

# How can Radio Help Musical Societies?



THE proposal made by Mr. C. B. Plummer was first published in the Auckland "Sun." After outlining the central thought, namely, that listeners should pay an extra 2s. fee in order to help the musical societies, and in return be assured of the broadcasting of their concerts, Mr. Plummer said that in some respects the idea followed the proposal of Sir Thomas Beecham in seeking to establish English opera by subsidy and the assistance of the B.B.C.

It was stressed that, in view of the very precarious condition most of the amateur organisations find themselves in, they consider it impossible to broadcast for fear of a falling-off in attendances. With a satisfactory subsidy forthcoming it was considered that orchestras and choral societies would be in a more or less assured position, and be able to supply programmes for broadcast purposes and safely run the risk of smaller audiences.

It was also claimed that this would have the result of raising the standard of music throughout the Dominion, the various societies being then in a position to secure better players, and also wider repertoires. Practically it would mean the linking up of all musicians connected with the New Zealand societies under the radio banner. "It might seem a bold scheme," stated Mr. Plummer, "but with the falling off in concert attendances as a result of broadcasting, the cinema, bridge, and other attractions, linking-up with broadcasting seems to be the only way of saving many of our musical societies whose existence at present is one continual struggle."

Mr. Plummer said he was aware that difficulties would be confronted, but was of opinion that, with the co-operation of all parties concerned, some such scheme could be devised. All the amateur musicians wanted was the pleasure of playing, and the only desire financially was to make ends meet.

In preliminary letters submitting his proposal to the Radio Broadcasting Company Mr. Plummer pointed out that for the payment of 2s. crystal owners in the four centres would receive high-grade concerts at 2d. each, while the owners of valve sets would receive fifty concerts for their 2s. As a basis for discussion he suggested that subsidies be paid to the different societies according to the expenses incurred in running their concerts. A

"At the first glance, New Zealand listeners-in will probably view with deep suspicion—and even unequivocal hostility—any proposition that threatens to raise their license fees. It should not be difficult to convince them, however, that Mr. C. B. Plummer's proposal to subsidise musical societies through a small levy on license fees has much to commend it. With agreeable candour it is admitted that the direct benefit will be in favour of the

organisation "off the air," can only be deplored. At the same time, the broadcasting authorities could more than fill the gap by adopting the suggestion made by Mr. Plummer.

The proposition is so obviously one to benefit the company that a liberal view on its part might reasonably be expected. If the desired schedule of subsidies can be distributed on a maximum levy of 2s. for each license fee, then the company should be prepared to concede at least half of that amount from each fee. The result would lessen the amount of the extra charge upon the license-holder, and the wider range of entertainment available would do a great deal to popularise listening-in, an object that, in the interests of its business, the company should steadily keep in view.

For music-lovers, there is a much wider purpose to be served. It is common knowledge that in the hurried processes of modern life people find little leisure to go forth to concert-halls. It is easier to play the gramophone, or to tune in on IYA. Musical societies have consequently faced with dismay a great falling-off in attendances, and an increasing difficulty in enrolling subscribers to give them support. Yet it is certainly not the conscious intention of listeners-in and gramophone lovers to stifle the musical talent developing in the community. Only behind a grossly material outlook could that intention survive. It is to be hoped that the great radio audiences will rally round.

**AN important proposal involving assistance on the part of radio to the musical societies throughout the Dominion has been made by Mr. C. B. Plummer, of Auckland. The suggestion is that listeners should pay an increased licensed fee of 2/- per annum, yielding some £4000 annually, and subsidy should be made from this fund to the organisations in different centres. In return, these societies should each provide four concerts annually for broadcasting, yielding a total of approximately 50 concerts per annum or one for every £80 subsidy. The proposal is important, and contains an idea which may lead to some concrete assistance being given. Various aspects are discussed in the following columns:—**

basis might be that societies whose expenses were more than £800 per annum should receive £100 per concert, this to be the maximum.

Mr. Plummer considered that such a proposal would render a wonderful service to the cause of music and that these additional concerts would stimulate an increase in radio licenses and so permit further improvement in the general programmes of the company. Mr. Plummer frankly admitted there might be difficulties in working out the idea, but he advanced the idea as a constructive effort to help matters.

## Press Views

Commenting editorially on the proposal, the Auckland "Sun" says:—

societies; but an indirect benefit in greater volume will go towards listeners-in and the Broadcasting Company.

"The broad plan outlined yesterday by Mr. Plummer provides for: slightly increased levy on license-holders. Allowing for an increase of 2s., it is estimated that this would provide a sum of £4000, to be devoted to the musical organisations in the four centres. In return for the subsidy the societies would be obliged to give broadcast concerts, of which there should be a total of at least 50 a year.

"Though an increase of only 2s. in the levy does not sound much, it will not be greeted with favour unless listeners-in first examine the situation closely, and realise the great wealth of talent the scheme will place at their disposal. New Zealand listeners-in have shown themselves to be severe critics of broadcast programmes. Because an artist is miles away in a studio, the great invisible audience shows no disposition to be forgiving. But because it lacks the spirit of charity, it can in no sense be called capricious. Listeners-in, speaking broadly, constitute a great and intelligent body. The failure of the authorities to gauge their standards caused trouble that is still remembered. A faint echo of it is heard even now, though it will be generally conceded that a much higher standard in broadcast programmes has within recent months been attained.

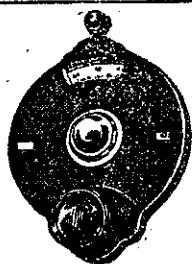
As the critical faculty of the radio audiences must be recognised, it follows that the response must be an adequate form of entertainment. Since the amateur musical organisations of New Zealand command a great variety of trained talent, it is surprising that the impulse now given by Mr. Plummer did not in the first instance come from the Broadcasting Company. Here in Auckland there has been difficulty over the engagement, for broadcasting purposes, of the Auckland Municipal Band, and the present deadlock, which is keeping an admirable

## Views of Mr. Harris

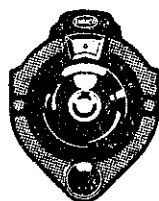
### Desire to Help Societies

COMMENTING on Mr. C. B. Plummer's suggestion to increase the listeners' fee by 2s. and thus provide £4000 additional revenue for subsidising the amateur musical societies in the four centres, Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Broadcasting Company, stated that the object of the proposal was much to be commended. The company's experience had shown, he said, that there was a good deal of amateur talent in this country, and the choral and orchestral amateur organisations of the type referred to by Mr. Plummer not only deserved, but were worthy of the greatest public support in their object to develop this talent.

The broad outline of the proposal, said Mr. Harris, was for the amateur, choral and orchestral societies to permit the broadcast of a total of some forty-eight concerts from the four main centres in return for an estimated revenue of £4000. It seemed to him, however, that an expenditure of this amount would have to be spread over a greater number of concerts in order to give listeners an adequate return for the increased fee. The concerts presented would not, in actual practice, exceed an average of twelve concerts from any one station. The total cost made the cost per concert received by the average number of listeners somewhat costly in return for what the listeners as a whole



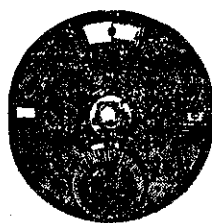
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