
WAS BAIRD FOOLING THE PUBLIC?

The plea in your January issue for a "serious study of the business and technical aspects" of the 30-line Baird activity may well serve to put an end to this confused affair. ("John Logie Baird and the Falkirk transmitter," pp 43-46). Annotated references in the article to reputable proceedings about achievements are intended to convince but give to today's reader a false picture of the happenings of 50 years ago. It should be appreciated that Baird never successfully demonstrated television. Being without a method of synchronisation over a distance, there could be no such event. At every attempted demonstration this primary need had to be faced and contrived. The bringing together of radio transmission, in itself having ideal properties for television purposes, and the trundling mechanical image analyser, was quite incongruous.

Proper electrical circuits for conveying the light values were not to be found in the various Baird set-ups. This was the time of early talking films and picture telegraphy when the stable photocell and bright recording lamp were both readily available. Baird claimed to use visual purple as the light sensitive material.

"Fibre optics," a modern term of wide application, is brought into the article. True, the possibility of using a bundle of fine internally reflecting glass fibres for channelling an image falling on a closely divided grid was well known, a scheme which avoids synchronising and light handling difficulties. The modern plastics as used in optical cables give a high degree of light insulation with but little loss. Fibre optics offer high definition remote viewing with the possibilities of image intensification. These things were not part of the Baird programme, being generally inapplicable to a radio service.

Baird hoped to convey to the public with his inadequate devices that he was in possession of a commercial proposition of considerable potential value. This he aimed to sell by pretence and to that end demonstrations had to be conjured and reports by staff contributors commissioned for publication. The pattern of the *Wireless World* article, almost line by line, shows the marks of this policy. Displayed advertisements in the daily press of the time said "Television is Here." A "Home Televisor" appeared, so here all was revealed for public judgement. The "Televisor" was a typical well made, Plessey product. With a monitored signal input (Big Ben clock face) and in an equipped laboratory where auxiliary gear, by way of a heavy duty synchronising and vision amplifier was to hand, the Baird Televisor was shown to be a failure in fulfilling its intended purpose.

This was the end of the 30-line part of the story which is as far as your article goes. No