

The New Zealand Radio Record —AND— Home Journal

(Incorporating the "Canterbury Radio Journal.")

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RADIO PUBLISHING COMPANY OF NEW ZEALAND, LTD.,
P.O. Box 1032, WELLINGTON.

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1931.

A RADIO BOARD FOR NEW ZEALAND.

ACCORDING to the Postmaster-General's announcement, Cabinet has endorsed the recommendation of the Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting to the effect that control for the future shall be vested in a Radio Board modelled upon the B.B.C. Adaptation to our needs is admitted to be required. Details are not yet available, but they will be embodied in the measure now ready for Parliament's consideration. It is stated, however, that the Board will consist of a chairman and four others, all appointed directly by the Government. This Board will take over the system in its entirety, but the Post Office will function as before in relation to the collection of fees and the allocation of wave-lengths. The Board is to be entirely divorced from political control.

THIS decision, although not altogether unexpected in view of the strong demand made for it by an organised trade and a section of listeners, may be regarded as a little surprising in the present period of economic stringency. Some immediate problems require determination before the Board can adequately function. Money will have to be found to take over the existing stations; more money will be required for the erection of those relay stations mentioned both by the Postmaster-General and by the Radio Broadcasting Company as being necessary for the effective reticulation of the Dominion with radio. Obviously the State must give the Board a flying start with adjusted finance, however much reliance may be placed upon revenue from listeners for maintenance of the service in the future. Therefore the present proposal has a bearing upon the country's immediate finance which must be discussed by Parliament.

THE main ground upon which the transfer has been determined would appear to be that a public utility should not be entrusted to private enterprise and be subject to profit. That point is discussed by the general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company in a statement he has made. He claims that the personnel of the proposed Board will have no monetary incentive to achieve financial success, and asserts that much is to be said for the system of definite contractual obligations on the part of a financially interested concern. That argument is undoubtedly sound, and it is upon that system that the present standard has been attained. On behalf of the company, it has to be admitted that it has more than fulfilled its contractual obligations. It took a big risk on the inception of the business; it has steadily expanded the service, and given infinitely more than was originally demanded of it. At times it has not felt able to give all that was asked by some sections, and in these refusals apparently has created feeling. The record of its financial transactions, however, shows that the service has been maintained only by rigid economy and careful administration. All things considered, a fair-minded public will give the company definite credit for the part it has played in building up the service. If the proposed Board does not do well, that appreciation will be intensified, and not diminished, in the future. For our part, while we admit the feelings and motives of the trade in their attitude, we await conviction that a general plebiscite of listeners would reveal any keen desire for a change. In equity, such as plebiscite, on full details of what is proposed on both sides, should be taken.

THE Government, however, has made its decision, and it remains to be seen what the attitude of Parliament will be. No magic will attend the mere institution of the Board. That body will find that it is confronted with no easy task. Even with the initial advantage of taking over a going concern with all the spade work done, it will not be able to rest upon the impetus of the service, for the public, on the Minister's own statement, will expect a definite increase both in the number of stations throughout the country and an expansion of the hours of service from the existing stations. Responsibility for fulfilling the Minister's assurance of betterment will rest upon the Board. The constitution of that Board is therefore of prime importance. It should not be regarded as a suitable berth for the superannuated civil servant or the aged business man. Radio embodies the new spirit of the age. Young, vigorous and progressive-minded men, with definite radio attachments, are essential, and a deep obligation will rest upon the Government to exercise wisdom in their choice. From the point of view of reward for past services and capacity to fulfil effectively and efficiently obligations undertaken for the future, much could be said in favour of the company's last-made proposals. Cabinet, however, has decided against that course. In the interests of listeners, whose cause is paramount, we urge now the fullest debate by the House on the whole of the issues before it. If the Board is to come, then even more insistently do we urge the wisest selection of talent and business capacity for the personnel of the Board.

Again Over 60,000 Licenses

Total Steadily Mounting

THE following sets out the number of radio licenses at July 31, 1931.

It will be observed that the number of licenses is now only 3000 smaller than that obtaining in March this year when the renewals fell due:—

District.	Receiving.	Dealers'.	Class. Trans- mitting and re- ceiving.	Experi- mental and special.	Free.
Auckland	17,940	233	89	—	91
Canterbury	9,789	163	82	—	43
Otago	7,400	135	49	2	30
Wellington	24,996	342	139	4	49
	60,125	873	359	6	213

Total: 61,576.

WHY?

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