

received. To be of real value, therefore, the amount involved would require to be spread over a greater period so that a greater average number of listeners could conveniently derive the benefit than would be the case with such a limited number of performances.

Value for the Listeners.

CONTINUING. Mr. Harris said that there was no doubt that part of the subsidy would be spent in expenses incurred by the societies on account of the public performance of the concert, which expenditure was of no direct value to the listener. Then again, full orchestras and large choirs, more so where performers are of varying ability, do not broadcast as satisfactorily as small orchestras or vocal quartets of selected combinations. From the listeners' point of view, the performance of amateur choral and orchestral organisations would not be as economical or as efficient, except perhaps for a few selected numbers, as the performance of a concert specially organised for broadcast purposes only.

"What applied to gramophone recording more or less equally applies to radio broadcasting," said Mr. Harris. "A microphone is the medium of pick-up in both cases, and in gramophone recordings, where small orchestras and small choirs of selected performers are utilised, the results are noticeably more efficient than is the case in full orchestras and large choirs. There is, of course, an atmosphere in the broadcasting of a public performance that has a psychological appeal to the average listener, but this is not a part of the musical development that amateur musical societies propose to foster. The average radio listener will naturally question if there is any logical reason, apart from the actual value received, why he should be specifically taxed to support amateur musical organisations. He will contend that it all depends on the amount of actual service that he personally receives in return for a given expenditure as compared with the service which he can obtain for the same expenditure in another form. Then, again, the expense incurred, other than the cost of the concert programme, must not be overlooked. A concert performed in a hall is of no value to the listener. What he wants is the broadcast of that concert so that he can obtain recreation at home. It is the broadcast of a programme or the placing of a performance on 'tan,' as it were, at any point in a particular area that costs the listener the most expense, and there are many instances where the additional cost of relaying a concert from a public hall might be better utilised, from the listeners' point of view, in special items from the studio where no such extra costs are involved."

Will Concerts Increase Popularity?

"IN respect to the subsidising of amateur musical organisations and their broadcast of special concerts improving the license position," said Mr. Harris, "we have broadcast special programmes and relays of public performances of every available character, and after careful analysis of the results we have no evidence that the broadcast of the type of programmes proposed, more so the choral performances, would make any appreciable increase in the patronage of our existing services. In saying this, we do not desire to infer that the concerts of amateur societies are not appreciated by listeners, as we know from those concerts we have re-

ceived that they are very much appreciated. They are, however, not of the type to attract the general public, as is proved by the experience of the societies. So far from there being an increase in the number of licenses, it is more probable that there would be a reduction, not because of the amount of the increase, but because of the principle involved in a compulsory increase."

Value in Proposal.

MR. HARRIS again reiterated that he was very pleased the proposal had been made, and that it should have been so favourably commented upon by the "Sun." It showed the keen interest which was taken in broadcasting and its relation to music. He pointed out that the Broadcasting Company had musical and dramatic committees in Auckland and Wellington, representative of the more prominent organisations and the company was pleased to have the recommendations of those committees, which met regularly. It was the earnest endeavour of the Broadcasting Company to co-operate in every way possible with the musical organisations of the Dominion, such co-operation being of advantage to the general public, the Broadcasting Company, and the organisations concerned. The company had, in the past, given tangible proof of its keen desire to foster the musical art in New Zealand, and it hoped to do increasingly more in the future. It felt, however, that the object of the proposal would not be served by an increase in the listening-in fee.

"With a view to availing itself of all variety of entertainment offered and as an outcome of Mr. Plummer's overtures, the company is now considering what it can do towards assisting the more prominent amateur musical organisations in the main centres in return for broadcast performances, and a proposal along these lines will shortly be placed before the company's Musical and Dramatic Committees."

Radio Factors

How Far can the Company Go?

NOTHING but good can result from a discussion of Mr. C. B. Plummer's proposal. The aspect which appeals to us is the recognition of the part which broadcasting plays in the musical life of New Zealand. This part has great negative and positive potentialities. Radio broadcasting can, it is thought by some, make or mar the various musical organisations. It is, however, not our opinion that broadcasting is a menace to the musical societies; that is the view held by some of the societies themselves, and that view, whether it be right or wrong, has to be taken into consideration. Personally, we think that the more the societies broadcast the more they will spread the love of music—which is, after all, the purpose of their existence in the community—and thus the more they, as societies, will benefit. But the immediate concern of the societies is finance, for musical societies, like all other organisations, must have the sinews of war. Though the members have banded themselves together for the purpose of fostering the love of

music, the society, as a body, is not entirely altruistic. A society must watch its finances. It may be that it takes a short-sighted view when framing its policy in respect to the best way of ensuring a satisfactory balance-sheet, but there it is.

MR. PLUMMER'S scheme has not met with unanimous approval, even by the musical societies which it is intended to benefit, but it has opened up a very interesting subject for consideration. The difference between the viewpoints of the societies is shown in Christchurch, where one gentleman expressed the opinion that even if his society received only £50 from the anticipated £4000, it would be in a very much more secure position than it is at present. Other societies, however, fear that if the scheme be put into operation, they will be faced with diminished audiences. The choral societies picture the effect of a half-empty hall on their membership, and on their singing, and feel that they cannot support the proposal at any price. If the attitude of these societies be persisted in, then there is no hope for any proposition, whether it be proposed by Mr. Plummer or by Mr. Harris, for the basis of both schemes is the broadcasting of the concerts.

If there be no chance of the concerts being broadcast, there can be no co-operation between the listeners and the societies. Opposition to the publicity medium of broadcasting is, of course, an entirely mistaken policy.

The analysis which Mr. Harris has made of Mr. Plummer's scheme pronounces it as hardly practicable, though he admits that the object of the proposal is very much to be commended. That the greatest musical organisation in New Zealand should be concerned, is only to be expected. The Broadcasting Company may assist, and is quite anxious to do so, but as the trustees for listeners' money it must see that the listeners get fair value in return for what is done. The Broadcasting Company does not approve of increasing the license fee. From knowledge born of experience, it knows that that proposal is doomed to failure.

PENDING publication of the proposals now under consideration by the General Manager for perhaps a direct subsidy on a basis within the present means of the company, it may be of value to outline some of the

factors which must be taken into consideration. If the company reaches the view that such a direct subsidy is feasible—and it will be agreed, we think, by the majority that an increased license fee is not feasible—then the basis of any payment of listeners' money must be simply in return for items broadcast, rather than an indeterminate subsidy. Some of the essential costs of musical societies in presenting public performances are for items which do not appeal to the radio listener in that they duplicate costs already incurred in providing a studio for the distribution of musical numbers. These items are such as the hire of the hall, the hire of costumes, advertising, management, etc.—all costs necessary to the presentation of the concert to the public, but not essential to a radio performance. Then again, in relaying a concert, expenses are incurred by the company which might be better spent on artists in the studio.

IN looking at this matter it has to be remembered, we think, that no subscription that radio can in point of fact pay is going to get these musical societies out of their difficulties. Neither the gramophone or the radio are in themselves responsible for their plight. There are the social habits of the people, and, above all, the economic factors governing the need of these societies securing sufficient from one or perhaps two public performances to cover the whole of long sustained preliminary expenses. In these days only those shows which run for long periods, and so spread their preliminary and overhead charges, have any chance of clearing expenses and making money. Amateur societies cannot secure long runs. Therefore, they are compelled to rely upon the voluntary assistance of members and a sympathetic public.

We think Mr. Plummer is to be commended for advancing his idea, and we sincerely hope that it may have a practical outcome. We have endeavoured to point out, however, some of the factors which must weigh with the management in its administration of listeners' funds specifically subscribed for the purposes of radio. These factors will necessarily limit the amount that may be offered at this stage as a subsidy.

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