

THE NEW ZEALAND Radio Record

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Managing Editor,
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P.O. Box 1032.
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WELLINGTON, MARCH 16, 1928.

THE DESTRUCTIVE HOBBY OF A GENTLEMAN WITH A "PULL."

Radio matters have been very much in the limelight of late in Auckland, and a rather amazing letter which we publish in another column seems to offer some degree of explanation. This letter sets out that a certain individual has chosen the "hobby" of pinpricking the Broadcasting Company to provide himself with amusement; that he has a "pull" with the Press, and is also good pals with two Cabinet Ministers; that he regards some of those who have hitherto taken a prominent part in the activities of the Auckland Listeners' League as "duds," but that he has a dark horse in training who will "tear things up a bit" when he "gets going"; that, in short, by the easy weapons of destructive criticism, political pressure and ridicule, he proposes to make the interests of the listening public a mere chopping block for his own petty interest or amusement. The spirit behind this is to us utterly incomprehensible, and we imagine it will be, too, to the listeners vitally concerned. Broadcasting is a public utility and service of the highest order. It has an outstanding function to perform in entertaining, amusing, and informing the public. It has great educational possibilities. It is the brightest feature in the life of many sufferers from illhealth, many isolated by distance, and countless thousands seeking relief from business worries and daily weariness. Yet such a service is to be hamstrung and crippled as a "hobby"!

Analysis of the situation in Auckland shows that the Radio Broadcasting Company, in spite of all disadvantages, has steadily pursued a policy of programme betterment and a high standard of directional efficiency. In pursuance of its standard of service, it has been obliged on two occasions to make major staff changes. Any business organisation has the right to manage its staff in its own way, without its domestic affairs being made the subject of public controversy, and the public, who are very far from being fools, will realise that such changes are not lightly made, nor are they fit subject for detailed discussion in public. Critics who are compelled to harp upon such topics seem to us to reveal the poorness of their case, while the person most concerned might fitly exclaim in retrospect, "Save me from my friends." The Auckland programmes to-day are better than ever. The best talent is engaged, and is enthusiastically devoting itself to the public entertainment.

The most serious aspect of the position in relation to the activities of the "gentleman with a pull," to our mind, however, is the serious reflection it casts upon a section of our public Press. It may be suggested that the Press which has for so long had an exclusive monopoly of the privilege of purveying news to the public does not look with favour upon a newcomer in the field which has competitive possibilities. In our opinion such an attitude on their part is unjustified, and, though the facts present some colour for the view that Press interests are antagonistic to broadcasting, and that they, by manufacturing discontent, are seeking to pave the way for Government administration of broadcasting (subordinate to Press domination) we prefer to believe that the final editorial control is unaware of the advantage that is being taken of its hospitality, and that it is ignorant of being made the victim of the despicable sustained "jape" indicated by the letter now published. It is obvious that no proper investigation has been made in respect of recent statements made—an investigation at once readily made had the desire of fairness been there and dictated by the very nature of the matter published. It rests with the Auckland Press concerned to disprove the claim of the gentleman with a hobby that he has a "pull," and to give broadcasting fair treatment. It has not had it of late. The broadcasting service is not perfect—neither is the newspaper service. Radio broadcasting has to grow towards perfection. It is still an infant. It has made lusty growth, and is capable of greater advance with reasonable consideration and a fair field. It is the business of listeners to refuse to be gulled by Press propaganda, and to exercise their own unbiased judgment. That judgment, we are satisfied, will be wholly in favour of giving the Broadcasting Company and service a fair spin.



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SPORTING

WELLINGTON MEETING TO BE BROADCAST

March 15-17.

Permission has been received from the Wellington Racing Club for the meeting on March 15 and 17 to be broadcast by 2YA. Listeners will be gratified at this decision, and undoubtedly will appreciate the sporting decision of the authorities.

NEXT WEEK'S BROADCASTS

March 24: Wellington Trotting Club (subject to permission being granted)—2YA, rebroadcast by 3YA.

March 23 and 24: New Zealand v. Australia, first test match (by courtesy of New Zealand Cricket Council)—1YA.

CANTERBURY J.C. MEETING

PERMISSION TO BROADCAST.

The committee of the Canterbury Jockey Club, which met in Christchurch last week, granted permission to broadcast a running description of its meeting to be held on April 9 and 10.

RENEWING LICENSES

FACILITIES GIVEN THIS YEAR

In April last year listeners experienced a great deal of inconvenience in renewing their licenses. Those who exercised forethought and called at the Post Office during March in the hope of forestalling the inevitable eleventh hour rush were disappointed to learn that no instructions had been received authorising the receiving of license fees before the due date, April 1.

This year, however, this difficulty has been removed and licenses may be renewed at any time during March, such renewal, of course, dating from April 1. Having regard to the time wasted at the P.O. counter by many licensees last year, all listeners are strongly advised to call at once at the nearest Money Order Office and arrange matters.

It should hardly be necessary to remind listeners that all wireless licenses expire on March 31, and that any person operating an unlicensed receiving station is liable to a heavy fine.

STATION 1YA

POSITION OF MR. STRINGER

COMPANY'S ATTITUDE.

Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, has made the following statement in final reply to much that has appeared in the Auckland Press.

"When Mr. Stringer voluntarily announced to the public that he had been dismissed and added that he did not know why his engagement had been terminated, we felt constrained to say that Mr. Stringer did know seven weeks beforehand the reasons for our action.

"Following this, Mr. Stringer has endeavoured to suggest to the public that our action was determined by (1) his action in consulting our solicitor, and (2) his own action in paying \$5 to secure the broadcast of the Auckland Trotting Club's meeting.

"This was what that \$5 was in fact for, although Mr. Stringer was not frank enough to say so or to acknowledge that in doing so he broke our most specific and exact instructions not to pay for public relays, and so establish an impossible precedent; moreover, his action contradicted his own former correspondence to us on this point.

"Neither of these reasons, however, had any weight in the change we made. We do not recognise that it is necessary or incumbent upon us to say more than that.

The public will appreciate that no responsible organisation likes to make rapid staff changes. The public will also appreciate that on account of past history in Auckland, a change there would only be made in the absolute interests of the company and listeners themselves.

It is not our habit to discuss our domestic business in the public Press, and we do not purpose following Mr. Stringer further in the matter. We are aiming at a high standard of efficiency and service, and are responsible for the steps we take to give the public the service it desires.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Satisfied (Oamaru): We have been in communication with the company about your letter. Remember saying it was hoped to do something with extra Sunday services, but quite sure no promise was made by us regarding your suggestion. Can you refer us to the issue? The company unfortunately can take no action regarding radiation of the kind described by you. Very sorry. Thanks for notes of reception.

AUCKLAND LISTENERS' LEAGUE

PUBLIC MEETING MARCH 19

We have received from Mr. G. McB. Salt, hon. secretary of the Auckland Listeners' League the following telegram:—

Obliged if publish that Auckland Listeners' League holding public meeting Unity Hall, Auckland, Monday, March 19, to discuss year's operations and future of broadcasting. Messrs. Harris, Macnamara, been invited attend.—Salt, hon. secretary.

MR. HARRIS UNABLE TO ATTEND.

Under date February 29 Mr. G. McB. Salt, secretary of the Auckland Listeners' League, wrote to the general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, Christchurch, as follows:—

Being of the opinion that Auckland listeners are very dissatisfied both with the programmes from 1YA and the whole system of administration of broadcasting, the executive of the Auckland Listeners' League is holding a public meeting in the Unity Hall on Monday, March 19, at 8 p.m., to enable listeners to discuss the whole situation. I have been instructed by my executive to invite you to be present to address or otherwise take part in the meeting.

To this letter the following reply has been sent by Mr. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company:—

"We are in receipt of your letter of the 29th ult., to the effect that as your executive is of the opinion that Auckland listeners are very dissatisfied both with the programmes from 1YA and the whole system of administration of broadcasting, you propose to hold a public meeting to enable listeners to discuss the situation.

"You will no doubt appreciate that due to the many types of listener served by the Broadcasting Company, it is not possible to produce a programme that would be satisfactory to all. The company, however, endeavours as far as it is possible to do through the medium of a broadcast service, to give different types of programmes, with a view to serving the various classes of listeners at different times. Every effort has been made by the company to improve steadily the programmes from all its stations commensurate with the income, and to-day the listeners in your district are being catered for through the medium of 1YA broadcast station by the leading talent available in Auckland City.

"Such criticism as has appeared in the Press is largely untrue, or otherwise unjustifiable, considering the conditions and limitations under which the company operates.

"In the circumstances no useful purpose can be served by the holding of a public meeting, and we would suggest that your executive forwards us some specific details in respect to its dissatisfaction with the programmes and administration, and in this way give us a fair and reasonable opportunity of getting at the facts.

"The writer will also be very glad to meet your executive at the company's office when he is next in Auckland, and in this way we have no doubt that we can enlighten you on such matters as may be concerning you which will possibly lead to a better understanding between us.—(Sgd.) A. R. Harris, General Manager.

Mr. G. McNamara, Secretary of the Post Office will be in the South Island on business for, we understand, some ten days.

GLORIOUS BROADCAST

"IN A PERSIAN GARDEN" AT 3YA.

"In a Persian Garden" proved one of the most delightful musical treats ever broadcast from 3YA. The vocalists—Madame Gower Burns, Miss Jessie King, Mr. Bernard Rennell, and Mr. Harold Prescott—excelled themselves, as also did the instrumentalists—Mr. Harold Beck, Miss Irene Morris, and Miss Aileen Warren.

Works of this description bring the standard of broadcasting in New Zealand into line with the best performances that have ever been broadcast by any overseas station.

MANUFACTURING DISCONTENT

WORK OF A GENTLEMAN WITH A "PULL"

Some rather remarkable statements about broadcasting have appeared of late in certain Auckland newspapers, these having reference not only to the change in the personnel of the station director at 1YA, but to the relay of the Edison night from 2YA, and caustic ridicule upon appreciative comment on the New Zealand system which appeared in an American newspaper. All of these statements have been sensationalised, apparently with the direct object of creating prejudice on the part of the public towards broadcasting. It is not our place to determine the underlying motive of those concerned, but a letter has come under our notice which seems to indicate a deliberate campaign being afoot to pin-prick broadcasting. The best possible service we can render listeners in general in showing the forces that are operating to befoul them is to give the essential parts of this letter:—

"I want a hobby for the coming winter, so I have decided to take an interest in keeping the Radio Broadcasting Company on the right track by the various aids of:—

"(1) Criticism, constructive and destructive, in the newspapers (I have a pull there).

"(2) Private political action. I know two members of the cabinet, Christchurch Old Boys, and besides there is a general election coming.

"(3) Ridicule. This will be easy, if necessary."

So I ought to have quite an amusing time.

Things are going to start here soon, I hear. Last night I was rung up by a neighbour who is a member of the executive of the Listeners League, and whom I consider as being the only really brainy man in the show. He is not the dud that — is. When he gets going he will tear things up a bit. He's a new member on the executive and one of the most forcible and logical platform speakers here, so there should be some fun ahead.

"I think that — dismissal will set the match to the fuse. Mind you, between ourselves, I couldn't understand his getting the job. He has had no office experience, and is not sufficiently 'a showman' for the position.

A PITIFUL "HOBBY."

Whether the "pull" that this gentleman has with the Auckland Press is responsible for the whole of the matter which has recently appeared, we do not know, but we do know that a wholly biased and unjustified view of events has been presented to the public, and that this is reacting very definitely against the interests of the public, the listeners, and the trade. Much of the matter that has appeared has been not only erroneous, but contemptible, notably that in connection with Edison night relay, and the ridicule sought to be made out of the tribute paid by the leading American radio newspaper to the legislation and conduct of broadcasting in New Zealand. It would seem that either the Press or their paid writers desire to wreck and obstruct broadcasting. The regrettable aspect of the whole matter is that, unless checked, it will react disadvantageously to the whole body of listeners, and the artistic service that broadcasting can render the public. Over the last few months the leading artists available in Auckland, thanks to the policy instituted by Mr. W. J. Bellingham, have been appearing both in solo and concerted work, to the very great improvement and benefit of the programmes in general. With many of these leading artists, the prime motive has been, not financial remuneration, but the desire to accord pleasure, and further the interests of music. Under those impulses they have performed often at considerable inconvenience, and we say advisedly that it is wholly unfair, unjustified, and unsporting for their work to be made the subject of Press attacks as a "hobby" by an irresponsible of the type whose letter we publish. The Radio Broadcasting Company has throughout made it clear that it claims no immunity from criticism or freedom from suggestions; on the contrary, it has expressed a desire for the formation of strong, responsible bodies representative of listeners, but listeners will, we think, agree that mere carping destructiveness of the nature proposed as a "hobby" will serve no useful purpose.

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Private Phone 25—010.

RADIO ENTHUSIASTS

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