

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, October 28, 1932.

LISTENERS will be interested in the proceedings before the Royal Commission on Performing Rights now sitting at Sydney. For some time there has been dissatisfaction among those paying copyright fees on the question of the amounts charged, and also in connection with the conditions imposed. This dissatisfaction is not peculiar to Australia, for the question of copyright has been under discussion in many other countries, notably U.S.A. and Canada. The latter country recently amended its Copyright Act in a manner that has much to commend it. It is provided that owners of copyright must file with the Minister at the Copyright Office lists of the items in respect of which the owners claim authority to grant performing licenses or to collect fees. In addition, the fees it is proposed to charge for the performances of the items must also be filed. If the fees are deemed to be excessive there is provision in the Act to have them revised by a Crown Minister. The amended Act will place broadcasters in Canada in a much better position than obtains in most other countries where it is impossible to secure from the bodies claiming to hold the copyright lists of controlled items. This handicap has been a source of much worry to broadcasters generally, for it has been impossible to know whether infringements have been committed until after the broadcast.

IT must not be overlooked that some composers handle their own copyright, and the broadcaster is often ignorant of the fact until he has actually used their compositions. In Australia, the Australasian Performing Right Association represents a number of the copyright owners. It is really as a result of the association's activities that the Royal Commission was set up. The commission is to report and make recommendations with respect to the following matters:—

(a) Any questions that have arisen or may arise between persons interested in the performing right of copyright works and persons interested or concerned in the performance of such works, whether as performers, or as persons authorising the performance, or as persons on whose premises the work is performed, or otherwise.

(b) The rates, methods and conditions of payment to the owners of

the copyright in musical or other works by persons aforesaid for the right to perform such works in public.

VOLUMINOUS evidence is being tendered by the interested parties. Probably the most interesting to date was that given by the general manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Mr. H. P. Williams. Mr. Williams stressed the fact that his commission, being trustee for the licensed listeners, was bound to see that those listeners were not exploited in the matter of payment of copyright fees, and he claimed that the fees being demanded by the Australasian Performing Right Association were inequitable. "It is known to us all," said Mr. Williams, "that a very serious view is taken by the legislature of every country with regard to joining interests, which, as a result of such combination, can force from any large section of the public a set of charges which are unjust and inequitable." Mr. Williams stated that there were a large number of persons who were copyright owners and were not represented by the A.P.R.A.—in fact the A.P.R.A. did not claim on 50,000 pieces broadcast in one year by the late Australian Broadcasting Company. He found that he had to deal with owners outside the A.P.R.A. While admitting that broadcasting has affected the sale of sheet music, Mr. Williams could not see that because of that fact the broadcasting service should be charged fees inequitable in themselves. He said that gramophones had also had a considerable effect on the sale of sheet music; that, he thought, would be generally admitted. He contended that it was inequitable for the A.P.R.A. to base any charge for a performing right on the ground that it must act as a compensation for the loss of sales on sheet music, in the case of compositions and publications which were marketed prior to the advent of broadcasting. He based his contention on the ground that mechanical presentation is but a stage in the march of progress, and therefore permits of no retrospective legislation. He cited several instances where a sudden change in the life of a community had entirely altered the source of revenue for different undertakings, but it had never been suggested that the innovation that had taken the place of the original

avenue of profit should bear a tax to compensate the deposed industry.

IT is clear from reports received of the proceedings that the Royal Commission will be sitting for a considerable time. Many different interests are represented at the hearing, and it would appear that one result of the inquiry is likely to be the formation of an association composed of the various users of copyright, to combat the demands of the A.P.R.A. This is, after all, only a natural sequence, for unity is strength in most things, more particularly where the varied interests have a common ground for opposing payments which are deemed unreasonable. Public interest is an important factor in matters such as copyright claims, and the majority of the public would be more likely

to support users of copyright than the owners, if only for the reason that the public in the long run probably pay the fees demanded.

ONE witness before the commission emphasised the fact that there were really only two interests concerned in the inquiry, namely, the public and the copyright owner. The various organisations representing the user of copyright were simply representing their publics, and fighting their battles, with a view to having the fees demanded reduced to a reasonable level. If any legislation is enacted following the inquiry, it will, we imagine, be on the lines taken by Canada, for it seems from the public point of view only reasonable that users should know the copyright items and the fees applicable to those items.

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

I COULDN'T get away from "good times again" talk last Wednesday. Both 2YA and 2ZW were simultaneously going strong during the talks session on the return to prosperity.

THE two outstanding broadcasts of the season—Szigeti at one end and the carillon at the other. Listeners can place them to suit.

I BELIEVE that owing to the extreme preference of a B station for a certain comedienne's records, it is becoming known as "Fields Station No. 1."

CHANGES are being made in the studio at 2YA to make the orchestra sound like a real one. It is hoped that consideration will be given to the piano. I get so tired of listening to a kind of pianoforte solo, with a kind of orchestral accompaniment, that I often have to go over to the B to keep my musical discernment of orchestral performances at proper value.

"SO and So kids himself he is a radio mechanic," a friend told me during the week, "but he overdid it. His father bought a £85 machine and let him loose on it, so he got a spanner and screwed things up inside. In rolled the stations—the Americans, Japs and Chinese were good. The boy became enthusiastic.

"A little more, dad, and we will hear England."

"Good old England, son; go to it," replied dad.

"And son got to work with the spanner again and screwed her up still farther, but instead of England coming in the set went off with a bang—£85 pounds blown to pieces."

That's a true story, and I am going to write to "Questions and Answers" to find out exactly what happened.

SAYS a Dunedin paper: "There arrived at 4YA this week a new announcer in the person of Mr. A. Ninnis, who has held the position of senior announcer at head office for some time." I've been wondering what the job of senior announcer at head office would be. It wouldn't be announcing new policies, because the board hardly require a man for that alone. No; the facts are wrong. Mr. H. Ninnis was not at head office. Was it this paper which made the faux pas with regard to Mr. Clive Drummond?

I AM going to get a set with automatic volume control so I can listen to 2YA in comfort. One day last week it was like a cork in a rough sea.

DEAR Quad,—A recent "Record" announcing grand opera singers from 1YA, refers to the "many satellites" which have appeared before the microphone: "First Don Bradman, then Szigeti"—Satellites with only one leg, too.

Szigeti a satellite!
Of whom, of what?
Tut, tut, Mr. Quadrant—Yours, "Stars."
Szigeti was also ambidextrous! What has he done to deserve it all?

THE last word in rusticity was the gnarled old man so busy in the potato field. At least, so thought the young journalist in search of "copy." "Good morning, gaffer," said the man of ink, leaning over the gate, "a lovely day."

"Aye," answered the aged one, resting on his hoe, "but there's thunder comin' along."

"How do you know that?" the scribe asked, "nosing" good copy; "red sky at morning—shepherd's warning, eh?"

"Dunno nothin' about that," was the reply, "but it were on the wireless last night and in all the papers this mornin'."