

THE NEW ZEALAND Radio Record

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THE PROBLEM OF FADING

In another column we outline an investigation into the problem of fading, in which we ask the co-operation of listeners. We think this will be of service to broadcasting. The problem at present is a baffling one. The tendency of listeners is to attribute the fault to the station. A special article issued by the British Broadcasting Corporation, which we published several weeks back, stated that fading was not attributable to the station, but to the course taken by the waves after leaving the station. It is also thought that the quality and nature of the land masses between the recipient and the station may have some effect, while the disturbance created by inexpert listeners may also be a factor. Whatever the causes be, however, we think an investigation along the lines we propose will be of value at least from a practical, if not from a scientific point of view. The returns made will be duly analysed, and a special map prepared showing the areas subject to fading, and so far as possible the intensity of it. As matters are now, some report fading and some report no fading. If it be found that the fault, generally speaking, is at the reception end, good will be done in directing the attention of listeners to the need for proper care and skill in reception. If, on the other hand, the uniformity of fading reports, indicate the cause to be in the station, a foundation will be laid for further investigation, which will be of value.

THE OSCILLATING FIEND.

Several items in this issue emphasise the duty of all listeners to their neighbours. A driver is not allowed on the public roads in charge of a motor vehicle without having demonstrated his capacity to at least not be a definite danger and nuisance to others. In wireless reception no standard of expertness is required, nor perhaps is desirable, before the issue of a license, but this does not remove the obligation of common decency on the part of owners of valve sets to avoid giving annoyance to neighbouring listeners by inexpert swinging of the dials. There is recorded an instance where, in father's absence, the children searched the ether for harmony—and created the most shrieking discords in neighbouring houses. Further, the testimony of a very expert listener and radio enthusiast is available from Auckland to the effect that never yet has he been able to enjoy 2YA because of the shrieking and howling of others. This suggests that there is need for a definite campaign for increased efficiency on the part of listeners. The results of greater all-round individual efficiency would not only be greater pleasure to the person concerned, but to the neighbours as well. The lectures that are being given over the air from the various stations on radio features are therefore all to the good, and may be expected to gradually achieve their object of raising the standard of reception skill throughout the community.

POLITICS AND BROADCASTING.

We cannot congratulate the Labour Party on the showing made by its members in their criticism of the Government in relation to its loan of £15,000 for the purpose of erecting 2YA. There is a type of mind which seems to delight in suggesting unclean motives and underhand methods—and it is a fair enough inference that those who are so ready to impute ulterior motives and discreditable action are the most likely to indulge in them should opportunity offer. The Postmaster-General deservedly showed heat in repudiating the inane suggestion that the Government had been bribed to grant this loan by "services" rendered in other directions. The suggestion carries no credit to those making it. The facts are plain enough. They have already been given in our columns. To meet the Government's wishes in making 2YA a super-power station able to cover the Dominion in daylight, and the South Pacific at night, the Broadcasting Company, after itself finding £15,000 more than its original commitment of £20,000, secured from the Government a short-dated loan of £15,000. The security given was a first security on the assets, plant and equipment of 2YA, other than the land, and as such is satisfactory to the Government. This arrangement permitted the plans to be carried forward quickly, and as the Prime Minister states, gave results cheaper than if the Government had itself undertaken the whole cost. But the Labour Party, for party purposes, seeks to suggest some hidden ulterior motive. Their story is not even consistent. In one breath they refer to the Broadcasting Company as "a wealthy corporation"; the next moment it is suggested that the finances are such that the risk is a bad one! With such a carping and inconsistent opposition, what a delightful medley would result were some political factions and factors to haggle over the details of programmes, etc. The only safe rule is to completely eschew politics. The "fly in the ointment" from the Labour point of view seems to be that the Leader of the Opposition, although invited to attend the opening of 2YA, was not invited to speak; so he stayed away. Hence the uproar. It rather sounds like a small boy throwing bricks because he wasn't at the party. The Opposition assumption to rank on a parity with Ministers of the Crown is nothing but an assumption, and as such may be taken at its due weight.

LOAN FOR 2YA GOVERNMENT'S ACTION FULL SECURITY TAKEN.

During the debate on the Budget the Labour members of the House of Representatives have made several attacks on the Government in connection with the agreement with the Radio Broadcasting Company, and the security given to the Government for the loan advanced by it to the company. It was stated that the charges registered against the company were firstly a mortgage of £5000 to the Bank of New Zealand, and secondly, a debenture of £15,000 to the Crown. This would make it appear that the Crown's security was subject to the Bank's first mortgage.

This, however, is not quite correct, as the Prime Minister, the Hon. J. G. Coates, explained. It appears that by an instrument dated July 1 last the Bank released its charge over the Wellington assets of the Broadcasting Company, for the purpose of giving priority to the debentures issued in favour of the Crown. The Crown therefore has a first charge on all plant, apparatus and assets in connection with the station other than land and a charge on the land subject to the mortgage of £5000 in favour of the bank. The assets are valued approximately at £27,000. It would appear, therefore, that the Crown's interest is fully protected.

The Government, said Mr. Coates, had thus got the station cheaper than if they had been responsible for the whole station and there was also this to be said, that none could forecast what would happen in these days in connection with wireless. It was possible that in a few years the whole thing might be turned upside down.

It was deemed advisable, however, to have a high power station erected in the capital—a station that could be heard in daylight throughout New Zealand, and the Pacific. The value of such a station would be great, especially in case of emergency.

Labour Innuendoes.

On another day various Labour members laid themselves out to bait the Postmaster-General on the same topic. Mr. Nosworthy replied, with force and vigour.

Mr. J. A. Lee (Auckland East) asked regarding the advance of £15,000 to the company for the erection of the Wellington station. The item indicated, he said, that a wealthy body had secured the ear of the Government to a very substantial tune. Did Mr. Goodfellow or Mr. Harris suggest to the Government that, as they had been of service in helping to sabotage dairy control, and that they had helped it in other directions, they should receive some reward such as this loan?

Mr. W. A. Veitch (Wanganui) claimed that, although the Minister had denied that the amount was secured on a second mortgage, to all intents and purposes it was. The gentleman behind the company had a way of getting all he wanted from the Government. The company was presided over by Mr. William Goodfellow, who also presided over the New Zealand Dairy Company, which had 2000 shares in the Radio Company, and which had also received important concessions from the Government. He was afraid there might have been other transactions which had not come to light bearing on that question.

Renewal of Licenses.

Mr. E. J. Howard (Christchurch South) said that it was ridiculous that a radio license could not be renewed a day before the date of expiry. It was mere "leg-pulling" to say that the Wellington broadcasting station was the finest and best outside of Rugby. Ninety per cent. of Wellington listeners-in had had their sets put out of action by 2YA when it was working. The station would be out of date very soon, and it would be useless in time of trouble. Speaking with considerable heat, he asserted that the Postmaster-General, who admitted that he knew nothing of radio, was merely a rubber stamp, and had muddled matters in regard to radio in the same way as he had muddled everything else. The listeners-in were not getting a fair deal from the Department.

The Minister: That is all the thanks the Government gets for what it has done.

Mr. A. M. Samuel (Ohinemuri) urged a revision of the fees, so that a nominal charge would be made for cheap sets, such as were used by children or persons who could not afford higher-priced sets.

Minister's Reply.

The Postmaster-General (Hon. W. Nosworthy) replied that arrangements could probably be made to enable licenses to be taken out before the due date to avoid congestion. He took no exception to the request for information concerning the radio company's loan. He combated the suggestion that the Government had lent the company £15,000 on a second mortgage, and gave the facts as at the opening of this article.

Speaking with warmth, he said it was no use members blaming the Government, or saying they had indulged in political manipulation with regard to the company, which had taken the matter up when nobody else would touch broadcasting. Some members opposite wished to force the Government into absolute control of the broadcasting, and that was one of the principal objects of the criticism that day.

There had been nothing but fault-finding in regard to every offer the Government had made. He did not believe that members who were criticising had any time for broadcasting.

COMBINED INVESTIGATION OF FADING PROBLEM

AN APPEAL TO "RECORD" READERS

In consultation with the Broadcasting Company we have decided to invite our readers to join us in an investigation into the problem of fading. It is amazing to note, from hundreds of letters in which enthusiastic writers mention points in relation to reception, how conflicting is the experience in regard to this trouble. Here is a writer from Stratford who says of 2YA: "It is the nearest thing to a perfect station received here, with practically no fading." On the other hand many Auckland areas report decided fading. A writer at Port Ahuriri says: "2YA (Wellington) is being received here anything but in a satisfactory way—inclined to be distorted, and fading rapidly at all times. On Saturday the 18th inst., 3YA, Christchurch, relayed a portion of 2YA's programme. Several times 2YA faded completely out, and on changing quickly to 3YA I found it coming through splendidly—no sign of fading at all."

From the South Island also, there are divers reports. From Southland some receptions are reported good and some bad. From Dunedin a writer says: "Fading is noticeable some evenings, but reception at Taieri is stronger than from Dunedin."

Obviously where there is an effect there is a cause. That cause is either fundamentally at the transmitting station, at the receiving end, or in between, either in land or atmospheric influences.

It occurs to us that a useful service might be rendered by the simultaneous taking of records at diverse points of the reception of a particular station at particular times. We propose, therefore, to select ahead, one particular evening's transmission from 2YA, and request as many of our readers as feel inclined to undertake the service, to record the results if possible for the full evening from 8 o'clock to 10 o'clock. To help their record a time chart will be published in the "Record" beforehand, giving space, minute by minute, for the full two hours with columns for the record of fading, either slight or intense. With this chart before them, listeners can, with a pencil, mark the exact moment at which fading begins, and its intensity and duration. Analysis of these reports subsequently will be of extreme interest. If, for instance, 100 per cent. of records from all over New Zealand show that at 8.19 fading began and continued for two minutes, then obviously it is a fair inference that the fault was a general one and presumably occurred at the station. If, again, at a certain time all North Island reported fading and all South Island was clear it would suggest some other cause such as atmospherics. The same analysis would be possible district by district. To summarise the results we would endeavour to compile a map of the whole Dominion, and shading in the area affected by fading with an indication of its intensity, and permanent or intermittent nature. The analysis of the reports sent in would be entrusted to our technical contributor "Megohm," who is specially qualified for such an investigation.

One point we would make on this investigation is that everyone can help, even owners of crystal and one and two valve sets. We want, if possible, the full two-hour's record of the one chosen station—2YA—no variation from station to station because that introduces new directions and intervening conditions. Records are wanted, too, from all distances—a few miles away up to the extreme points of the country.

The time charts and other organising work involved are now in hand and will be published in due course. A special evening will be chosen for the test and if possible a programme arranged to be of the most comprehensive nature to test the transmission.

In their reports listeners will be asked to indicate their local circumstances—such as distance from other valve sets; and, in view of the possibility of interference from other sets, reports from isolated listeners will be particularly valuable.

When the strike took place in the Old Country the only thing left to let the British people know what was going on was the broadcasting, as everything else was swept away. By that means the people were kept informed of what was doing. Members could accuse Ministers from himself downwards and upwards of political underhand methods, even to accusations of bribery practically. The member for Auckland East had asked who came to him (Mr. Nosworthy), and what offers were made. Such insinuations were almost an insult, and if certain members had any respect for themselves they would admit that their action was not calculated to make things better, when the Government were honestly trying to save the people from heavier expenditure by forcing everything into the hands of the Government.

Politics "On the Air."

Labour members also raised the matter of the refusal to put "over the air" a speech containing political matter by an official of a farmers' union organisation while speeches of the Prime Minister and the Postmaster-General were broadcast at the opening of 2YA.

The Postmaster-General (Hon. W. Nosworthy) replied that if he liked to go to the opening of a radio station at Auckland, or Wellington, and say a few words, he had a perfect right to do so. Otherwise he did not know where they were going to draw the line. He was not dying for the lime-light, but would sooner be at work. However, the Prime Minister and himself did go, and he believed the Leader of the Opposition was also asked to attend.

A Labour member: He was asked to be present, but not to speak.

The Minister said he had nothing to do with it, but would have been only too pleased to hear the hon. gentleman speak. Regarding the broadcasting of speeches of members of the Farmers' Union, it was considered that political topics should not be broadcast, and neither he nor the Prime Minister had any desire to touch on politics.

SOS

INFORMATION WANTED.

We have received the following subscriptions, and desire the names and addresses of the senders—

Postal notes for 7s. 6d.—5s. one, stamped Morrinsville, 2s. 6d. one, stamped Marokora.

Postal notes for 7s. 6d.—both stamped Morrinsville.

(What's the matter with Morrinsville?)

Khabarovsk, Siberia, has now a 20,000-watt short-wave transmitter of American make, designed for not only telegraph work between 20 and 100 meters, but also for broadcasts on short waves.

SO CLEVER!

THE DEAR CHILDREN

IRATE LISTENER INVESTIGATES.

A correspondent writes from Auckland province and quaintly tells how he traced a howler to his lair. There is a lot of truth in what he says, too.

"I think there is a bigger problem than fading facing you, and that is howling valves. To-night they are spoiling the concert. I have had my set just on 12 months, and I notice the howling valves are getting more and more month after month. I think the trouble is mostly that when a man buys a set he is taught how to tune it, but he does not teach his wife or family, and when he goes out for the evening the set is left to the family. They try how clever they are in getting one station after another. And it does not matter how they get it as long as they think they have it.

"I was so annoyed last evening at this noise that I closed my set and went out. I heard a set screaming from a house, so I made it my business to call on the people and told them that a few other people had sets as well as they. The woman said daddy had gone out and the dear children were getting so clever. They could get China, Germany, Heaven, and a lot more places! So that is what you are up against."

DRAT THOSE BOYS!

UNAPPRECIATED BACKGROUND.

"Why don't you stop that boy from making that noise?" came a voice on the telephone to 3YA one day last week when the races were being broadcast. "There's no one here making any noise," replied the station. "Yes, there is," persisted the lady at the telephone, who declared that the boy was interfering with her hearing the descriptions of the races. "Oh, you'd better ring up the racecourse and stop the paper boys from calling out," said the office of 3YA.

RAIN NOT BROADCAST!

AN ENVIOUS RUN-HOLDER.

A correspondent on a New South Wales out-back station, where a train passes once a week (for his letter paper states: "Mail leaves on arrival of train on Saturday") interpolates the following in a letter to the Broadcasting Company—

"Last week we heard the announcer say that you experienced good rain, necessitating the postponement of many sporting fixtures. It made us very gloomy, as no rain has fallen here for months, and we are feeding the sheep with corn and scrub."