

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, October 7, 1932.

A BROADCASTING service to be satisfactory must please the greatest number of listeners for the greatest number of hours, but the minority must never be forgotten. Satisfactory service comes down to the solution of two problems (a) coverage and (b) programmes.

THE report of the Coverage Commission has been placed before us and in view of its recommendations it is interesting to review the actions taken by overseas countries to obtain "coverage." In Great Britain the regional scheme operates. The programmes for the whole of Britain, with few exceptions, are produced in the studios at Broadcasting House in the heart of London. Generally two programmes are provided—national and regional—and both are relayed to the several transmitters strategically situated throughout the country, and broadcast on two widely-separated wavelengths. The aim is to present to the majority of listeners two class A programmes, i.e., those that can be received on a crystal or other simple set. Transmissions for one particular night are opposite in character so that classical and non-classical tastes may be catered for simultaneously. That this system is popular is indicated by the fact that 9 per cent. of the inhabitants of the British Isles have

radio licenses (the New Zealand percentage is 5). The concentration of resources in providing two programmes only has resulted in the maintenance of a high standard. With few exceptions the lowest radio licenses are to be found in the mountainous areas, where the coverage problems would be greatest. On the other hand, the majority of licenses are found in the south-west, the flat country near the sea, over which the European programmes come. These facts illustrate the point that coverage has a tremendous effect upon the receivable quality of the programmes and consequently goes a long way in determining whether the service will be satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

THE American system again consists of two programmes supplying centres with many relay stations, though in this case they are competitive and do not own the stations to which they relay. There are two key stations, one for the N.B.C. and the other for the Columbia network, and these are connected by land lines to hundreds of other stations scattered throughout the continent. In addition, there are many other stations which provide their own programmes. The activities of all stations are controlled by the Federal Radio Commission, which determines the frequency, power, hours of operation and quality of transmission. The result is that even though the Americans have hundreds of more or less independent stations, the listener is not besieged with a dozen stations clamouring at his dial and spoiling his local programmes.

GERMANY and other European countries are endeavouring to emulate the British system. Japanese broadcasting consists of a network of stations linked to two co-ordinated key stations, JOAK and JOBK. The result is that most Japanese listeners are receiving at least one programme satisfactorily. Australian broadcasting is built up of a national service which owns the principal stations, from which entirely different programmes are broadcast. Where two stations belonging to the commission are in the same city, widely different programmes are presented simultaneously, e.g., 2FC and 2BL. In addition, there are many uncoordinated stations which pro-

vide programmes in order to sell advertising time, and these B stations provide for most listeners an alternative service. The distribution of stations is poor, as each B station has been placed so that it can reach the greatest number of listeners, without any thought of national coverage, with the result that problems of selectivity for the city listener and the absence of nearby stations for country listeners are serious.

THE New Zealand system needs no explanation, and differs but little from the Australian system. The result is, as elsewhere, that city listeners are well catered for, while many country listeners do not have a reliable service. In view of this fact the Coverage Commission's recommendation for a centralised system of relay stations has considerable merit. Clearly the policy of the Board is not to dissipate too much of its capital in subsidising independent programmes, but to put into effect at the earliest possible moment the centralised scheme of providing the greatest number of listeners with one pro-

gramme which they can satisfactorily receive. This is the first step toward a satisfactory service.

THE second requirement of a satisfactory service, i.e., that of providing generally interesting programmes, is more difficult to determine, it being almost impossible to ascertain the wishes of the majority. The value of the questionnaire has been disputed, but the fact remains that the country which has the highest percentage of licenses in the world is Denmark, where every listener when renewing his license fills in on the back thereof a questionnaire concerning the programme service. The only way in which the authorities can determine whether or not programmes are satisfactory is from the license figures, and in this country they continue to rise at a rate greater than anticipated. Already there are 80,000, and the indications are that before the end of December that number will have risen to 85,000. Strangely enough, the percentage is lowest in Auckland and Dunedin, where there are more B stations than elsewhere.

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

IZR's new announcer and 3YA's morning announcer!! Enough said.

"MOTHER OF SIX" last week asked me to listen to 2YA's morning session. My suggestion is that if 2YA set about conducting a real morning session (2ZW style) they may have more listeners at that time of day. Most women like the woman-to-woman appeal—without the 74.2 per cent. carbohydrate.

SO New Zealand stations are getting "bird-minded." Why not try to emulate the B.B.C. by broadcasting "from the heart of primitive forest," a lone wood-hen calling its mate, or a tui swallowing its notes. No records please!

N.B.—"From the heart of primitive forest" is essential to anything N.Z. and that's why I phrased it thus.

A WORD from a man in the street—without prejudice. An announcer at a "B" station's sponsored programme is so stilted as to make listening to the session difficult.

EVEN after hearing the Lex McDonald record from 2YA last week I am willing to believe he is a great singer.

IN Dr. Guy Scholenfeld 2YA has a mine of information. I never fail to tune in to him on Wednesday evenings and always feel when he has finished that I know something more about something.

CONGRATULATIONS 2ZW.—An excellent relay of chamber music from the Town Hall last week.

THE fire behind friend "Spark's" smoke-screen re Mr. Drummond, of 2YA, departing is this: A Mr. Drummond (of Masterton) has been appointed assistant announcer at 4YA. The news hounds of the dailies "got the story wrong," and the following appeared: "Mr. R. B. Allan, late of the operating staff at 1YA, has been transferred to Dunedin, as has also Mr. Drummond, of Wellington."

IAM pleased to see that efforts are being made to co-ordinate Auckland's radio stations. Ideal service is the provision of alternative programmes, opposite in character—nothing less nothing more. If the B stations get together and do this they will thoroughly deserve the 2/6 they suggest listeners should pay them.

I MIGHT be unpopular for saying so, but it is my opinion that one of the deepest seated causes of international strife is patriotism overdone. Songs, literature and talks that exalt one people over others or lead them to believe they are the salt of the earth must eventually lead to trouble. All this because a lecturer from a YA station last week left listeners with the thought that England was the home of demi-gods. "God's chosen land." No. Sir, England is only human after all, and I prefer to agree with Cowper when he says "England with all thy faults I love thee still."

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Box 1088, Wellington.

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Name
Address

R.R.