

MORE LOCAL PRODUCTIONS IN ZB PROGRAMMES

Controller Of Commercial Service Visits Australia

THE production department of the Commercial Broadcasting Service will become one of the service's most important branches, following the recent return from Australia of the Controller, C. G. Scrimgeour, who spent a month in Sydney and Melbourne investigating the latest methods of producing programme features. Locally-produced features will play a bigger and bigger part in ZB entertainment as it becomes impossible to secure overseas features, Mr. Scrimgeour pointed out last week. The effect of this policy will be to lessen the demand on overseas exchange while preserving at the same time the identity and individuality of ZB broadcasts.

Generally speaking, Mr. Scrimgeour found that broadcasting had not changed very greatly since he was last in Australia five years ago. The outstanding development was what amounted to a new industry, the production of Australian features for Australian radio. The prohibition on overseas features had been a great boon to radio artists and producers, and a large number of studios had sprung up, principally in Sydney, Melbourne and the other larger cities.

Valuable Lessons

The technique of these studios was improving rapidly with their increased experience, and there was no doubt that the lessons learned by them would save the CBS a great deal of money when the production department started work in earnest.

Australian productions now had an established reputation for quality, and were being sold in Canada and even, in a few instances, in America. Similarly, it was hoped to find an outlet for CBS produced features in Australia. The only difficulty in the way of this was the lack of a complete processing plant in New Zealand, though this was being investigated at the present time.

Another thing Mr. Scrimgeour noticed in Australia was the belated recognition given to the radio artist, and in particular to the producer of radio shows. It was now realised that the quality of a feature depended very largely on the talent, skill and experience of these people. Of recent years, the equivalent of a star system had grown up in Australian radio.

New Studios in Sydney

Among the changes in Sydney which struck Mr. Scrimgeour's attention were the new studios of Station 2CH, a new block for 2GB, incorporating a layout of theatre and studios somewhat similar to that of the new 12B, and 2UE's new transmitter, which used the same type of mast as that pioneered by the Commercial Broadcasting Service in New Zealand.

In programmes, the most notable innovations were the big hour shows, based on the American radio theatre shows. Although commercial radio here could not support anything as long as



Spencer Digby photograph
C. G. SCRIMGEOUR
Money-saving lessons

an hour, very similar programmes would be inaugurated from the new 12B studios.

Australian stations had a distinct advantage, Mr. Scrimgeour pointed out, in that it was possible to link up every station in Australia by wire for important network programmes.

Interest in New 12B

Everywhere he went, Mr. Scrimgeour found a great deal of interest among radio executives in the magnificent block of studios and offices planned for 12B. Several told him that they intended postponing building new studios until they had an opportunity of visiting Auckland and seeing 12B for themselves.

He had come across many New Zealanders in Australian radio, and all of them up near the top, Mr. Scrimgeour added. Peter Bathurst was doing splendidly as a free lance, was frequently starred in radio plays, some for the ABC, and was also doing commentaries for newsreels. Lane Patterson, late of 2ZB was at 2UE, and Michael Miles, formerly of 2ZA, Palmerston North, was on the staff of a Melbourne station. Harry Withers, once on the staff of 12B, had done very well in radio, but was now organiser of the drive on behalf of the Sydney Lord Mayor's Fund.

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