

This Week's Special Article

A Plan For Getting Closer To The Listener

EVER since its infancy, radio has laboured under the seemingly insuperable disadvantage of complete severance from its audience. There is no certain way of determining whether or not a type radio entertainment is "going over" with the public. An artist may have 15 listeners or 15,000—the studio has no certain indication which. Public reaction may be gauged only by the uncertain media of "fan" mail, letters of complaint, Press criticism, and word-of-mouth praise.

All this is not to say that, in the main, the public does not get what it wants. Programme organisers are chosen for their knowledge of the public taste and for their long experience of catering for it; but one remembers that men, better qualified to judge the public taste than any programme organiser ever appointed have lost fortunes backing stage and film shows that "flop." Much that gets on the air, and is highly paid for, "flops" in exactly the same way. The radio station responsible has only the vaguest indication of it.

Latest trend in radio is frankly to seek the co-operation of the listener by means of the "Panel System." Last month—following a well-established BBC plan—the Australian Broadcasting Commission began the organisation of a drama panel by which it hopes to get much closer to a real approximation of the preferences of the listening public.

The sponsor of the scheme explains that his objective is a panel of listeners specially interested in

How can the station tell when a broadcast item "flops"? There's no real way. But a panel system such as that recently instituted by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, may get a cross-section of listener opinion.

radio drama, who will be willing to report on plays broadcast week by week from the National stations, and to answer an occasional questionnaire.

This experiment, he points out, follows frankly the methods recently adopted in Britain by the BBC. It aims to enlist the help of all types of listeners in the cities, provincial towns and outback districts, including the non-literary minded as well as those consciously interested in the written and spoken word. The plan is to have as many different approaches to the subject of radio drama as listeners can supply, but it is emphasised that co-operation is sought only from those prepared to bring an intelligent and regular interest to radio drama.

The Commission invites opinions from all volunteers, though it cannot guarantee that all offers of assistance will be accepted. The size of the listening panel must be kept within reasonable limits. As soon as the members of the panel are chosen, all letters from them dealing with broadcast plays will be acknowledged and classified.

It is hoped that by studying the views of so many diverse-minded listeners, the play department will be assisted materially in forming conclusions as to the likes and dislikes of the play-listening public.

Such a plan as this is surely worthy of imitation in New Zealand. The day may come when nearly every class of radio programme is directed by the co-operation of a "listening panel." There can be little doubt that under such a system radio entertainment would be vastly improved in scope of appeal, if not in standard.

In the Wake of the Week's Broadcasts

Station 2YD has a wide following in Wellington to-day. Though it does not stunting and has few highlights, its programmes are bright, middle-road and consistent. Some of us ask for little more. And

LITTLE MEN, YOU'VE GROWN UP so, since 2YD has now made its way, can't the staff give up counting the

number of nights they have been on the air? Last Sunday I thought I had got on to cricket by mistake when I heard the announcer boasting that he had reached 413. Come out of infancy, 2YD! This idea of metaphorically blowing out the candles on your cake gives listeners an uneasy impression of being trapped at a children's concert.

To my sorrow, I plugged in last week for the first time to "Mutiny of the Bounty," the serial feature that is going over all the ZB stations at present. Just then Fletcher Christian was casting

BETTER LATE THAN NOT AT ALL

off the launch with Captain Bligh and the loyal crew—and I sat down and mourned that I had missed so many of the earlier episodes. For this is an excellent feature—apart from the intrinsic interest of the subject. Faults lie in the monotony of the crowd noises, in a tendency to overdo the melodrama and in the shortness of the episodes which hardly gives the listener time to forget himself in the story. Still, if any-

one has been as foolish as I, and not yet sampled this entertainment, now is the time to start.

Limelight in the "Coronets of England" series has shifted from Queen Elizabeth to Mary of Scots. This series began promisingly from 2YD Wellington on a recent Sunday night, and—despite the

MARY OF SCOTS political complexity of Mary's early years in France—

UPHOLDS THE OLD TRADITION bids fair to uphold the excellent standard set by Henry VIII and Elizabeth. Notable is the skilful change in mood between the treatment of the life of the old Queen and that of the young princess.