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Summary of World Radio

Mr. J. H. Owen enthusiastically praises B.B.C. attainment, endorses unified control, and condemns advertising

MR. J. H. OWEN, who was for many years president of the Wellington Amateur Radio Society, has just returned from an extensive tour of Canada, France, and the United Kingdom. Mr. Owen is very definitely a radio enthusiast, and either carried with him a portable set at various stages of the journey or secured temporary possession of a set wherever he was situated. He was thus able to devote many hours to listening to programmes both in Canada, United States, Great Britain and Europe.

Arrangements have been made for Mr. Owen to give a talk from 2YA on his radio experiences, but opportunity was taken by the "Radio Record" last week to secure an interview with Mr. Owen, in order to place before readers a summary of his experiences and views.

Right from the outset of his trip, Mr. Owen, in order to place before readers bond of sympathy with others and an open sesame to friendships and contact. On the voyage to Vancouver on the "Aorangi" he enjoyed much benefit from an old-time friendship with the chief radio officer of the ship, Mr. Taylor, from whom Mr. Owen had earlier received instructions concerning one of his first sets.

"No Comparison" in Methods.

FROM Vancouver Mr. Owen crossed Canada, and proceeded to Britain. While in Toronto he was held up for three weeks by a bad cold. Hiring a set, however, he devoted the time to radio listening, and thus secured a very intimate knowledge of conditions on the air in that continent. This experience proved of definite value in enabling him to make a detailed comparison between the American system and the British system of radio broadcasting.

Asked the specific question as to which system—the British or American—was the better from the listener's point of view, Mr. Owen unhesitatingly and emphatically replied that there was simply no comparison—the British system developed by the B.B.C. was immeasurably superior in every way. "There," he said, "you have complete control of the air, and the corporation is able to devise and issue an informative and comprehensive set of programmes, which are a delight to listeners and render outstanding service in the cause of entertainment and education. The contrast with the American system is that America gives no unity of programmes whatsoever, and there is no coherent effort to render public service by the diffusion of news or definitely educative talk. Everything is sacrificed to the advertiser, and the effect upon the listener definitely is not good.

God help New Zealand and broadcasting if the Government ever allows any interference, in any shape or form, from the would-be advertiser or private stations. The result will only be a polluted atmosphere, such as obtains in Canada, the United States and to some extent in Europe. I do not hesitate for a single moment to say that."

Sidelights on Practice.

SPEAKING in detail of the American and Canadian system as experienced by him Mr. Owen stated that, because of the need for advertising revenue and business economy, the practice was prevalent there of one transmitting station equipment being used ostensibly for two or three separate stations with individual call signs. These worked at different hours and on different wavelengths, so that so far as the public knew, there were three or more stations operating in the locality, but in point of actual fact, all used the one transmitting equipment. Each individual station would be primarily concerned with advertising the goods of the firms maintaining it. To limit its expenses, it would sell to other firms of a non-competitive character a certain proportion of their time, because obviously they had to have revenue in order to continue operations. A typical method of operation might be cited in order that New Zealand listeners should understand just what advertising on the air meant. For instance, in Toronto one station would open up with the announcement that the "Mad Hatters" would entertain listeners. Speaking with a strong American twang, the announcer would say, in hearty fashion, something like the following: "Say, folks, we have a real fine programme for you this afternoon. The Mad Hatter's Orchestra will entertain you for the next half hour. This orchestra is maintained by Mr. Armitage, the hatter on Blank Street, where they sell the very best hats that money can buy. Very likely you have seen his premises. In addition to selling hats, however, the organisation maintains an orchestra, and that orchestra to-day will give you a real fine half-hour of music." Then the orchestra would perform—and frequently a very second-rate performance it would prove. At the conclusion of the half-hour, a further speech from the announcer would eulogise the hats. Thereafter would probably come a similar announcement from the manufacturers of someone's starch, and so on. There was no national coherent effort to render uniform service to listeners. The air was

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