

SPECIAL AUSTRALIAN SUPPLEMENT

Commercial Stations Play Big Part in Australian Radio

COMMERCIAL stations in Australia are an important and indispensable part of the nation's broadcasting. Radio advertising has been developed as an art in the Commonwealth, so that there is practically no undue obtrusion of "boosting" a line of goods or a service, and the programmes from commercial stations are of a remarkably high standard, to provide a service which sells itself to advertisers.

HALF of the annual license fee of 21/- charged by the Government on all radio sets used by householders is devoted to the maintenance of the Government stations, their staffs and programmes. The private enterprises, or, as they are generally known, the commercial stations, are operated for profit, deriving their revenue entirely from the sale of advertising time.

Research has proved that at any given moment 70 to 80 per cent. of the total available radio audience listen to commercial stations. Several reasons account for this preference. The Government stations insist on absolutely formal programme presentation; efforts by announcers to build up personal followings are discouraged; the tendency of programmes is more educational than towards popular entertainment; lack of competition causes the inevitable disabilities found in a Government concern.

Commercial stations, however, broadcast programmes designed to make the strongest possible appeal to the available audience, according to the time of day or night. The announcers of the main commercial stations have been selected to appeal to and inspire the confidence of the various types into which the radio audience has been found to fall. Thus they have become established personalities, wielding a very strong influence over public habits and opinions.

There is considerable concentration of population around the main cities, particularly Sydney and Melbourne, which means that those very rich markets are ideally reached by radio. This is particularly so because in both cities are the outstanding Australian commercial stations. It must not be thought, however, that the country areas of Australia cannot be reached effectively by radio. Quite the reverse is the case, due to radio's serving as the major entertainment for country people. Country radio stations are located in key areas throughout the Commonwealth. There are 20 stations located outside the six main cities.

Owing to the vast distances between large towns in Australia, either network broadcasts or transcription broadcasts must be used by national advertisers to cover the entire market. Network broadcasts are confined mostly to the four main States of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Owing to the fact that Perth is more than 1400 miles west of Adelaide the cost of landline service renders a relay prohibitive, especially as the potential market is relatively small. The same proposition arises in the case of Tasmania,

which is separated from the mainland by 443 miles of sea. Network broadcasts which require a more specific country appeal are put through the smaller country stations, although the cost of landlines and the difficulty of getting them at a uniform time means that often transcriptions are more suitable.

Generally speaking the use of an electrical transcription programme is more suitable for advertisers desiring national coverage. The types of programme cover a very wide range: dramatic, musical, musical comedy, children's and women's programmes, mystery serials and so on, which thus allow good "tie-ups" for sponsors of



INTERESTED IN 2GB.—Mr. A. E. Bennett, managing director of Station 2GB, Sydney, one of the biggest B stations in the Commonwealth. Mr. Bennett has recently been elected President of the Australian Federation of Broadcasting Stations.

different types of product or service. These transcription programmes also enable such markets as West Australia and Tasmania to be covered cheaply. Also, transcriptions are most suitable to "tie-in" with sales drives which are not always made in all States at the same time.

By mail returns over a number of years and by response to advertising it has been established that the Australian radio audience can be classified more or less accurately according to the time of day, as follows:

7 a.m. to 9 a.m.: Young business folk—men and women—and also school children from 7.30 to 8.30.

9 a.m. to 12 noon: Housewives and elderly folk.

Noon to 2 p.m.: Housewives and large family audience in country districts.

2 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.: Women interested in tea table chatter, social news, fashions, bridge talks and modern music.

4.45 to 6 p.m.: Children's session.

6.30 to 11.30: Night session—maximum audience of all ages and sexes, fluctuating according to programmes and becoming of a more sophisticated type after 10 p.m.

Some stations have made subdivisions beyond this broad schedule.

The actual sales results of firms using radio as an advertising medium are best expressed in terms of renewals. The keenest national advertisers in Australia have renewed into their fifth and sixth years, with increasing appropriations each year. There is no doubt that radio advertising fills a gap which other media miss, as it is the "living personal" selling which has a tremendously powerful subconscious influence, the effect of which has been proved for years.

Of the most prominent B stations in Australia, those with which New Zealand listeners are most familiar are 2GB, 2UW and 2UE, all of which are well enough received here to be included on the itinerary of the dials any night. There are some outstanding names connected with each of these concerns which have created a personal appeal to many Dominion listeners, both as announcers and performers. Many of them have at one time been connected with the radio world of New Zealand, and others come to our notice by virtue of persistently high-grade entertainment in one way or another.

On the station staff of 2UW, which is now operating 24 hours a day, there is one of the most colourful people ever to have spoken for any length of time into a New Zealand "mike," Mr. "Jim" Prentice. Other names on their payroll which need little introduction to New Zealand are Len Maurice, Charles Lawrence, Vernon Sellars and Jack Win.

Several New Zealanders are on the staff of 2GB, Sydney, including Jack Davey, a King's College old boy, who left Auckland for Sydney a year or so ago. He is now the "Bing Crosby of Australia," and his fan mail is often 1000 letters a week. Mr. Davey, who used to manage the Civic Wintergarden in Auckland, will shortly be returning to New Zealand for a brief holiday. During his stay in Auckland he is expected to broadcast from 1YA. "One of my first appearances in public was when I was about four feet high," said

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