

The New Zealand Radio Record

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Home Journal

(Incorporating the "Canterbury Radio Journal.")

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WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1931.

CONTROVERSY IN BROADCASTING.

AN interesting question was raised by a deputation, composed mainly of representatives of Christchurch societies, who waited upon the Postmaster-General last week. Their purpose was to seek either a definition of the phrase "propaganda of a controversial nature," as defined in one of the regulations governing broadcasting, or a withdrawal of the ban upon debates held to come under this definition. In brief, the deputation, representing such diverse interests as the Canterbury College Dialectic Society, the No-More-War movement, the W.C.T.U., the League of Nations Union, the Y.M.C.A., the Pacific Relations Group, the National Peace Council, and the W.E.A., represented that the ban upon the discussion of controversial subjects over the air operated against public interest. It was desired that debates upon controversial topics should be permitted, provided both sides were adequately represented.

THIS raises an important issue, and the Minister rightly took time to consider his reply. From all the circumstances attending upon the case, we imagine that, for the time being at any rate, no change in departmental policy will be made. Regulations governing wireless and broadcasting in general are now under review. They have been in the melting-pot for some time, and many interests will be glad to see them made public, so that the future policy can be known. In the meantime the regulations stand, and the Company, in discharging its contractual obligations, must apply those regulations. It is strange in this connection, therefore, for the Minister to have made the comment that the Company, in applying its own regulations, was "sheltering" behind them. The word "sheltering" is inappropriate in this connection. So long as the regulations remain as they are, the Company must apply them.

IN the public interest the "Radio Record" thinks it would be wise for the regulation to be broadened. This would be following the example of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Elsewhere we give in full, from a recent Handbook, the considered statement of the British Broadcasting Corporation's attitude to controversy over the

air, and the policy that has been evolved for its treatment. In brief, the only restriction upon the British Broadcasting Corporation is that it is prevented from expressing its own editorial opinions upon matters of public policy. It is permitted to broadcast statements involving matters of political, religious and industrial controversy. In practice it apparently excludes matters of religious controversy, but has exercised a firm and wise circumspection in handling, by means of public discussions and debates, matters of political and industrial importance. On this aspect a quotation from the Crawford Report is of moment. That Commission said: "Speaking generally, if the material be of high quality, not too lengthy or insistent, and distributed with scrupulous fairness, licensees will desire a moderate amount of controversy." But it was emphasised that the discretion of the governing authority must be upheld; and that authority must act strongly and impartially, with firm and consistent circumspection.

WHILE we believe that matters of public interest should receive treatment over the air, we quite recognise that a heavy responsibility will be placed upon the governing authority once the existing regulations are broadened. Listeners, we imagine, will not welcome discursive or amateurish debates of a protracted character. Talks or discussions are notoriously the most difficult feature of broadcasting with which to achieve success. Music wins its own way. Talking runs the gamut of matter and manner. Good radio voices are rare, and New Zealand largely lacks the experts capable of presenting controversial subjects interestingly. At the same time there is available material of promise in the country, and it would be good for this material to be used. These questions follow inevitably upon the broadening of the main regulations, but must be considered in relation to that issue. We agree with the deputation that it would be desirable for the existing regulations to be broadened, but we cannot fail to recognise that that decision, when made, will impose a heavy responsibility upon the governing authority, for increasing pressure will be exercised by enthusiasts of all sorts and kinds in the effort to parade their views before listeners.

'Carnival of Animals'

Zoological Fancy from 2YA

SAINT-SAENS' "Carnival of the Animals" is to be played by the 2YA Salon Orchestra on Tuesday, April 21.

This "Grand Zoological Fantasy" was written in 1886 as a joke, for a private concert. In it, Saint-Saens gives musical portraits of fish, flesh and fowl, and indulges in ironical wit, in a little satire upon the human animal.

For some reason he insisted that the work as a whole should not be published until after his death. One movement escaped the ban, and became extremely popular—the charming 'cello solo entitled "The Swan."

No. 1. "Introduction and Royal Lion's March." An amusingly gradiose circus-entry, with very effective roars from His Majesty.

No. 2. "Hens and Cocks." Pianos and strings, with clarinet. The fiddle's "cock-a-doodle-doo" is very life-like.

No. 3. "Hemioni" (swift animals). Wild asses caper about all over the keyboards.

No. 4. "Tortoises." A well-known lively tune from Offenbach's "Orpheus" is played extremely slowly with comical effect.

No. 5. "The Elephant." The double bass (or, in another version, the tuba) treads in a lumbering fashion a measure from the Ballet of Sylphs in Berlioz' "Faust."

No. 6. "Kangaroos." Agile skips on the pianos.

No. 7. "Aquarium." An impression of the lithe darts and flashes of fish.

The piano, in arpeggios, and the harmonica, suggest the undulating, shimmering surface of the water.

No. 8. "Long-eared Personages." Two violins imitate the mournful brays of donkeys.

No. 9. "The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Wood." The clarinet gives the bird's familiar call, against a background of piano tone.

No. 10. "The Aviary." Pianos and flute imitate various bird-notes, while strings, trembling, suggest the flutter of wings. The cuckoo is heard again at the end of the movement.

No. 11. "Pianists." These weird beings play finger-exercises, after the fashion of the child next door, from whose early fumbblings we have all suffered.

No. 12. "Fossils." Bits of well-worn French tunes are scattered about. The inclusion of the dance of skeletons, from Saint-Saens' "Danse Macabre," is appropriate, though in one sense those bones whose rattling is so much enjoyed by audiences, cannot be said to be fossilised.

No. 13. "The Swan." A graceful tune for solo 'cello, accompanied by the two pianos. The melody's outline, on paper, is curiously like the curves of a swan.

No. 14. "Finale." A brilliant display by all hands, to wind up.

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S-O-S

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