

THE NEW ZEALAND Radio Record

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SERVICE COMMITTEES.

Serious-minded listeners who are concerned with the full service that radio broadcasting can render the community, will study with interest the scheme for service committees submitted in another column by the general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company. This proposal, in brief, recognises that many sections of the community are interested in aspects of broadcasting, and proposes that round each station there be grouped definite committees covering the major activities of the community, where they impinge upon broadcasting. An example will make the point clear. A Church committee, comprising representation of the leading denominations, will, in effect, organise the broadcasting of church services, and so far relieve the station director of responsibilities in connection therewith. In last week's issue we had the testimony of the Rev. D. Gardner Miller, Christchurch, that this scheme in its period of trial there had worked most admirably. Other social activities—sports, musical societies, dramatic societies, welfare institutions, etc.—will be organised similarly, so that there will be direct contact between all the major activities of the community and the Radio Broadcasting stations, which latter will then have the benefit of considered recommendations from the central leaders of each section. This scheme as a feeder for service has much to commend it.

But that is only one side to the scheme. It embraces two other major features calculated directly to appeal to listeners. The first is the appointment of special official listeners to check up on the quality of transmissions. This is very essential, for in spite of the best of care, it would be too much to expect that all transmissions should maintain an unvarying standard of accuracy, and it is to the interests of all that any departures from standard should immediately be notified and corrected. The existence of official listening posts, too, will operate as a safeguard for the company, and protect it from charges of bad transmission which may not be justified. Most experienced service men agree that a high percentage of blame directed against the transmission should more correctly be diverted to the reception and faults there. The second feature that appeals to listeners bears upon this point, and the encouragement of societies concerned with "Better Radio." The harnessing of the enthusiasm of the listener in this direction has great possibilities. The most outstanding characteristic of the radio "fan" is his enthusiasm, and the direction of this into recognised channels where those seeking assistance can procure it, is very much to be desired. It is for this reason that we heartily welcome this aspect of the scheme. "Better Radio" societies will, we hope, be the general order; they will then serve as the definite rallying point for newcomers and as educational centres.

Some criticism may be directed against the scheme. If any weak points can be exposed, it is highly desirable they should be brought out. We know the proposal for achieving a comprehensive scheme covering the company and the listener has occupied the attention of the general manager for some time. The subject is a big one, and has many angles. The scheme finally submitted has been an evolution from earlier propositions—necessarily so in so big a matter. In this field there has been no precedent for guidance. The United States has no scheme for contact with listeners; Britain has no detailed scheme; Australia has none. Their conditions in every case are different. Here, the centralisation of this public utility in unified control—a system towards which other countries are trending to avoid chaos—has given the opportunity for the development of direct bonds along the lines of service between the company and the community. The scheme is, we think, an earnest offer on the part of the company to make broadcasting of the greatest use to the community, and we sincerely hope that the service committees will respond to the opportunity, and that a strong body of societies aiming at "better radio" will be formed throughout the country. If these are developed on national and not parochial lines, the benefits that will accrue will be great.

In order to spread the message of radio, the largest and newest of Berlin's broadcast stations has equipped a huge van automobile to bring its programmes to remote communities. The car is really a good-will agent, as it travels about Berlin and environs transmitting programmes to the home station, for re-transmission on the regular wave. In Europe, the license fees paid by set owners provide the revenue for broadcasters, who are therefore directly interested in increasing their number. With the apparatus installed in the motor van programmes may be picked up at points around the city and transmitted to the central station, where they are put on the air on the regular wave. Part of the equipment is a powerful receiving set with which the suburbanites of Berlin are treated to excellent programmes.

Many letters were received by WJZ (New York, 30,000 watts) following a complete programme carried out without the aid of announcers. The experiment proved a great success, since the programmes continued smoothly and serenely, unpunctuated with the verbal expressions and interjections of the studio announcer, and it is expected that many other stations will follow this example. The programmes, however, are published in the Press.

Don't expect to obtain sweet-toned music from your loudspeaker if you are using 90 volts (or more) "B" battery potential on your last audio valve if you are not employing a "C" battery. What is the good of owning an expensive set which gives you poor tone?

Descriptions of grand operas now being produced in Sydney by J. C. Williamson, Ltd., accompanied by music, are being broadcast weekly by 3LO, Melbourne.

Service Committee to Help Radio

(Continued From Front Page.)

"There is a persistent demand from listeners for reliable and independent information, and from those who contemplate installing receiving sets for advice as to the most suitable type of set for their requirements in the particular locality. Few people faced with this latter problem of deciding what to buy are in a position to know what must be embodied in a set to meet their requirements.

"This is a matter which is of vital importance to all who are interested in radio broadcasting, and one in which all interests are identical, for just as every satisfied listener is of assistance, so every dissatisfied listener is a hindrance to the development of the service. In addition, the improving of reception facilities is essentially a matter to be dealt with by local organisations, for conditions vary in different localities, and the type of set which is entirely satisfactory in one district may be quite unsuitable in another.

BETTER RADIO LEAGUES.

"In order that these matters may be dealt with and the disabilities of listeners minimised, the Radio Broadcasting Company proposes to give official recognition to such existing radio leagues or societies including in their objects the improvement of radio reception facilities. Also in districts where such radio leagues are not in existence, the Broadcasting Company proposes to sponsor the formation of leagues, to be known as 'Better Radio Leagues' having for their purpose the fostering of improvements for radio reception.

"The membership of all leagues should be open to licensed radio dealers and transmitters, as well as to listeners, and it is suggested that their activities include:—

- (a) The establishment of bureaus for the assembling and recording of reliable information in respect to receiving apparatus.
- (b) The dissemination of information regarding improvements in facilities for reception.
- (c) The investigation of cases of poor reception, local interference and howling valves.

"In respect to section (a) it is suggested that leagues should elect technical committees to gather information

NEXT WEEK WE WILL FEATURE A PARTICULARLY COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME QUESTION GIVING VIEWS OF LISTENERS PRO AND CON ON THE QUALITY ISSUE AND TRAVERSING IN DETAIL SOME RECENT NEWSPAPER MATTER.

regarding the installation, operation and maintenance of receiving apparatus capable of giving satisfactory results in the district over which the activities of the league extend. Much is to be gained by ensuring that all apparatus sold in a district is installed, operated and maintained so as to give the most effective results in the locality in which it is used.

"The activity outlined in section (b) will be educative and will keep listeners in the district in touch with the latest developments, thereby maintaining their interest in radio, making for better reception generally.

"The investigation of cases of poor reception, interference from local sources and howling valves, as provided in section (c), will greatly increase the prestige of the leagues, and will help to remove one of the greatest handicaps to broadcasting.

"The company is prepared to consider rendering assistance by appointing an officer to co-operate with those desirous of forming leagues, and to confer with them in respect of technical matters concerning reception apparatus and facilities generally.

CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEES.

"For some time past a church service committee had been operating successfully at 3YA, Christchurch, and had solved the problems of co-ordinating the order of broadcasts among those concerned quite harmoniously, and contributed very effectively to the general satisfactory conduct of church broadcasts. A constitution and rules of operation had been drawn up on the basis of that experience, and would be made generally available with the necessary adaptations for application to other organisations."

FIGURES THAT TALK

3LO, Melbourne.... 98,000
2FC, Sydney..... 52,000
3AR, Melbourne... 42,000
4 New Zealand
stations 35,000

Australian figures are for the twelve months ending June last; New Zealand, the approximate sum ending December 31 last. Much newspaper talk in New Zealand has centred round £50,000 and £60,000 as being New Zealand's figures. The facts are very different, for these critics ignored the fact that licenses grew late in the year and revenue only pro rata. Service depends on finance and the best service to broadcasting can be rendered by appreciating fact and not expanding and spreading fiction.

Special Shakespearean Day for April 23

Special efforts are in hand to make April 23, the anniversary of the birth of the Bard and also St. George's Day, a memorable Shakespearean day, and lovers of the Bard are advised to keep that evening free. It is anticipated that the best programme for that evening will come from 1YA, Auckland, although 2YA will also be to the fore with a very excellent evenings fare. Both of these programmes will be entirely Shakespearean features. Full details will be given later.

CANNOT BE REMEDIED

TROUBLESOME FADING

"MUST BE ACCEPTED LIKE THE WEATHER."

An American expert authority, dealing with the question of fading, says in a letter to the general manager of the Broadcasting Company:

"Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith has very aptly summed up the present knowledge of fading. He contrasts it to a huge picture puzzle of many thousands of irregular pieces, of which only a few parts have been successfully put together. Although many technical papers have been published with reference both to periodic and steady fading, the sum of knowledge on this subject is so little that only the most general conclusions can be drawn. It is not unfair to state that the phenomenon of fading is little less than a mystery. There is evidence that many factors contribute to it. There are day and night effects, seasonal variations, and shorter periodic variations caused by local weather conditions and temperature and humidity conditions.

"The accepted theory of periodic fading, of the two and three-minute variety is that it is based upon lagging effects. Although radio waves are considered to travel at 168,000 miles a second, so rapidly that lagging can hardly be reasonably conceived, nevertheless such effects must exist. For example, a receiving station located 336 miles from a broadcast transmitter may receive the signal directly through the air and also by reflection from the heaviside layer. These two signal components are combined in the receiving system. If the heaviside layer fluctuates, either in its altitude or in its properties as a reflecting layer, the amount of time lag in the reflected signal as compared with the signal received directly, must naturally vary. The accepted theory is that the reflected signal tends to cancel out the signal received directly and that the two, three, and four-minute fading is caused by changes in the heaviside reflection effect.

"Another type of fading, encountered in short-wave transmission, is known as selective fading. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company, in its researches in connection with the transatlantic telephone, has conducted extensive inquiries into selective fading and a technical paper on this subject may be expected at any time within the next few months. The way in which selective fading is observed is to transmit simultaneously five separate audio-frequencies on the carrier wave. They are received at a distant point and filtered separately so that the intensity variation at each audio-frequency may be measured. Their intensity with respect to each other varies from moment to moment and seems to follow no regular law. At one moment, the middle frequencies may be preponderantly loud while the upper and lower are weak, and, at the next moment, the situation may be reversed. These effects have not been observed in the regular broadcasting frequencies."

The writer concludes with the remark:

"In the present state of the art, I doubt very much that information along these lines can be of any great value to you. However, if any progress is made in counter-acting fading conditions, by methods used in transmission, I will inform you of them promptly. In the meanwhile, fading must be accepted much as the weather is; there is little or nothing we can do about it."

STRAIGHT HITTING

"THE BULLETIN" SPEAKS OUT

A recent issue of "The Bulletin" contains an article on Australian broadcasting, which contains much of interest to New Zealand in its revelation of the attitude of the public to broadcasting there. Much of what "The Bulletin" addresses to the critics of the Australian stations—which, with their much greater revenue than the New Zealand stations enjoy, are able to give longer hours, etc.—might well be taken to heart by a small section of New Zealand critics. Compared with 3LO's £98,000 annually, and 2FC's £51,000, each for operating only one station, the New Zealand company last year operated four stations on a year's income of approximately £40,000, or an average of £10,000 each. That is a straight-out comparison which has weight, and makes more applicable than ever "The Bulletin's" remarks, as follow:—

"Much of the current criticism of the broadcast programmes is ill-informed and unfair. It obviously emanates from the kind of Australian (too numerous, unfortunately) who delights in depreciating the work of other Australians, and running down eminent fellow-countrymen when they return from abroad. It would be more generous and more truthful to acknowledge that the broadcasting companies have kept a fowl in the pot for many clever show people in slack periods, have provided opportunities for a surprising number of gifted young musicians and the like, who would otherwise have found it difficult to get a hearing, and have done at least a little for native-born composers and playwrights—may they do a lot more! In any case, nothing is to be gained by butting into their business in the fashion of meddling politicians. The stations should be made to understand that Australia expects them to do their full share in bringing the benefits of broadcasting to the widest possible public at the cheapest possible rate, without sacrificing merit to cheapness. But threats and kicks are not likely to do any good. Neither is 'nationalisation,' on which some foolish people have set their hearts."

"A MATTER OF OPINION"

EFFECTIVE RANGE OF STATIONS.

PSYCHOLOGY OF LISTENERS.

An American radio authority, writing to the Broadcasting Company in respect to the power of stations, indicates that human nature is much the same in America as it is here. He says:—

"With regard to the practical service range of broadcasting stations, service range is as much a matter of opinion as it is of scientific measurement. When broadcasting first began, five hundred watt stations served listeners for several hundred miles; now that considerably higher powered stations have come into general use, a 500 watt station serves little more than a ten to twenty mile area, excepting where there are few stations, as we have in the Far West. It is likely that, if you increase the power of one of your four stations, you will find an insistent demand to increase the power of the remainder."

RADIO AUCTION SALE

THE WHOLE OF OUR HUGE STOCK OF UP-TO-DATE
RADIO SETS, PARTS AND ACCESSORIES WILL BE

AUCTIONED WITHOUT RESERVE

on

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, At 12 noon.

BRITISH IMPERIAL RADIO CO.,

GRESHAM HOTEL BUILDING

236 Lambton Quay

'Phone 42—412.

Wellington.