

Are "B" Stations Necessary?

Affirmative Views Under Present Conditions

The competition inaugurated by our contributor "Spark" on the question "Are B Stations Necessary?" drew a comprehensive range of views from readers. The winner, clear-cut, was Mr. John A. Jack, of Palmerston, Otago, who gave quite the best summary of the case as it stands at present.

Most of the competitors were quite clear-sighted in their recognition of the special problems of the situation, and all indicate eagerness as to the nature of the report to be made by the Coverage Commission. For the benefit of readers we publish a selection of other entries, as well as that of the winner.

"Vitaly Essential"

MR. ERIC W. WATSON, Christchurch secretary of the New Zealand DX Club, writes: I would say decidedly "Yes." The advantages are numerous. Take the case of the listener with a two or three-valve local receiver, which are quite popular among those who prefer "music" to "noise." What a boon are the "B" stations' programmes! One can, if the mood decides, have music from breakfast-time to 11 p.m. merely by changing from one to another. The "free" service supplements the restricted "YA" service and fills in many a "silent" hour.

Then there are other aspects. The "B" station, due to the absence of "red tape" in programme organisation, can broadcast talks, music, appeals for aid, and other like subjects, not to mention rebroadcasts of foreign radio stations at short notice, and items of local interest, not possibly for the "YA's."

The question of coverage is a very serious problem. Under the present conditions "B" stations are vitally essential to many outlying districts where reception of "YA's" is impossible or faulty.

There is perhaps the insignificant feature of "variety" in the "B" programmes. Such small features as electric chiming clocks, experimental 16in. gramophone records, etc. Valuable experiments are being carried out by the station engineers, and schemes which may revolutionise radio design are possible at any day. Radio enthusiasts are more enthusiastic over "B" stations than the "YA's" for, in most casts, they are the peak of radio efficiency. With the co-operation of listeners, "B" stations are kept at such a standard of efficiency that, though they may be only of 100 watts power, they succeed in many instances in making the local "YA" look "silly." They have the equipment, of course; everything is modern, and so an efficient service is given free to the public at, in most cases, a loss.

It would be a great public loss should these

The Winning Letter

THE winning letter reads:—

The problem of the "B" stations is one that has exercised the minds of big and small alike in the radio industry for some time. While there is no doubt that these stations are filling a long-felt want, there is also no doubt that they could do so much more satisfactorily and efficiently if assisted or replaced by the "A" service. No one will deny that these "B" stations would give a much better service if run under one management, as they would then be effectively distributed; their numbers reduced, and their power increased. A service comprised solely of the broadcasting of records, while giving us good music, is not the sole delight we desire our receiver to bestow upon us. We want something more, something the "B" stations cannot give while they are clustered in the cities broadcasting a surfeit of jazz.

As an alternative service to the "A" stations, one in each city would give crystal set owners more value for their 30/-, but at present the four main centres are the only hospitable havens for the crystal set owner.

Sponsored programmes are not at all nauseating if the sponsor's wares are mentioned only at each end, and a certain number of stations operating on these lines could give an acceptable service if strategically located.

The four "A" stations do not give a sufficiently extensive service to warrant the elimination of the "B's." In three of the four main centres there is the gaping blank called "silent day," while in many country districts the only programme that can be relied upon is that of the local "B."

Thus, summing up, I think that a number of "B" stations situated where their services would be most appreciated, drawing a revenue from so many sponsored programmes a week and so much subsidy, giving periodic relays of the "A" stations and of events of national interest and of sufficient power to give a programme to those who desired it during the many hours when the three small "YA's" are silent, would satisfy the listeners of the Dominion.

stations cease operating, not to mention the loss to the station operator. How, then, are they to be subsidised, which they truly deserve, except perhaps in cases where a large number of "B's" are in the one town? Listeners await the "coverage report" with great interest and, if all else should fail, I would prefer the "B's" to resort to restricted advertising rather than go off the air. After all, we don't have to listen to them! Advertising on the scale of the Australian "B" stations is not suggested, but restricted advertising for our "B's" should be resorted to before we undergo such a public loss.

"The Silent Day"

MISS BARBARA A. KERR expresses herself thus:

Taking into consideration the prevailing conditions, a certain number of "B" class stations are necessary at present. Until the time comes when the population of New Zealand warrants the erection of "A" stations in all the large centres—and that day is far distant—"B" stations will be able to assist the larger ones in fulfilling the existing needs for wireless entertainment and educational talks.

It is true that the "A" stations alone should be able to fulfil our every radio need, but crystal-set owners around Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin are not so well provided for as those who live near 2YA. To an invalid with a small set the "B" stations must be an inestimable boon. Without them the hours until 3 p.m. would be long indeed. And what of the "silent day"?

We would be sorry to hear that the most important "B" stations were closing down, for their varied programmes are fine. The short devotional service at the beginning of each new day is a help and comfort to many a sad and suffering listener. From a luxury, these services have now come to be regarded as an every-day necessity by many. Still, in some of the sponsored programmes it does seem as if some were sailing. (Continued on page 4)