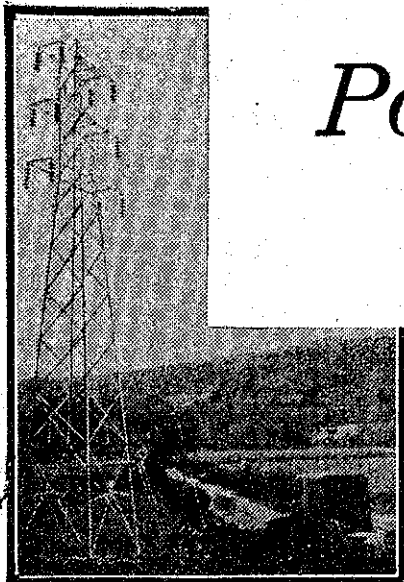


Power Line Leakages Mar Radio Reception

*Concerted efforts to minimise made
by Public Works, Power Boards and
P. & T. Department*



FOR the past year or so, numerous letters complaining about power-line interference have been received with increasing regularity from listeners in every province in New Zealand. With the increase, both in the number of radio licenses issued and in the number of districts in which reticulation has been effected, the trouble has become so acute as to necessitate urgent concerted action by the various bodies in control of power supplies.

It is an undoubted fact that people possessing an up-to-date radio set will spend more evenings at home than those possessing no such means of entertainment, and who consequently are forced to seek enjoyment outside the home. Granting this, it is obvious that more power in the form of lighting, etc., will be consumed by the set-owner. Hence, is it not in the direct interests of the Power Boards throughout New Zealand to eradicate any cause for interference which would prevent enjoyable reception?

Registering Complaints.

THE general opinion seems to exist among listeners that their complaints are totally ignored by the various authorities connected with reticulation. We can assure them that this is not so. Ever since the inception of broadcasting in New Zealand, the serious nature of this type of interference has been realised, and every effort has been made to minimise it.

That success has not attended every endeavour is due mainly to two factors: (a) the difficulty of locating a defect that does not reveal its presence by sparking or sizzling; (a) the indefinite nature of many of the complaints received.

As all complaints are finally delivered into the hands of the local radio inspector, our advice to listeners is to write directly to them, giving definite locations of faults. Great care should be taken, however, that the presence of interference can be proved—either by a detect-

ing receiver, by visible discharges, or the presence of corona effects. This latter condition is important, for should the engineer find the fault to lie with the set, or with anything but the power supply, then other complaints would probably be ignored.

It is also an established fact that a battery-operated receiver is occasionally quieter in operation than an all-electric set, because the great sensitivity of the latter, incorporating as it usually does, two or three stages of screen-grid radio-frequency, enables it to pick up any interference existing for quite a distance around.

DURING late years the radio receiver, as a trouble-free and much-appreciated means of home entertainment, has made rapid progress towards ultimate perfection. At the present time only two important factors capable of marring reception are left—namely, static and power interference. Of these, the latter is curable to some extent, and hence is obviously the next nuisance to eradicate. In many countries the problem has been recognised as being acute, and organised attacks have been made upon this type of interference, with the result that the trouble has, in general, been greatly minimised. Contrary to the opinions of many listeners, however, the problem of interference is recognised by many New Zealand Power Boards as a serious one, and much time and expense has been devoted to eradicating it.

The Controlling Bodies.

MOST of the complaints received by us lay the responsibility for curing the trouble on the shoulders of three distinct bodies—namely, the Power Boards, the Public Works Department, and the Radio Branch of the Post and Telegraph Department. Nothing definite seems to be known by the complainants regarding the relations and responsibilities of these departments.

In order to obtain an official ruling on the matter, an interview was arranged between our representative and Mr. Miller, assistant electrical engineer of the Public Works Department.

At the outset, Mr. Miller stated definitely that though his department has certain power over the Power Boards throughout New Zealand, it possesses no jurisdiction whatsoever to enforce power suppliers to overhaul their lines unless the latter are so defective as to be a menace to public safety.

It appears that though overhead equipment may be faulty enough to cause interference with radio reception, yet it is still passed by the Public Works Department because human life is in no way endangered.

Mr. Miller anticipated no trouble whatsoever with the various Power Boards, his experience in the matter being that they are usually only

too willing to rectify any trouble, provided it is located for them. In fact, the engineers of some Power Boards—Taranaki and Dannevirke for example—are already, and without pressure, using multi-valve sets to locate and rectify any interference. "However," concluded Mr. Miller—

"should any difficulty be experienced, the Public Works Department will be quite willing to make inquiries concerning a Power Board's indifference to the matter. We cannot definitely promise that this will make any difference, because, as I mentioned before, we really have no power to enforce compliance with such a request."

Power Board Engineer's Views.

MR. HOLLANDS, chief engineer and general manager of the Hutt Valley Power Board, supported Mr. Miller's prediction that power suppliers throughout New Zealand would be anything but antagonistic in considering listeners' complaints. A statement made by several listeners in their letters of complaint—namely, that Power Boards will not rectify any defects unless they are located for them—was found to be quite correct, and to a great extent justifiable.

"Most power suppliers consider that the matter is not sufficiently in their interests to rectify," remarked Mr. Hollands, "and, indeed, if it were, the majority of Power Boards throughout New Zealand are not sufficiently on their feet as yet to justify the engagement of a specially trained engineer for the sole purpose of locating and curing defects. In the future it is highly probable that such a course will be adopted," he continued, "but for the present it behoves listeners to locate any cause for interference themselves." Also, the expense of specially overhauling power lines which are, from our point of view, quite efficient, would be prohibitive," he concluded.

With regard to the cause of the trouble, Mr. Hollands remarked that the binding connecting the power line to the insulators is probably the chief cause of offence.

When the binding is completed and the surplus wire is snipped off, occasionally the tip is

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By providing amusement in the home, radio is a powerful influence to preserve family life, which modern civilization is threatening. But when reception is marred by interference, the good is offset, and radio loses its appeal. It is incumbent upon all to help minimise this nuisance.

Public Works and P. and T. Departments are willing to co-operate with Power Boards and listeners to overcome or at least lessen interference from power lines. It is in the interests of every listener to help these public bodies by reporting promptly cases where interference is prevalent.