

Free Use of Records Forbidden

Gramophone Companies Place Restrictions on Radio Trade

ALL STATIONS AFFECTED

ALL broadcasting stations have had, from November 1, to cease broadcasting records that are not their own property. This, according to the Listeners' League, who waited upon Mr. Taverner, Minister of Public Works, recently, will mean that many private stations will be forced off the air. In Dunedin only one station will continue to operate and this is owned by a gramophone agency.

Mr. Taverner, in reply, said he knew from a very recent conference which he had had with the Hon. J. B. Donald that the Postmaster-General was anxious to do all he could to stabilise the position and place it on a reasonable basis, which certainly did not exist at present. With regard to the apparent imposition, they would find his colleague very sympathetic.

There was a general feeling that this sort of control had gone beyond reasonable limits. Just what powers the makers of records of the Performing Rights Association had in New Zealand law, he was not in a position to say, but he had reason to believe that that aspect of the question was receiving Mr. Donald's attention.

Mr. Donald had also told him that it was his intention to inform Cabinet that it was not the Government's intention to go in for programme work. The Postmaster-General would probably welcome the assistance of the league.

The message from Dunedin stating that B class stations would have to cease operations after November 1 was referred by a representative of the Wellington "Evening Post" to the managing director of one of the chief gramophone record distributing companies.

He said that such statements were very misleading, for the record distributors had no intention whatever of forcing stations off the air: what they did insist upon, however, was that a fair deal should be given the music trade.

The real position could best be put by quoting from a circular letter sent by his company—very similar letters being sent by all the other distributors—to their retailers:—

"Under instructions from our principals . . . we beg to advise you that on and after November 1, 1930 . . . records are not to be supplied to A or B class broadcasting stations, except they be purchased in the ordinary class of business at retail prices.

No records are to be loaned, given, or sold at less than retail prices.

"There is the whole thing," he said. "We are not saying that the broadcasting of records has to cease: we have no power to say so, but we do say that the stations, either A or B, should purchase those records. The broadcasting of records is a straight-out business proposition: there should be a business return to the people who depend for their livelihood on the sale of records. Record manufacturers are facing a tremendous falling-off in business, very largely due to indiscriminate broadcasting of records. As is clear from the circular letter we are making no difference between A and B stations.

"Surely the Radio Listeners' League, which, I presume, is composed of business people, will recognise that we are asking a fair thing and will be only too glad to assist legitimate business by arranging for the quite moderate funds required."

Common-sense Broadcasting.

THERE was a great deal of difference between common-sense broadcasting and indiscriminate broadcasting, he continued. It was the latter type which worried the record traders.

Either one station or another would be on the air from breakfast time to bed time, before breakfast sometimes.

In some cases retailers who were station operators had adopted a neat trick when announcing records broadcasted by them, of giving a special shop code number. A listener might like it and decide to buy, and the only shop where that code could be understood would be the broadcaster's. They therefore insisted that retailer-broadcasters should announce the standard number on the record, and not a "fake" special shop number.



THE SALON TRIO, consisting of Miss Jean Clarkson (cello and piano), Miss Helen Gray (violiniste), and Mrs. Freda Evans (soprano). A combination of artists who are heard from 1YA. —S. P. Andrew, photo

and certain records were so effectively killed by endless repetition that no one wanted to hear them again, let alone buy them. It was for this reason that the record traders were asking dealers who were also station operators to eliminate request items altogether.

A record might be put on Monday afternoon; that evening someone rang up and asked for it again; it went on. On Tuesday there was another request, and on it went again, afternoon and evening; and thereafter, to make sure of pleasing a lot more requesters it stayed on at least once a day for the rest of the week. Not only were listeners sickened of that record over the air, but they were made far too sick to buy it.

Further Views.
SUPPLYING records free for broadcasting purposes had been doing the gramophone concerns a tremendous amount of harm, said Mr. W. U. Webley, of Webley, Sons, and Gofton, to-day, when the complaint made to the Minister of Public Works (the Hon. W. B. Taverner) by the executive of the New Zealand Radio Listeners' League was referred to him. He contended that it was quite just that broadcasting stations should pay for the records which they put on the air.

"The instructions to stop the supply came from Australia in the first place," said Mr. Webley. "Broadcasting stations are commercial propositions, just as we are. Hitherto they have been

freely supplied by wholesalers and retailers, without cost to themselves, and such a practice has been doing us a tremendous amount of harm. The position has been that the same record was broadcast so often that listeners became sick and tired of it through this continual repetition, and would not dream of buying it for their own gramophones. Continuance of the old policy might keep the radio people on the air, but it certainly will put the small gramophone dealer out of business.

"The Australian Performing Rights Association is insisting that any record broadcast shall not be given more than once a day for the first 14 days after the station gets it, and only once a week after that. That restriction, I am certain, will be welcomed by listeners."

Another Explanation.

WHEN interviewed by a "Sun" reporter concerning the above statements, Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, said that the position as stated by the gramophone people permitted of another explanation, as far as the A class stations were concerned.

"In the past, the broadcasting stations (A as well as B) had enjoyed the privilege of being lent the necessary recordings and the broadcasting of them has all along been recognised as being beneficial to the record selling business.

"Only comparatively recently has this view changed, due, according to Mr. Webley's statement, to instructions received from Australian interests.

"As far as the A stations are concerned, and apart from the records lent by the gramophone companies, the Radio Broadcasting Company owns a large library of thousands of recordings all purchased from the dealers, and great care is taken that these are not broadcast with undue frequency.

"As for Mr. Webley's statement that records are broadcast until listeners are sick and tired of them, this is pure camouflage, as those records lent to the broadcasting Company are not broadcast more often than at monthly intervals, and then only of considered acceptable to the listener.

"Apart from the fact that it is unwise for the Broadcasting Company in its own interests to overdo any item, the remedy has always been in the hands of the local dealers, whose wishes in every way the Broadcasting Company has always endeavoured to respect as far as it is practicable to do so.

"As has been explained by Mr. Webley, instructions have come from Australia. The New Zealand gramophone dealers must make out as good a case as they can for their principals, but the instructions received will hit some of the 'B' broadcasting stations rather hard. Some of the 'B' stations are run by gramophone dealers, and we understand that they will not be affected by the new conditions, but the other B grade stations which rely on the loan of records will suffer severely."

Wellington "B" Station.

DESPITE the embargo on the broadcasting of records, plans for the erection of 2ZW, Wellington's new B (Concluded on page 27.)