

Vigorous Campaign to Exterminate Pirates

Department Specially Active



DAILY paper some time ago asked the question "Is it profitable to hunt radio pirates?" and, quoting the New South Wales figures, arrived at the conclusion that the question was very doubtful. This was rather hasty, as it rather tended to cause the unlicensed listener to rest in his unlicensed condition, taking for granted that his authority was not playing a false. Fortunately for that paper no reference was made to New Zealand. Conditions here are different.

There is only one answer to the question asked, judging from the achievements of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department.

It is decidedly unprofitable for anyone who shirks his moral and legal obligations and does not secure his license.

Not that it is considered that pirating in this country is rife, but that a certain amount of this despicable business is carried on there is no doubt.

Motives for Pirating.

TO analyse the motives for piracy is a very difficult problem—several suggest themselves—but the pirate will probably find a better one in his own case. One excuse sometimes put forward by these pests is that they don't know whether they are going to keep a set or not, but in some cases they seem a very long time in deciding, so long that the radio inspector has to visit them to know their intentions. There is no justification for this veiled piracy, and he who would try a set out for some considerable time and present the excuse when asked for his license that he was not satisfied with broadcasting is more than a petty thief.

Interesting Excuses.

A CASE of this sort happened recently and may possibly be remembered by the party concerned if he should chance to see the incident in print. A letter reached the Department stating that in a certain street there was a party who was operating his set without a license. A visit from the radio inspector only resulted in the reply, "We are trying out several crystal sets, but have found that none of them are any good." However, he continued to try out crystal sets and has now had to pay the Government the cost of an amplifier as well as the cost of a license to "experiment."

Another excuse may be poverty, but very few indeed of those brought before the Court make this excuse, for they are met with the calm rejoinder, "Then don't try to live beyond your means," and somehow or other the thirty shillings and the fine, usually in the region of £2, have to be found even though they cannot be afforded.

But the real cost of Court proceedings is far in excess of the fine and the costs—it involves the forfeiture of self-respect. Frankly, it is not worth "convicted and fined" for shirking to bear one's share in the expenses which go to provide enjoyment and instruction. Then it is not fair to the other fellow who pays his license; he knows that he is paying for your entertainment, and

sooner or later he will tire of this injustice and do one of two things: either he will send a note, signed or unsigned, to the district radio inspector, or will fail to renew his own license—only to be caught, for no pirate can exist for very long—the P. and T. see to that.

Activities of the Department.

RADIO pirates, intending radio pirates, and those who are keen to see the extermination of the pest, may be interested to know the activities of the Department in guarding licensed listeners. On the registration of the license the name of the licensee is filed in the district in which the set is to be operated. The filing is systematically completed by streets in the case of the towns, and, in the case of the country, by areas.

For the purposes of inspection, the country is broken up into districts with a varying number of radio inspectors on full or part-time, according to the size of the district to be covered. Each of these districts receives the license cards as they come to hand, and they are systematically filed.

Filing does not consist of placing the cards in a box, tying them up in red tape, and leaving them for twelve months. There is no procedure like that. The regular inspectors, whose duties take them through the areas to be covered almost daily, are constantly referring to these cards, and can almost tell from memory every new aerial that is erected. Quite frequently certain blocks are inspected, and then the cards are taken out and aired, sometimes to the disgust of the radio pirate who was resting on the assumed lethargy of the Department.

These inspectors do not work by hours and catches, have been reported by inspectors who were on their way to the theatre. Because your licensed friend says that there has not been a radio inspector to visit him during the whole course of his license period, or because an official-looking man, with an ominous loop antennae has not frequently passed the door, it does not signify that these men sit in their offices and contemplate the latest figures.

Every district is regularly covered by inspectors daily, though these may be only part-time. In the cities, officials working on commission, pass your door, twice daily. Mr. Radio Pirate, and sooner or later there will be something to pay.

Systematic Inspection.

IN addition to these every-day happenings, each district is annually "cleaned up" by a large party, who scour out every nook and cranny where a pirate may be resting in his false security.

But the department has a force that is even stronger than all this—the feelings of the licensee who is not getting a fair deal, and who signs him-

self "Fair Play." Sometimes these complaints are the outcome of misguided information, perhaps a child at school who likes to think he is a "pirate," and who tells his friends, in spite of the fact that his own father owns a license, "Don't tell, but we are pirates." Very many cases of this type have been reported, and have proved foundationless. Nevertheless, many a £2 has been gained through this potent medium.

There are cases that will escape efforts at detection. These fall under our first definition, and from a social point of view are a menace, but even these are insecure, as the following case will exemplify.

Boasted of Security.

ONLY last week there was a conviction and fine of a pirate who boasted of his security, and, considering his equipment, no pirate could have felt more secure. For the aerial, a mattress was pressed into service, while a wire that would have escaped the most critical observation, ran down the wall to earth. Yet he was discovered, but how—that is the secret of the inspector, for he intends to catch others by the same means.

Yet another pirate known to the department is waiting to pay the extra large license fee.

An inspector received notice that the occupants of a certain house were using an unlicensed set, but on paying them a visit was calmly informed that there had not been a set used on the premises, and there was no intention of using one. The neighbour had a licensed set, so the radio man paid them a visit via the back door, "just to get a view of the back of the suspect's yard," but could see no traces. Viewing the house from another street did not add to the information already in the inspector's possession. He went away apparently baffled, yet the house is under observation, and sooner or later the owner of the unlicensed set will have to pay more than he would like to.

The Question of Flats.

THE regulations provide that each flat or premises supplied with a radio receiving device be provided with a license. Interpreting this ruling:

The landlord, who lives on the upper floor, owns a crystal set, and wishing to share it with his tenant below runs a lead of flex through the floor into the next apartment. The tenant thus listens-in through the 'phones. He is liable to the two pounds fine if he does not provide himself with a license. A set cannot, unless specially licensed, be used to supply other families. To run a lead into the neighbour's house puts him under the obligation of securing a license.

Another question that might be asked by an owner: "I have a license for my XYZ 8 valves; can little Tommy experiment with crystal sets without having to get an extra license?" Yes, one license per family only is required, so that shortwave, longwave, and crystal set may be used. But any of these cannot be removed even to an adjoining whare, if the entertaining is to be done outside the licensee's family.

The Effect of Pirating.

SO much, then, for the activities of the Department. What is the effect of pirates generally on broadcasting in New Zealand?

The radio service is maintained wholly and solely by listeners. Any one pirating upon that service is absolutely robbing his fellows of the better service that his own contribution would enable them to receive. What could the Broadcasting Company of New Zealand do with extra revenue? The whole cry of the listener is for better programmes; the whole effort of the Broadcasting Company is to provide those better programmes. They can be provided only by increased revenue.

That increased revenue is available to the company if those who are benefitting by this service recognise their obligations and cease to pirate upon their fellows and the company. With the necessary attitude on the part of the public towards this petty thieving, with the necessary vigour on the part of the authorities in waylaying the offenders, the numbers of pirates is being speedily reduced, and with the extra fees available a forward move in radio will be possible, which will contribute most markedly to the general good. The quality of the programmes and the length of the programmes could be improved with the extra revenue. More new high-class artists could be imported from Australia, or even further afield, and utilised at various stations month and month about.

That system in itself would be the best answer to the demand for variety.

FADA RADIO
Expressiveness
Defined
to the Last
Audible Dimension

