

# The New Zealand Radio Record

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## Home Journal

(Incorporating the "Canterbury Radio Journal.")

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WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 1931.

### THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S SPEECH.

WE had hoped that the opportunity presented by the opening of the Wellington Radio Exhibition—which function he was invited to perform in his capacity of Postmaster-General—would have been seized by the Hon. J. B. Donald, in order to place before listeners and the radio public in general a full outline of the Government's radio scheme. We expressed this hope earlier, and pointed out to the Minister that listeners were naturally eager to secure some details of that scheme from which they were assured they would receive such great benefit. Unfortunately the Minister had to confess that, though his scheme had been submitted to Cabinet, he had not yet succeeded in "getting it O.K.'d," and therefore he was unable to announce details. In those circumstances the Minister could do no more than reiterate certain hopes which he has already announced himself as entertaining. The Minister made much of the point of view that listeners were entitled to "a say" in the service. That is a good democratic cry, but we wonder the Minister does not apply his own medicine and give listeners the opportunity of propounding their views as to how their say should be expressed and other details of the service to be provided for their delectation. Why not let them help in forming the Government's scheme? We are also inclined to wonder whether the Minister, in propounding his view as to the say to which listeners are entitled, is aware of the extent to which the listener already has a say in the direction of controlling the Company's programme policy. Some fourteen committees, representatives of such interests as the Church, Children, Music, Dramatic and Primary interests, are at work in the various centres, giving practical help in providing the most satisfactory service to the public. That assistance is rendered by gentlemen who are both experts in their field and enthusiasts for radio, and we venture to predict that through them the listener is securing both better representation and more effective service than will be possible from non-expert hands, however well intentioned they may be. However, we trust that in due course the Minister will be able to announce his scheme. It has been a long time a-hatching, so that it is hoped no "ugly duckling" will finally emerge. The scheme is certain to be subject to detailed and efficient review by many interests; Cabinet is thus wise in not permitting itself to be rushed into a decision. It must further be remembered that the Minister is under commitment to Parliament to submit his scheme to it before taking action. The time for Parliament's assembly draws near, and little interval remains available for the expression of public views.

ON one point the Minister was definite. He announced, as being of interest to the trade, that he had signed a letter to a certain gentleman stating that in his operation of a B class station he would be permitted to use sponsored programmes, and to announce the name of the firm sponsoring them both before and after the presentation of the programme. This, said the Minister, would help B class stations to "defray their expenses." We feel bound to say that the Minister has created surprise by his action, and it would be of interest to know all that lies behind his change of front. On several occasions in the past Mr. Donald has placed himself on record, both verbally and in writing, as being definitely opposed to radio advertising in any shape or form. In one of those statements the Minister went so far as to say in effect that he realised the danger of even allowing a beginning to be made with advertising. In face of such a declaration, it is, to say the least, extraordinary for a responsible Minister of the Crown to make such a volte face. Why was it done? Obviously no distinction can be made between one station and another, and the Minister's new policy will permit each of the thirty odd B class stations throughout the country to seek advertising and financial support from sponsored programmes. The concession made by the Minister is admittedly a limited one, and warning was given that it must not be abused under danger of withdrawal of the privilege. But why play with fire? Experience in America shows that the advertiser, once he is permitted entry upon the air, demands more and more until he becomes intolerable. "He who pays the piper calls the tune" is particularly true of hard-headed advertising men accustomed to seeking 25/- worth of value for every pound they spend in publicity. American experience has proved definitely unsatisfactory. On this point we need do no more than quote the words of a recent American visitor to the effect that the radio listener is now utterly sick of the advertising menace that has been built up. He switches from station to station in a vain effort to achieve music pure and unadulterated. On this question we give full support to the British viewpoint and practice, viz., that the radio service should be operated wholly and solely from the point of view of the listener himself, without the intrusion of advertising activities. The British model stands supreme as the most satisfactory of all systems that have been tried. We therefore sincerely hope that the mis-step which in our opinion has been made will be rectified without loss of time by the Government. If a diversified and comprehensive service is desired it will be achieved far better by the establishment of one co-ordinated system servicing the whole country than by a heterogeneous collection of unrelated stations.

## "B" Class Stations

### Sponsored Programmes Permitted

WE are given to understand that the announcement made by the Postmaster-General, the Hon. J. B. Donald, at the opening of the Wellington Radio Exhibition, that a certain trader had been given permission to give sponsored programmes from his station and that announcement of the name of the firm donating the programme could be made both at the beginning and the end of the session, is applicable to all B class stations in New Zealand.

Although copy of the Ministerial letter is not available, we are assured that the permission given is strictly limited to the bare announcement at the beginning and end of each programme that "this programme is supplied by Messrs. So-and-so."

There are in New Zealand some thirty odd B class stations, and this announcement by the Minister creates an entirely new situation in New Zealand broadcasting. Hitherto the Minister, both in verbal and written statements, has expressed himself as opposed to advertising and as recognising the danger of even starting advertising on the air in New Zealand.