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Future Course of Radio Service

Interview

with

Mr. A. R. Harris



R. A. R. HARRIS, general manager of the New Zealand Radio Broadcasting Company, in an interview in "The Waikato Times," on the possibilities of the establishment of a relay station for Hamilton, dealt interestingly with several phases of the broadcasting service. He intimated that the question asked was purely one of Government policy, quite beyond the province of the company under the terms of its license.

IN reply to a question as to whether there was any immediate prospect of a supplementary service being provided for in the Waikato, Mr. Harris replied that this question opened up a problem in the solution of which all interested in broadcasting service are vitally concerned. Sooner or later the question would have to be decided as to whether any extension of the service should take the form of the extension of the services rendered by the four main stations or the extension of broadcast facilities for the benefit of the more prominent centres outside the four cities. Continuing, Mr. Harris said that whatever was done must be done with due regard to the economic situation and the obvious limitation surrounding the operations of a broadcast service in a country such as this with its comparatively small population, nominal license fee, and peculiar topographical conditions. The greatest care must be exercised in the development of the service in order to avoid the imprudent

adoption of temporary expediciencies which might burden the service with a legacy prejudicial to its efficient social and economic functions.

Economic and Social Factor.

THERE was no doubt, said Mr. Harris, that radio broadcasting was now widely recognised as one of the greatest economic and social factors of the age. It provided a service of infinite variety of virtually universal use and benefit, and it was peculiar in that the greater the patronage of the community the greater became the service to the individual without any increase in cost. During the past year, with an increase of 7 per cent. in licenses, the company had been able to increase its hours of service by 16 per cent. as compared with the previous year. This was made possible by the fact that once the necessary broadcasting facilities and staff organizations had been provided for, the bulk of the revenue accruing from increased licenses goes towards further improvement of the services.

In further reference to this aspect of the question, Mr. Harris said that the broadcast service, like any other enterprise, must, in the interests of all concerned, be conducted on sound business lines. Depending on popular patronage, the interests of listeners must always remain paramount. So long as those interests were served in a measure commensurate with the income, so long would

this be the case. In this connection, it must always be remembered that the broadcast service, to be self-supporting, must be universal in its appeal. It must be a service for all, and this being so, minority interests, as well as the interests of the majority, would receive equitable consideration. Were an attempt made to favour any particular class or faction, the service would lose its universal appeal, and in the ultimate result the position would be reached when it would be questionable whether any particular section could be efficiently served.

Social Value of Radio.

MR. HARRIS said he had no hesitation in stating that every possible endeavour was being made to cater for every section of the community, without discrimination or favouritism. The company did not undertake to provide for all tastes at one time, but if any class, or even any individual for that matter, felt that it or his particular requirements were not receiving due consideration at some time or other the company cordially invited direct communication of any such complaint. While he could not undertake that every request would be complied with, he could assure listeners that full and sincere consideration would be given to each and everyone.

In conclusion, Mr. Harris stressed the social value of radio in the homes of the people, and more particularly in country homes. The ramifications of the radio service embraced practically every phase of human activity, religious, social, intellectual and industrial. It brought into the home, no matter how remote, a diversity of interests that could not but help widen the individual outlook, create a better understanding between all classes, and a keener interest in national affairs.