

Radio for Southland

(Continued from front page.)

revenue from licenses left no margin for immediate extension of the service.

The service will continue to grow, and no doubt something in the near future would have to be done in the matter of relay stations for the more prominent cities and towns other than the main cities, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin already served.

In such a case undoubtedly Invercargill would be ranked as one for prior consideration. It was all a question of income, as after all the service rendered could only be commensurate with the income.

SOME of the committee are inclined to think that they should go ahead with an amateur station and ask the Broadcasting Company to provide the operation and maintenance of the plant, as proposed for New Plymouth, but the majority were of the opinion that they should all go right out for an extension of the existing broadcasting scheme and get a relay station in Invercargill connected by land line to Dunedin and a further move in this direction is anticipated very shortly.

Schemes Analysed

THE "Southland Times," in reporting the conference, said: "There had been many conflicting reports as to what type of station was required in Invercargill, and the conclusion the committee has come to after hearing Mr. Harris's statement, is that the original scheme, as they had proposed it, was not ambitious enough for a district the size of Southland. They are convinced that the only installation that will offer a solution of all the requirements is a relay station connected by land line with northern centres. Under this system, which is fully explained below by Mr. Harris, nightly programmes are relayed from the other centres, so that reception by crystal sets is possible up to a range of 15 to 20 miles, and much improved reception by valve sets over the whole of Southland is assured. The relaying from elsewhere will not, of course, be done when a local broadcast is available. That is to say, orchestral concerts, football matches and church services can all be broadcast from here merely by connecting the theatres, churches or football grounds with the studio. The committee is promised the support of the Invercargill Operatic Society, the Invercargill Rugby Football Union and several local churches. The relay system is in-

tended to provide programmes when they could not be arranged locally.

In these circumstances, the committee is going to work actively towards this objective, and it was decided to investigate what could be done to expedite the establishment of such a relay station. The first course to be taken will be to approach the P. and T. Department and ascertain the availability and cost of a land line to Dunedin.

Position Explained.

THE full statement of the position, as given to the committee by Mr. Harris, was as follows:—

In providing a broadcasting service for Invercargill there are three methods to consider:—(1) A primary station having its own plant and studio and an organisation to arrange its own programmes. (2) A rebroadcast station having its own plant, but for its service relying on the rebroadcast of programmes transmitted through the air from the other New Zealand stations. (3) A relay station providing its own plant and having its programme relayed over land line from the other New Zealand stations.

In the first method the commercial possibility is the prime consideration. The second proposal is more of a technical one. The third is one of availability of suitable land lines and cost of rental of same.

The size of station is usually considered in multiples of ten, commencing from five. We therefore have 5, 50, 500, 5,000 and 50,000 watt stations, although there are available, and in use for that matter, many stations of intermediate sizes. It is understood that Invercargill is mostly interested in a 500 watt station. The technical efficiency of such a station need not concern the matter at present, for, as previously mentioned, the commercial aspect is the main consideration. The first grade service range of a 500 watt station has been estimated, as a result of thousands of observations in other countries, as ten miles and the fair service range as sixty-five miles. An efficient station of this size would therefore serve Southland particularly well. The population within the high grade service is approximately 30,000, and within the fair grade service area approximately 28,000.

Listeners and Population.

FROM the only authentic information that we have, the highest percentage of listeners to population is 8 per cent. (in Victoria) and 6 per cent. (in Great Britain). If we take 8 per cent. of the population in the high grade service range and 6 per cent. of the population in the fair grade service range, we get about 4080 licenses. In actual practice the total number of licenses is an entirely different matter to the equivalent number of full-time licenses. As a matter of fact, the difference is at least from 25 per cent. to 33 1-3 per cent. Assuming a reduction only of 25 per cent. the equivalent full-time licenses that can be expected from the territory concerned for some time to come, based on the highest percentage at present obtained in other countries, is 3060.

Against this the cost of a complete, up-to-date 500 watt station, including plant, aerial system and studio, and excluding land and buildings, is between £7,000 and £8,000. The cost of efficiently operating such a station transmitting a daily service through the year and without reference to cost of

programmes is about the same figure. To this has to be added the cost of preparing, organising and performing of programmes. As a minimum, this can be put down for at least an additional £2,000 to £3,000 a year. Even with this expenditure, it is necessary to exercise the greatest economy and to depend on public interest for a portion of free service such as relay of public functions, sporting events, news, market reports and general information.

The Financial Aspect.

WITH a minimum total annual expenditure of £10,000 to £12,000, we have revenue from approximately 3060 listeners at 30/- each, 5/- deducted by the Government or a net £4200. On the face of it, a first-class primary station of 500 watts aerial capacity operating on its own account is not directly a commercial proposition under the existing population at the nominal license fee of 30/- per annum.

In the second method, the utilising for rebroadcasting a programme transmitted by some other station in the main centres and thus doing away with arranging for studio and studio programmes should under some conditions be commercially practicable, but in the case of Invercargill as at present, would not be reliable on its technical efficiency. Within certain ranges, this method of relaying programmes might prove acceptable for a short while, but, due to the fact that as time goes on listeners are more and more relying on the broadcasting service for regular information and entertainment and owing to the ever-changing atmospheric conditions and susceptibility to interference, such an arrangement could not be recommended as a regular service.

The only alternative, offering technical and commercial possibilities, is a relay station served by land line from the other stations erected in the main centres.

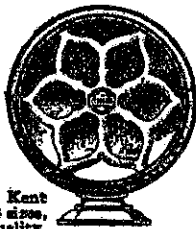
Principal Factors.

IN considering a proposal for the extension of the present broadcasting service to Invercargill, the main factors concerned are therefore the question of the service range of the proposed station, the potential licence holders within that range, and the availability and cost of land lines for connecting the station to the existing studio in the nearest main centre.

This will give a more or less general review of the major points for preliminary consideration. In addition, there are a number of other details to investigate in respect to running an independent station, such as limited available talent for providing a daily service, and the heavy preliminary expenses involved in the installation of the plant, organisation of staff, arrangements for copyright, and other matters that make it essential in such a comparatively sparsely populated country as this to have a co-operative and unified system to prevent overlapping of expenses and a resultant high aggregate cost for each city.

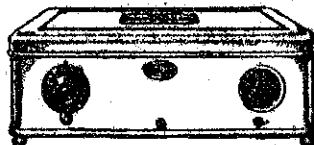
In the circumstances, all factors considered, an extension of the existing system by means of a land line from Dunedin and the erection of a suitable relay station is the only possible method offering a satisfactory and practical solution to your problem.

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