

Why Perpetuate the Racing Ban?



THE attitude of the Joint Committee on this question is one, surely, on which the sporting community is entitled to ask explanation. In order that the company's attitude in regard to the matter may be made quite clear to every interested licensed listener, and to the public generally, Mr. A. R. Harris, the general manager of the company, has authorised us to make public through our columns the communication addressed by him to the New Zealand Racing and Trotting Conference, under date March 8, 1929, in which the case for radio listeners was fully set out, and the conference's objections to broadcasting, as understood by the company and the public, traversed in detail.

Offer by Company.

THAT communication reads:—

"We have reason to believe that the decision of the New Zealand Racing and Trotting Conference prohibiting the broadcasting of descriptive reports of racing and trotting meetings may have been occasioned by a misconception of the Broadcasting Company's policy relative to this branch of its service, and to the consequent belief that the company desired to secure from the conference an unrestricted privilege.

"We have, therefore, pleasure in requesting the conference to be good enough to reopen the question, and to consider our application in the light of the company's policy as stated hereunder.

"It has been pointed out to us (on your behalf) that the broadcasting of all race meetings throughout New Zealand would be a practice inimical to the sport, in that it would tend to arouse the open hostility of that sec-

Reasoned Application by Broadcasting Company Refused

tion of the community by which horse racing is held in disfavour. We believe we were the first to recognise this danger when, as the outcome of our earliest broadcasts, we received from country clubs in all parts of the Dominion requests to include their meetings in our rota. In the circumstances we quite agree that it would not be in the

Alternatives Discussed.

"IN making this renewed application for authority to broadcast metropolitan meetings, we desire to point out that the alternative suggested by the conference, viz., the broadcasting of a realistic report of the day's racing at some time subsequent to the last race

can be put over in less than ten minutes.

"(6) Quite obviously, the descriptive report could not be put over after 8 p.m. without giving widespread offence, as from 8 o'clock onward is the session reserved exclusively for musical and elocutionary entertainment.

"(7) Apart from the very definite bar of impracticability—which we trust we have made clear to your conference—it is questionable whether the method suggested would not be regarded even by interested listeners as a tiresome and belated make-believe of no real value.

Objections Reviewed.

"The method suggested is, in our opinion, undesirable so far as the interests of the conference are concerned:

"(1) Because the broadcasting of a lengthy and stirring description of the day's racing at a time when the great majority of listeners of all classes are listening-in would be infinitely more calculated to arouse the hostility of those opposed to racing than would a descriptive broadcast straight from the course at a time when a much lesser number, comprised chiefly of those interested in the sport, are listening-in, especially when the evening broadcast would be accentuating the hostility of those who were being deprived of a large part of the news service, to which they have been accustomed.

"(2) Because the absence of the broadcast straight from the course is resented by many keen followers of the sport whose circumstances have deprived them of the pleasure of attending the meeting.

"We shall be glad if you will be good enough to bring this application before the executive of the conference, or of any committee which may be authorised to deal with the matter, at the earliest opportunity, as you will realise that in the event of a favourable decision we are desirous of recommending this service as soon as possible.

"Our application is specifically for authority to broadcast metropolitan meetings on holidays and Saturdays, but should the conference deem it to be expedient that we should broadcast the full programme of these meetings we shall be prepared to do so, as upon consideration it appears to us that abstention from broadcasting on the few days which are not holidays might draw public attention to the reason for abstention.

"We shall be pleased to arrange for a representative of the company to attend any meeting at which this matter may be dealt with, should such attendance be desired by your conference."

No Effect on Conference.

IN reply to the above communication the company was advised that the application could not be dealt with before the full conference of the combined committee of the New Zealand Racing and Trotting Conference in July. In order that there should be no possibility of the matter being inadvertently overlooked, the general manager of the Broadcasting Company, under date the 6th inst., sent to the secretary

THE Joint Committee of the Racing and Trotting Conference, sitting in Wellington during the past week, reaffirmed its decision of last year, and again rejected the Radio Broadcasting Company's application to be permitted to render a service greatly desired by many thousands of listeners throughout the Dominion. WHY?

interests of the sport, or the public, to make a practice of broadcasting race meetings generally.

"We are also in accord with the view expressed by the conference concerning the economic disadvantage of unduly attracting public attention towards the sport on days other than holidays. As to whether or not the practice of the racing clubs is in accordance with the precept of the conference is a matter which may be regarded as irrelevant to the Broadcasting Company's application; we recognise that there are necessities—such as the equitable and satisfactory apportionment of racing dates among the many clubs—which render impracticable a strict adherence to this principle.

A Limited Service.

"THE writer, in discussing the matter with interested persons, has made it clear that the company fully appreciated the fact that it would be undesirable to broadcast all race meetings, and that it did not intend to do this even if permission were granted by the racing authorities.

"All the Broadcasting Company wishes to do—ALL IT HAS DESIRED TO DO FROM THE OUTSET—is to broadcast metropolitan racing and trotting meetings on public holidays (including Saturdays) for the benefit of those interested people who could not attend the meetings, and at a time when such broadcasts could not possibly interfere with the business and industrial occupations of the community.

"Our broadcasts would be restricted entirely to the main metropolitan meetings, involving a very limited number of broadcasts per annum. The Broadcasting Company is quite prepared to accept the responsibility for this policy of restriction, but, if so desired, would be pleased to confer with any committee set up by the conference to deal with this matter.

"The conference need have no fear of the present Broadcasting Company ever over-doing the broadcasting of racing or trotting meetings.

of the day, is quite impracticable so far as the Broadcasting Company is concerned, and, in our opinion, particularly undesirable so far as the interests of the conference itself are concerned. The method suggested is impracticable, because—

"(1) The broadcasting service is necessarily based on a classified schedule under which the respective features of the services are broadcast at certain fixed times which experience has shown to be the most suitable for the particular service.

"(2) As the last race of the day usually eventuates between 5 and 6 p.m., it follows that the broadcast suggested by the conference would have to be put over after 6 p.m. (Any time between 5 and 6 would be useless, as during that hour the great majority of people are returning to their homes.)

"(3) Under the existing schedule, the children's session occupies the air from 6 to 7 p.m., and we feel sure your conference will realise that any interference with the session for the purpose of putting over the story of an afternoon's horse racing would provoke an outburst of popular disapproval from one end of the Dominion to the other.

"(4) The hour between 7 and 8 p.m. is exclusively reserved for the broadcasting of news and information, covering a wide range of subjects of universal interest, i.e., market reports, sporting results of all kinds, British Official Wireless cables covering items of international moment, general news, special announcements, and informative lectures.

"(5) The broadcasting of a descriptive account of the day's racing would occupy at the very least twenty minutes, and in all probability would take not less than half an hour, and would inevitably involve such a dislocation of the news service as we are confident would not be tolerated by the great body of listeners, especially as they have learned by experience that the bare results of five or six race meetings

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