

# Radio Listeners' League

## Formation of Wellington Branch

**D**ESPITE abundant advertising, and a thorough method of organisation, the public meeting held at Wellington on Wednesday evening, April 22, in Nimmo's concert hall, to form a Wellington branch of the New Zealand Radio Listeners' League, proved somewhat disappointing. Only about 50 persons were present, and a proportion of these appeared to have attended mainly to hear the free gramophone concert which was advertised to form part of the evening's proceedings. At the conclusion of the meeting more than half of the people, apart from those associated with its organisation, left without joining the league, although they were actively canvassed by members of the committee.

Mr. J. H. Owen occupied the chair. He mentioned that apologies for absence had been received from Dr. G. F. V. Anson, Messrs. Martin Luckie, and H. D. Bennett. In his opening remarks the chairman, reading from notes, briefly outlined the objects of the league and the purpose for which the meeting was called. Mr. Owen said that membership was open to all, whether radio licensees or not. He then introduced Mr. Harold Booth (of Dunedin), Dominion organiser of the league, to explain the objects and policy of the New Zealand Radio Listeners' League.

### Mr. Booth's Address.

**MR. BOOTH** said that in view of the fact that the Radio Broadcasting Company's contract would be expiring at the end of the year, and as the Postmaster-General had expressed his intention of bringing down new regulations, the time was opportune for the radio licensees to form one representative organisation for the whole of New

Zealand, so that those who paid the piper would have some say in calling the tune. For instance, he said, if the Government decides to form a Board of Control of broadcasting the radio licensees should have at least one representative on that board. No person connected with the radio trade could take office on the executive of a branch of the league, and membership of the branches was open to all comers whether radio licensees or not. Mr. Booth admitted and deplored the fact that the larger proportion of radio licensees had not yet joined the league. It was not sufficient to convince the radio licensees that the league was necessary; it was essential that they should have a big membership roll. It was proposed to call a Dominion conference of the various branches of the league about next August to form a national policy, and to offer suggestions to the Government as to what should be done. The league was a non-political body, but it was difficult to keep politics out of an organisation of that character. The league was formed to protect the rights of radio licensees.

They had been accused, said Mr. Booth, of being out to boost the trade or the "B" class stations. They were not going to boost either the "A" or "B" class stations. The question of these stations, however, came within the scope of the league's constitution, which provides that the league can be prepared to take in hand those matters. Eleven branches of the league had been formed in New Zealand, but, said Mr. Booth, he could not say whether they

were large in membership or not, but the executives were enthusiastic and the membership was growing.

Among the main objects of the league, Mr. Booth explained, was to enable all interests of the radio licensees to be concentrated at one central place of advice; to obtain a satisfactory broadcast service for all places in the Dominion from all New Zealand stations or "outside"; to ensure protection from interference due to leakages from power boards' supplies, X-ray and similar sources of interfer-

ences of opinions as to the merit of increasing the power of those stations. They must obtain expert advice on that matter. There was also no guarantee that the present cost of the listener's license fee would not be increased. Moreover, any assurance of the present Government was not binding on its successors.

Mr. Booth appealed for a strong membership of the Wellington branch, as the listeners in Wellington were at the seat of Government and readily accessible. In Otago, where they had about 6000 licensees, they had a membership of 2000. In Wellington, where there were somewhere between 14,000 or 15,000 listeners, they should have a membership of at least half that number.

### Organisation Too Wide.

Mr. I. M. Levy obtained the permission of the chairman to refer to a matter mentioned by Mr. Booth in his address. Mr. Levy pointed out that a serious blunder had been made in admitting all and sundry into membership of the league, whether they were radio licensees or not. He said that when they approached the Postmaster-General and claimed to represent the radio licensees, those whom Mr. Booth had said "paid the piper and should call the tune," no one could say how many of those whose names went to swell the membership roll had the right, as payers of radio license fees, to make representations to the Government. A fatal mistake had been made by admitting all and sundry to membership of the various branches of the league; it was fundamentally wrong in practice and in principle. They could not reasonably hope to deceive the Postmaster-General when they represented to him that their membership roll comprised so many when the plain fact remained that the membership of the league was not restricted to those who paid the radio listeners' license fees. The chairman had invited those present to enrol their neighbours when they came in to listen to broadcast programmes. This method of swelling the roll of membership, Mr. Levy stated, looked uncommonly akin to "roll-stuffing." Undoubtedly a considerable number of "outside" people had already been entered as members of other branches of the league; the constitution provided for it and their membership had been solicited. In his opinion, Mr. Levy said, the league's prestige was already discounted throughout New Zealand.

Mr. Levy's remarks were briefly endorsed by two others.

### Quite a Debate.

Mr. Booth replied that he had a full list of every registered radio licensee throughout New Zealand, and he had checked the membership rolls of the branches and found that only a few who did not hold radio licenses had been admitted to membership.

Mr. Levy remarked that Mr. Booth's reply did not tally with the statement he had made earlier in the evening—that eleven branches of the league had



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ence; to ensure a proper separation of the wavelengths of the various broadcast stations to prevent clashing (Mr. Booth here mentioned that at times he could not get one station without simultaneously hearing four or five other stations); to enlighten the public on the benefits of radio; to obtain legislation to protect radio; to render all possible assistance in the development of radio; to support the establishment of a Board of Control and to have at least one radio licensee's representative on the board. Mr. Booth urged that there was only one way to obtain these objects and that was by organisation. The existing radio clubs and associations could affiliate with the league. It was no good for the league to claim to represent the 61,000 radio licensees if the membership of the league comprised only a few hundred.

Continuing, Mr. Booth said that the league had to consider whether Government control of broadcasting was in the best interests of licensees or not. At the present moment the Postmaster-General's proposals were too indefinite for criticism. There should be no hasty decision to increase the power of the existing "A" class stations. There were