadcasting of the future.

M. MILI

** Three regional seminars were held for this purpose, at Rio de Janeiro for Latin American countries, at Kyoto for Asian countries, and at Khartoum for African and Arab countries.