

Racing Broadcasts Banned by Authorities

Is the Public Being Given Proper Consideration?

THE New Zealand Trotting Conference and the New Zealand Racing Conference have banned the broadcasting of trotting and race meetings on the grounds of detriment to the interests of the clubs and the public in facilitating illegal betting and exciting an interest on the day prejudicial to the business community. These grounds are of questionable merit and warrant public discussion. The general public is entitled to express its views on this embargo which does not seem to denote adequate regard on the part of those responsible for the appreciation of these broadcasts by thousands of listeners unable to attend sports meetings. The broadcasts have undoubtedly widened interest in the sport and it remains to be seen just how the public will take this complete embargo by the authorities.

THE Trotting Conference was the first to move in the matter, but its lead was followed two days later by the Racing Conference carrying an identical resolution.

The matter was brought forward by a report from the chief racecourse inspector, Mr. A. Ward, who wrote as follows:

The following questions appear to have arisen:

(1) Whether the company should pay for the right to use race or trotting courses on race days for the purpose of supplying entertainment or news to persons who were exclusively the company's customers.

(2) Whether, in view of public interest in racing, the clubs should continue as at present to assist the company without fee, or

(3) Whether the broadcasting of racing news from courses should be allowed under any conditions.

No doubt there were many people who were unable to attend race meetings, but who eagerly awaited early news of the results of the more important races, such as derbies, cups, or steeplechases. There were also convalescents in hospitals and other institutions who probably derived pleasure from descriptions of racing events over the wireless. From one point of view no valid reasons could be advanced against a proposition to charge the company a fee for a commodity supplied.

"There is, however, the most important aspect of this subject to be considered, and that is whether it is a wise policy to permit either free or for payment the broadcasting by wireless of racing news from race or trotting courses. Racing and betting on horse racing is regulated and governed by a very drastic statute law, the basic principle of which is to confine betting on horse racing events to the particular course where and when racing is taking place, and only by those who are able to be on the course in person, and then only through the medium of the totalisator.

"This means that if a person cannot attend a race meeting in person he cannot bet on any racing event unless he commits an offence. The obvious intention of the statute is to stifle interest in horse racing and betting thereon on race days away from the course. This being the case, would it be prudent policy for racing clubs to permit an outside body, which has no responsibility under the Gaming Act, for private profit to pursue a course which can have no other effect than to stimulate interest which results in illegal betting?"

"It cannot be doubted that the broadcasting as at present carried out does stimulate interest away from racecourses on race days, and is resulting in an increase of business for bookmakers. This is common knowledge. Receiving sets are to be found in clubs, hotels, and other places where news from courses is received by wireless, and bookmakers are taking full advantage of the fact. If racing clubs are accused of providing a stimulus to bookmakers, and their clients to indulge in illegal betting, it would be awkward to refute. It would be no answer to say that the Government provides bookmakers with telephones, which undoubtedly facilitate their illegal calling, as racing authorities cannot reasonably condemn the administration of the Gaming Act while condoning something of equal effect.

"I suggest that a sound argument against the allowing of broadcasting is that it tends to create interest which leads to betting in places and under circumstances which are forbidden by law. I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that he has had representations made to him on this very subject by his officers. He is averse to the broadcasting of news from courses, as it tends to increase his difficulties in suppressing illegal betting.

"If this company is so desirous of entertaining its clients with racing news, a representative could attend the various race meetings, where no doubt he would be hospitably received by the officials, and with the turf reporters he could record his impressions on each racing event and his impressions could be broadcast during the evening after the meeting. This would have a double effect. It would not place racing clubs in a false position, and a much larger number of clients would be at leisure to receive the news, and they would not be diverted from their interest and attention in their various occupations, and there could be no illegal betting, as the racing would be over and finished."

In an addendum to the report Sir George Clifford said: "I thoroughly approve of this report, and recommend that it be adopted by the combined committee of the New Zealand Racing and Trotting Conferences."

A Complete Embargo.

Following this, the chairman of the Conference, Mr. W. E. Eidevall, said he was strongly in favour of broadcasting, which provided great enjoyment to people in the country, but in the face of the report just read he did not see what they could do. He accordingly moved the following resolution:

"That the question of radio broadcasting of race meetings during the progress of the racing having been carefully investigated the New Zealand Racing Conference resolves:—

"1. That it is not in the interests of the racing club or of the general public that such broadcasting should be permitted for the reasons that such broadcasting (1) promotes and facilitates illegal betting; (2) creates and maintains an attention to the happenings at race meetings during the progress thereof by many persons not present, which results in disadvantage to the business community.

results. Where there is a public demand that demand will be met, and the posting of the results is like the broadcasting of the races, simply a service to the public. The Chief Inspector says the result is an increase in illegal bookmaking, and that this is a matter of "common knowledge." We think his presentation of the case is exaggerated. Bookmakers were in existence long before broadcasting began, and although conducting an illegal business, have had sufficient ingenuity to secure the information necessary to their craft, through their own means of communication, over the Government telegraphic and telephone services. Are those services to be discarded from the use of the community because of their use in this way? These bookmakers presumably operate in respect of all race meetings throughout the country. Only a small proportion of those meetings have been broadcast so that it has been impossible for the bookmakers to rely upon broadcasting for the information they require. They had their own service before broadcasting began and they

as being a gain to the public and a populariser of the sport.

Public Interest Must Rule.

It is the public that is chiefly concerned in this matter. If it be conceded that racing and trotting are permissible recreations—and we do not think that matter is in question—then their popularity rests with the public; their continuance depends upon public support. In return for that support the public is entitled to the best possible service in news and information, and on this plane there is no rival for the descriptive broadcast in its immediacy and interest. If it be urged that abuse attends the broadcast, that is no argument for its complete abolition. It is only an argument for proper policing and control. It is the function of the police to prevent abuse of the law. To cut off a public utility because of some small individual abuse is ridiculous. What community would endure its gas supply being cut off because some poor distressed soul inserted a gas tube in his mouth? Should

looking for and against that, anyway must be put the pleasure of invalids, the aged and the distant. I trust the Conferences will show they are sports and amend this rather ridiculous ban. Australians will laugh at us as a crowd of wowers—and they won't be far wrong.—"Good Sport," Levin.

What About the Backblockers?

DO the Racing and Trotting Conferences realise what they are doing by their ban on broadcasting? Have they given any consideration at all to the pleasure that the broadcasting gives the listeners in the backblocks who are quite unable to attend the meetings in the bigger centres which are chiefly affected by the ban? Their action will be most unpopular. If it is an effort to squeeze a few shekels out of the listener, it is, I think, doomed to failure. Obviously, on merit, the boot should be on the other foot. The racing and trotting meetings get their revenue from listeners when they attend the meetings, which they do in big numbers when the meetings are held locally. It is the distant listener that is affected. No one interested in the sport will stay away from a meeting when he can attend. The sport is too good for that. But when he cannot attend, he should be given the second-hand thrill of a good broadcast. There is no doubt about that and I am sure the ban will be condemned on all sides. The argument about illegal betting is, to my mind, ridiculous. The bookmaker does not rely on broadcasting. He is too clever for that. I hope the public will speedily let the Conferences know their wishes in this matter.—"F.N.," Palmerston North.

Statement on the Racing "Ban" by Mr Harris

"THE Broadcasting Company has always made it quite clear in its public statements and correspondence that if the racing and trotting clubs did not consider it in their own interests to have their meetings broadcast, they had only to so advise the company and their wishes would be respected," said Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager, in referring to the decision of the Racing Conference. He added that the Broadcasting Company did not presume to tell other people how to run their business.

"When, however, the Trotting and Racing Conferences based their refusal to permit further broadcasting on such reasons as those set out in the resolutions, then the logic of their decision is certainly open to question," he said. "We do not admit that broadcasting facilitates illegal betting. If the Conference has evidence of the prevalence of illegal betting, then obviously that evidence should have been placed in the hands of the proper authorities. If on the other hand they have no substantial evidence, why should the law-abiding listeners be penalised? So far as the promotion of legitimate sport is concerned, the present method of descriptive broadcasting of the actual racing does more good for the sport than the alternative evening broadcast of an ordinary report as suggested by the Conference could possibly achieve. The Broadcasting Company is quite as desirous as is the Racing Conference that the laws of the land should be defended; its best interests lie in promoting the moral and material welfare of the people whom it serves; but I cannot see the logic

of that part of the resolution which alleges it to be disadvantageous to the business community that the attention of those not attending race meetings should be attracted by broadcasting, while implying that no disadvantage to the business community is incurred by those who actually attend the meetings."

IN a further statement to the "Radio Record," Mr. Harris stated that the Conference suggested that the Company should be afforded facilities to obtain reports of every racing or trotting meeting throughout the Dominion, such reports to be broadcast from the Company's stations after the conclusion of the day's racing.

This, as he had said, would be but a poor substitute for the descriptive broadcast, but further than that it seemed to him that the evils about which the Conference would appear to be concerned would be intensified rather than lessened were the alternative to be adopted and applied to anything like the extent suggested. As a matter of fact the Company had no intention to broadcast reports of every meeting, and he was quite sure that listeners had no desire that this should be done. All that the Company had done in the past, and all that it desired to do was to broadcast one or two meetings a year from each of the four main centres, and which meetings were usually held on public holidays.

This, he believed, was far less likely to disturb industrial life and encourage illegal betting than was the alternative suggested by the Conference.

"2. That radio broadcasting of this kind be prohibited by all clubs but that all clubs be recommended to accord to responsible representatives of the Radio Broadcasting Company all privileges and facilities now enjoyed by the Press, in order that such representatives may take such notes as may enable the broadcasting of race meetings as part of the evening's programme."

Mr. H. Russell (Hawke's Bay): Will these resolutions be incorporated in the rules? Will it be illegal to have broadcasting?

The chairman: The Radio Company will not be allowed on to courses to give detailed reports of the races.

Mr. Russell: Is the club bound by these resolutions? Will they be incorporated in the rules?

The chairman: It will be a resolution of the Conference, and will go out to the clubs, and if the clubs do not carry out the wishes of the Conference it is for the Conference to say what it will do with the clubs.

The motion was carried.

Are the Reasons Sound

In our view—and we believe endorsement will follow from the public—the conclusions of the chief racecourse inspector as to the demerits of racing broadcasts are not sound, and the members of the conferences did themselves less than justice in failing in the first place to thoroughly investigate those allegations, and secondly, in failing to balance against whatever weight was determined did attach to them, the undoubted fact that very extensive pleasure has been afforded many, many thousands who definitely are quite unable to attend race meetings, by the descriptive broadcasts of race meetings which have been given in recent times.

The chief racecourse inspector was formerly a member of the police force, and as such, his mind must inevitably work along the lines of a police officer. That the attendance in billiard saloons on the occasion of racing broadcasts, is larger than usual, may be correct—but, so is the attendance of the public on similar occasions in front of newspaper windows and hoardings and tobacconists shops where the results are posted up. Those attendances in themselves are no guarantee that illegal betting is in progress to a degree greater than usual, nor are they justification for the banning of the posting of Press

still have the same system. Broadcasting is of no outstanding benefit to them in displacing their own methods.

The Gaming Amendment.

That a little extra opportunity for speculative investment is afforded distant enthusiasts by racing broadcasts may be possible—although it is not proven on the facts—and if it were feasible for investments to be telegraphed to the totalisator the race meeting concerned would secure a direct cash benefit from this increased interest. The Gaming Bill now on the stocks contains a proposal to that end. As things are at present (or have been) this business cannot benefit the clubs because in any case it is impossible for the money to be remitted. Banning the broadcast therefore will not benefit the clubs one iota: the effect will be merely that definite injury and disappointment will be inflicted upon thousands of unoffending souls. It is there we think that the conference failed to strike a balance between the professional zeal of their chief inspector and their own knowledge as good sports of the widespread interest in and benefit from racing broadcasts.

The Business Interest.

The further point that the business community suffers disadvantageously through the distracting charms of racing broadcasts has even less merit than the suggestion of illegal betting. Frankly, how many people in business are able to devote their day to listening to a racing broadcast; how many desirous of attending and able to do so would stay away merely because the meeting was to be put on the air? A handful at the most. And as against that handful there is the definite gain of interest in thousands of distant homes—an interest that later translates itself into patronage of the local race meeting and so builds up an expanding interest in the sport of racing. It is this interest that the Racing and Trotting Conferences should be concerned to maintain and develop. It is the occasion for a long view and not a short view—the occasion for a balanced view and not a biased view. In striking a balance we are satisfied that the weight of public opinion will be in favour of the continuance of racing broadcasts

razors be abolished because someone cut his throat therewith?

In this matter the greatest good for the greatest number must be the final determining factor. A balance must be struck. It rests with the public to throw in the weight of its opinion as to its own interest to tip down the beam against the restricted individual view that so far seems to have prevailed. We firmly believe that on reconsideration the conference will realise that they have far more to gain from the broadcasting of their meetings than to lose, and that they will realise the public, as their patrons, have their rights in the matter.

LETTERS OF PROTEST

Be Sports!

I cannot say how disappointed I am at the news that broadcasting of races is to be banned. What are the authorities thinking about? Don't they want their sports to be popular? Don't they want thousands of people who otherwise would think nothing of racing to be interested in the thrilling broadcasts and make up their minds to go when they have a convenient opportunity? Broadcasting is the greatest feeder of interest in the sport that we have had. It gives a wide knowledge and interests thousands otherwise indifferent. The cure for the evils that are alleged—more efficient police work. I doubt very much if the allegations are soundly based. A policeman always sees what he is

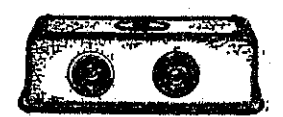
B.B.C.'S VIEW OF "RADIO RECORD"

WE were interested to receive by last mail acknowledgment from the British Broadcasting Corporation of the fact that they were receiving the "New Zealand Radio Record" regularly. A comment was added: "We find it is a very interesting and 'live' paper, particularly in its steady efforts to be a real link between the broadcaster and the listener."

TELEVISION radio signals, when made audible by the ordinary radio receiver, produce a high-pitched note intermittently interrupted as the subject transmitted moves about before the eye of the television transmitter.

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