

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, December 9, 1932.

THE suggestion has been made in the correspondence columns of a local daily that the funds of "that wealthy body, the Broadcasting Board," should be raided to provide funds for the Government. Apart from the ethics of the situation, the suggestion is ridiculous, for saddled with a debt of £60,000, required to maintain a higher standard of programmes, to erect new stations, and to meet a hundred and one other increasing costs, the Board is far from being wealthy, and the fact simply stated is that there are not the funds to raid. An income of £100,000 may seem a large sum for the Board to receive, but considering that the British Broadcasting Corporation receives £1,000,000 from licenses alone, not to mention the mere £150,000 that it receives from other sources, and it spends just over half a million on programmes and nearly £200,000 on plant to maintain a very limited number of programmes for less hours a day than does the Board, it is apparent that the latter is cutting its cloth in the most economical way. If it is to be shorted by the Government then there is only one solution, and that is poorer programmes or shorter hours.

BUT the ethics of the argument are quite wrong. Listeners pay a body, agreed that it is one appointed by the Government, an annual sum for their entertainment. Naturally it is to be expected that this amount will be used in its entirety for the said purpose of entertainment. If they paid it to any other organisation they would expect value. Why not then in broadcasting? If the Government must have funds let them levy an amusement tax which is added to, not detracted from, the license fees. Naturally there would be objections, but the public would know they were being taxed, and would not blame the Board for apparent depreciation in programme quality. Taxes must be passed on and just as petrol is not watered because the Government chooses to levy an import duty of 6d. a gallon, so programmes must not be thinned out because the Government wants a little extra revenue. After all the Board's funds are no more the possession of the Government than are those of any private company.

TO criticism, fair criticism, no one objects, and there are few who do not welcome constructive criticism, but the unfair and destructive, to say nothing of the inaccurate, does considerable harm without bringing anyone any good. A perusal of our Mailbag columns indicate that there is a large number of correspondents who seem to overlook this, and, regardless of fact, make accusations that will not bear the light of day. In fact, more balanced members of the more balanced section have charged us with rendering a disservice to radio by publishing the letters. While we do not agree, for we place the Mailbag columns, almost without restriction, open to our readers, there is something in that remark. In the last few weeks a fair amount of anti-board criticism has appeared, mainly under noms-de-plume. But will the criticism stand the acid test? Published in this week's Mailbag are two letters pointing out inaccuracies made by other correspondents, and one writer goes so far as to wager five pounds that the criticism cannot be upheld by fact. The critique states that 90 per cent. of the items from the YA stations are highbrow. Let us select at random any day's programmes, say those for Wednesday, December 7, and see what the state of affairs really is. Classing as highbrow Grand Opera, symphonies, etc., chamber music and oratorio, we find that out of the 100 odd titles published less than twenty are classical. This does not include two and a half hours of dance music and the day sessions, of which less than four hours out of sixteen are classical. So our correspondent and his ninety per cent. is far removed from fact. What one would class as highbrow another would not, but we have defined the generally accepted classification.

ANOTHER point raised is that the Government is running the service. This clearly is contrary to fact. The Board, though appointed by the Government, is composed of business men who are given a free hand with instructions to develop and improve the service. It is unlikely, too, that the members of the Board would tolerate interference from the Government, for all are

successful men in their own spheres and fully comprehend the technique of running a business concern, which the broadcasting service is purely and simply. The personnel of the Board's staff is, with few exceptions, the staff carried on from the Broadcasting Company. Certainly it has been augmented by three officers of the Post and Telegraph Department, but it must be admitted that they were three of the most capable men in the Department and have now definitely severed their connection with the Government. So this argument will not bear inspection.

YET another correspondent makes the assertion that in three months Mr. de Mauny has repeated items forty times. According to our reckoning Mr. de Mauny in

that time has played 170 times, and if our correspondent's assertion is correct one item in every four is a repetition—clearly contrary to fact. Certainly some of the better known and more popular items, such as "Light Cavalry," have been repeated more than once, but the reason is obvious. If they did not do this the "too classical" charge would be laid at its door.

IT really seems that there is a section that is never satisfied, and, merely getting an impression, rushes into print with some preposterous suggestion. The printed page is different from the spoken word. Whereas the latter can be corrected or amended without difficulty, the former stands forever, and it seems that it should, at least, be accurate. We would then entreat our correspondents to check their statements.

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

2 ZW. I think your programme on Saturday night did you credit.

AN all-electric brewery has just been opened in Munich—Ohm-brew.

JUST a kindly word to the Board in passing. Watch your talks. Some of them are fairly close to advertising.

A LOT of dud radio sets are being sold from door to door these days. If you are wise you will leave them alone and tell your friends to do the same thing.

A SCOTTISH programme from a YA station last week started with "Plymouth Hoe," included the "Yeomen of the Guard," a lecture on Maori Mythology, and finished with "Yankee Grit." Scottish! Ugh. International, I call it.

SPARK, who for the time being has suspended his 5/- joke, left this paragraph for me. "Listening to Big Brother Bill during the 4YA children's session recently, our young hopeful of six summers, astonished at not hearing an Aunt's voice, exclaimed, 'Mum, he hasn't got his missus with him to-night.'"

AN English paper says that two thousand years ago wild boars prowled over what is now the site of Broadcasting House. Even now the place is not entirely free from the tame species—"Punch."

I WAS having the monthly trim up at the barber's the other Friday evening when I overheard the following conversation:

Barber: "Anything hon the 'air to-night, sir?"

My neighbour, curtly: "I don't know, I'm not interested in radio."

THE Bohemian Orchestra from 1YA last week was a praiseworthy

broadcast. But why does not the announcer go down to the hall instead of remaining in the studio. He would at least be prepared for last-minute changes in programme and not convey the impression that his musical knowledge has been sadly neglected.

DEAR Quadrant: What are "radio logs" dxers talk about so much.—"No Savee." I'm not quite certain, but doubtless they are things you have to exercise a lot of imagination about. Probably logs one puts on an electric fire.

I CAN only get 2YA on my new set. What will yours bring in?"
"Well—er—the monthly instalment account."

HOW radio changes things! In our day children were seen and not heard. This precocious young generation is heard and not seen. I'm dreading television.

MR. B. BERNARD'S talk from 2YW on Monday evening was most interesting, but I can see the poor man deluged with inquiries. But it is his own fault. Did he not say "Ask me anything and everything about anyone and everyone in Hollywood, and I will write you personally"? Some people are courageous, to say the least.

I READ somewhere that Great Britain is exporting thousands of radio sets to China. It tickles me to think of radio sets being sold there. I can just picture the scene as the impassive Orientals stand in a junk shop in the Bubbling Well Road.

Customer: "Dis one agood tuna?"

Dealer: "Dat one velle good tuna. He cathee plenty station!"

Customer: "Speaka Chineese, or speaka English?"

Dealer: "He speaka anything—alla same parrot!"