

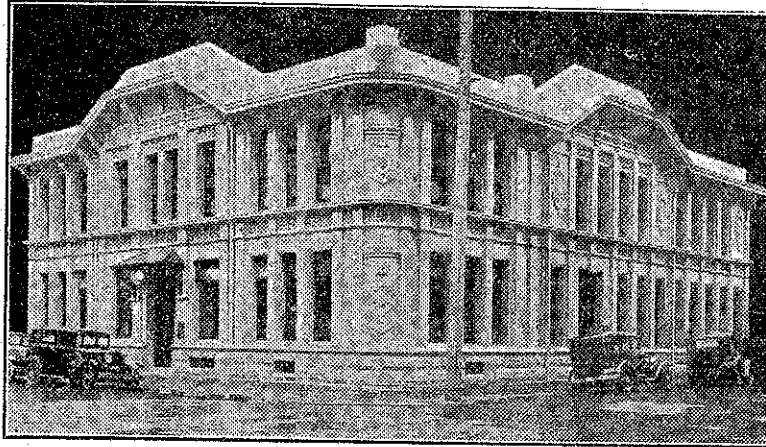
handing on the torch which was entrusted to it more than six years ago," said Mr. John Ball in a broadcast, which he gave from 2YA on behalf of the company's directors, on New Year's Eve, 1931. "That the torch burns brightly is shown by the number of licensed radio listeners now compared with six years ago. There are 70,000 now; there were about 300 then. Broadcasting was very new in 1925, and the company had no beaten track to follow, not even a blazed trail, but it has done its best to carry on the trust reposed in it."

The personnel of the new Broadcasting Board was announced in the second week in December, 1931, by the Postmaster-General (Hon. Adam Hamilton). The members were Mr. H. D. Vickery (chairman); Mr. L. R. C. Macfarlane, Mr. G. R. Hutchinson and Mr. E. C. Hands (general manager). Three major problems faced the board when it took office. The first was the question of expanding the service. A regular "silent night" was observed by the principal stations. This was abolished. The hours have gradually extended until to-day the YA stations' hours of transmission have increased 117 per cent. since the beginning of 1932. There is a broadcast programme available for practically every listener in New Zealand from seven in the morning till 11 at night.

The second problem concerned the programmes themselves. The Broadcasting Board had a certain income—it could not exceed this income and yet it was pledged, to some extent, to improve the quality of the broadcasts. Negotiations were entered into with England, whereby the Board was able to considerably increase its stocks of recordings, and these are now constantly being added to. Sport was made to play a bigger part in the service, and to-day no sporting event of any importance takes place without a microphone featured somewhere in the foreground. Within the last few months the board has advanced its schemes a step farther and New Zealand listeners are assured of a fairly constant stream of international artists on the air. Senia Chostiakoff, the Russian tenor, and Madame Elsa Stralia, the opera star, have just concluded seasons, while arrangements have been made for the early appearance of Madame Goossens-Viceroy and Raymond Beatty, the bass-baritone. Early in the New Year Lionello Cecil, the world-famous tenor, will sing from the YA stations.

Patents, copyrights and the restrictions upon the use of gramophone records constituted the third of the board's problems. The position of patent rights has been clarified within the past 12 months and a more or less amicable agreement has been reached with the gramophone companies. Copyright is still, and always will be, a major problem, but the Broadcasting Board has come to terms with the holders of various copyrights and listeners have, in consequence, been given broadcasts of Gilbert and Sullivan, grand opera, and B.B.C. special programmes.

To-day the service is pushing on into new fields. Christchurch has already been equipped with a new station, and the power there is to be further increased shortly. Seventy-six thousand pounds is being spent in Auckland and, when the new station is opened next month, 1YA will be the most powerful station in Australia or New Zealand. The transmitter has been placed at Henderson and the studios are in Shortland Street, just a minute's walk from Queen Street. A site has been chosen on the Otago Peninsula for the new 4YA transmitter, and, when this is built, it will be of the same power as Auckland—10 kilowatts. Wellington will be the next station to receive attention, although by this time next year listeners in the capital will be in the happy position of having a choice of five stations at any hour of the day—the four YA stations and 2YC.



*The headquarters of the New Zealand Broadcasting Board in Featherston Street, Wellington, are scarcely as magnificent as the headquarters of the B.B.C. in London, but the amount of work accomplished there in connection with the arranging of the national programmes would amaze the average listener.*

In the matter of licenses, too, the Broadcasting Board can congratulate itself. When it took office less than three years ago there were 70,000 licensed listeners in the Dominion. On another page in to-day's issue are given the latest figures—144,558 licenses in force on the last day of September—an increase of more than 100 per cent. in less than three years.

About 12 months ago the Broadcasting Board effected changes in the wavelengths of the national transmitters, and there was considerable interest among listeners and some criticism. These changes were the outcome of conferences between the board's engineers, the Post and Telegraph Department, and the Australian authorities, and were made for the purpose of securing the best condition of reception for a majority of listeners in this country. The full beneficial effect of the changes will not be apparent until the completion of the board's coverage programme, but already in many areas there is definite evidence of improved coverage. In determining the best frequencies to be used in New Zealand, due heed had to be given to the programme of new stations contemplated by the Commonwealth authorities, who co-operated fully in making the best use of the wavelengths available. It is true that some listeners are now unable to receive certain distant stations, but every technical advance in broadcasting, whatever its nature, will adversely affect some listeners.

During the past year all the main stations, too, have been equipped with modern microphones of the velocity or ribbon type, and the result has been a marked improvement in musical reproduction.

The New Zealand Broadcasting Board took over the national service at a time when the novelty of broadcasting was wearing a little thin, and the public was growing critical. It is a concern whose every move is "fair game" for every critic in the country, and it has not entirely escaped criticism during the past year or two, but, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, it is pursuing a sound and vigorous policy and giving the New Zealand listener a service that is equal—and more than equal—to that of any other British colony.