

# An Unjustified Press Attack

## Radio Writer's Charges Refuted by Management

### "Evening Post" Adopts Peculiar Tactics

**Q**UITE a storm in a teacup developed in Wellington following 2YA's transmission of the speech on Unemployment by the Rt. Hon. J. G. Coates on Tuesday evening last. "Grid Bias," the radio writer of the "Evening Post," condemned the transmission as "distorted," and claimed 3YA was better. Mr. A. R. Harris, who was in Wellington, promptly replied and revealed that, but for a few minutes at the start, 3YA was reproducing 2YA directly. He invited "Grid Bias" to explain that discrepancy and offered to give any set of reputable listeners a test at any time to demonstrate the accuracy of 2YA's transmission. A feature of the later stages of the correspondence was that the "Evening Post" deleted substantial passages from the statement by Mr. Harris, and also condensed a letter from a correspondent supporting his view, while giving in full in its correspondence columns a letter condemning the transmission—which letter, by the way, bore a suspicious resemblance to the style of "Grid Bias." The attitude of "Grid Bias" on radio matters has been so partisan for some time past that it is plain a special objective is in view, rumoured, amongst other things, to include a seat for him on the Radio Board if and when established!

Arising out of the incident, a definite challenge to "Grid Bias" has been issued by the "Radio Record."



HE original comment by "Grid Bias" in the "Evening Post" of October 15 was:—

"As heard in the Wellington broadcast, Mr. Coates's voice was quite unfamiliar in tone, and the sibilants and ch sounds were nearly all violently distorted. Some of the defects seemed to be due to faulty placing of the microphone, but the major part of the distortion probably occurred elsewhere, perhaps in the amplifier apparatus in the transmitter. This was indicated by the fact that the Christchurch and Auckland broadcasts were far better, notwithstanding the intervening land-lines, and both gave a fair approximation to the actual timbre of the Minister's voice.

"The Wellington broadcast was almost a fiasco, for the speech transmission was so irritating as to distract attention from what Mr. Coates was saying."

#### Reply by Mr. Harris.

**T**O this comment Mr. A. R. Harris, general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Company, promptly replied. He said he desired to take strong exception to the statement that the speech was spoiled by bad transmission.

Mr. Harris said that the transmission was carefully checked, both locally and at various points throughout the Dominion. From the company's own knowledge, and from reports received from official listeners, they knew that the address was received with the utmost clarity, not only locally, but all over the Dominion.

It was impossible to get good reception out of bad transmission, and if the majority of listeners throughout the country received the address clearly and satisfactorily, as they did, then the fault complained of did not lie in the transmission, as inferred by the "Post" contributor, "Grid Bias."

He (Mr. Harris) was not, however, surprised to learn that distortion was experienced in Wellington with some sets, as he had previously pointed out that multi-valve sets, particularly those of earlier types, were overloaded when used in close proximity to so strong a station as 2YA. In modern developments some sets were fitted with local switches to take care of this feature, and in the very latest sets a special

new type of valve was used, designed among other things to eliminate the necessity for the local switch, and also avoid overloading the detector valve.

It was only natural that on a lower-powered station transmissions would come through more clearly on sets that suffered by use near a high-powered

station, due to the weaker strength of the signals. Various statements to this effect had been made from time to time in the past by the company in reply to complaints similar to that made by "Grid Bias."

The company had also made application to the Department for a license

to operate a smaller 100-watt transmitting set in conjunction with the larger transmission, so that users of large sets in Wellington would be able to work directly on the smaller station without having to disconnect their aerial or make special provision in their sets for handling the higher power of the main transmitter. That permission, however, had not been accorded.

This overloading of sets was a point that had been stressed, not only by public statements but also, as a matter of fact, the company's engineer, by means of actual demonstration at private residences in Wellington and locality, had proved the truth of this factor.

It was therefore surprising, in view of those statements and the demonstrations referred to, for "Grid Bias" to persist in making the statements he does.

2YA's transmission on the occasion referred to was absolutely sound and correct, and the fact that it was received satisfactorily all over the Dominion, as well as locally, on all suitable types of receivers, proves the utter falsity of the statements made blaming the transmission for distortions experienced at the receiving end.

#### Rejoinder by "Grid Bias."

"GRID BIAS" made the following rejoinder:—"As the broadcast speech is gone forever and cannot be called in evidence, its actual quality cannot be tested. I am not disturbed by the allegation that 'the majority of listeners throughout the country received the address clearly and satisfactorily.'"

"The statement that the speech was badly distorted was not published without corroborative complaints from other listeners than myself: and it is of interest to note that one of these listeners went out of his way this morning to praise the transmission of the symphony concert—which I myself was unfortunately unable to hear.

"What does disturb me, however, is the persistence of the company and its officials, when complaints are made about the defective transmissions, in blaming the listeners' receivers. I have been actively interested in radio reception for many years—perhaps longer than Mr. Harris—and I can assure him that I know perfectly well when my set is overloading.

## Is this Fair Reporting?

### Two Versions of What Mr. Hamilton Said

**L**ISTENERS in Wellington have become aware in the last few months that an extremely partisan attitude on the radio question has been adopted by the "Evening Post." We give below, side by side, the report of the speech by the Postmaster-General, the Hon. A. Hamilton, in reply to Saturday's deputation, as culled from the two Wellington papers, and invite readers to compare the two and note the significant omissions from the "Evening Post's" report:—

#### From the "Evening Post."

In reply, the Minister said he was glad to have the deputation express its opinion, which would be available to Cabinet when it was reaching a decision. He did not know whether the public realised to the full the importance of that decision. The Government fully realised the possibilities of broadcasting, which were enormous and might well play an important part in the social and educational life of the people. What the Government had to decide was whether broadcasting was to be controlled by a company or a Government-appointed board, and it was just a question whether a company could provide a better board of management than the State. He did not want to express his personal opinion at that stage, as he anticipated that Cabinet would reach a decision over the week-end. He could assure the deputation that all aspects of the matter would be very carefully considered before a decision was reached.

#### From "The Dominion."

Mr. Hamilton said that he realised the importance of the points the deputation had raised. He realised that broadcasting had an important future, but the question of control had not yet been definitely decided on. It seemed strange that broadcasting control had not settled down to uniformity throughout the world.

Dr. Sutherland: It is settling down now.

The present company had taken a great risk in investing in broadcasting when it did, Mr. Hamilton said, and it was entitled to some consideration. Its license expired at the end of the present year, and it was not asking for a renewal. What it was asking for was control by a public company.

Professor Robertson: that would still be private control.

Mr. Hamilton: "It would be controlled by a company of which half the shareholders would be listeners-in." Whether the Government could nominate a better board of control than the listeners-in could was a question Cabinet hoped to decide during the week-end. He hoped to be able to make an announcement at an early date.