

## Members Receive a New Book on the Radio Industry

In December the Business Historical Society presented to its members a new book, *WEAF: A Pioneer in Commercial Broadcasting*, by William P. Banning. This volume is concerned with the beginnings of the radio industry, which has become so very important both economically and culturally in the brief span of about a quarter-century. The experimentation involved led to the creation of the American way of commercial broadcasting.

The book deals specifically with the work of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company — one of the pioneering experimenters with the radio in America — as centered in the broadcasting station WEAF. The executives of the A. T. & T. early visualized the possibilities of radio telephony, but they also became interested in the broadcasting of programs. The company experimented with the latter in 1922-26. Besides providing connecting telephone channels for network broadcasting it made at least three contributions: it contributed to technical knowledge and experience, it experimented with program broadcasting, and it devised a way of financing program broadcasting. The author deals with all three of these, but his chief contributions lie in the second and third.

The volume was originally intended only for deposit in the company's library "for the information of Bell System Personnel." On reading the manuscript, Arthur W. Page, Vice-President in Charge of Public Relations, became convinced that the public would be interested and referred the manuscript to the committee on publications of the Business Historical Society for an opinion as to its historical merit. The committee recommended its publication by the Society. This is the first publication under such auspices that the Society has undertaken, and under proper safeguards it seems a legitimate part of the Society's functions. In the words of N. S. B. Gras' editorial introduction: "The Society is

happy to present to the public an opportunity to read a story written by an insider to commemorate the work of his company and the accomplishments of his fellow employees. It happens that the events herein described are of importance to modern business and to society as a whole. It is also true that the mode of presentation and the rich documentation help the reader to appraise the record."

William P. Banning, the author, was connected with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company from 1922 to 1944 in the field of publicity, and from 1927 to his retirement as Assistant Vice-president in Charge of Public Relations. He was an interested observer of the developments concerning which he has written. In preparing his manuscript he drew on company records and he consulted those who were directly concerned with the WEAFF experiment. He tells his story with an honest effort to present the truth.