Public Address Systems[1]

By I. W. GREEN and J. P. MAXFIELD

SYNOPSIS: A public address system comprises electrical equipment to greatly amplify a speaker's voice so it will reach a much larger assemblage than he could speak to unaided. Beginning with the presidential conventions of the two major parties in 1920 and the inaugural address of President Harding in March 1921, when a special address system installed by the telephone engineers enabled him to address an audience estimated at 125,000, there followed in rapid succession, many public events demonstrating the value of such systems. One of the most notable of these occurred on Armistice Day 1921, when the speeches, prayers and music at Arlington, Virginia, were heard, not only by 100,000 persons gathered there at the National Cemetery, but by some 35,000 in New York City and 20,000 in San Francisco. On this occasion the three public address systems, one for each of these cities, were joined by long distance telephone circuits.

The fundamental requirements of a satisfactory public address system are naturalness of reproduction and wide range of output volume. The meeting of these two requirements for music proves more difficult than for speech.

The public address system here described is most readily considered in three sections—"pick-up" apparatus which is placed in the neighborhood of the speaker and converts his words into undulatory electric currents; a vacuum tube amplifier for amplifying these currents; and a "receiver-projector" for reconverting the current into sound waves and distributing the sound over all of the audience. In the present system each of these three parts of the equipment has been designed with the intention of making it as nearly distortionless as possible, so that the various parts might be adaptable for audiences ranging in size from possibly one thousand to several hundred thousand, and might also be used in connection with the long distance telephone lines and with either radio broadcasting or receiving stations. One of the larger public address systems is easily capable of magnifying a speaker's voice as many as 10,000 times.

The pick-up device whether of the carbon microphone variety or a condenser transmitter need not be placed close to the speaker's lips but will operate satisfactorily when four or five feet away. The loud-speaking receiver mechanism is so designed that it will carry a power of several watts with small distortion. Under normal conditions, 40 watts distributed among a number of receiver-projectors arranged in a circle is ample to reach an audience of 700,000 persons.—*Editor.*

THIS paper aims to present the problems encountered in the development of electrical systems for amplifying the voices of public speakers and music; and to describe the equipment as brought to a commercial state and now in use in the United States and various other countries.

The two main requirements of a successful public address or loud speaking system are, first, that it shall reproduce the sounds, such as speech or music, faithfully; and second, that this faithful reproduction shall be loud enough and sufficiently well distributed for all of the audience to hear it comfortably. Most of the development work

[1] Presented at the Midwinter Convention of the A. I. E. E., New York, N. Y., February 14–17, 1923. Published in the Journal of the A. I. E. E. for April, 1923.

has been directed toward obtaining these two results under the various conditions which surround the operation of these systems.

The faithful and natural reproduction of sound depends upon many factors, of which the following are some of the more important: The acoustics of the space in which the sound originates, the characteristic of the loud speaking system itself and the acoustics of the space in which the sound is reproduced. Where the sound is picked up and reproduced in the same space, as is the case when the speaker is using one of these systems to address a large audience locally, there is a reaction between the horns and the transmitter or pick-up mechanism which is controlled by the acoustic conditions under which the system is operated.

Acoustics of the Space

In connection with the acoustics of the space in which the sound originates, or in which it is reproduced, four factors stand out. These concern the effects of reverberation, of echo, of resonance, and of diffraction. In the specific cases where the sound is reproduced in the same space or room in which it originates, another effect is encountered, which has generally been termed "singing," and is evidenced if sufficiently great by the emission of a continuous note from the equipment.

Reverberation is caused by reflection and is evidenced by the persistence of the sound after its source has ceased emitting. When the reverberation in the space in which the initial sound is being picked up is sufficient to cause one sound to hang over and become mingled with succeeding sounds, in other words, so that the sound from one syllable interferes with that of the succeeding syllable, it is practically impossible to improve the acoustic conditions solely by the use of the public address system. In such a case, the first procedure is to place material which absorbs sound in the space. The purpose of this absorbing material is to lower the time required for the sound to die away after the source ceases to emit. The amount which any given material lowers the time of reverberation depends not only upon the amount of material introduced, but also upon its disposition within the space.

The term "echo" applies to a similar phenomenon, but is generally used where there is sufficient time lag between the reflected sound and that originally emitted, so that two distinct impressions reach the ear.[2]

[2]Collected Papers on Acoustics, Wallace Clement Sabine, Harvard University Press, 1922.

The troubles encountered from echoes usually occur only in large buildings or large open spaces surrounded by buildings, trees, or other obstacles and are generally associated with interferences with the reproduced sound rather than with the original sound. There are cases, however, particularly in auditoriums, where some of the walls or ceiling are large curved surfaces, in which case localized echoes may result. The speaker's voice or extraneous sounds from the audience may be reflected from one or more of these surfaces to focus spots where the volume of sound is consequently abnormally great. It is important, therefore, that the transmitter which is picking up the sound shall not be located at one of these spots. These points of localized echo are particularly troublesome also when they occur in the space occupied by the audience. Under these conditions not only is the sound intensity too great, but the character of the sound is altered and very often badly confused. The avoidance of such difficulties is a matter of test and the proper arrangement of the reproducing mechanism, as will be seen later in some detail.

The effect of resonance seldom occurs in connection with the amplified and reproduced sound, inasmuch as the spaces dealt with are large and their natural frequencies are too low to be troublesome. Resonance usually becomes of importance in connection with mounting the pick-up apparatus or transmitter. It generally results from attempts to conceal the transmitter by placing it in some form of small enclosure. The best form of housing from an acoustic standpoint consists of a screen cover which protects the instrument from being struck or injured but in no way affects the sound reaching it.

Resonance produces a distortion which it has been customary to consider as of two varieties. First, there is an unequal amplification of sounds of various frequencies and second, there is the introduction of transients. These transients occur whenever the sound changes but are most easily recognized audibly by their continuation after the source has ceased emitting. They also have frequency characteristics which depend not only on the sound which started them but also upon the character of the resonant portion of the system.

The troubles introduced by diffraction are seldom of very great importance except where the sound is reflected from regularly spaced reflectors or passed through regularly spaced openings. Quite serious diffraction troubles have been encountered when operating a loud speaker in a large field, surrounded by an open work board fence, the trouble being evidenced by very distinct areas, particularly at the outskirts of the audience, where the sounds were badly distorted.

The difficulties encountered as a result of "singing" form one of the most troublesome problems connected with the actual operation of these systems. When a portion of the sound emitted by the projectors reaches the transmitter with sufficient intensity, that its reproduction is as great as the originally emitted sound from the projectors, and with such phase relation that it tends to aid the original sound, the system will emit a continuous note. Moreover, when the portion of the sound from the projectors which reaches the transmitter is not sufficient to cause a continuous note, it may be sufficient to cause considerable distortion of the speech or music. In excessively reverberant halls these conditions are often fulfilled when the actual amplification is so small that the people at the distant points are scarcely able to hear the speaker. In all cases in our experience the difficulty has been sufficiently overcome by properly placing the transmitter with respect to the projectors. The situation is very much helped by the presence of the audience, which adds considerably to the acoustic damping of the room.

It will be seen, therefore, that the acoustic conditions of the space in which loud speakers are used are of considerable importance.

Characteristics of the System

The first requirement of the system itself is that it shall reproduce speech or music faithfully. A system is said to do this, or in other words, its quality is called perfect, when the reproduced sound contains all of the frequencies, but no others, contained in the original sound striking the "pick-up" mechanism, and when these frequencies have the same relative intensities that they had in the original.

An imperfect or distorting system is one which fails to fulfill this requirement. There are two main types of distortion which had to be considered; the first being the unequal amplification of the system for the various frequencies constituting the sound and the second being the introduction of frequencies not present in the original sound. For simplicity of discussion, this last class will be divided in three parts, namely: the effect of transients, the effect of asymmetric distortion and the effect of disturbing noises.

The effect of transients has already been mentioned in connection with acoustics and they, of course, produce the same type of distortion whether they occur in the acoustic or the electrical system. Transients occur whenever the sound changes either in pitch or intensity, and are introduced at the beginning and ending of each speech sound. This modification of the characteristics of the speech

sounds acts to lower the intelligibility. It probably causes more trouble in speech transmission than the fact that the sound continues after the source ceases.

Asymmetric distortion affects one half of the wave differently from its other half. This causes the introduction of frequencies which, in some cases, produce very serious disturbances in the transmission of music and speech. The most noticeable troubles are from the formation of sum and difference tones.[3] Such tones are likely to give rise to dissonances with the other sounds occurring in the music. In the case of speech asymmetric distortion manifests itself by a lower intelligibility.

The effect of foreign noises sometimes encountered is twofold. First, they influence the ability of the listener to hear the characteristics of the speech sounds and hence tend to lower the intelligibility. Secondly, the constant attempt of the hearer to sort out the speech sounds or music through the disturbing noises tires him appreciably. In order that this strain shall be inappreciable, it is desirable that the sound delivered by the system shall be at a power level approximately 10,000 times that of the noise.

The second general requirement which is placed on a successful system is that it shall deliver its faithful reproduction loud enough for all the audience to hear it comfortably and enough above noise for good intelligibility. In this connection there have arisen one or two interesting points bearing on the psychology of hearing. One of the most striking of these is concerned with the coordination between hearing and seeing. Although the projectors are usually mounted twenty or more feet above the speaker's head, and in some exceptional cases, slightly to one side of him, the majority of the audience is conscious of only one source of sound, and that appears to be the speaker himself.

This phenomenon is so marked that in several cases the question has been rasied in the minds of the listeners as to whether the system was functioning. They could only be convinced that it was by having it shut down for a few seconds when their inability to hear made them realize how successfully the system could operate.

Another of these psychological phenomena deals with the apparent distortion of the voice when its intensity at the ears of the listener is too great or too small. If the speaker is talking in a normal conversational tone, his voice contains a larger percentage of low frequencies than is the case when he is raising his voice to a considerable

[3] Origin of Combination Tones in Microphone-Telephone Circuits. E. Waetzmann, Annalen der Physik, Vol. 42, 1913.

volume. If the loud speaker so amplifies this voice that it reaches the audience with such volume that their instinct tells them that the speaker should be shouting, the system appears to make his voice sound quite heavy and somewhat unnatural. It has been found necessary, therefore, to so regulate the amount of amplification that the people at the furthest portion of the hall can hear comfortably and the volume of sound shall not be permitted to become any louder than necessary to meet this condition. On the other hand, if the volume is insufficiently loud, certain of the weaker speech sounds are entirely lost, and it becomes difficult to understand.[4]

Solution of the Problem

With these considerations in mind it may be interesting to take a brief survey of the whole problem and the method by which the solution was reached. Two general methods of attack were considered. The first was to attempt to make each unit of the system faithfully reproduce its input, while the second was to make any distortions of one part of the system, cancel those of another portion, so that the complete system would operate satisfactorily. In either case, it was desirable to keep each unit free from asymmetric distortion, as this type of distortion cannot be easily compensated for.

While it would probably have been simpler to follow the second line of attack, the greatly increased flexibility of a system in which each part is correct in itself was of sufficient value to cause the attempt to be made that way. When it is realized that these systems, to be commercially successful, must be capable of operating for various sized audiences, ranging possibly from one thousand to several hundred thousand, that they must be used in connection with long distance telephone lines, as well as with either radio broadcasting or receiving stations, the desire for flexibility can be understood.[5]

As a result of attempting the development in the manner already described, there has resulted a system which involves four functional units; a "pick-up" mechanism or transmitter unit, a preliminary amplifier unit, commonly called the speech input equipment, a second amplifier unit commonly called the power amplifier, and a receiver-projector unit for transforming the amplified currents back into sound, and properly distributing it throughout the space to be covered.

[4] Physical Examination of Hearing, R. L. Wegel, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Volume 8, Number 7, July, 1922.

[5] Use of Public Address Systems with Telephone Lines, W. H. Martin and A. B. Clark. Presented before A. I. E. E., Feb. 14, 1923.

It may be interesting at this place to determine how successfully these various units and the system as a whole fulfill the requirements of equal sensitivity to all frequencies within the important speech or music range. Fig. 1 shows the relative sensitiveness of the trans-

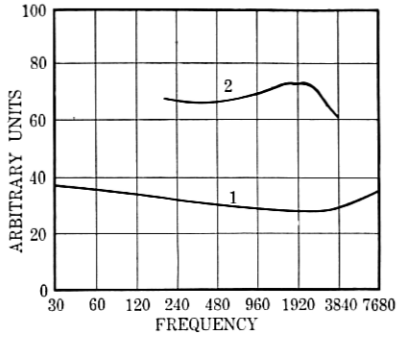

Fig. 1—1-Condenser Transmitter with Associated Amplifier.
2-Carbon Transmitter without Amplifier.

mitter as a function of frequency. The ordinates are proportional to the logarithm of the power delivered for constant sound pressure at the diaphragm and the abscissae to the logarithm of the frequencies employed. The lower of the two figures refers to the condenser transmitter with its associated input amplifier.[6] The upper refers to the push-pull carbon-type transmitter. These transmitters will be described in detail later.

Fig. 2 shows a similar curve for the complete amplifier system, comprising a three-stage speech input amplifier, and a power stage capable of delivering approximately 40 watts of speech frequency

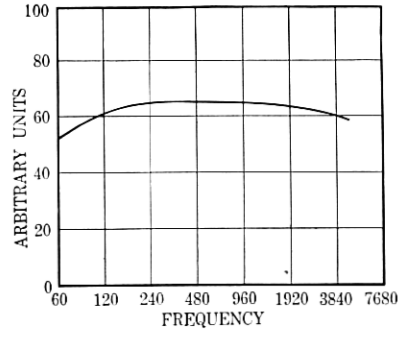

Fig. 2—Public Address System Amplifiers.

[6] The Sensitivity and Precision of the Electrostatic Transmitter for Measurement of Sound Intensities. E. C. Wente, *Physical Review, N. S.* Vol. 19, No. 5, May, 1922.

electrical power without distortion. In connection with these amplifiers a sharp distinction should be made between their gain rating, or amplification, and their overload or power rating. Gain measures the power amplification which can be obtained provided the input is small enough so that the equipment at the output end is not overloaded. Overload or power rating refers to the maximum power which can be supplied by the amplifier without causing distortion of the currents being amplified. Although the power rating of power equipment is usually determined by the heat which can be dissipated, a marked distortion of wave form takes place when the iron in any of the apparatus is worked beyond the straight line portion of the magnetization curve. In the case of amplifiers, the maximum power obtainable is limited by the power output at which distortion occurs rather than by the heat which can be dissipated.

Fig. 3 shows a chart for the characteristics of the complete system,

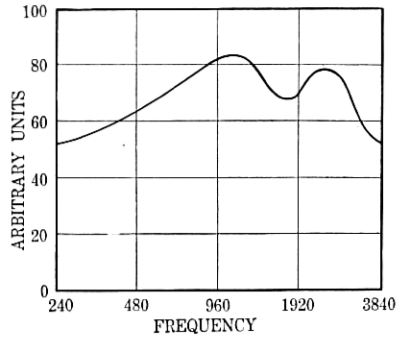

Fig. 3—Complete Public Address System with Carbon Transmitter.

including the carbon transmitter, the speech input and power amplifiers and the receiver projector unit.

In connection with the requirements for equal amplification of all frequencies, it is interesting to note that a system, which does not fail to reproduce equally all frequencies in the speech range by more than a ratio of 10 to 1 in reproduced power, is indistinguishable from a perfect system or from the speaker, himself. It seems probable that this effect is, in some way, connected with variations in the frequency sensitiveness curve of normal ears. Normal ears show a sensitiveness variation with frequency as great as 10 to 1 and the frequencies of maximum sensitiveness vary materially from one individual to another.[7]

[7] Frequency Sensitiveness of Normal Ears, by H. Fletcher and R. L. Wegel, *Physical Review*, July, 1922.

It has been found that in order to transmit speech with entire satisfaction for loud speaker purposes, that is, sufficiently well so that the audience is not aware of the contribution of the mechanical equipment, it is necessary for the system to operate with essentially uniform amplification over a range of frequencies from 200 to 4000 cycles. While there are, in speech, frequencies slightly outside of this range, the loss in naturalness and intelligibility by the system's failure to reproduce them, is slight.[8]

While no such frequency range is required for intelligibility only, it has been found that systems not covering substantially this frequency range, sound unnatural. When the lower frequencies are missing, the reproduction sounds "tinny." When the higher frequencies are missing it sounds heavy and muffled. The requirements for thoroughly natural reproduction of music are probably more severe, particularly in the low-frequency region, than are the similar requirements for speech, but, at the present time, complete data are not available to indicate the contribution of these frequencies to naturalness.

In connection with the flexibility of the system, it is interesting to note that the speech input equipment has been designed to raise the power delivered by the transmitter to such an extent that it is sufficient for long distance telephone transmission or for the operation of a radio transmitting set. The power amplifier is designed to receive power at approximately this level and deliver it to the projector units sufficiently amplified to operate them satisfactorily.

Future Development

In viewing the loud speaker field from the point of view of future development there are two lines of attack along which work is being done, and which give promise of success. These are the improvements in frequency characteristics and increase in the range of loudness which the system can accommodate satisfactorily.

The improvement to be expected from a more uniform frequency characteristic is mainly an increase in naturalness, especially where music is being reproduced. A slight increase in intelligibility may be hoped for, although this factor is of little importance, as the present system is satisfactory in this respect.

The other improvement mentioned, namely, the volume range, is probably the more difficult, but is necessary before music can be re-

[8] The Nature of Speech and Its Interpretation. Harvey Fletcher, *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, Vol. 193, No. 6, June, 1922.

produced in a perfect manner. Rough experimental data indicate that the loudness in an orchestra selection may vary from one part of the selection to another by a ratio as great as 50,000 to 1. While the present equipment does not operate with entire satisfaction over this range of loudness, it has been found relatively easy to obtain good results by manual adjustment of the amplification during the rendering of the selection. If the gain is varied in small enough steps, the change is not noticeable to the listeners.

An increase in the loudness range would render the manual adjustment unnecessary and would make the reproduction a faithful duplicate of the music as actually played.

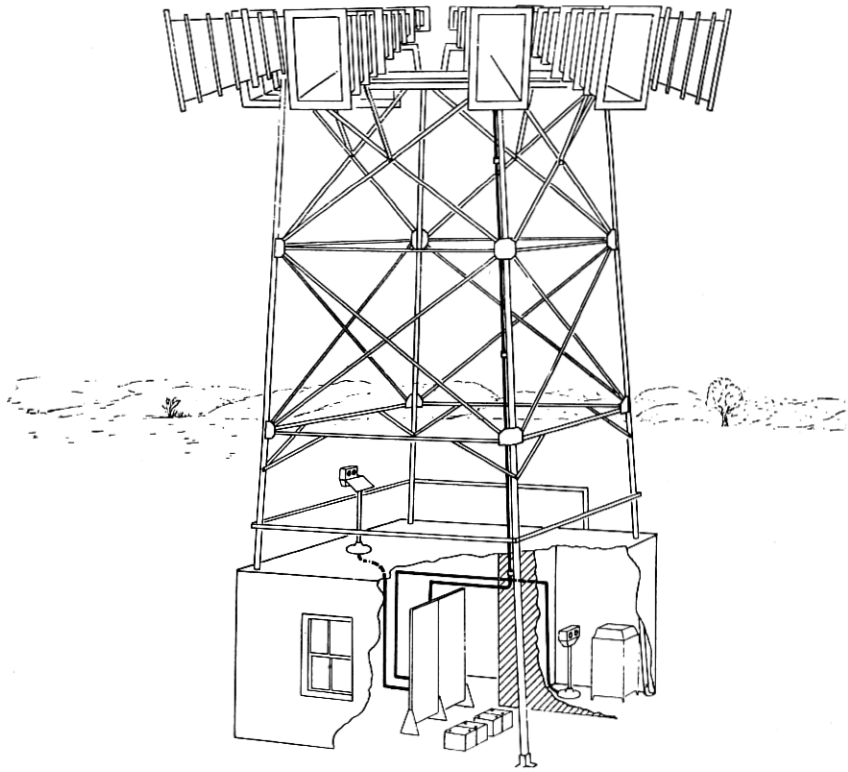

Fig. 4.

Technical Description of the System

The foregoing discussion having described the requirements which must be met in order that the public address system shall successfully transmit speech and music, the system in its commercial form will

now be described. In order to make clear the arrangement of the equipment, a typical installation is shown in Fig. 4, this being an installation where the audience and speaker are in the open air, and where no connection is made with the long distance lines. It might be well to state here that with the equipment shown an audience of 700,000 can be adequately covered.

Some of the sound leaving the speaker's mouth is picked up by the transmitter, on a reading-desk type of pedestal, which is normally mounted at the front of the platform.

The feeble currents from the transmitter are led by carefully shielded leads to the amplifiers in the control room, which is usually

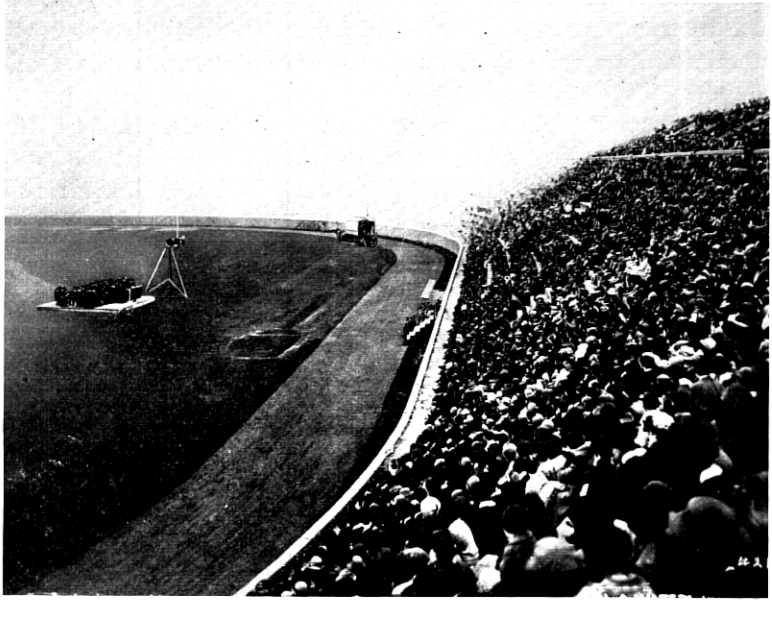

Fig. 5.

located directly beneath or to one side of the speaker's stand. A floor space of not more than 125 square feet is required for this room, even in the case where it is desirable to transmit phonograph music to the audience between speeches.

The amplifier and power supply equipment is shown on the two panels in the center of the control room. The amplified speech currents are led from these amplifiers to the receiver projector units, which, in this case, are arranged on the super-structure above the

speaker's platform. This position is most desirable, as the illusion produced is such that the voice appears to come from the speaker rather than from the projectors, a factor, the importance of which has already been mentioned. Moreover in this position the acoustic coupling between the transmitter and the projectors is a minimum, permitting the operation of the system at a satisfactory degree of amplification with an ample margin below the point where singing troubles are encountered.

A public address equipment, similar to that just described, but with a somewhat lower power output, has been developed for use at the smaller open air meetings, and in all but the largest indoor auditoriums. Fig. No. 5 shows one of these equipments, mounted on an automobile truck, which has been employed at a number of points in the eastern part of the United States. This smaller system has characteristics as good as the larger system in regard to faithful reproduction of speech and music, with a power output in the order of one-tenth as great. An audience of 50,000 can be adequately covered at an outdoor meeting with this system.

Fig. No. 6 is a schematic arrangement of the equipment at an installation of the type shown in Fig. 4. At the extreme left are the

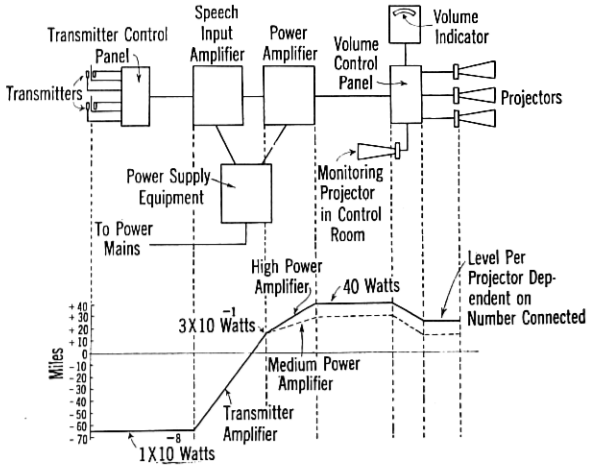

Fig. 6.

transmitters where the sound waves are picked up. The output from these transmitters is taken to a switching panel where means are provided for cutting in the various transmitters. From this panel the transmitter currents are taken to the transmitter amplifier, which is capable of amplifying them to a power level suitable for input to

the power amplifier, or for connection to the long distance lines, in those cases where the speeches are transmitted to distant audiences. It is also suitable where connection is to be made to a radio station for broadcasting the speeches. The power amplifier is shown just to the right of the transmitter amplifier. Below it is indicated the power supply equipment by which the commercial power is converted to a form suitable for the vacuum tubes in both amplifiers. The output from the power amplifier is taken through a panel where switches and a multi-step auto-transformer are provided for the regulation of several projector circuits. Just above this panel is an indicating instrument, known as the volume indicator, provided in order that the operator may know what volume output is being delivered to the projectors.

The projectors, at the extreme right of the figure, consist of the motor or receiver unit transforming the speech currents into sound waves, and a horn to provide the proper distribution of the sound.

It is interesting to note the power amplification which is obtained in the larger of the two systems from the transmitter to the projectors. Referring to Fig. No. 6, a chart will be seen which indicates the power levels through the system drawn to a scale based on miles of standard telephone cable, our usual reference unit. The output of the high quality transmitter is of the order of 65 miles below zero level, this latter being the output from a standard telephone set connected to a common battery central office by a line of zero resistance. Expressed in watts the output of this transmitter under average conditions of use with the public address system is of the order of 10^{-8} watts. Incidentally, this is of the same order as the speech power picked up by the transmitter, or in other words, the transmitter does not amplify the speech power received by it as is the case with the transmitter used for regular telephone service.

This very minute amount of power in passing through the transmitter amplifier may be amplified about 120,000,000 times. Expressed in terms of telephone power levels, this is 17 miles above the zero level previously mentioned, or a few tenths of a watt.

The power amplifier serves to increase this power from a level of 17 miles to about 40 miles, the latter corresponding to about 40 watts. This power is then distributed to the projectors, the amount consumed by each projector, of course, depending upon the number connected.

An idea of what this amount of power at speech frequencies means may be given by the statement that it is sufficient to operate at about the level considered commercial all of the 14,000,000 tele-

phone receivers in use in the Bell system if these were directly connected to the amplifier.

In describing the various pieces of equipment which together make up the system, we will follow the order in which the power is carried through the system from the transmitter to the receiver-projector units where the amplified sound waves are propagated.

Transmitters

In the early work on the public address system, an air-damped, stretched diaphragm condenser transmitter was employed, having a thin steel diaphragm about 2 inches in diameter, constituting one plate of the condenser. The other plate was a rigid disk, the dielectric being an air film 1/1000 of an inch in thickness. Due to the stretching of the diaphragm and the stiffness of the air film, the diaphragm of this transmitter had a natural period of approximately 8000 cycles per second which is well above the important frequencies in the voice range. This high natural period, in conjunction with the damping due to the thin film of air, resulted in a transmitter of very high quality of reproduction. However, its extremely small capacity (in the order of 400 micro-microfarads) made it necessary to use leads of very low capacity between the transmitter and the first amplifier, and due to the high impedance of the transmitter and its associated input circuit to voice frequency currents, these leads were very susceptible to electrostatic and electromagnetic induction. It was necessary to limit them to a length of 25 feet, and to provide complete shielding. Moreover the output of this transmitter was less than one five-thousandth of that of the transmitter now used, and for the early installations of the system, it was necessary to provide a preliminary amplifier beneath or to one side of the speaker's stand in order to keep the transmitter leads short and to provide sufficient power to properly operate the main amplifiers. Work was therefore undertaken to provide a transmitter having quality practically as good as the condenser transmitter, volume output sufficient to operate the main amplifiers, and not requiring the elaborate precautions as to shielding the leads.

The high quality transmitter which was the result of this development work is of the granular carbon type with two variable resistance elements, one on each side of the diaphragm and is commonly known as a push-pull transmitter. It has nearly the same high quality reproduction characteristics as the condenser transmitter, due to the use of the same stretched diaphragm and air damping structure. It

introduces no appreciable distortion over the range of frequencies required for good reproduction of speech, but it must be understood, that this quality was obtained only at the sacrifice of sensitiveness, the latter being in the order of 1–1000th that of the transmitter used at telephone stations in the Bell system. With the multi-stage vacuum tube amplifiers available this low volume efficiency is not serious, and in fact we are using this transmitter for what is known as distant talking, *i.e.*, the speaker may be at a distance of five or six feet from the transmitter. This is, of course, necessary in any transmitter suitable for public address work as it is not possible to greatly limit the movement of the speakers, nor can they be required to use a hand transmitter. It might be well to point out that this sacrifice in volume efficiency in order to gain high quality is possible at the transmitting end of the system, but not at the opposite end where the electrical power is transformed into sound waves and propagated, as the device at this point must be capable of handling large amounts of power with minimum distortion.

Referring to Fig. No. 7 which is a cut-away view of this push-pull high quality carbon transmitter, the granular carbon chambers will be seen. The electrical path through each of these variable resistance elements is from the rear carbon electrode through the carbon granules

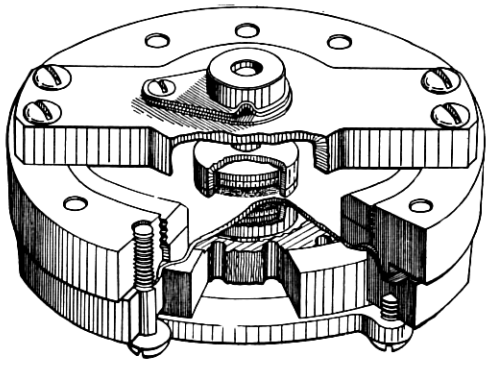

Fig. 7.

to a gold-plated area on the diaphragm itself. The resistance of this path is about 100 ohms and as the two buttons are in series for the telephone currents, the transmitter is designed to work into an impedance of 200 ohms. The double button construction almost completely eliminates the distortion caused by the non-linear nature of the pressure-resistance characteristics of granular carbon.

As this instrument has a practically flat frequency characteristic no collecting horn or mouth piece is used with it as resonance is introduced by such chambers, with accompanying distortion. To insure the insulation of the transmitter from building vibrations, a simple spring suspension has been provided. To protect the transmitter from injury, two types of transmitter mountings have been used, both arranged for the suspension of the transmitter in a screen-enclosed space—the first adapted to take a single transmitter for indoor use only, while the second for outdoor use, mounts two transmitters within a double screen enclosure to prevent any noise effects due to winds. This second type is arranged to attach to a simple pedestal-type of reading desk, which it has been found desirable to provide as there is a slight tendency for the speaker to remain fairly close to the desk. In this connection it is interesting to note that we have found a small rug, so placed as to cover the area which the speaker should occupy during the delivery of his speech, is of great assistance in this regard, as he unconsciously confines himself to the area of this rug. Both of these measures to insure the speaker remaining in proper relation to the transmitter, are supplemented, wherever possible, by an explanation of the system to all the speakers previous to the actual performance.

Transmitter Switching Panel

Resuming the path of the speech currents through the system, the output from the transmitters is taken to a panel designed to enable the operator to switch quickly from one transmitter to another, as with some public functions, the speeches are made at different points during the ceremonies. This switch is arranged to short-circuit the output of the power amplifier when passing from one transmitter to another, to prevent clicks in the projectors. In certain cases, the equipment is arranged to permit two or more transmitters to be connected to the amplifiers at one time, as is desirable when solo singers and an orchestra are to be picked up in a theatre, with proper adjustment of their respective volumes.

The amplifier equipment has been built in four units which may be grouped as necessary under the various conditions encountered in commercial installations. The proper amplifiers are determined, first, by the source of the voice frequency current to be amplified, that is whether a distance talking or a close talking transmitter is to be used, or whether the speeches are brought in over a telephone line, and secondly, the size of the space in which the amplified sounds

are to be delivered to the audience. It was found that four units would provide for all the conditions occurring in practise, two of these being speech input or transmitter amplifiers with different gains and two being power amplifiers of different power ratings. These units and other equipment used with the system, are made up in panels, of uniform width, in order that the proper equipment for any installation may be assembled on two vertical angle iron racks arranged to be fastened to the control room floor.

Speech Input Amplifier—First Type

The first of the speech input amplifiers is shown schematically in the upper part of Fig. 8. It is a three-stage amplifier. Two po-

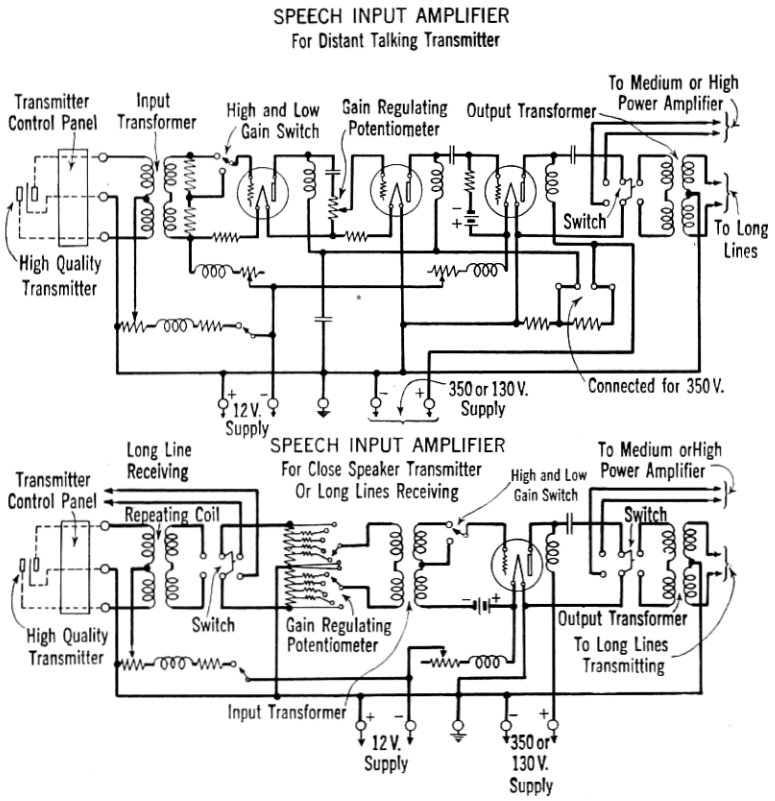

Fig. 8.

tentiometers provide adjustment of the gain over a large range, and switching arrangements allow the output to be connected directly

to the input of the power amplifier, when the program is to be transmitted to a local audience; or to be connected, through a transformer of proper impedance, to the long distance lines when the program is to be transmitted to a distant audience, or to a radio-broadcasting station. The filaments of the tubes are supplied from a 12-volt storage battery, while the plate circuits obtain direct current at 350 volts from the power supply equipment mentioned later. Arrangements are also provided for using 130 volts instead of 350 volts under certain conditions. The proper grid potentials are obtained by utilizing the drop over a resistance in the filament circuits of the first two tubes, and for the third tube small dry cells furnish the grid potential. The maximum gain with this amplifier is 85 miles, which expressed as a power ratio is 1.2×10^8. Under this condition the output is approximately 3/10 of a watt. The front and rear views of this amplifier, mounted on the supporting rack, as shown in Fig. 13, where the gain regulating potentiometer, the rheostats for controlling the filament and transmitter currents, the three tube mountings with protective gratings and the jacks which permit the connection of instruments for determining the current flow in the filament, plate and transmitter circuits, will be noted. Great care was taken in the design of this amplifier to obtain as nearly as possible equal amplification of all the important frequencies in the voice range. The transformers, and the retardation coils in the plate circuits were chosen with this consideration in mind.

Power Amplifiers

For practically all of the larger installations the maximum power possible with the system is required and the output from the transmitter-amplifier is taken directly to the high power amplifier. Referring to Fig. 9 it will be seen that this is a four-tube amplifier so connected that but one stage of amplification is obtained. Usually alternating current at 12 to 14 volts is used for heating the filaments of these tubes, the latter being connected in what we know as a push-pull arrangement. It will be seen that each side of the push-pull arrangement consists of two power tubes in multiple. It is interesting to note that this push-pull arrangement of the tubes will deliver somewhat more power for equal quality than the same number of tubes connected in the ordinary multiple arrangement, since the tubes may be worked beyond the straight part of their characteristic. The grid potential is chosen to permit the largest variation of current without distortion and is obtained from a group of small flashlight batteries.

The output transformer at the right of the figure is designed to match accurately the impedance of the tubes to that of the number of receiver-projector units which has been found to give the greatest flexibility under the varying conditions of commercial operation. This amplifier, speaking in telephone terms, is worked at a gain of 23 miles, a power amplification ratio of about 200, the

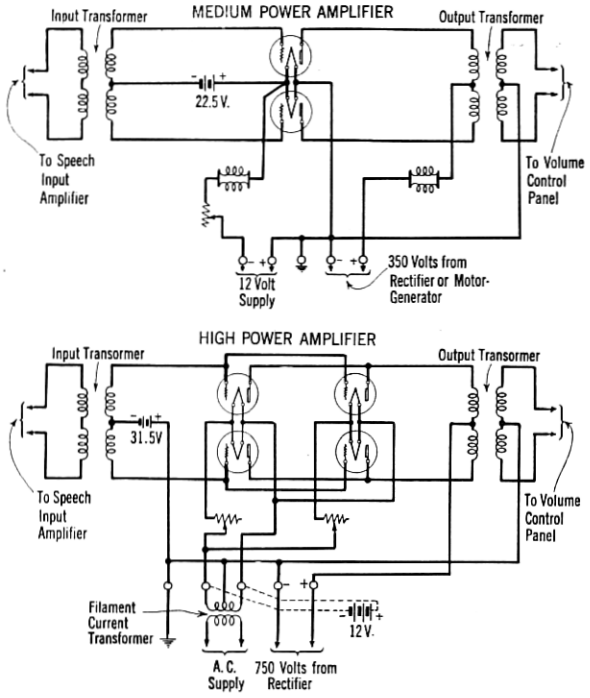

Fig. 9.

maximum output being about 40 watts. The plate circuits of the tubes are supplied at a d-c. potential of 750 volts. As has been pointed out previously, this amplifier gives a practically uniform gain for all the important frequencies in the voice range. This high-power amplifier is shown mounted on the supporting rack, in Fig. 13. The apparatus on the rear of the panel is protected with a sheet metal cover and integral with this cover is a disconnecting switch, which, when the cover is removed, cuts off the high potential from all the exposed parts on the set.

For indoor installations where the audience is small the power output given by the high-power amplifier is not required and a medium-

power amplifier has been developed for this use. It is arranged to connect directly to the transmitter amplifier and the output is taken to the projectors through the volume control panel. It has a gain of 17 miles or a power amplification ratio of about 33. The maximum output is about 4 watts, or about one-tenth of the power obtainable from the high-power amplifier.

The schematic of this amplifier, is shown in Fig. 9. The input coil is the same as is used in the high-power amplifier. The push-pull connection of the tubes is also used in this amplifier, although but two power tubes are used. The filaments of these tubes are supplied from a 12-volt storage battery while the plate circuits are supplied at 350 volts direct current from a motor generator set which will be described later.

Speech Input Amplifier—Second Type

A speaker using the system may read his speech from his home or office and in such cases it is unnecessary to use the push-pull carbon transmitter in the distant-talking manner. For use when this transmitter is spoken into from a distance of a few inches, a second form of speech input amplifier has been made available having a gain of the proper value to supply either of the power amplifiers, or a long distance line if desired. This gain is relatively small as the output of the transmitter when used for close talking is about 10,000 times that when it is used for distant talking.

Fig. 8 shows the schematic of this amplifier which is a single-stage one, employing one tube and having the same over-load characteristic as the first form of speech-input amplifier. A two-way switch permits the connection of the transmitter or an incoming long distance line to the amplifier. To the right of this switch is a potentiometer for regulation of the gain. To the right of the tube is a second two-way switch for connecting the output either to the power amplifier or through an output transformer to an outgoing long distance line. The power supply for the tubes and transmitters, is the same as was described under the first form of speech input amplifier.

The switching means provided on this amplifier allow it to be used in a number of ways. Announcements from a close talking transmitter may be made from the projectors through a power amplifier or may be sent out on the telephone lines to a distant public address system installation or a radio-broadcasting station. In addition to these uses, incoming speech over the long distance lines may be put out on the projectors through the power amplifier or may be sent out on the long distance lines to a distant installation.

Volume Control

As discussed heretofore, it is necessary to give the operator control of the volume put out by each projector or group of projectors. The equipment provided for this purpose is mounted on a panel uniform with the others and consists essentially of an auto-transformer connected across the output of the power amplifier with 11 taps multipled to the contacts of eight dial switches, the arrangement being shown schematically in Fig. 10. Seven of the dials control projector circuits on each of which one or more projectors may be grouped, the

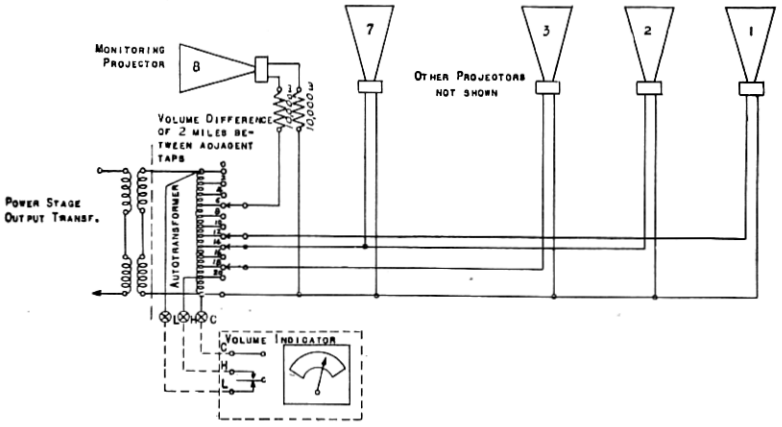

Fig. 10.

eighth dial being reserved for controlling the volume of the operator's monitoring projector in the control room. A key is associated with each dial for opening the circuit and a master key is provided for cutting off all of the projectors simultaneously.

The device shown as "Volume Indicator" in this figure consists of a vacuum tube detector bridged across the output terminals of the power amplifier. The rectified current is taken to a sensitive direct-current meter of the moving coil type, the degree of deflection of this meter measuring the output from the power amplifier when connected at a proper place in the circuit. The deflections of the meter therefore serve as a basis for determining the adjustment required on the transmitter-amplifier to give the required output when switching from one transmitter to another or for different speakers.

Receiver—Projectors

From the control panel the power is taken to the projectors, each of these consisting of a loud-speaking receiver mechanism to transform

the speech-currents into sound waves, and a horn to distribute the sound. The receiver is so designed that it will carry several watts

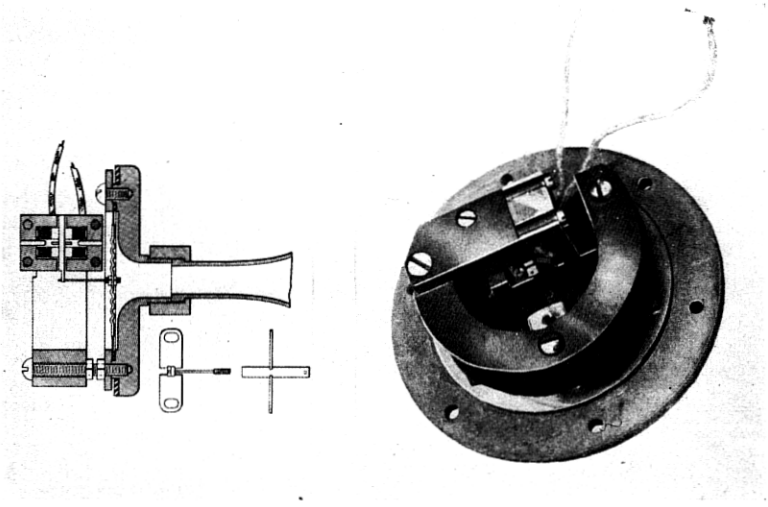

Fig. 11.

with small distortion. It is shown in Fig. 11 where it will be seen that a light spring-supported iron armature is mounted between the poles of a permanent magnet and passes through the center of the

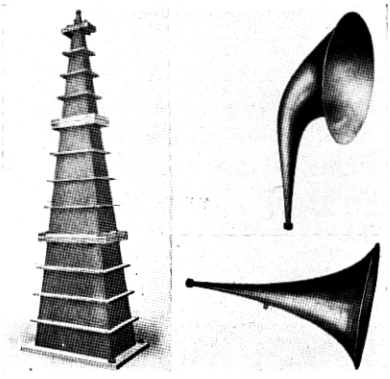

Fig. 12.

coils carrying the voice currents. A light connecting link ties one end of this armature to the diaphragm which is of impregnated cloth, corrugated to permit vibrations of large amplitude. A stamped metal

cover protects the parts from mechanical injury, and a cast iron case, in which the whole assembly mounts, is provided for protection against moisture.

One of these receivers equipped with the largest projector provided, will carry without serious distortion or overheating, power which is

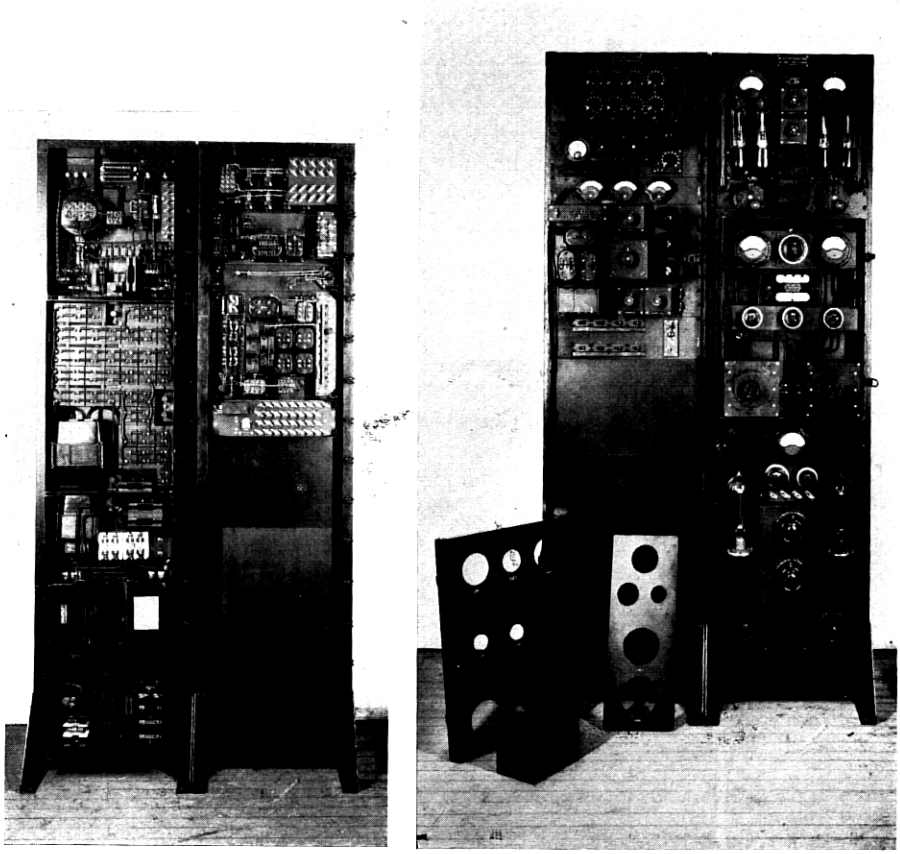

Fig. 13.

about 27 miles above the zero level. With this output, it is possible to project speech a distance of 1000 feet under ordinary weather conditions and this has been done at several installations.

On account of the different conditions encountered in installations three types of horns have been used, shown in Fig. 12. Where it is necessary to project the sound to great distances, a tapering wooden

horn is used, of rectangular cross section, 10½ feet long, the walls being stiffened to prevent lateral vibration. For most installations these large horns are not required, and two types of fibre horns are used. One of these is straight in the body, with a flaring open end, while the other used in the control room, is bent.

The grouping of projector units on the volume control switches differs with the type of installation. In outdoor performances, the necessity of correcting the volume in certain directions due to varying winds makes it advisable to group adjacent projectors on a single switch. This is not the case with indoor performances, as no wind effects are possible. Instead, symmetrically placed projectors which will always require equal volume are grouped on a single switch.

Power Supply Equipment

In order to convert the commercial electric power supply to forms suitable for supplying the filament and plate current for the vacuum

Fig. 14a.

tubes in the amplifiers, two types of power equipment have been made available. When the installation is of a size requiring the high-power amplifier, a vacuum tube rectifier taking its supply at 110 or 220

volts, 60 cycles, and delivering 750 volts direct current for the plate circuits is employed. A potentiometer arrangement provides a direct-current supply at 350 volts for the speech-input amplifier tubes. Full wave rectification is obtained and a filter consisting of a large series reactance coil and bridged condensers is used to render the direct-current output suitable for this use. Included in the

Fig. 14b.

power equipment is a step-down transformer for supplying the filaments of the power amplifier. For the larger installations, employing the rectifier, the total power drawn from the commercial supply is 1500 watts.

For installations of a size not requiring the use of the high-power amplifier, a compact motor generator set is provided consisting of a 350-volt d-c. generator driven by a suitable motor, the total power drawn from the supply mains being about 500 watts. A low-voltage generator for supplying direct current at 12 volts for the operation of the amplifier tubes is incorporated in this motor generator set. A filter is necessary and a reactance coil and a 12-volt storage battery is floated across its output. This supplies the transmitters and the tube filaments. The necessary indicating meters are provided on a

meter panel for observing the voltages and currents of all the items of equipment which do not have individual meters associated with them.

Observing System

In addition to the monitoring projector provided in the control room for the guidance of the operator, it has been found necessary in all but the simplest installations to provide observing stations at

Fig. 15.

various points in the audience. The observers stationed at these points are equipped with portable telephone sets, by which they may immediately communicate with the operator, who is provided with a telephone set consisting of a head receiver and a breast transmitter. The value of these observation stations for regulation of output volume during a program will be apparent.

In the case of an open air performance a variable wind may make it necessary to increase the volume of certain projectors and decrease the volume of others in order to cover the audience uniformly. Without the observers, the control operator would be unable to take care of these changes.

Considerable preparation is required where the equipment is being used for the first time, in order that the performance of the public

address system installation will be of the highest order. Where the acoustic conditions are unfavorable it is necessary to make tests with various arrangements of the projectors, in order to determine the

Fig. 16a.

most satisfactory one. It has been found advisable to carry out the entire program previous to the performance in order that the operating force may become familiar with the sequence.

Conclusion

The usefulness of such systems is very well illustrated by a few of the results which have actually been obtained. Fig. 14 shows a crowd of approximately 125,000 people, every one of whom was able to hear clearly and distinctly all of the words spoken in President Harding's inaugural address in March, 1921. This crowd was relatively small, compared with the crowd which could be accommodated by one of the larger type systems. Some insight into the number of people which could be accommodated can be gained from the fact that such a system will cover comfortably a complete circle whose diameter is 2000 feet when the projector units are placed at the center.

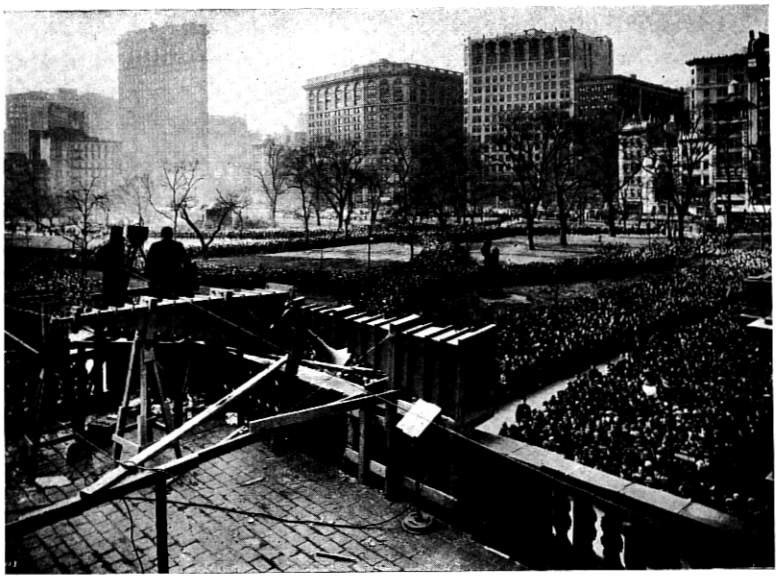

Fig. 16b

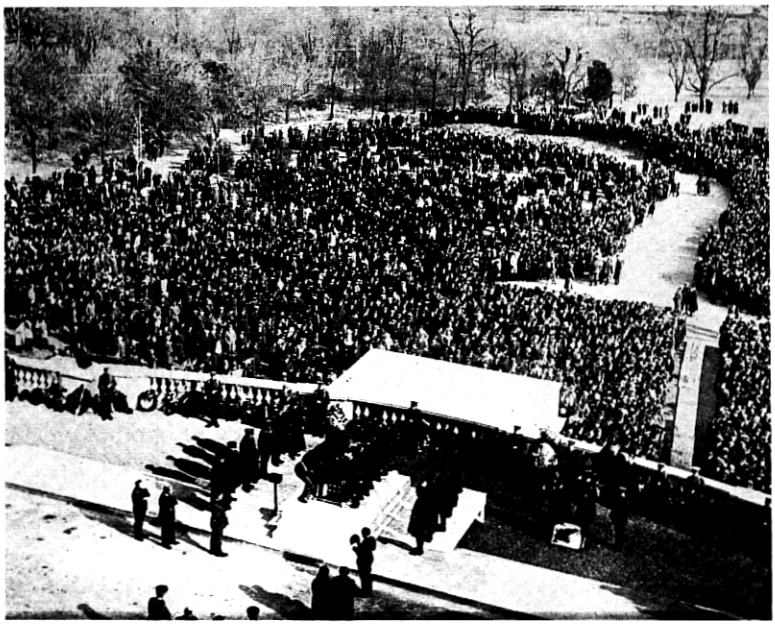

Fig. 17a.

One of the largest and most successful uses to which this equipment has been put took place on Armistice Day in 1921 when 20,000 people in San Francisco, 35,000 people at Madison Square Garden, New York City, and approximately 100,000 people at Arlington Cemetery near Washington joined in the impressive ceremonies which took place at the burial of the Unknown Soldier. Figs. 15, 16 and 17 are views at the three cities, during the ceremonies.

Some of the other uses which have been made of the public address system are the Republican and Democratic Conventions prior to the last presidential election, after-dinner speaking in large ballrooms and in halls where speakers have to address large audiences. There

Fig. 17b.

is one more application of this type of equipment which is gaining rapidly in its use. This last is the application of the speech input equipment to radio broadcasting. The broadcasting of the opera, "Aida," from the Kingsbridge Armory, and of the Philharmonic

Concerts from the Great Hall of the College of the City of New York are two of the successful uses where music and speech were concerned, while broadcasting of the results of the football games from the various distant cities indicates possibilities for the dissemination of interesting information.[9]

The social and economic possibilities of the system are scarcely realized by the public as a whole at the present time, when the method resorted to for reaching large numbers of people is usually the printed word. While this method is effective, it leaves much to be desired in that the personal touch between the man with ideas and the people to receive them is entirely lost. The difficulty for any but those possessing the strongest voices to reach an appreciable number of people at one time has led to a decline in oratory as a means of conveying public messages to large numbers, for it is not always the man with the best ideas or the best ability of presenting them, who is blessed with a powerful voice. A system such as the one which has just been described enables the speaker, even though his voice be relatively weak, to address at one time and in one gathering, several hundred thousand persons, and if the system be used in connection with long distance telephone lines or radio broadcasting, the number which may be reached is increased almost indefinitely. The value of such a situation can hardly be overrated in times of national emergency or stress, when it is necessary for those in responsible positions in the Government to get their message to the people directly.

The development of the apparatus just described has been the result of the efforts of such a large number of investigators working cooperatively that no attempt has been made to acknowledge the individual contributions.

[9] Use of Public Address Systems with Telephone Lines. W. H. Martin and A. B. Clark.