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## **J.G. Crowther's War: Institutional strife at the BBC and British Council**

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### **Abstract**

Science writer, historian and administrator J. G. Crowther (1899–1983) had an uneasy relationship with the BBC during the 1920s and 1930s, and was regarded with suspicion by the British security services because of his Left politics. Nevertheless the Second World War saw him working for ‘establishment’ institutions. He was closely associated with the BBC’s Overseas Service and employed by the British Council’s Science Committee. Both organisations found Crowther useful because of his wide, international knowledge of science and scientists.

Crowther’s political views, and his international aspirations for the British Council’s Science Committee, increasingly embroiled him in an institutional conflict with the Royal Society and with its President Sir Henry Dale, who was also Chairman of the British Council’s Science Committee. The conflict centred on the management of international scientific relations, a matter close the Crowther’s heart, and to Dale’s. Dale considered that the formal conduct of international scientific relations was the Royal Society’s business rather than the British Council’s. Crowther disagreed, and eventually resigned from the British Council Science Committee in 1946.

The article expands knowledge of Crowther by drawing on archival documents to elucidate a side of his career that is only lightly touched on in his memoirs. It shows that ‘Crowther’s war’ was also an institutional war between the Science Committee of the British Council and the Royal Society. Crowther’s unhappy experience of interference by the Royal Society plausibly accounts for a retreat from his pre-war view that institutional science should plan and manage BBC science broadcasts.

## Introduction

In his memoir *Fifty Years with Science*, the British science journalist, author, administrator and science populariser J. G. Crowther (1899–1983) mentions in passing that during the mid-1930s he applied for a job. For references, he turned to Ernest Rutherford, Abram Ioffe, Robert Millikan and Werner Heisenberg, all of whom obliged.<sup>1</sup>

Crowther did not get the job, but I recount the story to draw attention to his list of referees. Apart from Ioffe, all were Nobel laureates, and their nationalities were diverse: Rutherford was British (though originally from New Zealand); Ioffe was from the USSR; Millikan was American; Heisenberg was German. This small episode is emblematic of Crowther's distinctive position in the history of science popularisation: he knew and enjoyed the respect of many leading scientists (albeit mainly from the physical sciences), and his circle of acquaintances was wide and international.

As a young man inventing a scientific career for himself, without being a practising scientist, Crowther tried several avenues of employment. In the mid-to-late 1920s, he made his first forays into science journalism with *The New Statesman and Nation* and especially the *Manchester Guardian*, to which he became a regular science contributor.<sup>2</sup> At around this time he also made unsuccessful overtures to the BBC to become a manager of science broadcasts. He eventually had a significant broadcasting career at the BBC, albeit one with a curious profile. Excluding the period 1940–47 (approximately the Second World War and its immediate aftermath) Crowther barely had a broadcasting career at all, appearing before the microphone infrequently, and never before the television cameras. (See Appendix for a list of Crowther's broadcasts.) The period from 1940 to 1947, however, was different. In those eight years Crowther averaged one broadcast every nine weeks, or 38 in total, although like most invited Talks speakers he was not an employee of the BBC. In addition he was a valued

adviser to BBC staff on scientific programme planning, and planned some broadcasts himself. However, Crowther was virtually silent on this aspect of his war-time work in his memoir *Fifty Years with Science*.<sup>3</sup> The contrast between Crowther's desultory peace-time broadcasting and his substantial war-time work for the BBC is part of a bigger story relating to the British war-time propaganda effort – a story that includes Crowther's work for the British Council, where he was employed from 1941–46.

The British Council was founded in 1934 under the aegis of the British Foreign Office in response to the rise of fascism and to the high level of economic competition faced by Britain. Its mission was '[t]o make the life and thought of the British peoples more widely known abroad; and to promote a mutual interchange of knowledge and ideas with other peoples'.<sup>4</sup> Alice Byrne has written:

[T]he British Council ... occupies a place comparable with, though not as renowned as, that of the BBC in representing Britain internationally.<sup>5</sup>

The BBC and the British Council had mutual affinities as purveyors of British values and culture to the rest of the world. This similarity of objective between two otherwise dissimilar organisations partly accounts for Crowther's appeal to both. As an avowed internationalist with a wide circle of acquaintances and journalistic contacts, Crowther was useful to both organisations when they were expanding their overseas activities. This period of Crowther's life illuminates not only his own career but also the war-time work of the two organisations he worked for – the BBC and the British Council.

The bulk of Crowther's work for the BBC during the years 1940–47 was carried out for its various overseas services. This period saw an influx of new personnel to the Overseas Service, much of it new to British life and British broadcasting, and often drawing on

resources not used in the domestic arm of the BBC. Where science was concerned several of these new recruits turned for advice, ideas and contacts to Crowther, who was largely shunned by the BBC's domestic services.

Crowther was also active in a third internationally oriented organisation: the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), and specifically its Division for the Social and International Relations of Science. His work with the BAAS overlapped with his BBC and British Council work, as I shall show. One of the ironies of the story that unfolds is that Crowther's pursuit of harmonious international scientific relations via the British Council proved to be incompatible with the maintenance of harmonious national scientific relations, as he became embroiled in a dispute with the Royal Society over the administration of Britain's international scientific relations. 'Crowther's war' was also an institutional war – or at any rate an institutional battle – in which he was the loser.

Before embarking on an exposition of Crowther's war-time activities, I will give an outline of his life and explain why he interests historians of twentieth-century science and science popularisation.

### **J. G. Crowther**

James Gerald Crowther (1899–1983) was born in Halifax, Yorkshire, and won an exhibition to study mathematics at Cambridge in 1917. His university studies were suspended because of the First World War, in which Crowther did not serve, being occupied instead in war-related scientific research with the physiologist A. V. Hill (who recurs in the narrative below). In 1919 he began his undergraduate mathematical studies at Cambridge University, but dropped out after a term. Spells of teaching followed, and in 1924 he became a representative for Oxford University Press, touring the UK to meet scientists, sell books and – contrary to his employer's wishes – commission new ones.<sup>6</sup>

As he began working for Oxford University Press, Crowther embarked on scientific journalism, which was to be his main occupation.<sup>7</sup> Crowther's principal journalistic outlet was the *Manchester Guardian*, for which he supplied (by my estimation) around 350 articles between 1927 and 1949, mostly published with the by-line 'a scientific correspondent' or 'a science correspondent'.<sup>8</sup>

Christopher Chilvers comments that 'Crowther was not the first scientific journalist, but he was the first to codify and articulate a distinct vision of the role of scientific journalism'.<sup>9</sup> As a science writer, Crowther saw his role as not simply to report scientific developments, but also to act as an advocate for science. This gave his journalism an occasional evangelical tone. In *Science for You*, published in 1928 and based on some of his *Manchester Guardian* articles, he wrote:

One of the necessities of the hour is that the public should know more about science.<sup>10</sup>

and

The public should be made to realize that their own existence is largely the result of the application of science to the old domestic manufacturing arts, ...<sup>11</sup>

Science therefore was not simply something the lay public might find interesting, but something they ought to know about. A public knowledge of science could have:

... an astonishing influence on human society. The public interest in science would beget a public scientific understanding and conscience, and just a little of these, by themselves, would have remarkable effects. The public would then, for example, perceive that the scientific experts in coal-mining were on the whole second-rate.<sup>12</sup>

Hence Crowther hoped, through his journalism, to make his readers more critical of the prevailing order and to enhance their awareness of science's potential to be an agent of change. He considered that the popular media had an important role in disseminating the scientific message, but were too often led astray by the need to 'entertain':

... neither 'entertainment' nor 'religion' are the proper motives for scientific exposition. [But] ... this kind of motive is the one that nearly all editors look for - mistakenly, as I believe.<sup>13</sup>

Increasingly drawn to the political Left, Crowther became fascinated by the USSR and by the role of science there. In 1929 and 1930 he visited the USSR, and in the summer of 1931 he played a large part in the organisation of the Second International Congress of the History of Science and Technology, held at the Science Museum in London in 1931, and at which he was instrumental in ensuring the presence of the Soviet delegation.<sup>14</sup> This delegation included, among other notables, Nikolai Bukharin and Boris Hessen.<sup>15</sup> Hessen's paper on 'The social and economic roots of Newton's *Principia*'<sup>16</sup> has been described by historian Loren Graham as 'one of the most influential reports ever given at a meeting of historians of science'.<sup>17</sup> According to Graham, the paper marked the start of externalist interpretations of science, which stress 'social, economic and other non-scientific influences on the development of science'.<sup>18</sup> Crowther was greatly influenced by Hessen's paper, and henceforth endeavoured to incorporate an externalist perspective in his scientific histories.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1930s Crowther broke the news of several major scientific discoveries through his articles in the *Manchester Guardian*. In February 1932, thanks to his contacts at Cambridge's Cavendish Laboratory, he obtained a notable scoop by announcing James Chadwick's discovery of the neutron.<sup>20</sup> Jeff Hughes has written that this journalistic coup:

...was important for the *Manchester Guardian*, for Crowther himself (it 'made' his journalistic career) and for the physicists (who received sympathetic coverage of their work)<sup>21</sup>

Crowther's account of Chadwick's discovery was republished in the USA, where it established his reputation as a science journalist.<sup>22</sup> A few weeks later, Crowther attended a lecture by Niels Bohr in Copenhagen in which Bohr revealed by calculation why interactions between neutrons and electrons would be much rarer than those between neutrons and protons (as had been found experimentally). Bohr allowed Crowther to précis his presentation in a *Manchester Guardian* article.<sup>23</sup> This was the first publication of Bohr's work on the topic. A few weeks later, Crowther published another scoop following Cockcroft and Walton's splitting of an atomic nucleus using special apparatus (as opposed to atomic fission arising from natural radioactive decay); and a few months later he published an early account of Blackett and Occhialini's invention of an automatic cloud-expansion chamber. This device was used to confirm the presence of positrons in cosmic rays arriving at the Earth.<sup>24</sup> Ernest Rutherford, the Director of the Cavendish Laboratory, is reported to have said that he had complete confidence in Crowther's journalism.<sup>25</sup> Crowther described Rutherford as 'my most eminent encourager', and wrote that on hearing of Rutherford's death in 1937 he 'wept more than [he] did when [his] own father died'.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1930s Crowther became a seasoned international traveller and a prodigious networker, meeting and befriending eminent scientists in many countries. In March 1937, on the invitation of James B. Conant, president of Harvard University, he delivered six lectures on 'The History of American Science'. Unknown to Crowther, his lecture on Edison was attended by Arthur E. Kennelly (co-discoverer of the Kennelly-Heaviside layer in the

ionosphere), who had for a time been Edison's assistant. Kennelly complimented Crowther on his insights into Edison.<sup>27</sup>

During the latter part of the Second World War, Crowther was one of a group of scientists who successfully campaigned for the inclusion of science in the remit of the newly formed UNESCO.<sup>28</sup> In the post-war period he maintained his international scientific interests, opposed the development of atomic weapons, and continued to publish popularisations and histories of science. Following his death in 1983, his papers were acquired by the University of Sussex in the UK.

### **First contact with the BBC**

In 1926, when the BBC had been operating for five years, Crowther contacted the editor of *Radio Times* (a weekly BBC publication listing forthcoming broadcasts) to suggest the inclusion of a weekly science page. The proposed page would draw attention to science broadcasts in the week ahead, give answers to listeners' science questions, and present an abridged text of a selected science broadcast. The *Radio Times*'s editor encouraged Crowther, and the project progressed as far as the creation of a typeset dummy page. The project came to a halt, however, with the sudden death of the editor, and his successor did not revive it.<sup>29</sup>

Crowther approached the BBC again later the same year via a six-page letter presenting his ideas for reorganising science broadcasting in general programming (as opposed to science in schools broadcasts).<sup>30</sup> His letter appears to have been both a pitch for a job and a preliminary setting-out of ideas prior to a meeting with BBC staff. Crowther's letter suggested ways of changing the style and management of science broadcasting. He considered that all science broadcasts should be brought into a centralised Science Talks department (contrary to BBC practice, which was not to have subject-specific departments) and that a Science Talks department should have a scientific manager, for which position he recommended himself.

Crowther suggested that programmes should be organized didactically, so that treatments progressed from elementary to advanced. Some of the leading scientists of the day, such as Sir William Bragg and Ernest Rutherford, would be invited to conduct scientific experiments on the radio, with listeners at home following their instructions. Crowther also envisaged a role for the Royal Society:

The President of the Royal Society is particularly interested in radio work, so that no time could be more propitious than the present for interesting the Royal Society in the BBC's scientific activities.<sup>31</sup>

Overall Crowther's proposals were aimed not only at rectifying the public's ignorance, but also at elevating its appreciation and judgement in scientific matters:

The Science Talks department [under my management] would make every effort to see that all talks were genuinely scientific even if popular, and would try to create a better public taste in scientific matters than the newspaper press has so far succeeded in creating.<sup>32</sup>

In view of subsequent developments covered in this article, I wish to highlight two particular points from this letter: Crowther's aspiration to centralise science production under a scientific manager; and the potential involvement of the Royal Society in the BBC's science output.

The BBC's Director of Talks, Hilda Matheson noted on Crowther's letter: 'Almost everyone is interested in science when it's shoved under their noses. But I think not quite so much as this man suggests'.<sup>33</sup> Nothing came of Crowther's suggestions, although the idea of a single science department under a scientific manager had a long and controversial afterlife.<sup>34</sup>

Following his 1926 letter, Crowther plied the BBC with copies of his newspaper articles and with suggestions for talks. His first opportunity to broadcast came a year later when Hilda Matheson planned three short monthly astronomical talks entitled 'Stars of the Month'. She asked Crowther to recommend a speaker, or to do it himself.<sup>35</sup> He volunteered, and the talks were broadcast in January, February and March 1928.<sup>36</sup>

Crowther's next radio appearance was in September 1931. In the meantime, significant changes had taken place in the BBC's Talks Department. Mary Adams had joined the BBC in 1930 with special responsibility for science talks – a post Crowther would presumably have hoped for. However, Adams's background was quite different from Crowther's. In contrast to Crowther's lacklustre academic career, Adams had gained a first-class degree in Botany from University College, Cardiff, and had pursued research at Cambridge University, where she became interested in adult education. Her first broadcasts in 1928, at around the same time as Crowther's, were considered to have been highly successful.<sup>37</sup>

Crowther too had moved on since his first BBC broadcasts. As mentioned earlier, he had visited the USSR and had been instrumental in bringing the Soviet delegation to London for the Congress on the History of Science and Technology. He had even contemplated moving to Moscow to set up an agency for importing British technical teaching expertise, although this plan did not materialise.<sup>38</sup> His interest in Left politics and his visits to the USSR brought him to the attention of the British security services, who set about establishing whether he was a communist. They concluded that he was not.<sup>39</sup>

There was little broadcasting work for Crowther during the 1930s. Mary Adams, in a note to her successor in 1936 on the qualities required of a science broadcaster, summarised the strengths and weaknesses of some of the broadcasters she had used. Concerning Crowther she wrote: 'ideal in theory, but a poor broadcaster'.<sup>40</sup> Interpreting Adams's remark is a matter for

speculation. Crowther's evangelism for science, his up-to-date knowledge, and his network of contacts ought to have made him invaluable. Possibly this is what Adams meant by 'ideal in theory'. As for his being a 'poor broadcaster', it is worth quoting Crowther's own comments on first hearing his recorded voice at the age of 37: '...much more cultivated than I had expected, but prosy and deliberate, and I sounded as if I were an amiable uncle of about fifty'.<sup>41</sup> Surviving audio recordings confirm the accuracy of Crowther's self-assessment.<sup>42</sup>

### **Scientific networks in the 1930s**

During the 1930s Crowther greatly expanded his range of international scientific contacts. In just a random handful of pages concerning the decade from his memoir *Fifty Years with Science* he meets Marie Curie, Irène Curie, Frederic Joliot, Peter Debye, Abram Ioffe, Nikolay Semyonov, Paul Langevin, Pierre Biquard and Niels Bohr, among others.<sup>43</sup> This density of names is not untypical of much of his memoir. In addition, Crowther met many German scientists, artists and intellectuals who came to London following Hitler's ascendancy in Germany – many of them travelling onwards to the USA.<sup>44</sup>

One development during the 1930s that had ramifications for Crowther's war-time work with both the BBC and the British Council was the growth of the social relations of science movement.<sup>45</sup> This was concerned with the betterment of society through science. Its origins have been traced to the First World War, and a disenchantment with science that spread widely among the public and, to some extent, among scientists themselves, as the destructive potential of science became evident.<sup>46</sup> The movement received an impetus from the Soviet delegation's visit to London in 1931.<sup>47</sup> Other scientists in the movement included crystallographer J. D. Bernal, physicist and co-discoverer of the positron, Patrick Blackett; astronomer and editor of *Nature*, Richard Gregory; and biologist J. B. S. Haldane. The movement took institutional form in Britain in 1938 when the British Association for the

Advancement of Science established a Division for the Social and International Relations of Science (DSIRS), which Crowther joined.

In the summer and autumn of 1940, the British biochemist and Sinologist Joseph Needham undertook a lecture tour in the USA. During the tour, Needham stressed to his American audiences that the European war threatened, among other things, science in Europe: ‘If the Nazis should win in Europe, science will be set back for several generations, perhaps longer’, he told them.<sup>48</sup> Needham found a growing pro-British and anti-Nazi sentiment in the USA, especially following the evacuation of Dunkirk in May and June 1940, the German invasion of France in June 1940, and the London Blitz (commenced September 1940).<sup>49</sup> He found members of his audiences curious to know more about British science, but observed that the supply of pro-British propaganda in the USA was ‘woefully deficient’. This situation contrasted markedly with the more effective dissemination of pro-Nazi propaganda. There were, for instance, Nazi bookshops in New York City.<sup>50</sup> On his return to the UK, Needham wrote a report on his visit, and a copy went to the Ministry of Information. The Ministry responded by asking the British Council to undertake the publicising of British science abroad.<sup>51</sup> In early 1941 a Science Committee was established within the British Council, chaired by Sir William Bragg. It consisted of three specialist panels, covering pure science, engineering and medicine, each with its own chairperson.<sup>52</sup> (Later an agriculture panel was added.) Crowther was sounded out as a Secretary for the Science Committee, and in June 1941 he took up the post, assuming responsibility for investigating ways to promote British science abroad.<sup>53</sup>

Although we do not know why Crowther was chosen, his journalistic experience and international outlook on science made him a good choice.<sup>54</sup> A month after joining the Science Committee, at a meeting of the Pure Science panel on 4 July 1941, Crowther presented a set

of proposals which, in its proselytising tone, recalls his 1928 book *Science for You*. Crowther wrote in his proposals: ‘The need now is to create a continuously developing panorama of the achievements and progress of science’.<sup>55</sup> He suggested that this could be done through existing departments of the British Council, through other bodies outside the British Council (such as the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Chemical Society), and through unspecified initiatives. A range of media would be used: print, lectures, film and broadcasting. For the print media, he proposed a newsletter; and for broadcasting he suggested co-operation with the BBC in planning broadcasts by British scientists for overseas listeners.<sup>56</sup> Bragg complimented Crowther on his prompt and imaginative approach to the task, and within weeks Crowther was producing *Monthly Science News*.<sup>57</sup> A few months later he was part of a delegation from the British Council to the BBC to propose collaborative ventures.

*Monthly Science News* typically consisted of a single folded sheet, printed in a double column and carrying five or six unsigned stories on science and technology. The lead story was usually a biographical item about a scientist, accompanied by a photo.<sup>58</sup> In its collection of short topical items, *Monthly Science News* was reminiscent of the science page Crowther had envisaged for *Radio Times* in 1926.

Initially *Monthly Science News* was distributed as an insert to *Britain To-day*, a periodical publication issued by the British Council’s Press Office for foreign dissemination. *Britain To-day* was free of charge, and distributed in a few European languages (including English) to recipients nominated by Britain’s overseas ambassadors.<sup>59</sup> Its initial circulation was 100, 000 although within a few months this was reduced because of constraints in finance and paper. An edition was distributed to press offices around the world for use in overseas press; and 2000 copies per month were distributed within Britain.<sup>60</sup>

When *Monthly Science News* had established itself, the British Council's Science Committee became increasingly occupied with international scientific relations, and with handling visits to and by overseas scientists.<sup>61</sup> In March 1943, in connection with this side of the Committee's work, Crowther established the Society for Visiting Scientists (SVS) under the aegis of the British Council.<sup>62</sup> It was an information centre and to some extent a refuge where foreign scientists could find information, hospitality and assistance. By 1944, when the SVS moved to its own premises, it had a lounge, meeting rooms, bar, refectory and some dormitory accommodation.<sup>63</sup> This venture once again brought Crowther to the attention of the British Security Services, in the form of the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, which record that Crowther had been sounding out governments of allied countries and groups of refugee intellectuals with a view to founding a pan-European scientific organisation.<sup>64</sup> The Security Services kept his organisation under observation but by 1947 had concluded that the Society was not a threat to national security. However, they continued to be wary of Crowther.<sup>65</sup>

### **Visits to the BBC**

On 3 September 1941, on behalf of the British Council's Science Committee, Bragg and Crowther met the BBC's Director General, the Controller of the Overseas Service and the Manager of Empire Talks to explore cooperation between the Science Committee and the BBC in a project aimed at overseas listeners.<sup>66</sup> The result was the series *Science Lifts the Veil*, about 'the conquest of the sub-visible Universe',<sup>67</sup> and was broadcast weekly on the Empire Service from 5 January 1942 to 6 April 1942. Broadcasters included William and Lawrence Bragg, crystallographer J. D. Bernal, biologist Cyril Darlington, physicist John Cockcroft and physicist Patrick Blackett. Crowther claimed he was largely responsible for organising the series, which was subsequently published as a book.<sup>68</sup>

After this series of broadcasts, Crowther's work for the BBC's Overseas Services increased markedly. Part of the reason was Crowther's usefulness to an organisation that had lost many of its peace-time staff to military service. Departing BBC staff were replaced more than two-fold by an influx of new staff. Between September 1939 and March 1943 (the peak of BBC war-time staff numbers), BBC staff increased from 4889 to 11,663, approximately a 240% increase, and the Overseas Service saw a particularly large growth.<sup>69</sup> Many of the new staff in the Overseas Service were recruited from broadcasting services elsewhere, or from countries with which Britain had imperial connections. By the end of 1942, the BBC's Overseas Service was broadcasting in 45 languages, much of it directed at continental Europe.<sup>70</sup> (Before the war, the majority of the BBC's overseas broadcasting had consisted of the English-language Empire Service.) Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb have referred to this war-time environment in the BBC Overseas Service as a 'uniquely cosmopolitan united nations of broadcasting personalities'.<sup>71</sup> This was the context in which Crowther's broadcasting career flourished.

BBC Overseas Service staff often consulted Crowther on scientific matters, especially those with an international dimension. For example, in September 1941 producer Eric Blair (better known as George Orwell) consulted Crowther about the series *I'd Like it Explained* on the Indian service. Blair wanted a speaker on synthetic and raw materials, and asked Crowther to suggest someone.<sup>72</sup> Other producers who made use of Crowther were Una Marson in the Caribbean Service, Anthony Weymouth in the General Overseas Service, Eleen Sam in the China Section, E. Schreider in the French Section, and G. Ivan Smith in the Pacific Service.<sup>73</sup> Smith, who had come to the UK from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, became a friend to Crowther and collaborated with him on several broadcasts.<sup>74</sup> In 1945, the Assistant Controller, European Service, wrote in an internal memo: 'Crowther is a good friend of the BBC and has helped a lot with science talks'.<sup>75</sup> This attitude contrasted markedly with that in

the BBC's domestic services where, as the following incident shows, Crowther was not popular.

In December 1941, plans were afoot for a BAAS conference proposed by Crowther on ways of extending the public understanding of the benefits of science.<sup>76</sup> Crowther visited representatives of the BBC's domestic services in connection with the planned conference, and offered 'a flow of important and interesting material and a group of young and authoritative speakers'.<sup>77</sup> Unlike Crowther's earlier meetings with Overseas staff, these exchanges did not go smoothly. Misgivings were expressed afterwards by BBC managers about Crowther's offer of assistance 'in view of earlier experience'.<sup>78</sup> The nature of these misgivings, and of the 'earlier experience', was not spelled out, although it is clear from archival documents that BBC managers were concerned about the possible political bias of scientists associated with the BAAS's Division for the Social and International Relations of Science.<sup>79</sup> Crowther's offer of cooperation with the BBC's domestic arm was not taken up.

William Bragg also fell foul of the BBC's domestic managers, although not because of his politics. One of his last actions before his death in March 1942 was to suggest to BBC deputy Director General Sir Cecil Graves a re-running on a domestic network of the *Science Lifts the Veil* series, which was in its third month on the Empire Service. The BBC's Director of Talks in the domestic section, however, was not impressed by the series:

In our opinion the Overseas talks have been very uneven indeed. Some have been brilliant – namely Sir William Bragg's own introduction – but others have been exactly the kind of talk which we have had in the past and which has not secured a wide audience.<sup>80</sup>

Bragg's proposal was tactfully rejected: he was told there was no space in the Home Service schedules for *Science Lifts the Veil*.<sup>81</sup> Four days later, on 10 March 1942, he died. Crowther described working with Bragg at the British Council as 'a profound pleasure', and described him as 'a person of extraordinary natural wisdom... able to make correct judgements on the facts before him, irrespective of his general set of ideas'.<sup>82</sup> Their cordial relationship thrived despite very different political views, with Bragg being, according to his son, an apolitical, lifelong Conservative-voter.<sup>83</sup>

### **The BAAS 1943 Science and the Citizen conference**

On 20–21 March 1943, a BAAS conference that Crowther had initiated on 'Science and the Citizen: The Public Understanding of Science' took place. Conference presentations were organised around themes including Radio and Cinema, and Science and the Press. Crowther himself spoke on Science and the Press. He addressed the familiar theme of the need for the public to know about science, and the consequent importance of professionalism among science journalists. He castigated the press for its neglect of science, pointing out that, through war work, many people who had hitherto had no connection with science were working in scientific occupations and interested to know more.<sup>84</sup> Despite making these criticisms, Crowther's speech was a relatively mild affair.

In the session on Radio and Cinema, however, two speakers in particular challenged the BBC's autonomy. These were biologist C. D. Darlington (a Fellow of the Royal Society), and Douglas McClean of the Association of Scientific Workers. In suggestions reminiscent of Crowther's 1926 proposals to the BBC, each proposed that science broadcasting at the BBC, should be more centrally managed, and that the scientific world should have significantly more influence on its planning.<sup>85</sup> A defence of BBC autonomy was presented by BBC Overseas Producer G. Ivan Smith, who had collaborated with Bragg and Crowther on *Science*

*Lifts the Veil*. Smith cited the series as an example of a particularly successful collaboration, and commented that ‘the broadcaster’ (meaning BBC staff members) must be the final arbiters:

[external participants] always worked on the understanding that the broadcaster shall have final judgment...<sup>86</sup>

As a consequence of the conference a nine-strong deputation from the BAAS, headed by Sir Richard Gregory and including Julian Huxley and Douglas McClean (but not Crowther), arrived at the BBC on 14 December 1943 to see the Director General. According to a short news item published in the *Evening Standard* the same day, the scientists’ mood was confrontational:

The deputation had its genesis in a conference last March, convened by the British Association, on Science and the Citizen. At one session Sir Allan Powell, President of the BBC, [*sic*, Powell was actually Chairman of the BBC] heard from the chair ideas on broadcasting and the citizen; in particular suggestions that the BBC should have a scientific advisory committee, with a man of high standing as a permanent official of the BBC to look after the scientific broadcasts. This afternoon, in effect, Sir Allan Powell is being asked ‘What about it?’<sup>87</sup>

Though couched in journalese, this report captures accurately the deputation’s most contentious proposals. These proposals, however, did not come as a bolt from the blue to the BBC. A letter to the BBC from the BAAS setting out these proposals had preceded the visit, and had been annotated by William Haley, the BBC’s Editor-in-Chief (and from 1944 its Director General).<sup>88</sup> Against them he pencilled ‘most dangerous’, and ‘would depend on the

limitations placed on such a committee'.<sup>89</sup> In the presence of the deputation, however, his tone was more conciliatory. He expressed:

... his great interest in what had been said by the various speakers and said...[A]ll the suggestions put forward would receive full and sympathetic consideration.<sup>90</sup>

A non-committal press release was issued, and that was the end of official discussions between the BBC and the BAAS on this matter until after the war.<sup>91</sup>

The deputation's proposals, in so far as they advocated a centralisation of the BBC's science output and an enhanced role for the institutional world of science in BBC programming, echo the proposals Crowther had made in 1926 – although it is unlikely that anyone but Crowther would have known this. It is therefore tempting to assume that Crowther would have been sympathetic to them. We have no evidence regarding Crowther's opinion of these proposals; however, in my conclusions I will suggest that his increasingly unhappy experiences at the British Council are likely to have shed a new light for him on the danger of institutional scientific interference in the work of the BBC.

An unexpected outcome of the BAAS delegation's visit to the BBC was the revelation, in an unguarded remark by William Haley, that the BBC had a secret advisory arrangement with the two Secretaries of the Royal Society.<sup>92</sup> This arrangement had been set up in 1942, as the BBC's usual advisory committees had been in abeyance since the beginning of the war. The BBC had approached the Royal Society to enter into an advisory arrangement because the Society was considered by the BBC to be authoritative, whereas the BAAS was erroneously considered to be 'merely a body to which all scientists belong'.<sup>93</sup> The arrangement had been kept secret at the Royal Society's request.<sup>94</sup> Following the embarrassing revelation of this

arrangement at the meeting with members of the BAAS, a BBC manager offered to include the BAAS henceforth in its advisory arrangements.<sup>95</sup>

### **Trouble at the British Council**

Following William Bragg's death in 1942, life at the British Council's Science Committee started to turn sour for Crowther. The problem was Bragg's replacement, Sir Henry Dale.

Henry Dale (1875–1968) had enjoyed a long and distinguished research career focusing on chemical mediators in the human body, and including the discovery of histamine. In 1914 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society, for which he served as Secretary (1925–35) and President (1940–45). (His Presidency of the Royal Society therefore coincided with his Chairmanship of the British Council Science Committee.) Dale received numerous prizes, including the Nobel prize (1936), and was honoured with a Knighthood, CBE and OM.<sup>96</sup> He was also an occasional broadcaster on the BBC.

In Dale's view, the British Council's Science Committee had usurped a function of the Royal Society, and one of his goals as incoming Chairman of the Science Committee – and as President of the Royal Society – was to resolve the conflict of interest between the two bodies.<sup>97</sup> By long tradition, where international relations in science were concerned, the Royal Society took responsibility, and for this it received an annual Treasury Grant. In matters of international scientific relations, the Foreign Office had traditionally routed business to the Royal Society. Dale felt that the British Council's Science Committee had disrupted this arrangement. The Foreign Office, within whose jurisdiction the British Council lay, was now inclined to divert international science issues to the British Council Science Committee. To remedy this unwelcome shift of responsibility, Dale proposed to institute a 'cooperative' arrangement between the Royal Society and the British Council Science Committee:

[T]he Royal Society and the British Council's Science Department, working together on an agreed basis of cooperation, could do far better service to international relations in science than must result from independent, to say nothing of competitive, action.<sup>98</sup>

The 'agreed basis of cooperation' to which Dale referred was to be achieved by dissolving the Science Committee and reconstituting it with representatives of the Royal Society.<sup>99</sup>

Crowther saw things differently.<sup>100</sup> So far as he was concerned, the Royal Society had been manoeuvring to control the British Council's Science Committee ever since Dale took over from Bragg. Crowther considered that the Science Committee was the appropriate body to deal with international scientific matters because it was answerable to a government department (the Foreign Office), which itself was answerable to Parliament and the electorate. The Royal Society, by contrast, was a private organisation of self-elected members with no status in government. In any case the Royal Society was too narrow a body to subsume a Science Committee that had panels for Engineering, Medicine and Agriculture, as well as Pure Science. Crowther's personal papers indicate that he believed that the Royal Society also disapproved of the Society for Visiting Scientists, considering it too much under his influence and reflecting too much his political views.<sup>101</sup>

Crowther's disquiet about the conduct of the Royal Society was obliquely hinted at in a review of Sir Henry Lyon's history of the Royal Society which he wrote for *The New Statesman and Nation* in 1944.<sup>102</sup> In his review Crowther commented on the way the Royal Society had evolved from its original mission of pursuing science for the good of humanity to a position where it relished its detachment from worldly affairs. He saw a danger in such a Society gaining executive power whilst remaining free of the administrative responsibilities and accountability that executive power usually entailed:

But if the Society remains of this type [i.e. detached from worldly affairs] and also acquires directive powers, serious dangers arise. On the one hand, there will be the Society with supreme scientific authority but no administrative responsibility, while on the other there will be Government and other scientific departments with administrative responsibility but no scientific authority.<sup>103</sup>

Implicit in this quotation is a juxtaposition of the Royal Society with a body such as the British Council Science Committee.

In an unpublished archive document labelled 'Personal and Confidential', Crowther chronicles at considerable length the many actions carried out by Dale and some of his Royal Society colleagues (notably A. V. Hill) which he felt were intended to undermine the Science Committee and to favour the Royal Society. The document also alleges that Dale undermined the Society for Visiting Scientists, despite Crowther having initially suggested that it be a subsidiary of the Royal Society – a suggestion which the Royal Society had rejected.<sup>104</sup>

Matters came to a head for Crowther in November 1945 when Dale set out his plans to augment the Royal Society's representation on the Science Committee.<sup>105</sup> Crowther was unable to marshal support for his opposition within the British Council. Having failed to get Dale's proposals blocked, he resigned from the British Council at the end of February 1946.<sup>106</sup> Dale maintained that he had always esteemed Crowther's administrative and journalistic skills, and regretted his resignation. Crowther was invited to join the restructured Committee<sup>107</sup> but declined, writing in his draft reply:

Under the present proposals [i.e. Dale's new Committee structure], the Scientific Department must ultimately become subordinate to the policy of the Royal Society,

which is not even a Government Department and is in no way responsible to Parliament.<sup>108</sup>

The Science Committee continued to function at least until the early 1950s. Crowther resigned from the Society for Visiting Scientists in 1948, feeling that his management and politics were increasingly disapproved of by other people connected with the Society.<sup>109</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The curious profile of Crowther's work for the BBC, with its upsurge shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War and its quiescence shortly afterwards, almost exactly parallels the profile of his career with the British Council's Science Committee, which began in 1941 and ended in 1946. The article has shown that this apparent coincidence relates to the growth of the British propaganda effort in the Second World War. Each organisation required a science populariser with an international outlook and a wide knowledge of science and scientists, and Crowther fitted the bill.

The article has shown the conflict that ensued when Henry Dale, who considered that the Royal Society had an exclusive right to manage international scientific relations on behalf of the government, replaced William Bragg as Chairman of the British Council's Science Committee. Further conflict arose when Crowther set up the Society for Visiting Scientists under the aegis of the British Council's Science Committee. This conflict was part of the 'institutional strife' referred to in the title of this article. The two bodies encroached on one another's territory, and the more established and esteemed body (the Royal Society) prevailed by virtue of its prestige. Although Crowther gives an account of his disagreement with Dale in his memoir, it captures none of the sense of grievance that leaps out from his much longer account in archival documents.<sup>110</sup>

I wish to propose a connection between the institutional chauvinism outlined above and another episode covered by this article – the visit by a BAAS deputation to the BBC in December 1943. I commented earlier on Crowther’s relatively muted presence at the 1943 conference on ‘Science and the Citizen: The Public Understanding of Science’. He did not speak in the session on Radio and Cinema, although by this stage he was an experienced radio performer and adviser. Two of the scientists who *did* speak in the Radio and Cinema session, Darlington and McClean, argued that scientists should have more influence over BBC science broadcasts. This proposal was consistent with Crowther’s 1926 letter to the BBC, which had even suggested a role for the Royal Society in formulating programme plans. When the deputation of scientists from the BAAS subsequently visited the BBC’s Director General to make similar points face-to-face, Crowther was absent. Naturally there could have been countless reasons for his absence. However, I suggest that a plausible one was a growing appreciation by Crowther of the danger posed by institutional science gaining control of supposedly autonomous public bodies.

If Crowther had been disposed to see them, there were parallels between the Royal Society’s annexing of the British Council’s Science Committee under Henry Dale and attempts by a scientific institution to influence BBC science coverage in December 1943. The legal statuses of the British Council and the BBC were similar. Both were created by Royal Charter to be operationally autonomous, but to have executive ability on behalf of government. The Royal Society’s undermining (from Crowther’s point of view) of the British Council’s Science Committee could be seen to exemplify megalomania by an organisation that was scientifically authoritative but outside the structures of accountability. Scientific attempts to influence or control BBC science broadcasting could be viewed in the same light. If this suggestion seems unduly hypothetical, it is worth recalling the war-time advisory arrangement between the BBC and the two Secretaries of the Royal Society, which came to

light during the BAAS delegation's visit to the BBC in December 1943. One of the Secretaries of the Royal Society at this time was Professor A. V. Hill, someone whom Crowther considered to be implicated, along with Henry Dale, in the Royal Society's undermining of the British Council's Science Committee.<sup>111</sup> From Crowther's position this advisory arrangement could well have looked like further scientific megalomania by an unaccountable body – the Royal Society. That the arrangement was kept secret at the Royal Society's request would have done little to allay suspicion.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Appendix

This table of Crowther's broadcasts is mostly compiled from the J. G. Crowther Contributor's file at BBC Written Archives (Caversham) and from documents at the Crowther Archive (The Keep, Brighton).<sup>112</sup>

Date	Broadcast title	Series title	Service
2/1/1928	Stars of the Month		London and Daventry 5XX
6/2/1928	Stars of the Month		London and Daventry 5XX
5/3/1928	Stars of the Month		London and Daventry 5XX
22/9/1931	City Sparrows Economics		National
8/3/1934	Radioactivity	Events at Home and Abroad	National
16/1/1940	The Beginnings Of Electrical Science	Science and the Community	Schools
5/3/1940	Mobile Power: The Dynamo And The Electric Motor	Science and the Community	Schools
11/6/1940	Electricity in the Service of Chemistry	Science and the Community	Schools
27/6/1941	Russian Science	Ariel in Wartime	Home
30/8/1941	Science in the USSR		Home
1/10/1941	Science and Human Welfare (associated with the BAAS conference 'Science and World Order')	Current Affairs	Schools
2/10/1941	Industrial Uses Of Chrome		Overseas
14/1/1942	Science Helps Man	Verandah Topics	Overseas
23/3/1942	Science Lifts the Veil	Science Lifts the Veil	Overseas. Crowther introduced a talk by T. E. Allibone
30/3/1942	Science Lifts the Veil	Science Lifts the Veil	Overseas (Crowther introduced a talk by P. M. S. Blackett)
6/4/1942	Science Lifts the Veil	Science Lifts the Veil	Overseas Crowther introduced and read a script by C. H. Andrewes
30/6/1942	Science in the USSR		Overseas
30/5/1942	James Watt		Overseas
25/7/1942	Scientists in London		Overseas? Schools?

	Today, British Association meeting		
6/9/1942	Brains Trust	Brains Trust	Overseas
13/9/1942	Brains Trust	Brains Trust	Overseas
3/10/1942	Postscript	Postscript	Overseas
19/10/1942	Science in Russia		Overseas
4/1/1943	Isaac Newton		Overseas
5/1/1943	Brains Trust	Brains Trust	Home
7/1/1943	What Is the Use Of Science?	Science and Agriculture	Overseas
24/1/1943	Answering you		Overseas
2/2/1943	Reshaping Industry	Postscript	Overseas
18/2/1943	Final talk of 7-part series		Overseas (Crowther planned all broadcasts in the series)
3/1/1944	Science in 1944		Overseas
8/10/1944	Science Notebook	Science Notebook	Overseas
26/11/1944	Obituary for Sir Arthur Eddington		Overseas
22/1/1945	This Expanding Universe		Overseas
29/1/1945	Scientific Co-operation	<i>Chronique Scientifique</i>	Overseas (Crowther's script translated into French)
6/12/1946	Profile of Julian Huxley		Overseas
11/3/1947	Isaac Newton		Overseas
22/4/1947	Joseph Lister		Overseas
1/5/1947 to 5/6/1947	Six talks on Applied Science		Overseas
22/1/1961	Wisest, Brightest, Meanest of Mankind		Home (About Francis Bacon)
16/4/1961	Bacon the Scientist		Overseas
[?]/11[?] 1971	Rutherford and Radio[?]	World radio Club	World Service
5/8/1972	A Fable in his Lifetime		Radio 3
27/9/1972	A Generation for Progress		Radio 3

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<sup>1</sup> James G. Crowther, *Fifty Years with Science*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970, p.155. Crowther does not name the organisation he applied to for the job, giving only three dots in place of its names. The dots could stand for ‘BBC’, whose main science producer Mary Adams transferred in 1936 to the fledgling BBC television service leaving a vacancy for a specialist in science broadcasting in the radio services. The vacancy was filled by Ian Cox. See Allan Jones, ‘Mary Adams and the producer’s role in early BBC science broadcasts’, *Public Understanding of Science* (2012), 21(8), pp. 968–83.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Hughes, ‘Insects or Neutrons? Science news Values in Interwar Britain’, in Martin W. Bauer and Massimiano Bucchi, (eds.), *Journalism, Science and Society: Science Communication between News and Public Relations*, New York and London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 11-20.

<sup>3</sup> James G. Crowther, op.cit.(1).

<sup>4</sup> Alice Byrne, ‘The British Council and the British World, 1939-1954’, *GRAAT On-Line* issue 13 March 2013; available from <http://www.graat.fr/cultural.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Alice Byrne, ‘The British Council and cultural propaganda in the United States, 1938–1945’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* (2013), 3, pp. 249-263; p.249.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher A. J. Chilvers, ‘The dilemmas of seditious men; the Crowther–Hessen correspondence in the 1930s’, *British Journal for the History of Science* (2003), 4, pp. 417–435; p.420.

<sup>7</sup> Chilvers op. cit (6), p. 420.

<sup>8</sup> The date when Crowther started contributing to the *Manchester Guardian* is not entirely clear, but Crowther op. cit. (1) p.41 suggests that he considered 1927 to be significant in the establishment of his journalistic career with that publication. Crowther, op. cit. (1) p.260 gives 1949 as the year of his last contribution to it. To arrive at my estimate of Crowther’s output for the *Manchester Guardian* I used the ProQuest online database of the *Guardian*, and searched in the author field for “J. G. Crowther” OR “scientific correspondent” OR “science correspondent” between the dates of 1927 and 1949. I confined the publication title

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to 'Manchester Guardian' as this database covers some other publications. The search produced 383 'hits'. In these hits, J. G. Crowther's name appears in the by-line 11 times. Oliver-Hill Andrews (personal communication, 1 March 2015) says that everything with the 'scientific correspondent' by-line after about 1929 was by Crowther, but prior to that date some articles with this by-line were secured by Crowther from scientists. I therefore tentatively round the number of articles by Crowther down to 350. For more on Crowther's writings, see Oliver Hill-Andrews's doctoral thesis *Interpreting Science: J.G. Crowther and the Making of Interwar British Culture* (University of Sussex, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Chilvers, op. cit (6), p. 421.

<sup>10</sup> James G. Crowther, *Science for You*, London: Routledge and Sons, 1928, p. vii.

<sup>11</sup> Crowther op. cit (10), pp.vii and 235.

<sup>12</sup> Crowther op. cit. (1), p.43.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Crowther to Mary Adams, 3 September 1931, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading, UK (subsequently BBC WAC), Crowther Contributor File.

<sup>14</sup> Chilvers, op. cit. (6), p.426.

<sup>15</sup> Chilvers op. cit.(6), p. 422.

<sup>16</sup> Boris Hessen, 'The social and economic roots of Newton's Principia', in Nikolai Bukarin, (ed.), *Science at the Cross Roads*, 2nd ed., London: Cassel, 1971, pp 147-212.

<sup>17</sup> Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union: a Short History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> Graham, op.cit. (17), p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 79.

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<sup>20</sup> 'The origin of matter: New type of ultimate particle found by Cambridge Scientist', *Manchester Guardian*, 27 February 1932, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Hughes, op. cit. (2) p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p.96.

<sup>23</sup> Crowther op. cit. (1), p.99. Crowther's account of Bohr's presentation was published in the *Manchester Guardian* on 19 April 1932, p. 5, 'The Neutron: Niels Bohr's Address at Copenhagen', and not on the 19 March 1932, which Crowther erroneously gives as the publication date in op. cit.(1), p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Crowther's accounts are given respectively in 'The atom: disintegration by electricity, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 May 1932, p. 9; and 'Mystery of the cosmic rays: apparatus that makes them photograph themselves', *Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1932, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Crowther op. cit. (1), pp. 175–6.

<sup>26</sup> Crowther op. cit. (1), pp. 189–90.

<sup>27</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), pp. 168–83.

<sup>28</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p.245.

<sup>29</sup> Printer's proof of typeset Science Page for *Radio Times*, Crowther Archive, The Keep, Brighton, UK (subsequently CA), SXMs29/9/10/2.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum from Crowther to Hilda Matheson, 6 December 1926, BBC WAC, Crowther Contributor File.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum from Crowther to Hilda Matheson, 6 December 1926, BBC WAC Crowther, Contributor File.

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<sup>32</sup> Memorandum from Crowther to Hilda Matheson, 6 December 1926, BBC WAC Crowther, Contributor File.

<sup>33</sup> H. Matheson, manuscript comment on Crowther's letter of 6 December 1926, BBC WAC, Crowther Contributor File.

<sup>34</sup> See Allan Jones, 'Elite science and the BBC: a 1950s contest of ownership', *British Journal for the History of Science*, (2014), 4, pp. 701–723. Allan Jones, 'Clogging the machinery: the BBC's experiment in science coordination, 1949–1953', *Media History* (2013), 4, pp. 436–449. Timothy Boon, *Films of Fact: A History of Science in Documentary Films and Television*, London: Wallflower Press, 2008, pp. 187–91 and Chapter 7.

<sup>35</sup> Hilda Matheson to J. G. Crowther, 16 November 1927, CA, SxMs29/9/10/5.

<sup>36</sup> These broadcasts were the earliest instances I have found of science broadcasts by a populariser rather than a practising scientist.

<sup>37</sup> Allan Jones, 'Mary Adams and the producer's role in early BBC science broadcasts', *Public Understanding of Science* (2012), 8, pp. 968–983.

<sup>38</sup> Chilvers, op. cit. (6), p. 422

<sup>39</sup> Letter 29 November 1929 from D. B. S. to J. W. Stafford at the Passport Office, National Archives, Kew, London, UK (subsequently NA), KV2/3341 Security Services file on J. G. Crowther. Chilvers, op. cit. (6), p.419, says that Crowther joined the Communist Party in or around 1923.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Adams to Ian Cox, n.d., [probably circa. June 1936], BBC WAC, R51/523/1.

<sup>41</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 180.

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<sup>42</sup> Crowther's voice survives in BBC recorded radio programme 'A Generation for Progress' broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 27 September 1972. National Sound Archive Recording reference: T10854R. BBC reference: T39893.

<sup>43</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 130–36.

<sup>44</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 123–9.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Roy and Kay MacLeod, 'The Social Relations of Science and Technology 1914–1939', in Carlo M. Cipolla (ed.) *The Twentieth Century*, vol. 1, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976, pp. 319–320.

<sup>46</sup> MacLeod and MacLeod K., op. cit. (45).

<sup>47</sup> Chilvers, op. cit. (6), p. 427.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Needham, 'Report on Four Months' Tour in the United States, June–November 1940', p. 4, SZ/TQ/2/7. Zuckerman Archive, University of East Anglia (subsequently ZA).

<sup>49</sup> Needham, op. cit. (48), p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Needham, op. cit. (48), pp. 6 and 7.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Lord Melchett to Solly Zuckerman, 26 March 1941, ZA, SZ/TQ/2/7.

<sup>52</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 228.

<sup>53</sup> Letter 29 May 1941 from B. Ifor Evans to William Bragg (and members of Science Committee), NA, BW 2/338. At some point subsequently Crowther's job title was changed to 'Director', possibly accompanying a raising of status of the Science Committee within the Council. A long, undated anonymous document 'The Place of the Science Department in the Organization of the British Council' in the Royal Society Archive, HD/8/2/3/1/13, probably by Crowther and from internal evidence written more than a year after he joined the Council, outlines the anomalous position of the Science Committee as a subdepartment of Education. Various

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difficulties of this arrangement are outlined, including, for example, that the Science Committee had insufficient authority to intervene when the Council's Film Department produced an unsuitable film about the Royal Institution. The document appears to be making the case for separating Science from Education and raising it to Divisional status. By the time of Crowther's resignation in early 1946 he was referred to as 'Director' of the Science Committee, which would be consistent with a change of status of Science. An undated five-page 'Report on British Council Science Committee' by Crowther in CA SxMS29/5/2/15, evidently written around the time of his resignations, refers retrospectively to events at the Council. Crowther titles himself 'Director' when recounting events from 1942 and subsequently.

<sup>54</sup> At the time of Crowther's appointment to the Science Committee, he and Bragg did not know each other well. Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 229.

<sup>55</sup> Pure Science Panel, Agenda for 1st meeting on Friday 4 July 1941, Publicizing British Scientific Achievement, NA, BW2/339.

<sup>56</sup> Pure Science Panel, Agenda for 1st meeting on Friday 4 July 1941, Publicizing British Scientific Achievement, NA, BW2/339.

<sup>57</sup> Letter William Bragg to J. G. Crowther, 25 June 1941, NA, BW2/339.

<sup>58</sup> Samples of *Monthly Science News*, CA, SxMs29/5/2/11.

<sup>59</sup> Alice Byrne. «*Boosting Britain* » : *Démocratie et propagande culturelle, Britain To-day 1939–1954*, Doctoral thesis, Aix-Marseille Université, 2010, pp. 60-61.

<sup>60</sup> British Council Science Committee, minutes of meeting on 4 November 1941, NA, BW 2/338.

<sup>61</sup> For example, draft minutes of the Science Committee meeting for 25 November 1942 have much on Anglo-Soviet scientific relations. The minutes for 13 July 1943 and 8 December 1943 deal with Anglo-Chinese relations. NA BW 2/338.

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<sup>62</sup> Patrick Petitjean, 'J.G. Crowther and the Anglo-French Society of Sciences' (2007) downloadable from <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00112452v1/document>. Accessed 27 February 2015. Crowther says that the Society for Visting Scientists operated informally from 1942, and was formally established in October 1944 (op. cit. (1), pp. 240 and 242).

<sup>63</sup> Anon., *Nature*, 23 September 1944, p. 391.

<sup>64</sup> Note by a Sergeant at Metropolitan Police, Special Branch 2 October 1944, NA KV2/3341 Security Services file on J. G. Crowther.

<sup>65</sup> Note from A S Halford, Foreign Office (recipient unclear) 28 January 1947, NA, KV2/3341 Security Services file on J G Crowther.

<sup>66</sup> Memo from Sir Richard Maconachie to Director General, 22 December 1943, BBC WAC R51/529.

<sup>67</sup> Undated memo/press release 'Science Lifts the Veil', c. November 1941, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>68</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p.230. Also draft minutes of 4th meeting of the Science Committee, Wednesday 25 November 1942, NA, BW 2/338.

<sup>69</sup> Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 113–14. Simon J. Potter, 'The colonisation of the BBC' in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb (eds.), *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932–2012)*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, pp. 40–56: p.40.

<sup>70</sup> Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982, p. 122.

<sup>71</sup> Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, 'Corporate Cosmopolitanism: Diasporas and Diplomacy at the BBC World Service, 1932-2012', in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb (ed.), *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932–2012)*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, pp. 1–20: p. 9.

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<sup>72</sup> Letter Eric Blair to J. G. Crowther 21 September 1941, CA, SxMs29/9/10/4.

<sup>73</sup> Letters from J. G. Crowther to Una Marson, 17, 30 Nov. 1942; 13, 14 Jan. 1943. Letter from Una Marson to J. G. Crowther, 20 Jan. 1943. Letters from G. Ivan Smith to J. G. Crowther, 10 March 1943, 12 September 1945. Letter Anthony Weymouth to J. G. Crowther, 7 Dec. 1943. All BBC WAC Crowther Contributor File. Letter B.K. to E. Schreider, 26 Jan, 1945, CA, SxMs29/5/2/2. Letter Eleen Sam to J. G. Crowther, 27 Nov. 1942, CA, SxMs29/5/2/12. Letter J. G. Crowther to Eleen Sam, 19 Feb. 1946. CA, SxMs29/5/2/2.

<sup>74</sup> In memo 17 June 1945 from Pacific Service Director (G Ivan Smith) to Controller (European Service) Smith refers to Crowther as a friend; and in a letter to Crowther 12 September 1945 Smith tells Crowther that he is leaving the BBC to work as a documentary producer for Rank Films and invites Crowther and his wife to dinner. BBC WAC Crowther Contributor File.

<sup>75</sup> Smith to Assistant Controller European Service, manuscript addition, 17 June 1945, BBC WAC Crowther Contributor File.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the committee of the Division for the Social and International Relations of Science, 3 December 1941. Also minutes of Divisional Committee for Social and International relations of Science Minutes 14 April 1942, which attribute the idea for the conference to Crowther. ZA, SZ/TQ/2/6.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from J. G. Crowther to N. Luker, 24 December 1941, BBC WAC R51/523/3. Memo from N. Luker to Director of Talks. 7 January 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>78</sup> Memo from N. Luker to Director of Talks, 7 January 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>79</sup> Memo from Director of Talks to Assistant Director of Talks, 12 January 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>80</sup> Memo from Director of Talks to Controller (Home), 4 March 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Sir Cecil Graves to Sir William Bragg 6 March 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

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<sup>82</sup> Crowther, op. cit. (1), p. 229

<sup>83</sup> Lawrence Bragg, 'Interview with Sir Lawrence Bragg' by David Edge, 20 June 1969; Oral History Transcript at American Institute of Physics, Niels Bohr Library and Archives. Available online at <http://www.aip.org/history/ohilist/28531.html>

<sup>84</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science, *The Advancement of Science* (1943), vol. II, no. 8, 1943, p. 335–6.

<sup>85</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science, *The Advancement of Science* (1943), vol. II, no. 8, pp. 300 and 303.

<sup>86</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science, *The Advancement of Science* (1943), vol. II, no. 8, p. 299.

<sup>87</sup> Anon., *Evening Standard*, (1943, 14 December).

<sup>88</sup> Letter from British Association for Advancement of Science to Director General, BBC, 19 November 1943. BBC WAC R51/529.

<sup>89</sup> Internal memo from W. J. Haley 24 November 1943 regarding letter from British Association for the Advancement of Science, BBC WAC R51/529.

<sup>90</sup> Notes of meeting at Broadcasting House, 14 December 1943, BBC WAC R51/524/4.

<sup>91</sup> There was however a brief sequel a few months later involving the Association of Scientific Workers. In February 1944 Haley met representative from the Association of Scientific Workers whose main proposal was 'that the BBC should appoint a full-time scientific officer who would be assisted by some sort of outside scientific advisory body' (Record of Interview 12/2/44 with Dr Douglas McClean (Lister institute) and Dr van Heyningen from W J Haley to C(H), BBC WAC R51/529). This was much the same as the pair of proposals made a few months earlier by the BAAS's delegation. Once again, the proposal made no progress.

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<sup>92</sup> 'Notes of meeting at Broadcasting House', 14 December 1943, BBC WAC R51/524/4.

<sup>93</sup> Director of Talks to Assistant Director of Talks, 12 Jan 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3,

<sup>94</sup> Director of Talks to Assistant Director of Talks, 12 Jan 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3. The secrecy of the advisory arrangement with the Royal Society is revealed in a memo from Director of Talks to Controller Home Service, 19 October 1943, BBC WAC R51/529.

<sup>95</sup> Director of Talks to Assistant Director of Talks, 12 Jan 1942, BBC WAC R51/523/3.

<sup>96</sup> Biographical information from Wilhelm Feldberg, (rev. E. M. Tansey), 'Dale, Sir Henry Hallett (1875–1968)' in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2004). Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Jan. 2011. 11 Aug. 2013  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32694>>

<sup>97</sup> This account of Dale's side of the disagreement is based on a letter from Sir Henry Dale to Sir William Larke, 13 March 1946, NA BW 2/337

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<sup>100</sup> This account of Crowther's objections is based on a letter from R. Seymour to W. H. Montagu - Pollock, Foreign Office, 1st March 1946, NA, BW 2/337; and also on the 5-page undated document 'Report on British Council Science Committee', CA, SxMS29/5/2/15.

<sup>101</sup> Petitjean, op. cit. (62), p. 17, note 41.

<sup>102</sup> Lyon's book was Sir Henry Lyons *The Royal Society 1660–1940: a History of its Administration under its Charters*, Cambridge University Press, 1944.

<sup>103</sup> J. G. Crowther, 'The Royal Society', *The New Statesman and Nation*, 2 December 1944, p. 375.

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- <sup>104</sup> J. G. Crowther undated document ‘Report on British Council Science Committee’, CA, SxMS29/5/2/15.
- <sup>105</sup> Letter from J. G. Crowther to Sir Henry Dale, 26 February 1946. NA, BW 2/337.
- <sup>106</sup> Letter from J. G. Crowther to Sir Henry Dale, 26 February 1946. NA, BW 2/337.
- <sup>107</sup> Letter from General Sir Ronald Adam to J. G. Crowther, 17 August 1946, CA, SxMS29/5/2/15.
- <sup>108</sup> J. G. Crowther, draft reply to letter from General Sir Ronald Adam to J. G. Crowther, 17 August 1946, CA, SxMS29/5/2/15.
- <sup>109</sup> Crowther, *op. cit.* (1), p. 307.
- <sup>110</sup> Crowther’s published account of the institutional disagreement between the Royal Society and the British Council Science Committee occupies pp. 235 and 249–251 of *op. cit.* (1).
- <sup>111</sup> J. G. Crowther undated document ‘Report on British Council Science Committee’, CA, SxMS29/5/2/15.
- <sup>112</sup> Crowther, *op. cit.* (1), p. 318–19 mentions two non-BBC broadcasts: one for New Zealand Radio entitled ‘Science and Peace’ in 1951 ; and, p. 322, one for Polish Radio in 1955.