

THE RADIO RECORD

Published Weekly
REGISTERED G.P.O., WELLINGTON, N.Z., AS A NEWSPAPER.

Vol. II., No. 29,

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1929.

Shall Advertisements Intrude on the Air?

IN view of the proposal current that B-class stations should be allowed to operate in New Zealand and derive revenue from the sale of advertising time over the air, this article from "The Radio Times" discussing the attitude of the B.B.C. to the question, is timely. The American system of free-for-all exploitation of the air by merchandising experts is not supported, but reliance placed upon the existing system with its intimate and direct relation between the Corporation and the listener.



HE practice, on the part of broadcasting organisations in some other countries, of selling a certain number of programme hours to commercial firms for the purpose of advertising, has made some people wonder why the B.B.C. has always abstained from what, at first sight, seems an obvious method of increasing revenue and importing a certain variety into the programme. On the face of it, the advantages of such a custom would seem to be almost all on the side of the broadcasting organisation. If the manufacturers of some product really think that by paying, say, the Halle Orchestra, to give a concert or series of concerts for the benefit of listeners to broadcasting, on the sole condition that at the end of the concert or concerts it should be announced that the programme was provided by Messrs. So-and-So, people will really be induced to buy a certain brand of soap or matches, there seems little reason why the privilege should not be granted. But when the matter is considered more closely it will be found that there are many other reasons for rigidly excluding this source of programme material.

To begin with, the B.B.C. has a monopoly of broadcasting rights. This means that broadcasting time in this country is entrusted to it on the understanding that it will make the very best use of that time in the interests of the listening public. This trust is regarded by the B.B.C. as a highly serious one, not to be farmed out or delegated to anyone else. The first duty of the B.B.C. is to use this time in the interests of the public, and not to sell it to someone in the interests of his business, even though by so doing the public will appear to be as well served as by the

B.B.C. itself. The revenue from licenses in Great Britain is sufficient to cover the cost of what is admittedly the best broadcasting service in the world, so that the increase of revenue which would be secured by the selling of programme time is not required.

THE business of providing daily some twelve hours of programme matter from several stations simultaneously is an extremely intricate and complicated one. Everyone thinks that he could improve the programme out of recognition if he were given a free hand; everyone, that is to say, is capable of providing at least one programme that would be entirely to his own taste. But when it comes to meeting the tastes of millions of people in different localities, with different standards of life, different interests, different degrees of education and culture, it is found that the very widest knowledge, the greatest experience, and the most expert training are required if the multifarious interests concerned are to receive due and fair recognition. There is nothing that an outside organisation could provide that is not already available to the programme builders of the B.B.C., and while advice and suggestions are always warmly welcomed, no ideas have come from outside which have not already appeared within the organisation itself and been considered, adopted or rejected.

But there are other and more subtle reasons which conform the Corporation in its policy in this matter. The relationship between the B.B.C. and its listeners is a peculiar and intimate one. In spite of the individual (and for the most part quite healthy) grumbles and criticisms, the public knows very well that its interests are conscientiously and jealously guarded

by the B.B.C. in its task of entertaining, educating, amusing and cultivating. There is no hour or minute of programme time which is employed in any other way than in giving the best that is possible. We believe that the average listener's enjoyment of a programme would, in however subtle and indefinite a way, be marred if this integrity of intention were to be in any way encroached upon.

ADVERTISING has a very important part to play in the economic structure of our times, but it has no place in connection with the fine arts. No one knows better than the advertiser how apt the public is to resent being entrapped or influenced by some advertising device that is not quite subtly enough disguised. No one can fairly object to an open and earnest invitation to buy someone's pills; but most people would slightly resent being given, say, a box of chocolates and having their sense of gratitude evoked, only to find that the donor of the gift was benefiting himself by concealing in it some form of invitation to buy his pills. However good that box of chocolates might be, it would not be enjoyed to quite the same degree as either a box that was the outcome of a genuine affection or the result of a straight transaction with the confectioner. And our enjoyment of a Beethoven Symphony would almost certainly be tarnished by the intrusion of the thought in the middle of it that we were listening to it because somebody earnestly desired to sell a particular brand of chewing-gum to us. The intervention, however subtle and disguised, of a third person between the broadcasting organisation and its listeners could not fall in some degree to damage that sense of intimacy which is so peculiar and striking a feature of the broadcasting service.

(Continued on Page 2.)