

The New Zealand Radio Record

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INITIATIVE IN BROADCASTING.

IN last week's issue we published an interesting article from "Popular Wireless," dealing with the apparently excessive number of resignations of prominent officials from the B.B.C. In outlining the circumstances, the British journal reaches the conclusion "that the root of the trouble lies with the governors of the organisation. Their appointments were always criticised, and their capabilities for the office even more criticised, and we sincerely hope that something will shortly be done radically to change the situation with regard to the governorship of the B.B.C." This comment is interesting in so far as it provokes thought as to the best means of organising and governing a radio broadcasting service. The history of the British Broadcasting Corporation is that the undertaking was originally instituted in 1922 by the formation of the British Broadcasting Company, the moving spirits being business organisations interested in the manufacture and sale of radio equipment. London station was first opened on November 14, 1922, Birmingham and Manchester on the next day, and Newcastle ten days later. Other stations were developed at Cardiff, Aberdeen, Bournemouth, and Sheffield in 1923, and again throughout 1924 a progressive expansion was continued. The result of the energetic development undertaken by the British Broadcasting Company was that, in April of 1926, 2,000,000 licenses were in force, and the service was established on an outstandingly progressive and satisfactory basis. Throughout this period a governing oversight and general administration, particularly in regard to the matter broadcast, was exercised by the British Post Office. In the latter months of 1926, however, it became apparent that the political atmosphere favoured the creation of a Government Department. Consequently on January 1, 1927, the British Broadcasting Corporation was instituted under Royal Charter, and a number of governors—men of prominence in various educational, musical, and financial fields—were appointed. Sir John Reith was entrusted with the post of governing director.

THE resignations now effected would seem to indicate quite definitely that the policy instituted by the Corporation has failed in some aspects in its administration. The charge is made by "Popular Wireless" that the governors have not been content to merely lay down broad lines of policy, but would seem to have intruded themselves into the detail organisation of the actual programmes, rather than leaving that highly technical and important department to the care of those who have specialised in the field of catering for the public taste. If this charge is correct, it represents a grave disadvantage. There is nothing so delicate or so exacting as the interpretation of the public taste. Broadcasting as a means of entertainment necessarily competes with the theatre, the picture, and other avenues of amusement. It, therefore, must take from the technique of those businesses something of the same subtlety of interpretation. While taking something, it has had to develop additional capacity for

sensing the requirements of the public. This is highly artistic and exacting work. Those responsible necessarily must possess the artistic temperament, which is the least amenable to bureaucratic control or interference.

TO achieve success in any line of entertainment requires an immediate sympathetic response to an interpretation of the public needs. That intuitive appreciation must be backed by the capacity to take immediate action. If the initial conception is checked by the clogging wheels of bureaucracy, then the first fire of enthusiasm is lost, and what might have been a brilliant conception is flattened and killed. There would seem, therefore, to be the special need in connection with broadcasting, to ever preserve initiative and enterprise. Commercial and artistic history shows that that initiative and enterprise are best displayed by individuals, and immediately suffer eclipse under any suspicion of bureaucracy. It is in that sense that this development in connection with the B.B.C. is most interesting and illuminating to New Zealand listeners. We are concerned to see that our own broadcasting system develops on the best lines possible—on lines that will permit of the display of enterprise and initiative, so that the public taste can be catered for with a minimum of limiting restrictions. Our New Zealand system seems to be a fairly happy blend of the two systems. It preserves the enterprise, initiative, and immediacy of action and economy of administration that obtain with private enterprise; those virtues are supplemented by a governmental supervision concerned to safeguard the interests of listeners, and requiring a high standard of performance in all fields for the benefit of the public.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE success that attended the Dunedin Exhibition, following closely on the remarkable success of the Wellington Exhibition, shows clearly that there is a definite desire on the part of the public for more intimate contact with radio. The opportunity of seeing, concentrated at one spot, the latest and most advanced complete sets utilising A.C. equipment, the most complete and compact battery-operated sets, and the subsidiary gear that contributes so much to the modernising of old sets, appeals strongly to the listening public. The simplification of processes that is going on is appreciated by the radio public, and in itself is unquestionably extending the appeal of radio. Those who are interested in the constructional side of radio are limited. They may be those who get the most intense interest and pleasure from radio in the field of constructional capacity, but it is the larger and broader section who listen merely for the pleasure or entertainment derived from the programme itself that constitutes the strength of radio. It is this section that has made and is making radio exhibitions so popular and successful.

HEARTY congratulations are extended to the promoters of the Exhibition in Dunedin. Their organisation has been good, and the public has responded in admirable spirit to the fare offered. A particular feature of the Dunedin Exhibition was the section devoted to the children. This was a happy thought, and undoubtedly constituted a special feature of the show. The occasion, too, was made memorable by the skilful exploitation of land-line telephonic communication from Wellington to Dunedin. A definite feat stands to the credit of the Department in making it possible for the Postmaster-General, the Hon. J. B. Donald, to sit in his office in Parliamentary Buildings, Wellington, and speak direct to the Exhibition in Dunedin, for his voice there to be passed through loudspeakers and heard by the assembled audience, and thence rebroadcast by Station 4YA. This constituted a record in this field, and is a striking indication of the clarity and perfection of telephonic communication now available to the public. The Dunedin Exhibition is, it is thought, likely to be followed by an exhibition in Christchurch, and we hear that there is a possibility for a similar venture in Auckland. Properly organised, there is no reason why each and all of these ventures should not be successful. The public interest is available for development, and the successful organisations already perfected show that the public is prepared to heartily support exhibitions of this nature.