

Future of "B" Class Stations

Mr. R. H. Nimmo Suggests Co-ordination of Selected Units with Main Stations to give Listeners United, Comprehensive and Alternative Services

WE enjoyed an interesting interview with Mr. R. H. Nimmo, who called upon us in connection with the situation that has developed with "B" class stations and their revenue problems. Mr. Nimmo's viewpoint is of interest to all listeners who are concerned with the future development of radio, and accordingly we publish his views in order that consideration may be given them.

Mr. Nimmo stated that, owing to the restrictions now placed upon sponsored programmes over the air by the Post and Telegraph Department, a serious position confronted "B" class stations in general. The revenue they had derived from certain arrangements that were in existence had seriously declined, and the position was developing, unless the position of such stations was taken into consideration by the Government, that many of them, if not all of them, would be forced off the air.

INTERESTED myself in radio broadcasting," said Mr. Nimmo, in his statement, "because as a trader I felt forced to take some action on behalf of the listener and the trade, to facilitate the sales of radio sets and give a service that would be helpful to such sales, not only by myself but by dealers in general. I therefore was glad to co-operate in the formation and establishment of the company operating 2ZW, just as many other dealers and provincial towns had taken the same course in regard to their stations for similar reasons. These stations, in the main, have been provided because the service from the existing YA stations has not been adequate to dealers desiring to demonstrate sets at hours other than those covered by the YA services. Further, in the provincial centres and distant points, the clarity of reception from YA stations left much to be desired.

"The response by the public to the extra hours and good transmission that have been afforded, in particular by 2ZW, has, I contend, been remarkable, and is testified to by many hundreds of letters that have come into the station from all over the Dominion, since we began operations. We counted for the successful conduct of our station, upon a certain amount of revenue being secured from sponsored programmes under definite control and used with discrimination. The restrictions now imposed cripple our revenue and make the outlook for the future most difficult."

What of the Future?

IT was necessary in those circumstances, continued Mr. Nimmo, to face the situation from the listeners' point of view. He contended that the listener in general had been rendered a definite service right through the country by the "B" class stations. The service provided by those stations had popularised radio to a greater extent than would have been the case had New Zealand depended on only the YA stations, thus helping the radio trade, the Broadcasting Company, and the listeners themselves. If the service given by the "B" class stations was to be lost, radio in general would suffer materially. He therefore considered that in determining the course upon which the broadcasting service for the

future should be conducted, it was incumbent upon the Government to take into consideration the position of "B" class stations. He contended that broadcasting service as a whole should be conducted primarily in the interests of listeners; that, while private enterprise might be used in the administration of that service in order to secure efficiency, it should be impossible for either "A" or "B" class stations to exploit the service from a profit-earning point of view. The most logical procedure in those circumstances was for both "A" and "B" class stations to be co-ordinated and under one control.

A Comprehensive Proposal.

WHILST he was a strong advocate of a board of control, he thought that, if the Government did not adopt the scheme, whatever company was entrusted with the control of the major

class stations in the main centres and in the more important provincial towns from the listeners' funds, and so provide that choice of programmes which was definitely required by listeners. This grant should be sufficient to cover interest on the capital involved in the station and running costs. If such an arrangement was made, he would be absolutely opposed to any B class station accumulating profits at the cost of the listener. Certain of the provincial B class stations could be linked up with the central YA stations as relay stations. Necessarily, under such an arrangement with the central authority, the B class stations concerned would have to attain a high standard of efficiency not only from a technical viewpoint, but also as regards the type and quality of programmes broadcast.

Technically, the stations would have to conform to certain definite standards approved by the Post and Telegraph Department, and as regards the programmes these must measure up to a standard approved by the board of control. An adequate expert staff must be maintained by each station, such staff to be approved by the board of control or by whatever controlling authority is set up. Taking into consideration that the prospective revenue from listeners and the trade would amount in the near future to about £100,000, and, with the certainty, if improved services were given, of substantially increasing from year to year, he was of opinion that the sum of £10,000 would suffice to subsidise efficiently operated "B" class stations in each of the four main centres and subsidiary selected country stations. This money would be well spent. These B class stations in the cities should be powerful enough to cover the Dominion. By this means listeners with efficient sets would have the choice of eight alternative services working within the Dominion from the main centres.

To Avoid Loss and Injury.

SUCH a proposal would meet the present position. If the position of B class station owners was not considered and the present restrictions upon obtaining revenue were maintained, then those who had invested money in the stations concerned would suffer a financial loss by the loss of the capital involved in their plants and listeners in the districts affected would suffer by being deprived of the service hitherto



MR. R. H. NIMMO.

given. It should be possible for co-ordination to be effected on the general lines indicated, thus enabling continuity to be maintained in services that had been built up.

On the revenue question, Mr. Nimmo expressed the view that, while he was definitely opposed to direct advertising over the air, he thought it was possible for sponsored programmes to be used with tact and discrimination to the advantage of the stations concerned and the listeners themselves. He maintained that the standard of service established by 2ZW before the restrictions recently imposed by the Post and Telegraph Department became effective was such as to give offence to no one, and that the revenue thus received was utilised to the definite advantage of listeners.

Televising Street Scenes

A DEMONSTRATION of the televising of street scenes was given in London recently by Mr. J. L. Baird, the inventor of the Baird system of television.

Considerable variations in the quality of reception, due to the varying degrees of cloud and sunshine, was in evidence, but on the whole the experiment was a success. The apparatus used differs from that employed in a television studio in that no travelling spot of light is employed. In place of this a large drum with mirrors set round its circumference revolves at high speed and projects a succession of images of the scene upon a photo-electric cell.

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service should be directed to co-operate with the B class stations in order to help provide alternative services of the most acceptable character to all listeners. From the practical point of view, he claimed that, on the position as it obtained to-day, it should be possible for either the proposed board of control or whatever company was operating the service to subsidise selected B