

Broadcasting of Rugby Football Matches

Listeners Await Decision of Delegates

TEST it should be permitted to broadcast Rugby Test matches was the tenor of an application to the management committee of the New Zealand Rugby Union by the Radio Broadcasting Co.

"The recently expressed decision of the Union," wrote the general manager (Mr. A. R. Harris), "was based on the probable loss which it is feared the provincial unions will suffer at their local matches on the days when the big matches are broadcast. In this respect, however, the prospect of any decrease in the takings would be more than balanced by the indirect gain from the wide publicity which the Rugby game would receive."

"If the games with the English team be not available, we must look elsewhere, but in view of the interest which will be taken in the Tests and other matches progress reports as complete as possible will have to be broadcast with the minimum of delay. In doing this we will only be carrying out the duty which we consider we owe to our listeners."

The Hawke's Bay Radio Society also wrote asking the union to reconsider their decision to disallow the broadcasting of Saturday matches and particularly of the Test matches.

Mr. Dean said he saw no objection to the broadcasting of Wednesday matches but the Broadcasting Company did not seem very keen to report these mid-week matches, as to do so would mean expense in arranging for relays. He would like to know what the Radio Broadcasting Company would be prepared to pay for the right to broadcast reports of the games played by the British team in the Dominion.

Mr. H. H. Sterling said that on broad lines he was in favour of reports of Rugby matches being broadcast in the Dominion. The New Zealand Union was the custodian of the game in the Dominion and they had to view the subject on broad lines.

Mr. Dean pointed out that the New Zealand Union had already agreed that reports of the matches played by the British team should not be broadcast.

Mr. Sterling: I thought we were having a general discussion on the subject. If I am out of order, so is everybody else.

On the motion of Mr. S. S. Dean it was agreed that the matter should be brought up in general business at the annual meeting of delegates of the New Zealand Rugby Union.

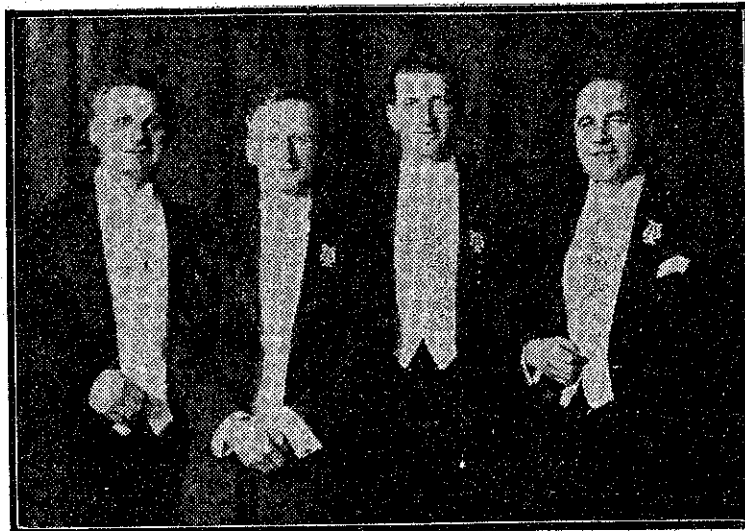
IT IS an open secret that the decision of the New Zealand Rugby Union not to permit the broadcasting of matches played by the British team on Saturdays has occasioned a good deal of comment and dissatisfaction in sporting circles. A further discussion upon the question of broadcasting Rugby matches occurred at the annual meeting of the Wellington Rugby Union, held last week.

The outcome was that a motion was passed conveying the recommendation to the incoming managing

entitled to earn, and that profit, it will be patent to any commercial man, is so limited as to entirely remove it from any charge of exploitation.

Few commercial men would be prepared to undertake the responsibility of administering a service of the nature of the Broadcasting Company, with its limitations and difficulties, for a return so moderate as 7½ per cent. It is therefore incorrect in our view to regard the company as a "commercial concern" with the objective only of profit-making. Rather is it to be regarded as a service organisation working, under direct responsibility from the Government, to give radio listeners the fullest possible service of news and entertainment under a limitation as to the profits to be derived.

WHEN the Racing authorities banned the broadcast of racing events, the suggestion was made that their attitude was dictated by the desire to extract a fee from the Broadcasting Company. At that time the principles actuating the Company were laid down by Mr. A. R. Harris. Those principles in our view are entirely sound. Mr. Harris pointed out that the funds pro-



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committee that the broadcasting of matches should not be permitted unless the Broadcasting Company was prepared to pay a fee for the privilege.

This attitude is apparently based upon the statement made by Mr. J. Prendeville that "the broadcasting people are a commercial concern out to get dividends and profits." This statement is not wholly correct, and to that extent gives a wrong view of the situation.

WHILE it is true that the Broadcasting Company is organised as a commercial company, it is not "out to get dividends and profits."

The dividend or profit which it can earn is limited by its arrangement with the Government to 7½ per cent. upon the capital employed.

There can, therefore, be no question as to the Broadcasting Company utilising its revenue for the building up of undue profits. It has not always been able to earn even the profit it is

provided by listeners were fully taxed in providing upkeep and the running expenses of the five stations maintained by the Company, and in meeting the necessary costs in relation to musical programmes, artists' fees, etc. Having regard to the extensive nature of the sports, popular in the Dominion, of the service rendered them by their events and results being broadcast, it was not found possible in principle or practice to contemplate a payment of a fee for the service.

Newspapers are not asked to pay the football authorities, the racing authorities, the swimming authorities, tennis enthusiasts, golf enthusiasts, basket-ball devotees, or cricket teams, fees for the privilege of reporting their performances.

The Press is recognised as rendering a service to those organisations by giving them the publicity upon which they live. Broadcasting in its turn is a publicity medium, for it renders the same service. Why should it be placed in a different category?

Weather Reports

The broadcasting of the mid-day weather reports ceased on March 15, the last day of Summer Time. In co-operation with Dr. Kidson, of the Meteorological Department, who prepared the special weather forecasts, these broadcasts were for the benefit of the farmers of Canterbury engaged in harvesting. The weather reports, which were thus broadcast, proved of great value.

The Press derives a profit from the news service it renders, and there is no limit upon the profit which the Press, by good management and full organisation, is entitled to secure from its public.

BROADCASTING renders the same service, but its profit is limited. We think it will be recognised by the public who support football that it is wholly unfair to ask the Broadcasting Company, as a service organisation, to pay a fee for the right to broadcast football matches.

Such a practice is quite impossible, having regard to the need for conserving the money of listeners. We feel sure that very strong protests indeed will be directed towards the football authorities upon their attitude. After all, it is the public which support football and other sports, and the public has its rights.

Particularly has the incapacitated public its rights. In the effort to drive the fullest possible number of able-bodied sports to swell the gate-money, little regard is being given to those old-time sports who are no longer able to attend either through illness or age, to those in the country who, in their day, gave of their best, and to those in other centres who like to listen to the fortunes of war in their home town.

The wisest remark made in the course of the discussion was that by Mr. Martin Smith when he warned his colleagues that there was a double edge to the question, and that they needed to be careful of the way in which they trod. That is quite right. There are alternatives to broadcasting Rugby football, and having regard to the proved value of broadcasting publicity, those alternatives, if developed, might have far-reaching results.

So far as the Test matches are concerned, every footballer throughout the Dominion will be interested in the result. If the object of the tour is to encourage football what better way of doing it is there than allowing every footballer to either see it or hear it. As it is impossible for all to see it, why not suspend all matches on Test days and allow all footballers to follow the radio description and learn what they can of the relative tactics of the contest. In this way radio would be made to serve the prime object of the tour, namely promotion of interest in Rugby football and improvement of the standard of play?

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