

The New Zealand Radio Record

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N.Z. RADIO PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
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WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1929.

"B" STATIONS AND ADVERTISING EXPLOITATION OF THE AIR.

THE Postmaster-General has specifically disclaimed the suggestion put into circulation that, in answering the trade deputation which recently asked him to permit B class stations to be established to exploit the sale of time on the air, he said he saw no objection to the proposal. The Hon. A. B. Donald now puts on record that he made no such promise. All that he did say to the deputation was to promise consideration of the matter, and that consideration is now being given by the departmental officers, whose report will, of course, be made in due course, to the Minister concerned, for the formulation of his own decision.

This proposal is not one upon which any catch judgment can be given. It is a very important matter, and it definitely requires full and careful consideration, with the prime objective of reaching a decision which will ensure the greatest good to the greatest number, that is, the listeners, and the preservation of the best system of supplying a satisfactory broadcast service. The system of selling time has produced certain results in America, and those results are seemingly satisfactory to the listeners, but, obviously, at a high cost in trade expenditure. Much money has been unnecessarily spent in duplicating plants; many firms have lost money on their radio stations, and have scrapped them. Finally, out of a welter of competition, the governing authority was constrained to step in, and drastically reduce the number of stations in order to clarify the air, and conserve the quality of reception for the listening public. Britain has followed an entirely different method of development. She has built a very fine and successful system upon the individual license, and has steadily refused to bow to the lure of advertising money. An article on our cover this issue defends that policy from the point of view of the listeners' artistic sense of satisfaction, and we imagine that many of those arguments will find an echo in the heart of thoughtful readers here. From that angle, the article is specifically applicable to the discussion of the present situation.

CERTAIN minor observations on the application that has been made to the Minister would seem appropriate at this stage. It is to be noted that those applying for the B class stations made the bait very attractive by solemnly promising that the stations would operate only in the time not taken up by the YA stations. This we imagine to be a little soft soap, and, in point of fact, it conflicts with the assurance given by the advocates, that the B class stations would be willing to operate practically from morning till midnight. We find it a little

difficult to square the two assurances, and we imagine that, however honourably a beginning might be made, the time would rapidly come when those responsible for the B class stations would find it necessary to approach the Minister, with a request to be allowed to operate in the time now taken by the YA stations. This would be necessary, in our opinion, if those paying for advertising time on the B class stations' schedule were to be satisfied.

OUR view of the problem is that New Zealand has started upon a system of unified control, supported by the moneys of listeners. It is a matter of indifference for the purpose of the argument whether that unified control is applied by a company, board, or by the Government. It is the listener who pays for the service, and the administration is merely a matter of detail. With our limited population, and consequent limited sum likely to be available for radio development, it is inadvisable, in our view, to institute any policy likely to sap the strength, now or in the future, of the central organisation. The granting of permits to the B class stations to exploit advertising, will make inroads upon the existing system, to its present and future disadvantage. On the present basis, listeners know what they are going to get. On an indiscriminate competitive system, there would be no obligation on the part of B class operators, and no assurance as to the service to be available. In any clash, the outcome would inevitably be the development of two weaklings, struggling for the nourishment adequate for one.

ANOTHER very important factor which we have already mentioned is that inroads upon the advertising allocations of the mercantile firms operating in New Zealand would not be welcomed by our newspaper Press. It might be arguable that money appropriated to radio would be supplementing newspaper advertising—that such expenditure was only developing goodwill, and that Press advertising would always be required to clinch sales. There is something in that argument. It might conceivably be urged that radio advertising would extend the demand for Press advertising, and so do the newspapers good. Allowing some weight to this contention, we would not, however, welcome the task of endeavouring to convince the newspaper Press in this country that the sale of time over the air by the radio company or companies would be a fair return for the hospitality accorded radio programmes by the Press in general.

WE have no doubt that the Postmaster-General will give this matter his full and careful consideration, and that consideration will extend far into the future, and not have regard only to the lure of promises for the present. The bait is certainly attractive, and well-dressed. Something for nothing, at the other fellow's expense, always appeals to some. There is, however, need to look beyond the immediate end. We are thoroughly convinced that, ultimately, the strength derivable from a central system such as is now operating would be sapped if the present proposal were adopted, and that the undertakings originally given in good faith would not be found possible of permanent maintenance—that, in a word, the diffusion of energy which would develop would ultimately militate against the best interests of listeners.

Radio Competitions

Prizes for One-act Plays and Poems

THE judges who will officiate in connection with the competition for the best original poems, dramatic and humorous, will be Mr. Johannes Andersen (Turnbull Library), Dr. Guy Schofield, and Mr. C. A. Marris, editor of the "N.Z. Referee."

The prizes for this competition will be:—First prize, £3; second prize, £2; third prize, 10s. 6d. box of Cadbury's chocolates. It was announced last week that Cadbury's Ltd. were donating all the prizes, which would be chocolates; the first two prizes, however, will be in cash, only the third being in chocolates. All the three prizes are donated by Cadbury's Ltd.

The judges of the entries in connection with the one-act play will be a sub-committee of the IYA Musical and Dramatic Committee.

Entries in the radio play competition, for which the prizes are £5, £2, and £1 1s., close on February 28.

The time for the closing of entries in connection with poetry competitions is March 1.

All particulars and conditions of the competitions appeared in last week's issue of the "Radio Record."

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