

What the Company Has Done

Development of Broadcasting in New Zealand.



Listeners in the near future will be concerned with the decision of Parliament upon the future administration of the broadcasting service. It will be timely to review concisely the course of events in the past five or six years, particularly the activities of the company in bringing the broadcasting service to its present state of—not perfection, for that word is an impossible one in the broadcasting field, but at any rate of relative efficiency.

It was in August of 1925 that the Government entrusted the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd., which had been formed in quick time to undertake the responsibilities of the service, with the powers of establishing and building up a broadcast system suitable for the needs of the Dominion. The subject was a new one, but fortunately officers of the Post and Telegraph Department and responsible politicians had devoted to it a certain amount of investigation and thought. They had the advantage of a certain amount of experience in other countries, and could in a measure forecast the probable requirements of the Dominion in this field. By that time the British Broadcasting Corporation had been established, and it was decided in the main to make the British system a model for New Zealand, although the detailed administration of the service was to be entrusted, not to a Government corporation but to a private company. This was a sound decision in the state of our national development, for it has enabled a national broadcasting system to be established and carried out to the satisfaction of the great majority of listeners on sound financial lines, all without cost or liability to the State.

Some Actual Facts.

IN summary, the company has established and maintained broadcasting stations, including studios, with necessary plant and equipment embodying the very latest improvements, at the four main centres. It is well known that the station at Wellington was given power ten times that called for in the contract from the Government, this being provided to cope with any national emergency and to give daylight range of the whole Dominion.

In the second place, the company has given approximately four times the daily hours provided for under its original contract.

The character of the service given has encouraged the number of licensed listeners to grow from approximately 3000 to over 60,000.

After operating the service for some four years and studying the actual conditions as they obtained in New Zealand, the company could see that further development was necessary to give listeners all over the country the fullest possible efficiency. Technical investigation showed it that it was necessary to increase the efficiency of broadcast coverage and enable listeners in the country districts to obtain

a service equal to that already enjoyed by listeners adjacent to the main stations.

That scheme was submitted to the Government, but no action was taken upon it. It is still before the Government, but would seem to have been made the basis of the alternative scheme said to be in contemplation by the Government.

Programmes.

WHEN the company began operations the recording of gramophone music was not as efficient as it is now. It was therefore laid down in the original contract that a limited amount of

gramophone records should be used. It was thus incumbent upon the Broadcasting Company to exploit and develop to the fullest possible extent local musical and elocutionary talent. In the early stages the Broadcasting Company was condemned for using records. To-day it is condemned for not using them sufficiently. Realising its responsibility to develop local talent, the company sought assiduously for talented performers. Over 40,000 individual contracts with artists have been completed since the inception of the system without a single case of misunderstanding.

In addition to the service of developing local talent, the company has brought to the ears of listeners the world's leading artists by means of recorded performances.

In recent months the company has made available special recorded features selected from programmes broadcast in other countries, thus giving New Zealand listeners a diversity of entertainment that they could not obtain by any other means. In this field the company has kept fully in touch with modern developments.

There has also been given regular broadcasts of interesting and educational lectures by highly-qualified speakers; daily news is fully covered; market reports and descriptions of sporting events are not neglected.

Finally, in the service of its programme, it has assembled a musical library, comprising 16,000 items, many of which are unprocureable otherwise in New Zealand.

Public Service and Relations.

NO opportunity has been lost of broadcasting events of local, national and Imperial significance by means of relays and rebroadcasts. The company has freely co-operated with all local organisations in aiding the propagation of anything in the public welfare.

A particularly useful bond of association with the public has been forged by the appointment of 32 official listeners, and the establishment of 14 public committees, which bring to the service of broadcasting the specialised knowledge of 146 leading citizens, representative of a wide range of listeners' interests. These committees make recommendations to the company with regard to—

- (a) Entertainment, music, drama and sport.
- (b) Church services and broadcasts of a religious nature.
- (c) Children's work.
- (d) Service to primary producers.

Finally, the company has scrupulously safeguarded the political, sectarian, moral and social aspirations and susceptibilities of the listening public. It has done a very great deal to further all social interests.

Whatever may be the decision for the future governance of broadcasting, the company can have the satisfaction of knowing that it pioneered the broadcasting service in New Zealand; that it laid the foundations of the service broadly and soundly; that it faithfully carried out all the conditions of its contract—giving, in fact, much more than was required of it in practically every field; in short, that it blazed the trail courageously and well, quietly solving many problems, of the existence of which some, ever ready to complain, were not even aware.

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