

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, June 3, 1932

AS we predicted last week, the renewals of licenses to the end of April totalled 63,224, including dealers' and transmitting licenses. This is a record percentage of renewals, the decline on the month preceding being only 15.5 per cent. compared with 26.6 per cent. in the preceding year, and of 26.7 per cent. the year before that. Only in the good year of 1929 was the percentage in any way approached, when the drop was only 19 per cent. While we do not imagine that the Board will claim the whole of the credit for this favourable showing, in that it is recognised that "Hard times are good times" for radio, we do think it is entitled to some credit for the favourable response on the part of listeners. With that response the Board will feel encouraged to face its task for the future, realising that as enterprise is shown the public will respond by greater support.

IN this connection we observe a tendency in some quarters to press for action. It is very easy and popular to urge action regardless of cost. In fact, New Zealand at the present time may be said to be paying the penalty for irresponsible pressure for action and advance in the sphere of public enterprise. Because of the demand of taxpayers for luxuries of one sort and another, the Government for many years past has steadily entered one field after another of social service, local bodies have expanded their service to ratepayers, and other phases of public utility have sprung up. The net result to-day is that New Zealand is carrying an unrivalled burden of public servants. Our population of one and a half millions—approximately that of the city of Glasgow—has the pleasure of being governed by two Houses of Parliament, with 646 local bodies of one kind and another. We have a national debt of something like two hundred and seventy-five millions, on which we have to pay an annual

interest bill of approximately ten millions. We have the pleasure of maintaining on the public pay-roll not less than one man in seven of the total male population. On any broad consideration it must be admitted that this country is over-governed and over-served in practically every direction.

THESE remarks have some point in relation to radio because the same tendency to urge expansion, regardless of cost, is apparent in this field. We are as keen as anyone to see radio expand, because our own success hinges entirely upon the size of the radio audience. We do not, however, wish to see the expansion of radio purchased at too high a cost. Everything comes back to finance in the finish, and if the future is mortgaged for the present, then the bill must be paid with interest later. The Board fortunately is composed of hard-headed business men, and it is no secret that they intend to administer radio as a business. The capital position as it obtains between the Board and the Government has not yet attained finality in relation to terms, and until that is clarified the Board must necessarily proceed cautiously. Progress, however, is being made on foundation lines by the preparation of the report of the Coverage Commission, which is doing its work most thoroughly and comprehensively. It will be some weeks before the report is available, but its report, when presented, we believe will provide an effective programme for future expansion. It will be the task of the Board then to translate that programme into reality at a pace governed by financial resources. Whatever may be the exact terms of the arrangement between the Board and the Government as finally arrived at, it must be recognised that interest upon the money borrowed will be included, and it will be sound business to eliminate that charge by repayment of capital as rapidly as possible. These words are written, not with any view of damping hopes for future expansion, but to warn listeners that progress must be conditional upon sound business methods, and by a strict regard for living within our means. It is satisfactory that the radio revenue is ex-

panding, but it must still be borne in mind that the revenue available to the Board is required to cover a particularly straggly and scattered territory; it is required to service four or five stations (and maybe more if subsidies are to be extended to B class stations) with the revenue available in Australia for in-

dividual stations. It is very nice to have fine services, but the task of paying for them is not so pleasant. While speedy action is spectacular and popular, the times and circumstances dictate an element of caution, the need for which must be recognised in a changing and troublesome time.

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

PIFFLE. Someone said—and published it too—that the Radio Board was not making progress; that they were hampered by laissez faire. I suggest he looks up the word, thinks, and then re-writes his par.

'TIS announced that Mr. Heigh Ho will be leaving us. I take off my hat to one of the best announcers I have heard, and incidentally one of the best radio personalities.

IT is surprising what ground does to radio waves. I was taking a portable from Hataitai to town the other day and was listening to 2ZW en route. Whilst approaching the Mount Victoria tunnel signals were normal, but as soon as I got inside they disappeared, and could not be coaxed in. Near the other side they came in again, and as soon as the set was clear of the mouth, they were as strong as ever. The intervening hill had made practically no difference on the other side, but when under the earth it is another story.

WHAT is this D.X. Club we hear so much about these days?

A FRIEND of mine—an ardent golfer—was with me, watching the Kirk-Windeyer team in action over the week-end. Someone played a splendid shot, and after he had suitably eulogised it, turned to me. "Tell me, couldn't someone follow these fellows round with a microphone and broadcast their shots? I mean, like this: 'So-and-so has just played a beautiful drive, but the wind is carrying it over to the bunker'—then he could follow up with a dissertation on the play. It could be made very interesting." A short pause, then, "I'd love to be the one who is doing the announcing." "Would you, dear," his wife interrupted, "I think your golf vocabulary would broadcast splendidly." But joking aside, it would be a novel broadcast and, given the right man behind the microphone, it should go over well. What about trying it one of these days, R.B.?

"MINUTE radio waves to reach Mars." The efforts to transmit signals beyond the earth have failed owing to the Heaviside layer. A new 42 centimetre beam may do the trick, however, according to engineers," says an overseas paper, by way of introduction to its front page story. Well, what if it does? Who is to know and what can it do if it gets there?

A SOUTHERN paper, quoting a northern one, suggested that if a certain "unknown writer in the south" wanted to know if "B" stations were necessary, he should come to Auckland,

and not ask foolish questions. I think he missed the point of the question—don't you?

DO you know anyone who has not renewed his license? Pass him the word that the radio inspectors are hunting out unlicensed sets, and he may find it difficult to explain that he has forgotten to renew. If caught he may have to pay the price of two licenses.

WHY is it that the Sunday night relays of concerts in the cities are so popular. Is it the artists themselves—most of them broadcast fairly regularly—is it the arrangement of the items, or is it the atmosphere created by the applause and the unexpected encores? I think it is the last-mentioned feature as much as anything.

A SPEAKER on Empire Day, in proposing the toast of England, commenced:—"Let's couple the future of England with the past of England." No. Let us forget the past. We have done too much fighting to make memories of the past pleasant. There has not been a generation that has not known war. The old idea of glory built on the battle field gets but little sympathy with the present generation, who see only the reflected horrors of the last great struggle. And for this reason songs that tend to extol the virtues of one nation to the detriment of another should be suppressed; at the least not broadcast. Fortunately they do not go over very often.

I WAS reading recently where the characteristic sounds of the various instruments can be made electrically and have actually been broadcast. When you think about the competition of sound and its relation to electricity there does not appear to be anything very wonderful about the performance, but the possibilities make you wonder. Whether is this thing called radio taking us?

A RADIO writer recently asserted that the radio trade was in a remarkably healthy condition so far as the turnover of new sets is concerned, and that importers were finding it hard to keep abreast of the demand. Maybe. But is there any money in it? If I know anything about the radio trade, they are up against it with prices cut to the bone as they are, and the high import duties and state of exchange to contend with. Certainly they are busy, but if there is one man who has my sympathy it is the radio trader. His job is not all that it seems.

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