

# PARLIAMENT AND 2YC

AT this time of the year, when Parliament is being broadcast, letters are received from listeners beyond the effective range of 2YX who wonder why some arrangement cannot be made which would allow them to hear 2YC's programmes. Nancy Bruce, for instance, writes from Wanganui: "Now that another session of Parliament is being relayed from the House of Representatives, may I, on behalf of the many music lovers in the central districts of the North Island, plead for an improvement in the matter of an alternative station? When the House is in session the reception from Station 2YX is such that we might as well be denied any alternative. While it is possible at certain times to hear other YC stations which might be linked, reception is not good enough in this area to make listening worth while."

A similar complaint comes from L. A. Lewis, Nelson, who adds: "There are those of us who would prefer the YC programmes to the Parliamentary broadcast."

The following official statement has been obtained in the hope that listeners affected by the present system will be better able to understand why no satisfactory alternative is available.

The answer to this often-heard complaint (says the statement) about the transfer of 2YC's programmes to 2YX, when Parliament is being broadcast, begins with these obvious facts: that by decision of successive Governments the proceedings of Parliament are broadcast by 2YA, the station most widely heard; and that its own programmes are then, necessarily, transferred to another station. If they go to 2YC, 2YC's must go either to 2YX or to 2YD, both transmitters of small range. As there would be no advantage whatever in the transfer to 2YD, necessitating the transfer of 2YD's programme to 2YX, the possibility may be mentioned only to be dismissed; but it should be added that, until the small relief transmitter 2YX became available, the broadcast of Par-

liament had always meant the dropping of 2YC's programme altogether. The use of 2YX to save it, if only for a restricted audience, fortunately became possible just as the YC programmes were reorganised and the now familiar evening programme type was developed.

The practical questions accordingly are:

(i) Why is not the 2YA programme transferred to 2YX, 2YC being left undisturbed?

(ii) Why cannot the 2YA and 2YC programmes be rearranged, so that the most valuable 2YC items (concert relays, first-class studio recitals, and so on) are placed in 2YA's programmes, when Parliament is in session, and are heard with them when transferred to 2YC?

First, the 2YA programme from 7.30 in the evening is largely taken up, from night to night, with regular items which audiences expect at regular times. These include plays, variety, series like Sports Digest, Question Mark, Bob Bradford's Quartet, and the Weather and News at nine o'clock. A programme made up, as this one is, of items which in effect represent fixed commitments of various kinds, in entertainment and in information, to large sections of listeners has a correspondingly strong claim upon the 2YC transmitter.

The second question involves a number of considerations. The reference to the Weather and News points straight to one of them. No programme rearrangement could be permitted to prevent the strictly punctual broadcast, by a powerful transmitter, of the 9.0 p.m. time signals and weather report; and the regular placement and wide dissemination of the news have the same sort of importance. But this means that there are forbidding risks in placing concert relays, particularly, on the 2YA programme, since it is difficult to be sure that the first half of a concert programme will have ended by nine and virtually impossible to time the beginning of the second half to fit in with the end of the news bulletin. But that is only a special case, exemplifying the difficulty of fitting selected YC programmes into the inelastic YA pattern.

Moreover, any rearrangement of programmes, designed to rescue typical YC items by fitting them into the YA programmes, is open to two other objections, both serious. The first is that the rearrangement destroys the established classification of programmes. The YA and YC types are intended and known to be different, and the difference should be maintained. The second is that, even during a session of Parliament, sitting days can be varied, by sitting on Monday and on Friday evenings, for example, or by taking a recess of a day or more; and these alterations are made at very short notice. But broadcast programmes are prepared and printed well ahead, so that in such circumstances the choice must be between sticking to the rearrangement already advertised and reverting to a normal arrangement. This is a choice between bad, confusing alternatives. The end of a session is also, often, unknown until it is very near; and the same difficulty can occur then.

That, then, is why the present system is adhered to, vexatious as it can be to listeners who lose on 2YX what they would hear on 2YC, and much as these losses are regretted by the programme planners.



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