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Service Committee to Help Radio

Comprehensive Outline of Public Relations

A comprehensive statement is made by Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, regarding the progress made in radio service and the prospects for the future. In particular, Mr. Harris outlines the desirability of co-operation for the mutual benefit of all concerned, between the company and such public bodies or societies whose objectives were such as to make closer co-operation between the broadcasting company and themselves desirable. This involves the establishment of service committees on the part of different organisations. This scheme has been in operation in an experimental way in Christchurch in relation to church services, and has proved most successful, and it is considered the application of the scheme to all interests concerned will prove equally successful and satisfactory.

THE full text of the statement made by Mr. Harris is as follows: "In launching a new business, such as radio broadcasting, the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand, Limited, has endeavoured to visualise from the outset its ultimate objective of rendering the greatest possible measure of service to the community. It has recognised that the conditions met with in the initial stages might be entirely different from those obtaining later, and, rather than introduce expedients which might restrict development later, has made every effort to establish the business on a sound basis. Every step has been taken only after careful consideration, not only in respect of the immediate requirements, but also of the ultimate effect.

ORDERLY PROGRESS.

"While the company appreciates that programmes are of paramount importance, and that the culminating point of the work of the whole of its organisation is the efficient broadcasting of such programmes, it realises that to establish a sound foundation on which to build the superstructure of suitable and acceptable programmes an efficient transmitting plant and station, combined with a competent staff organisation, are the first essentials.

"The three essentials, in order of priority, are thus:—
(1) Efficient plant and station equipment.
(2) Efficient staff organisation.
(3) Attractive programmes.

PLANT

"In providing the first essential, it has been necessary to carry out a vast amount of detail work in obtaining the latest information, purchasing the best equipment, locating sites, planning lay-out, erecting apparatus, furnishing studios, and financing capital expenditure.

"The requirements of studios for broadcasting purposes had also to be studied exhaustively, and there arose difficulties in securing suitable premises, so much so that in the case of three of its stations the company has found it necessary to erect special buildings, and in the case of the fourth station extensive structural alterations had to be effected. As an outcome of this work the company's stations compare favourably in efficiency with any other stations in the world, and also its station at Wellington is equipped with transmitting apparatus second in power in the British Empire only to that at Daventry.

"The policy of avoiding temporary expedients and their resultant legacies, now makes it possible for the company to broadcast from properly equipped and correctly proportioned studios a transmission which carries to the listener to New Zealand stations a faithful reproduction of the full artistic effect of the items rendered.

STAFF ORGANISATION.

"In organising its staff the company has had no precedent to draw upon. The present personnel has, however, been carefully chosen and its enthusiasm and industry are proving very effective. However, more remains to be done in perfecting the organisation, and as the service expands and circumstances warrant action will be taken commensurate with the income.

PROGRAMMES.

"In organising the staff of the company the attainment of the objective is much more involved and difficult than in the case of arranging a programme to be staged in a concert hall. In such cases the attendance at concerts is an indication that the audience is more or less in sympathy with the particular type of programme to be presented. On the other hand, a broadcast programme reaches a varying audience, including many types, and

therefore a programme which is popular for a concert hall may not be popular when broadcast.

"The company endeavours to secure the best talent available for its programmes. Every applicant is required to give an audition and the results are carefully classified on confidential records provided for the purpose. To these records are added from time to time artist's accomplishments and subsequent dates of performances, items presented and comments.

"From these records the programme organiser can readily choose the artists he considers will be most suitable for the particular type of programme to be presented for each session.

"Skeleton programmes are prepared for approval six weeks before the date of performance and detailed programmes four weeks before the date of performance. Session agreements are executed by the performer on the one part and the programme organiser and station director on the other part. These contain full details of items, including composers and publishers.

"Arrangements are also made for each performer to attend at the studio and rehearse with the official accompanist, and a few days before the date of performance a reminder card is mailed to the performer to ensure that the engagement will not be overlooked.

"Thus it will be seen that a great deal of work is involved, and nothing left to chance in preparing a programme for broadcasting purposes.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE COMPANY AND LISTENERS.

"Although it has not appeared opportune hitherto to introduce a medium of direct contact with listeners, the company considers that the time has now arrived when it might establish some form of public relationship with its customers.

"Proposals have been formulated from time to time by various leagues and societies, but these have been more or less premature and for the most part abstract, incomplete and incapable of practical application.

"In dealing with the question of public relations there are three distinct factors to be taken into consideration, namely:—

- (a) Effectiveness of transmissions at the point of reception.
- (b) Public utility of programmes.
- (c) Improved facilities for reception.

"In so far as the listener is concerned, the company proposes to deal with each of the above respectively as follows:—

- (a) By the appointment of 'honorary official listeners' and official 'listening posts.'
- (b) By organising 'public relations' committees at all broadcasting stations.
- (c) By sponsoring 'better radio' leagues.

"It will be recognised that the success of these public relation proposals hinges on co-operation between the parties. It must be remembered also that co-operation means united effort for a common purpose on the part of all concerned, and that unless it is wholehearted it becomes a hindrance rather than a help.

"The organising of the 'public relations' committees and 'official listening posts' will be undertaken by the company.

"The formation and operation of 'better radio' leagues, however, will depend upon the initiative and enthusiasm of listeners. The company cannot organise the leagues, but is prepared to assist.

"Leagues should be able to do a great deal in arousing interest and popularising radio, which in turn will increase the value of radio to the listener himself.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TRANSMISSION AT POINT OF RECEPTION.

"The question of efficient transmission of programmes from properly equipped and controlled stations is an internal one for the company. The effectiveness of the transmission at the point of reception, however, is a matter that can be better gauged with the help of listeners, and in order that reports may be received that will enable a systematic study of the question to be conducted, the company proposes to arrange for closer collaboration with listeners by the appointment of honorary official listeners of the Radio Broadcasting Company of

New Zealand, Limited. The receiving stations of these honorary officers will be recognised as 'official listening posts,' and will be situated in the following localities:—

North Island.

Auckland City.
North Auckland.
Bay of Plenty.
Hawke's Bay.
Taumarunui.
Palmerston North.

South Auckland.
Poverty Bay.
New Plymouth.
Wanganui.
Wairarapa.
Wellington City.

South Island.

Blenheim.
Westport.
North Canterbury.
Central Otago.
Christchurch City.

Nelson.
Hokitika.
South Canterbury.
Southland.
Dunedin City.

(To be added to as necessity arises.)

"Appointments will be for a period of one year expiring on March 31 of each year, and will be made by the Broadcasting Company by issuing to each officer a certificate of appointment and an official badge. The head office of the company will issue periodically to 'official listeners' bulletins of general information with regard to transmissions.

"The duties of honorary official listeners will be:—

- (a) To supply to the company from time to time reliable information regarding reception of its transmissions in his particular locality.
- (b) To report on the effect of special test transmissions.
- (c) To investigate local reports concerning the reception of transmissions.
- (d) To investigate local reports of interference from other transmitting stations and ships.

PUBLIC UTILITY OF PROGRAMMES.

"To-day certain activities of the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand, Limited, touch upon work already being undertaken in the more usual way by well-defined public bodies or societies. There are the churches, musical and dramatic societies, child welfare leagues, educational bodies, sports clubs and radio and listeners' societies, all organised, and inevitably interested in what radio is doing toward the furtherance of their respective objects. It is the aim of the company to obtain, if possible, some sort of co-operation between itself and these representative bodies.

"In furtherance of this aim, the company has formulated a scheme of public relation committees. It is intended that the personnel of these committees shall consist of representatives of the bodies concerned and representatives of the company. For instance, the sports committee shall consist of representatives from football clubs, cricket clubs, tennis clubs, athletic clubs and other sporting clubs and the company's representatives.

"The company devotes a portion of its broadcasting time to the matters in which the above-mentioned bodies are interested.

"The duty will devolve on the various committees of recommending to the company items of interest to be broadcast during the times at their disposal and of matters incidental thereto. In addition, committees will be required to consider applications and suggestions for broadcast of matters pertaining to their particular subject, and, in the case of competing claims, come to resolution thereon for the guidance of the company.

"For the sake of uniformity, and in order to facilitate the work of the committees, the company has prepared a scheme by which it hopes to secure the desired co-operation between itself and the bodies mentioned. It seeks co-operation for the mutual benefit of all parties, but it must be borne in mind that in all matters the interests of the listener-in are necessarily paramount.

IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR RECEPTION.

"The Radio Broadcasting Company is endeavouring to establish an efficient service of maximum public utility, but efficient transmission of attractive programmes is of little value unless the listener has suitable reception apparatus properly installed, operated and maintained under efficient conditions.

(Continued on page 4.)