

Should squatters
be treated
as criminals? Page 14



The BBC's film archives, which are to be examined by a committee advising on their best use in the national interest. Report, page 16.

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BBC appoints a committee to advise on preserving and exploiting its archives

By Kenneth Gosling

The BBC's archives, containing half a century's accumulation in a dozen libraries of films, books, recordings and photographs, are to come under the close scrutiny of an advisory committee headed by Professor Asa Briggs, Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University.

It amounts to one of the most valuable collections of historical information in the country. The committee, set up on the recommendation of the BBC's general advisory council, will advise, among other things, on the ways in which the archives "might best be exploited in the BBC's and the national interest".

The terms of reference also include advising on the policies to be followed for the preservation or disposal of its visual, audio and written material and on the most suitable methods of storage and retrieval. They also recognize that, in view of the purposes for which the BBC derives

its income from licence revenue, its archival policy should have as its main object the preservation of material needed for the BBC's own use.

In other words, the committee will decide what should be kept and what discarded.

Mr Richard Hewlett, of the BBC's information services division, said the committee would study how far material should be kept for the BBC's own purposes, for potential programme use and for reference, and to what extent it was of national and international importance—such as films of world statesmen and exchanges of correspondence with world figures.

Increasing amounts of material are being stored, raising questions of space, and the retention policies of the various libraries may well be considered. Of greater importance, he said, was the consideration of future intake and its bearing on the fact that today's programmes are tomorrow's archives.

The BBC's sound archives con-

tain 62,000 individually catalogued recordings; the television film and videotape library some 300 million ft of film. The music libraries have between them more than 250,000 manuscripts, including 50,000 copies of popular songs. There are 30,000 news bulletins in the written archives centre at Reading.

Professor Briggs has written a history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

The other members of the committee are:

Professor Kenneth Charlton, professor of history of education, London University; Mr R. E. Coward, Director-General, Bibliographic Services Division, British Library; Professor Margaret Gowing, professor of the history of science, Oxford University; Mr Benny Green, writer and broadcaster; Mr A. R. A. Hobson, associate, Sotheby, Parke Bernet & Co; Mr Michael Holroyd, biographer, literary critic and novelist; Mr David Jenkins, librarian, National Library of Wales; Professor Randolph Quirk, professor of English language and literature, University College London; Mr Donald Sinden, chairman, British Theatre Museum Association; Professor Michael Tilmouth, professor of music, Edinburgh University.

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