

The New Zealand Radio Record

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Home Journal

(Incorporating the "Canterbury Radio Journal.")

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RADIO PUBLISHING COMPANY OF NEW ZEALAND, LTD.,
P.O. Box 1032, WELLINGTON.

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1931.

RADIO ADVERTISING IN RELATION TO THE LISTENER.

WITH the frank declaration that broadcast advertising had got out of hand, Mr. W. E. Macfarlane, business manager of the "Chicago Tribune," challenged the thoughtful consideration of a Convention of American Newspaper Proprietors recently. The newspaper with which Mr. Macfarlane is associated itself owns and operates a radio station, and as the advertising chief of both the newspaper and the radio station, Mr. Macfarlane is in a unique position to discuss business angles of the new medium of advertising and its reflex action upon the radio listener. Mr. Macfarlane points out initially that the United States do not follow the example of most other countries, and establish a tax upon receiving sets for the purpose of maintaining a broadcasting service. With their usual devotion to private enterprise, the United States threw the field open, and as a result it to-day has some 600 independently-owned private broadcasting stations which maintain themselves by advertising revenue. This advertising revenue is derived from advertising presented in two main forms: First, direct advertising in the form of price lists and direct sales talk; and secondly, the sponsored programmes where the advertiser seeks to build goodwill by presenting a musical entertainment of high quality. This creates the situation that the broadcast station in the United States depends upon the same means of economic support as the newspaper. Whereas, however, the newspaper collects a small charge from its reader for each copy (which costs more than that to produce) the broadcaster gives the listener free auditory sound. In each case, however, the real fountain-head of the service is the advertiser.

THE manner in which this advertising has developed is what creates the definite problem facing the American listener. At the National Radio Conference held in 1925, a resolution was adopted, reading in part: "That the conference deprecates the use of radio broadcasting for direct sales effort and any form of special pleading for the broadcaster or his products, which forms are entirely appropriate when printed or through direct advertising mediums"—but, it might have been added—"are inappropriate when used by radio." If that philosophy had been followed, the newspaper and the radio services

would have been supplementary to each other. Instead of that, Mr. Macfarlane points out, they have become directly competitive in the United States. The advertiser has not been content, in his use of radio, to seek goodwill only. He became insistent upon direct advertising of the most pronounced type—not merely special pleading, but lists of prices, continuing in some cases for a quarter of an hour. This is admitted to be a bad form of publicity, and Mr. Macfarlane is broad enough to admit: "As a radio listener I am frequently disturbed by the advertising which I have to admit into my home in order to hear programmes in which I am interested." This observation applies to the sponsored programme as well as to that of direct advertising.

WITH American experience as a guide, New Zealand has so far steered clear of the pitfall of advertising over the air. Efforts have been made to introduce it, and possibly will be renewed in spite of existing recommendations and declarations. We understand that recently a deputation representing B Class stations, when approaching the Postmaster-General in connection with their copyright problems, broached the question of being permitted to seek advertising revenue through the use of sponsored programmes. This permission was naturally not given, nor was any hope held out that the position would alter. On the whole we believe this decision to be fundamentally sound in the interests of listeners themselves. In our circumstances in New Zealand, with a relatively small revenue on which to operate, it is tempting to consider the possibility of sponsored programmes under judicious control and restriction. The difficulty, however, is to maintain them under control. The old tag has it that he who pays the piper calls the tune, and once give the advertiser an entry into the ether, the tendency would be for him to demand more and more definite return for his cash outlay regardless of psychological reaction. Further, the right to advertise could not be given to one radio section without another, and the practice once started would create a competition which would be uneconomic to the community in general. Both radio and the newspaper have their separate function in our daily life, and the decision to keep those functions separate and distinct, particularly in a small community such as New Zealand, is in our opinion definitely wise.

Musical and Dramatic "B" Class Stations and Copyright Committee

A MEETING of the 4YA Musical and Dramatic Committee was held on Thursday, February 5, Mr. H. P. Desmoulins (representing the Choral Society) presiding. There were also present: Mr. Max Scherek (Society of Professional Musicians), Mr. J. G. Butler (Royal Dunedin Male Choir), Mr. G. Angus (Anderson's Bay Glee Club), Mr. H. McFarlane (Dunedin Orchestral Society), Mr. A. Cook (Burns Club), Mr. S. Osborne (Dunedin Shakespeare Society), Mr. A. F. O'Donoghue (Station Manager).

Mr. O'Donoghue, having taken up his duties as Station Manager at 4YA, was cordially welcomed. The question of arranging a New Zealand Composers' Night was discussed, and the matter referred to a sub-committee, with Mr. T. J. Kirk-Burnand, Programme Organiser, as convener. On the motion of Mr. Cook, recommendations concerning an Old Time Concert were adopted.

The Station Manager submitted a report on the outstanding features of the past month and on the attractions scheduled for the coming month. He intimated his intention of featuring sporting events as much as possible. Discussing the "horrible tremolos" in the voices of some radio performers, Mr. Desmoulins soundly condemned the tendency, which he attributed to faulty training. He said that Sir Henry Wood had described the tremolos as a terrible "wobble." The date of the next meeting was fixed for Friday, March 6.

Position Not Yet Finalised

IN our issue last week, in referring to the position between B class stations and the Copyright Association, we said: "We are given to understand that a statement in the daily Press (and accepted by us in good faith) allegedly emanating from the secretary of the recently-formed association of B class stations, etc. . . . is not fully correct."

In connection with this statement, Mr. H. Booth, secretary of the B Class Stations Association, writes that he was not responsible for issuing the statement in question. This assurance by Mr. Booth is quite accepted by us. We based our remarks upon information which was in conflict with a newspaper statement. As was pointed out last week, the arrangement between the B class stations and the Copyright Association are not yet finalised, but negotiations are, we are informed, still in progress. One or two stations have, it is understood, effected arrangements; notably that of the New Zealand station operated by the Manawatu Radio Society, and we believe a station in Dunedin.

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