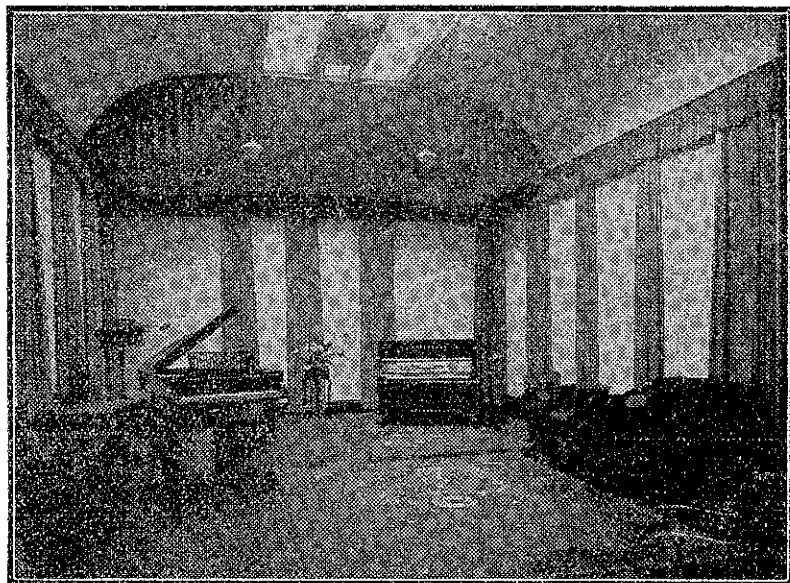




10 YEARS IN ENTERTAINMENT



"The Old Order Changeth"



N.Z. Radio Standard is High—But It Was Hardly Won During a Decade

The one and only studio at 1YA in the France Street premises was not palatial, and did not compare very favourably with southern ones. But the original Scots Hall "studio" was a room 10 feet by 12 feet, with a curtain dividing off the transmitting gear!

CLOSE on the heels of the world's leading broadcasting countries, New Zealand has advanced in radio, until to-day, exactly 10 years after the formation of the New Zealand Broadcasting Company we may lay claim to a national service unrivalled throughout the world for its general suitability in view of the sort of public it serves. There can be no such thing as perfection in a broadcasting service. There are too many widely varying tastes to please for such a happy condition to be practicable. But New Zealand may pride itself upon the progress which has been made in the 10 years of official life under which broadcasting has grown.

Comparisons may be odious, but in this case they are complimentary to this Dominion. It is all very well to allow personal prejudices to prompt critics to deride the Dominion's national broadcasting stations and some particular parts of programmes. Let them look back for 10 years—if they have been listening in for so long—and remember what joy they derived from reception of programmes which, if broadcast to-day, would arouse an outcry from most of the 157,000 licensees.

Of course, in 1925 the broadcasts were carried out under severe handicaps of which the listeners knew practically nothing then, and which are forgotten now—except by those men who were in the game in the pioneer days. For them, the early days of radio in New Zealand will be always a happy, romantic memory, for they can afford to sit back and laugh at their former hardships and vicissitudes when they compare conditions with those which rule to-day.

Auckland was the pioneer of broadcasting transmission in New Zealand on a "big" scale—they called it officially "radio telephone broadcasting." At least, the scale was big in those days when people got as much thrill out of receiving a programme from three miles' distance on a crystal set as they do nowadays when the tune in their new all-wave six or eight-valve set to a European broadcast for the first time.

During the first year of experimental broadcasting carried out by a small group of dealers in electrical goods, the great thing was to make one's own crystal set. To this the "one-valve amplifier" was frequently added. Then most people became tired of developing sore ears with headphones, and the loudspeaker sets, with two or more valves, and the usual batteries, had their day. Once the all-electric sets were established on the market, listening took a great leap forward in popularity, and to-day the all-

wave sets are the latest novelty, an innovation which has to some extent increased the criticism heaped upon the Broadcasting Board, owing to the greater number of listeners to overseas stations.

An important point too often overlooked by the critics, however, is that they listen to an overseas station for perhaps an hour or so, and disregard the rest of the plan of broadcasting from a particular station. For it is in the comprehensive plan over the course of, say, a month, that New Zealand's progress—and in many comparisons superiority—becomes evident.

It was not until the newly-formed Broadcasting Company decided upon the "contract" scheme for engaging artists that they were able to accurately forecast the concert programmes a few weeks ahead, for before that dozens of artists would promise performances on certain nights, and perhaps only one or two would turn up at the studios. At this time the limit of transmitting hours was governed to some extent by the transmitting gear, which had to be allowed a half-hour "holiday" every two hours to cool down.

In the Scots Hall, Auckland, the first studio was a room about 10 feet by 12 feet, divided from the transmitting plant by a curtain. No microphone as we know it to-day was available, and the talks and songs had to be performed in front of gramophone horn with a small electric diaphragm at the inside end. Consequently, it was impossible even to broadcast an ordinary duet, as two performers could not get before the sensitive part of the contraption at the same time. With technical advances and a move to the studio in George Court's Building, more scope was provided for varied items, and the great step from infancy to comparative maturity had been taken in New Zealand broadcasting. Programmes were able to expand now beyond protracted relays of the Prince Edward Theatre Orchestra. Meanwhile, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin had been provided with similar transmitting stations under the company's rule, and the nation was becoming rapidly radio-minded.

License fees enabled the new company in 1925 to pay artists instead of relying on voluntary items, and broadcasting was for the first time on a really business footing in this country. On August 7 of the following year the 500-watt 1YA was opened. Less than a month later the new 3YA transmitter started operation, and in February, 1927, the station's permanent home was officially opened. On July 16, 1927, the new 2YA 5000-watt transmitting plant on Mount