

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, May 20, 1932

THE question submitted by our contributor "Spark" to readers as to the necessity of "B" class stations provoked response from readers that possesses some points of interest. The winning letter, and those of the more outstanding contributors, are given in another column, and doubtless will be read with attention. One somewhat surprising feature in connection with this inquiry was the relatively small numerical response by listeners. We do not know whether this means that the readers of the "Radio Record" are so financially sound as to make a guinea prize insignificant in its appeal, or whether it will warrant the interpretation that there is not that volume of support for "B" class stations that has been thought.

THE view taken by the winner and the majority of contributors is that in the present circumstances, and until clarification of the New Zealand Broadcasting Board's policy on the report of the Coverage Commission, the "B" class stations are necessary from the point of view of listeners. The winner makes a fundamental point when he indicates that those "B" class stations which are essential to adequate coverage of the country should be co-ordinated with the "YA" service, and in effect become "A" stations. The policy of the "Radio Record" always has been that in the fundamental interests of listeners there was room in the Dominion only for one major co-ordinated and unified service, supported by the fees of listeners. While we have never agreed with the policy which has allowed so great a number of "B" class stations to grow up in this country, we do feel sympathy with those "B" stations in the situation in which they now find themselves, and which may be accentuated in the future. We foresaw that inevitably, as the "B" class stations

gave a service which was appreciated, and as their operators found the burden of maintaining them grow, appeals would be made to the central service for a share of the moneys provided by listeners. We foresaw equally that, if that central fund was to be divided among a growing number of units, then the general efficiency of the service would be impaired. It was from that angle, and not from any antagonism to the "B" stations in themselves, that we consistently issued warnings of the dangerous situation in which "B" class stations might eventually find themselves. Unquestionably listeners have derived benefit from the gratuitous service given them by the "B" class stations. In rural areas in particular they have rendered a service. In the cities they have provided a service of a luxury character in that it was alternative to the service given by the "YA" stations—i.e. in relation to the main afternoon and evening hours. In cases they have given morning sessions which are a distinct advantage to trading interests.

AS indicated, the response in support of "B" class stations did not reach the volume we expected, and we are wondering whether the final analysis of the questionnaire inaugurated by the Broadcasting Board will provide a parallel, and reveal that over the whole number of listeners the percentage habitually preferring "B" stations is small. In certain areas the support accorded popular "B" stations may be definitely big, and it is perhaps in those areas that the Board must first concentrate to effect either co-ordination with the existing "B's" or provide an adequate direct "A" station coverage. The outstanding radio event now is the report of the Coverage Commission, for upon its recommendations will the future of broadcasting definitely be built.

Are "B" Stations Necessary?

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too near the wind. When the results of the Listeners' Questionnaire are considered and acted upon, the need for B stations will not be so great. While we think they are necessary at present, we do not consider that they should receive any of the license fees since there is still so much room for improvement in the A stations. It would not be a fair deal to pay the public's money to privately-owned companies, while the Government needs all it can get to improve the existing stations in the four largest centres. Although 2YA is by no means perfect, yet it has set a standard that the other YAs must soon attain. Greater power, all-day programmes, and a general improvement will remove the most urgent need for B class stations.

Small sets are rare in the outer rural areas, so it makes little difference to backblocks folk whether B stations are on the air or not, but for the sake of those with small sets in cities and towns where reception is subject to interference and distortion we say: "Yes, B class stations are necessary."

Would be Greatly Missed

MR. CECIL H. V. STEERE, Marton, makes a strong plea for the alternative services: The growth and development of radio in New Zealand has in many ways been assisted by the operations of B class stations. In my opinion they are necessary for the full enjoyment and appreciation of radio broadcasting. At present the YA stations are giving excellent service, and the Broadcasting Board is to be commended for a big improvement in the service. Despite divided opinions on the question, I have no hesitation in saying that the programmes put over the air to-day are better than ever they were before. But at the same time such a thing as variety is a factor to be considered. I do not think it possible for four main stations, operating in various parts of the Dominion, to give that variety so essential to the success of any undertaking. By reason of their numbers, B stations offer a wider range of selectivity than the average listener would have if the number of stations was restricted.

I enjoy my wireless more than any other means of obtaining pleasure. I would far rather spend a quiet evening at home with the wireless than go out and patronise a talking picture. We are all human. We have a variety of strange tastes, likes, and dislikes, and it is impossible for every item to appeal. When a programme does not give me any enjoyment, I merely turn the dial until I come to something that does. Thanks to B stations this is possible. Without them I feel as though I would be lost. I am indebted to a small station which renders a breakfast session each morning and supplies me with the correct time. On Sunday mornings, when our main YA station is off the air, another small station gives a delightful programme of recordings. The work of this latter station, 2ZO, Palmerston North, is greatly appreciated in this locality. And then, again, there are times when the main station is occupied in talks, children's sessions, or news reports. These last three are essential if all listeners are to be catered

"Sailormen of Devon"

ON May 21, three hundred and fifty-two years ago, there arrived at Plymouth, England, the most famous ship that ever sailed the Seven Seas. Her name was the "Golden Hinde," and the illustrious Francis Drake was her commander. Three years before, on November 15, 1577, she set sail from Plymouth on the greatest voyage that was ever attempted by Englishmen. Out to the Pacific Ocean she went, thence around the Cape of Good Hope, and then Home to England, and thus the "Golden Hinde" was the first English ship, manned by English seamen, to circumnavigate the world. The 21st of May stands out as the great day in English history, as the day when England entered into her sovereignty of the sea. The great Commonwealth of Nations, now known as the British Empire, had its birth with the arrival of Drake back in England, for it was he and his men of Devon, who broke the power of Spain, and caused great argosies of English ships to venture forth to all the oceans. On May 21, "Lee Fore Brace" (1YA) will commemorate the great occasion with his story, "Sailormen of Devon."

Broadcasting Control

OF the seventy countries of the world which now have broadcasting facilities, twenty-nine allow broadcasting to be conducted by private enterprise, as in the United States, twenty make broadcasting a State monopoly, and two have combined private and public systems. This is revealed in some recent statistics, which show there are now 1423 broadcasting stations in the world. The compilation does not reveal the character of the other twenty countries' radio systems, because each country has only one station. For the most part the stations of the smaller countries are State owned and operated.

for; but at the same time those who prefer something else must listen to them or switch off their sets—unless there is a B station to supply that indispensable variety and change of programme.

New Zealand listeners should congratulate themselves on the high standard of efficiency maintained by B class stations. One has only to tune into some of the smaller Australian stations to find this out. If not sickened by extremely dull advertisements, one will be appalled by the poor quality of their announcers. Our own country is free from anything like that, and in view of the facts, our B stations are worthy of the highest praise.

Let the board in its wisdom decree what it considers best for the future of New Zealand B's, and if not possible to finance some of the deserving cases, in view of economic conditions, I sincerely hope our small stations will be allowed to carry on, even if certain restrictions are considered necessary.

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S-O-S

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LOFTIN-WHITE AMPLIFIERS Stewart Hardware Ltd.,
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MULLARD VALVES All Radio Dealers.