

The Case for Radio in Rural Outposts

Editor-Announcer visits Gisborne

TO make contact with listeners in important rural centres, Mr. J. Ball, Editor-Announcer of the Radio Broadcasting Company, visited Gisborne, where he was given the opportunity of addressing a gathering of 100 radio enthusiasts.

"I came here this evening to tell you something concerning the inauguration, operation, and ideals of the New Zealand Broadcasting Co.," said Mr. J. Ball, reports the "Poverty Bay Herald." The proceedings were broadcast by Station 2ZM.

Mr. Ball stated that the company at the outset did not seek a national service. All that Mr. Goodfellow had in mind at first was the provision of a broadcasting service for the benefit of farmers in the Waikato district. When he approached the Government with this suggestion he was asked to consider the matter from a national point

of view. There had been many months of negotiation towards this end, but no one had been found willing to undertake the enterprise on the Government's terms. After some hesitation, Mr. Goodfellow agreed to do so on condition that Mr. A. R. Harris, an expert in whom he had the fullest confidence, would act as co-director and general manager, and that a license was issued on terms equally satisfactory to themselves and to the Government. Mr. Harris signified his willingness to co-operate, with the result that operations were commenced.

An Arduous Responsibility.

"JUST here let me express my personal opinion that the agreement under which the company faced this arduous responsibility embodied terms to which very few business men would willingly subscribe," added Mr. Ball. "Only men possessed of a strong sense of community service, and inspired with the ambition to create, to achieve, to accomplish something worth while more for the satisfaction of having accomplished it than for any material gain which might accrue from accomplishment, would have accepted under such conditions the burden involved. They undertook to establish, maintain, and conduct a national broadcasting service for a specifically limited dividend (when earned) of 7½ per cent., it being stipulated that any and all profit in excess thereof must be devoted to the improvement and extension of the service, which service they were bound to operate under strict Government regulations."

Splendid Services.

"I HAVE no hesitation in publicly declaring that the company has more than faithfully fulfilled its trust," continued the speaker. "It is giving listeners to its four big stations three times the length of service called for under the agreement, and I need scarcely tell you that in broadcasting as in any other enterprise time means money. I want you to realise what this means. The directors are giving three times the hours of service which they undertook to give; they have built and equipped four modern transmission stations, one of them a super-power station, infinitely more costly than the agreement specified; established an efficient staff organisation; consistently improved the standard of broadcast programmes; and formulated a definite policy designed in time to give New Zealand one of the most complete and efficient broadcast services in the world."

Some idea of the "straw" required for the making of broadcast pro-

grammes was given by Mr. Ball, who said that the minimum cost of running a half kilowatt station on a proper basis, without any charge for talent, was estimated at £8000 a year. "Add to this for talent a minimum of £10 a day for six days a week—over £3000 a year—plus a further £1000 for copyright charges, relays, and other expenses, and you have an estimated minimum of £12,000 a year. For a five-kilowatt station, as is 2YA, Wellington, the estimated minimum total cost may be figured at about £14,000, plus say £4000 for talent and £1500 for copyright, relays, and incidental expenses. This estimate, while allowing for depreciation and interest, makes no provision for a sinking fund. The significance of these figures is that a revenue of at least £55,000 is required to do justice to the four stations."

Programmes Criticised.

REFERRING to psychology in relation to programmes, Mr. Ball said that all broadcasting programmes were subject to a good deal of adverse criticism. "So, by the same token, are the programmes of the B.B.C., which has at its command the world's best artists," continued the speaker. "Here we have a most convincing demonstration of the utter impossibility of pleasing the entire broadcast audience. The psychological explanation is as simple as it is obvious—the infinite variety of human tastes. Allan Wilkie comes with a Shakespearean repertoire, and all good lovers of Shakespeare's plays flock to his performances and are delighted. An outstanding exponent of classical music stages a recital and finds an appreciative audience in people who find enjoyment in that class of music. Williamson's put on musical comedy knowing full well that musical comedy appeals to a large section of the community. Fuller's specialise in vaudeville and draw the appreciative patronage of those who favour that kind of entertainment. And so on. Each sphere of entertainment claims its own votaries. But the broadcast programme goes on the air to all and sundry, and it is a moral certainty that from overture to anthem it is jarring either one or other of these variegated tastes. The very best the organiser of a broadcast programme can hope to do is to please some of the listeners some of the time."

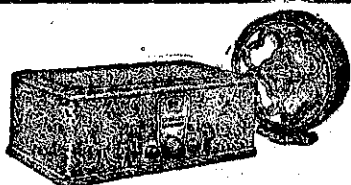
Reception in Poverty Bay.

RADIO reception in Poverty Bay was then dealt with by Mr. Ball. "Unfortunately I am unable to speak to you as an expert on the technical side," he said, "but I gather from the company's electrical experts that fading, particularly the type where the music becomes fuzzy and distorted, is very rarely due to any fault at the transmitting station. This irregularity always appears after dark, and is more prevalent in winter than in summer. Moreover, it has been noticed that the greater the power of the station the more it is subject to 'night distortion.' Our engineers have deduced a rule which seems to work out very well in practice, and it is this: If a listener is situated more than 150 miles from a station and he gets good daytime reception from the station, the signals will practically be certain to be subject to distortion fading at night."

"The exact cause of fading is not definitely known, but there is a generally accepted theory which in practice accounts for most of the peculiarities we observe," he explained. "When a station transmits a signal the wave travels outwards in two directions. One portion hangs on to the surface of the earth and is known as the ground wave, while the other portion travels upwards and outwards and away from the earth. Surrounding the earth is the atmosphere, which gets more rarefied as the height increases, until a point is reached at which its density becomes negligible. This extremely thin atmosphere forms a layer round the earth known as the 'heavyside layer,' and is the cause of all the trouble."

"When the sun's rays are shining on this layer an electrical action is set up which causes the layer to be more or less electrically conducting. In the daytime, therefore, the waves which reach this 'heavyside layer' from the transmitting station, are absorbed. At night-time, however, no absorption takes place, and the signal is reflected back again to the earth. The ground wave is, of course, unaffected by day or night conditions and is quite constant, but if we add to this another wave from the same station such as one reflected from above—and one which has probably travelled

(Concluded on page 5.)



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