

# Public Relations Board

## Logical and Comprehensive Scheme Submitted by Mr. A. R. Harris



**DURING** the currency of the Wellington Radio Exhibition a meeting of dealers was held, at which Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, was present by special invitation. On behalf of the dealers, the chairman, Mr. W. M. Dawson, explained that they were particularly interested in the future of broadcasting. Because of their wide interests in the trade, they felt that they could, with advantage, be associated in some way with the company controlling the service, and he asked Mr. Harris if he would outline any scheme that the company had in mind to meet such a desire on their part.

### Outline of Proposal.

**MR. HARRIS** said that the company had already given the matter very serious consideration, and had proposed, subject to approval, to form a Public Relations Board to co-ordinate the work and objects of the existing Public Relations Committee. These committees now consisted of four children's committees, four church committees, four musical and dramatic committees, in the four main centres, and two primary producers' committees with two more to be formed at Auckland and Wellington, as well as possibly four sports committees. In the meantime to secure immediate action in regard to sporting events, it was proposed to form at Auckland a sub-committee of the existing Music and Dramatic Committee, together with representatives of prominent sports bodies, to make recommendations in regard to sports matters. On the outcome of that experience, necessary similar action might be taken later in other centres. He had no doubt that an allocation would be made to sports bodies somewhat on the lines of the sum that had been set aside for distribution among musical organisations in the four centres in recognition of their courtesy in permitting broadcasts of their public performances.

### Success of Special Committees.

**THESE** public relations committees had been formed for the purpose of dealing with specific services, as it was found impracticable to form a single committee capable of dealing efficiently with the diverse ramifications of a broadcast service. For instance, in regard to church matters, a committee consisting of representatives of the more prominent denominations was set up in each of the four main centres. In most cases these representatives were ministers of their respective denominations. They were not, however, selected because of this, but because they were more conversant with the requirements of religious broadcasts than the company was. In the same way committees had been formed to deal with children's services and also with musical and dramatic entertainments. Altogether there were functioning at the present time some

fourteen committees, all meeting monthly. Ultimately these committees would be extended to twenty in number. The object dominating their formation was that they should review the work being done by the Broadcasting Company in respect of the various services that went to make up a broadcast programme, with a view to obtaining from those programmes the greatest public benefit. These committees had done most valuable work and had more than justified themselves because of the specialised knowledge and enthusiasm brought to their task by the members. On the experience gained the company now felt justified in proposing the establishment of the logical conclusion, namely, a centralised body which could

man. The board thus constituted would meet regularly to deal with the reports as they came from the various committees. Further, once a year it might be advisable to convene a general conference of delegates of the committees in order that everything pertaining to the service could be passed in review.

### Responsible Positions.

**MR. HARRIS** indicated that comprehensive reports of the proceedings of all committees were at present compiled and carefully considered. These reports thus constituted a foundation for the initiation of the work of the proposed board, and under the proposed scheme would automatically come before the members of the central body. The work of members of this board would be fairly onerous. They would be required to digest the reports and review the work of some twenty committees monthly. It would be fair, therefore, for some remuneration to be paid for their work, and this, together with the necessary expenses, would naturally be borne by the company.

In conclusion, Mr. Harris said that those outside the company naturally obtained a grandstand view of the situation. The company had spent a great deal of time and trouble over a period of six years in building up the service, and if the Dealers' Association cared to appoint a representative from each of the main centres to visit Christchurch in order to review the existing system and gather first-hand impressions of the extent and completeness of the organisation, the company would be pleased to give a cordial welcome.

### The R.B.C.'s Policy.

**IN** order to give listeners a comprehensive view of the Radio Broadcasting Company's policy, the following statement is reprinted from a brochure issued by the company:—

Radio broadcasting is a national service. Its ramifications cover many phases of personal interest of the greatest diversity.

On the spiritual side there are many people who are interested in church services; some want a service of a particular denomination, others want no creed, but are interested in broadcasts of an ethical character in general.

In intellectual matters we have those partial to a certain science, others perhaps not at all interested in any phase of science; but keenly interested in the higher forms of music and drama; while we have also a very large section of listeners attracted by entertainment of a humorous nature, certain news items, sports of various kinds, jazz and lighter forms of music.

The Broadcasting Company cannot select its audiences, or broadcast at any one time only to a section appreciative of a particular type of entertainment; there is always an unsatisfied element. The company must either cease to function or, while functioning and endeavouring to please all sections, inevitably fail to please all sections at one time or another, so long as indiscriminate listening is indulged in.

### Measures Taken.

**THERE** are certain ways in which this difficulty may to a certain extent be met, and two methods adopted by the company have been:—

Firstly, by a fundamental classification of programmes, where definite types, attractive to certain sections, are broadcast at particular times, so that listeners can, if they wish, discriminate without inconvenience or loss of service.

Secondly, by eliminating as far as possible any suspicion of favouritism for any particular form of service, thereby encouraging a spirit of tolerance and public confidence.

The first of these methods has been adopted by dividing the service into particular sessions, and classifying the programmes so that definite types are broadcast from each station at specified times, such programmes covering as wide a field as possible within the limits of their types, so as to give the greatest practical diversity.

### Scheme Formulated.

**WITH** the object of putting the second method into operation as effectively as possible, and at the same time increasing the public utility of its service, the directors of the Broadcasting Company have, during the year under review, introduced a public relations scheme embodying:

1. The formation of public committees at each of its stations.
2. The appointment of honorary official listeners in various places throughout the Dominion.

In all walks of life there are societies and associations of highly-qualified enthusiasts organised in a spirit of public service, each with its definite object. It is not desirable that radio broadcasting should lessen the public interest in these organisations, or in any way prejudice their activities. On the other hand, it is of the greatest public utility that radio broadcasting should co-operate with such organisations.

These organisations exist for the definite purpose of promoting interest in various subjects. For instance, there are musical and dramatic societies interested in offering to the public various types of entertainment. There are the churches, whose purpose it is to present religious teaching, and there are those organisations which are specially interested in the child life of the community. All are inevitably concerned with what radio broadcasting is doing so far as it affects their particular interests.

### Committees At Work.

**WITH** membership constituted of representatives of these organisations, church service committees, musical and dramatic committees, and children's session committees have been formed at the company's Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch stations. All positions are honorary, so that while the committees are closely associated

(Concluded on page 2B.)

## "Sick Of It"

### Advertising Condemned

**"ADVERTISING** is the scourge of radio in the United States," declared Mr. Brooks Gifford, a Los Angeles lawyer, on his arrival from Sydney by the Ulmaroa, states "The Dominion" newspaper.

"A great idea—what a marvelous service for listeners!" was his comment on being told of the New Zealand system, whereby all sets were licensed. In America licenses are not required, he said, the necessary funds for carrying on the broadcasting stations being obtained from advertising.

"Nobody listens to the advertising stunts over there," he said. Things are so bad that when you tune in to one station, a symphony or a song, or other item is suddenly broken into by a dissertation on the merits of somebody's hats or such like, and it means constantly tuning in to a new station. Sometimes we have to tune in to a dozen different stations in an evening, and I can assure you that people in America are absolutely tired of the whole thing."

review the recommendations of all committees and co-ordinate them prior to making comprehensive recommendations to the company for the improvement of the service. This work was already being done to some extent by the company, and it was proposed that it should be made a separate division of the company. This central body would include one representative of the radio trade, one of listeners, and two of the Broadcasting Company. The chairman would be elected by the members of the board, the company reserving the power to add to the board if found necessary. It was felt to be better to start with a small board, so that it would not become unwieldy and to increase membership as the service developed. A permanent secretary would be engaged as the duties involved would be such as to require the services of a full-time