

The New Zealand Radio Record

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

LETTERS from several correspondents show that in some circles of listeners the announcement made from 2YA on a recent Sunday evening that certain items were not available for broadcasting has been completely misunderstood. These letters show that the listeners have thought the items were of such a nature as not to be fit for broadcasting on a Sunday evening. That is not so, and no question of the merit of the item is involved. The position simply is that at the public concert in question certain professional artists associated with an entertainment company appeared, and a condition of their appearance at the concert was that they should not be broadcast, it apparently being considered that the broadcasting of their voices would affect their drawing power to the entertainment with which they are associated. This explanation is made as a matter of justice, as several correspondents have rather blamed the company for the excision and have "spread themselves" in verbal ingenuity condemnatory of this so-called wowservistic action. The company had no option in the matter, and did the only thing possible by filling in the time with items from the studio.

TRULY is the way of the politician hard. Living by votes, every public action must be viewed in the light of vote reaction. No other explanation covers the conduct of Mr. Howard in relation to the ban on racing, but it is questionable whether, in his desire to ride the winner, he has backed the right horse. His support of the Racing Conference in its refusal to extend to broadcasting interests the same facilities for gathering and publishing news as is accorded the Press, is not likely to win the support of his sport-loving constituents, nor does it accord with a due regard for the rights of a democracy to prompt news of items of interest. If Mr. Howard is concerned to appreciate the interest of "the people" in sport and desires to protect their interest he will amend his attitude and not back an oppressive monopolistic attitude. Why did Mr. Howard desert democracy on this point? Where does he stand?

WE have already dealt so fully with the unwarranted ban placed upon the rights of the people to equal privileges from broadcasting as are accorded the Press, that we are diffident about devoting more space to the matter. We cannot miss the opportunity, however, of directing attention to the letter of a correspondent, published in another column, which deals with some important aspects of this matter. The correspondent points out the manner in which the public support racing, and cites details to show the substantial aid given by Parliament to the cause of racing in the last few years. Concessions amounting to £100,000 per annum have been conceded by Parliament. The largest individual item is one which comes from the pockets of the public. This is the matter of "totalisator fractions." Amounting to between £35,000 and £40,000, this sum, formerly appropriated for a term by the Government, is now handed over to the racing clubs themselves. Yet in spite of this and other windfalls enumerated, the cause of racing is so hard pushed (they would have us believe) that it is a matter of moment to them to endeavour to force a few shillings from the pockets of listeners for the privilege of receiving from the air news which is handed freely to the Press. The right of the public to a free Press has long been established. The Press, to its credit, has always fought solidly for the untrammelled right to publish news at the earliest moment. The

policy of suppression adopted by the Racing interests is utterly opposed to the welfare of the public, and will never win public approval. Resentment is strong against it, of that the authorities may be assured.

Further Complaint about the Racing Ban

How much do the Clubs want?

I WAS pleased to see in last week's issue the statement of one writer that he refused to attend the Christchurch meeting because of the narrow attitude of the racing people in banning broadcasting. I feel the same way myself and I know the resentment of the people is very widespread and general. The only consolation is that the Broadcasting Company has had the courage to defy the ban and make arrangements for securing the news to which all listeners are entitled.

It is now suggested that the racing people want to bleed the listeners through the Broadcasting Company of money for a service that is given to their friends of the Press freely. As it is the public which maintains racing I think it is time, in view of this attitude of the racing people, to examine the position and see the extent of the concessions and privileges which are given by the public through the Government to racing. According to a recent speech by the Minister of Finance the concessions given to racing in the last few years alone total over £100,000 a year. This sum is made up of between £35,000 and £40,000 conceded to the clubs in respect of unpaid fractions of dividends. Practically £26,000 of the Government's share of the totalisator tax was rebated to permit of ground improvements. Further, the clubs benefited by the abolition of income tax on land. The stakes duty was reduced from 10 per cent. to 5 per cent., thus saving approximately £30,000 and a tax of 2½ per cent. on admissions (worth £6500) was repealed last year. And of course the clubs retain all unclaimed dividend money.

SO the public have given the racing people £100,000 annually and yet they have the nerve now to suggest that the listener should pay for the news that is given freely to the newspaper press. Is there no limit to what the racing clubs want? Have they no regard for the public at all? Do they wish to bleed the public at every turn?

But I find the concessions to racing do not consist only of money. I believe it to be a fact that the very ground on which the races are held at Riccarton is a public reserve appropriated to the Canterbury Jockey Club

by a certain procedure. This public reserve, on which is now the Riccarton racecourse, was given by the Crown for racing purposes and the control vested in seven trustees. In 1907 there were three of the original trustees left—Sir George Clifford, Mr. G. G. Stead and Mr. B. L. Lane, all influential members of the Canterbury Jockey Club. These trustees leased the whole of this valuable property of 178 acres to the Canterbury Jockey Club for the modest sum of £20 per annum. One of the names mentioned appears on the lease on behalf of both lessee and lessor. The next step after this was to prosecute twenty people for allegedly trespassing on a public reserve and they actually succeeded in having them incarcerated in gaol for refusing to leave that public reserve. This action roused so much public comment that it was apparently desired to make the position absolutely safe, so there appeared from "somewhere" an Order-in-Council giving the trustees special permission to lease the land to the Canterbury Jockey Club!

The position therefore is, sir, that racing is the spoilt child of the New Zealand public. From the pockets of the public it is supported and from the purse of the community it receives preferential treatment, amounting in the last few years to no less than £100,000 a year on the authority of the Minister of Finance himself. Valuable public reserves have been appropriated to the benefit of racing, and now, not content with all these privileges at the hands of the public, it is coolly suggested that the fees of listeners should be raided as an extra perquisite for racing. That is the confession of the secretary of the Racing Conference. As you pointed out, sir, their concern for the morals of the community deceived no one and the candid reason was probably given when the secretary complained that their palm had not been crossed with silver!

I think the public should know these facts. The ordinary Press will not publish them, and as you are the only paper fighting for the rights of the public to receive from broadcasting the same privileges as are accorded the Press, I send the information to you.—I am, etc.,

NO HUMBUG.

Riccarton.

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