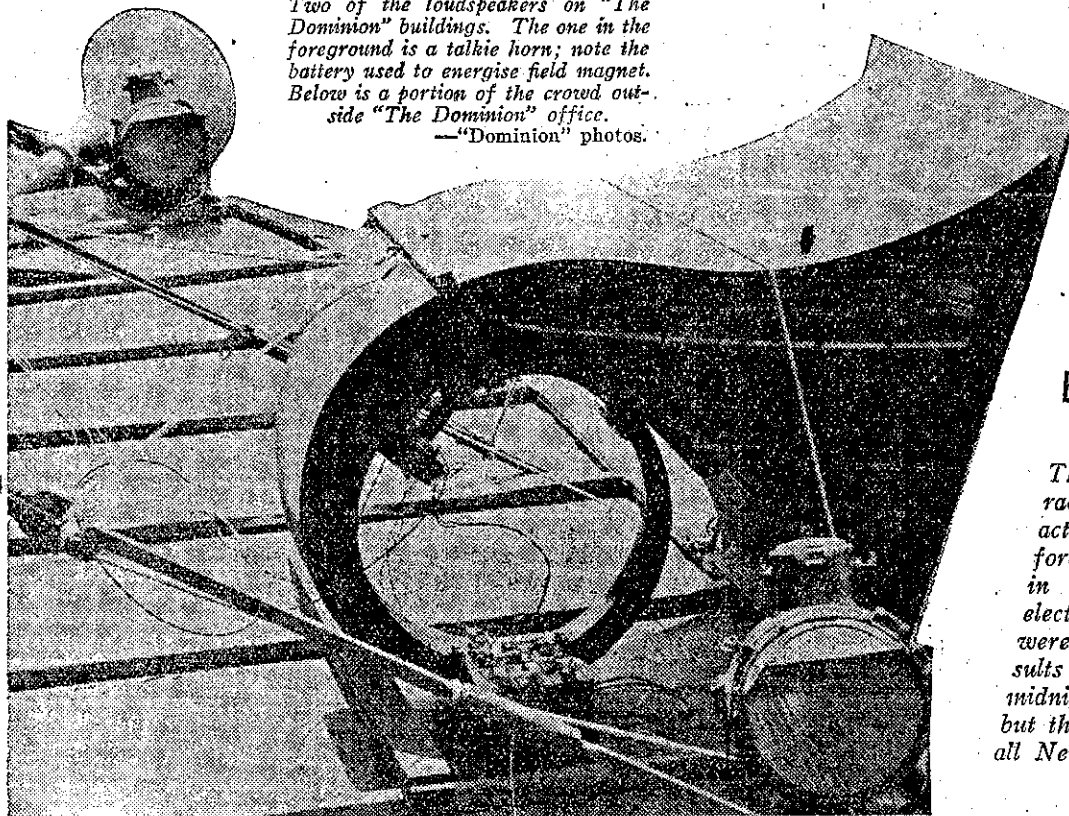


Two of the loudspeakers on "The Dominion" buildings. The one in the foreground is a talkie horn; note the battery used to energise field magnet. Below is a portion of the crowd outside "The Dominion" office.
—"Dominion" photos.



THE ELECTION BY RADIO

By Colin W. Smith

The extent to which radio can alter the character of an election was forcibly demonstrated in last week's general election, when not only were practically all results through before midnight—a record—but they were known to all New Zealand.

THOSE who listened-in to the election as well as those who attended the various centres will agree that radio is changing the whole character of elections. Gone are the crowds jostling round notice boards and craning their necks to see the last result. The fever and excitement are, too, becoming but memories of the days when one rode in from the outbacks to swell the numbers round the township post office to see the results go up.

Radio has made it different. The family do not leave the fireside, but collect round a huge chart and record the numbers as they come to hand over the radio. Step by step the progress of the election can be followed as the news is flashed from the far-flung electorates to the centres, there collated and sent on to the broadcasting stations. In a few minutes the figures are recorded in thousands of homes and the next result is on the way.

In the cities the traditional election night is full of excitement and as of yore crowds gather round the newspaper offices to see how things are going. They are cosmopolitan crowds, and there is a large proportion of the noisier element, who see in the election a glorious chance for a "rag." One is not surprised then that when the speakers appear they are usually given anything but a favourable reception. But radio intervenes and helps them to deliver their message of thanks. Contrast what obtained a few elections ago when the elected candidates appeared on the balconies to talk to the crowd below. Particularly in the case of the conservative members—crowds are rarely conservative—was speaking almost an impossibility, and even those in the front rows were able to catch only a few words. "Speak up, speak up," followed by cat calls and general booing prevented any words reaching the mob.

Radio, however, has won a decisive victory and even the most persistent interruptions have

little effect on the speaker, and his voice, amplified many hundreds of times, rises over the noise of the mob, who, in spite of their rowdiness, are forced to listen. Those distant from the scene can hear every word, the faint background being a reminder only of elections of the past.

A newspaper office on election night is a busy place indeed, particularly if it is working in conjunction with a broadcasting station. Many hours of work are necessary to instal the equipment. Special lines are run to Post Office and broadcasting station, microphones and amplifying devices are installed, and there is usually a gramophone to entertain the crowd in the intervals.

Such was the installation in the offices of the "Radio Record" on December 2. There were two phones, one in connection with the Post Office and the other with a listening post in the suburbs where results broadcast from 1YA could be picked up and sent to 2YA, possibly ahead of the Auckland results from the Post Office.

Shortly after 7 p.m. the phone in connection with the Post Office rang. I experienced a thrill of excitement as I lifted the receiver and answered. "Hello, first result to hand," came over the wire. I knew that voice—the well-known 2YA announcer. We exchanged greetings, and then the figures came through. "Number 45 on the chart, Wellington North." I wrote as fast as my pencil would