

Sponsored Programmes

An Appreciation and a Challenge



RECENTLY I had the pleasure of hearing one of the sponsored programme with which the Dublin station has been experimenting, but, having missed the opening announcement, I was unaware of its nature and sponsors. It was soon evident, however that the underlying motif was the sea—obviously a subject of wide appeal to British listeners, apart from the possible novelty of sponsored programmes as such. Orchestra, chorus, and vocalists combined to provide a well-rendered and pleasing variety of songs, rollicking sea chanties, selections from Gilbert and Sullivan, and other popular favourites, and although the announcer's American twang may have irritated some of us, the absence of any advertising matter was calculated to soften the heart of the stoutest antagonist to programmes of this kind. So far, so good. Nothing jarring—nothing irrelevant; just an hour's uninterrupted entertainment in which memories and traditions of the sea blended with a growing curiosity as to the name of the promoters of so excellent a programme.

Consequently it was with a feeling of pride and satisfaction that we heard the final announcement take the form of a short statement of facts concerning the successful activities of one of Britain's oldest and biggest industrial groups, whose name is a household word and whose achievements have gained them fame throughout the world. Such a fitting conclusion—neither too long nor too obtrusive—was a proud reminder of our world position in shipbuilding and aviation, and as long as sponsored programmes follow this model of good taste and elegant reserve they cannot fail to attract a large percentage of listeners.

But what of the future? Business is business, and none grasps this fact more thoroughly than those who purchase the right to call the tune. Any discrimination as to the advertiser's rights is next to impossible, and if one section of industry is permitted this form of advertising, then all sections must have the same right in proportion to their ability to pay. But all manufacturers and industries do not lend themselves to the same treatment as one which is inherently bound up with our national pride and inheritance.

America is a long way off, but there are doubtless many who listen to the more easily received French stations. How many listeners, however, understand the short announcements with which these otherwise good programmes are so freely interwoven? How many dance enthusiasts would care to hear between each item that indigestion and bad breath may be re-

From "Wireless World" we reprint this article, which was written because of certain disguised advertising that was broadcast in Ireland. The contributor, who wishes to remain anonymous, takes a generally broad view of the subject, but, whilst indicating that sponsored programmes in good taste and reserve can be a blessing, warns us that the ultimate effect of sponsored programmes must, in all probability, be disastrous, and that it is foolish to suppose it would be possible to stem the tide of commercialisation if once the principle of sponsored programmes were to be accepted.

lieved by chewing someone's aromatic india-rubber; or that a postcard to such and such a concern will bring you their profusely-illustrated catalogue of 220 pages, free, gratis, and for nothing? When that catalogue has been metaphorically rammed down your throat several times a night for months on end you may, in time, be reduced to the condition of the nervous man who waited up half the night because he didn't hear the lodger upstairs throw his other boot across the floor. Your interest in the programme diminishes in proportion as you become grotesquely fearful of what will turn up next. Unfortunately, there is no escape except to dispense with listening altogether, and in time you will come to hate that advertiser and everything associated with him, wireless included.

We in England are accustomed to having our news bulletins treated with respect. We tune in to the news because we want to hear the news. Moreover, those responsible for its preparation are careful to marshal their items according to a general plan that has unconsciously familiarised us with what to expect. In consequence, we may be reasonably sure of switching off at the appropriate moment without much fear of missing anything material. Contrast this with one of our Continental neighbours, and we find two voices alternating at the microphone. The first crisply informs us of some breathless event in the world of human achievement, followed by his colleague's oily admonition to your wife to wear a specific make of corset, or risk the loss of her beautiful figure and possibly the affection of her loved ones. No. 1 now takes over with a solitary item of sports news, whereupon the other butts in to the effect that no wife can be proud of her husband's pyjamas unless they come from the "Factory-to-consumer-direct-sales-

service" of the Pyjam Silk Corporation, whose name and address will be repeated to you as many times as human ingenuity can embody it in each and every announcement.

"But," you may say, "you cannot do this to us, because we get all the news we want from the papers, and, besides, we do not like dance music." Forgive me, but this is a mistake. When the payer calls the tune, he will have no scruples as to your aesthetic attitude toward the arts. Let me cite a case of a few weeks ago. The opera "I Pagliacci" was being given from a certain Continental studio, and Nedda had just concluded her love duet with Silvio, promising to meet him at midnight. Hard by, the treacherous Tonio was leading Canio to the secret meeting-place of the lovers, and one was all agog for the clash of music that was to herald the betrayal of a rival, the fruitless chase, and the climax of the "Motley." But no! At the crucial moment the opera was switched off and a crude announcement substituted by an advertiser whose monotonous repetitions are becoming a threat to one's peace of mind. And what, after all, is wireless entertainment but a convenient means of securing a temporary release from the bustle and business of the outside world? Once open the doors of broadcasting to the tender mercies of the modern advertiser and you not only sacrifice the sanctity of the home, but point the way to the prostitution of good taste and decency. Imagine the parallel in English. It is Sunday evening in the quiet seclusion of your drawing-room. From the loud-speaker comes the mellow rhythm of Gray's immortal words:

"Beneath those rugged elms, that
yew tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a
mould'ring heap. . ."

Here a new voice fades in to tell you that the advent of Tomsons' Patent Tombstones have made the "mould'ring heap" a thing of the past, and an unsightly object of pity in any well-managed graveyard. Loving and discriminating listeners should write for the "T.P.T." catalogue illustrating scores of varieties of Tomsons' Patent Tombstones—the heritage of the dead. If you doubt these things, you have only to tune in to some of the Contin-

ental stations to learn the ugly truth of what is already an accomplished fact. Further instances might be cited ad nauseam, but may I conclude by saying that if you can associate the Hungarian Rhapsodies with crustless cheese, or the Unfinished Symphony with an alleged cure for perspiring feet, then by all means have your sponsored programmes—you will get your fill; but, take heed, a real danger is upon us.

Broadcasting in N.Z. History Sketched

PRIOR to the formation of the Broadcasting Company, several stations were in existence in different parts of the country. Station SAC, operated by Mr. J. I. Smail, of Christchurch, was the first commercial station to be on the air in the Dominion. The stations broadcasting at that time were mainly operated by amateurs and were not of sufficient power to give an efficient service to the Dominion. What was needed was a big organisation with capital to erect up-to-date stations in the four main centres.

The Government of the day realised that for the common good of the country a unified system of control was necessary and as the outcome of its investigations, it decided that private enterprise, governed by regulations, would be best suited to the Dominion's needs. This meant that the risks of establishing a new business would fall on private citizens.

So, in 1925, at the request of the then Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. J. G. Coates, the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand, Ltd., was formed by Messrs. W. Goodfellow, A. R. Harris, and Wm. McKellar. Mr. Harris had had technical experience in the United States, having been for a time a research worker in the laboratories of Thomas A. Edison, and he took charge of the business as general manager.

The company was under contract to the Government to establish four 500 watt stations. The first of these, 1YA, was established in Auckland. Next came 3YA, Christchurch. At the request of the Government, the company agreed to increase the power of 2YA at Wellington to 5000 watts, making it, in actual practice, the most powerful station in the Dominion and Australia. Following on the erection of 2YA came 4YA at Dunedin.

The company had many difficulties to surmount in building up the service. New Zealand, from a topographical point of view, is an awkward country to provide with an efficient service, but in the six years that it has been controlling the system the company has steadily increased the transmitting hours, improved the quality of transmission, and, by its efforts, has increased the number of listeners from less than 3000 to a total of 71,000.

During the last session of Parliament it was decided to transfer the undertaking, which had been put on a profitable basis by the company after five years of losses, to a board.

"The Valve With the

Life-like Tone."

TRAIL BLAZER OF



THE INDUSTRY

Specially selected by
Manufacturers because

America's Leading Set
of their reliability.

OBTAINABLE AT ALL GOOD RADIO DEALERS.