

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, March 24, 1933.

WITH the advent of the winter season, interest in the broadcast service becomes accentuated, particularly in the country districts, where the decline of seasonal farm work leaves greater leisure. This makes it timely to raise that perennially vital question of interference to radio reception, occasioned by leakages and radiations from electrical transmission lines and electrical apparatus. Every power board throughout the country is in regular receipt of complaints from radio listeners of interference from transmission lines. Where the governing authorities are sympathetic to radio and the interests of their clients, these complaints are given as much consideration as possible. Investigation frequently proves that the transmission lines are not at fault, but that some other factors are responsible. Nevertheless it is to be admitted that in many instances the fault is directly due to the power lines. The question then arises as to who should rectify the position.

THIS matter was dealt with in the report presented to the Broadcasting Board last year by the Coverage Commission. In that report the suggestion was made that a Special Committee be appointed to investigate and make recommendations. That committee has been in existence now for some little while. It consists of representatives of the Post and Telegraph Department, the Broadcasting Board, the Public Works Department, and the local authorities. The chairman of the board is Mr. C. S. Plank, Chief Telegraph Engineer. The matter is now being considered by this committee, and although the problem is a most ticklish and difficult one, listeners will sincerely hope that some scheme will be devised to effect improvement.

THE problem is by no means simple. Many of the older transmission lines have been erected in full accord with technical and legal requirements, but by their very nature radiate electrical waves which occasion trouble in radio receivers. To remove this trouble would involve extremely heavy capital expenditure, and naturally in these times such an outlay is unthinkable. In other cases leakages occur, which the power authorities are in general only too

pleased to rectify when pointed out to them. It is to their advantage, in the first instance, to check leaks which occasion loss, and in the second instance, to give their customers the best possible service and encouragement to use electricity, both in the form of power for radio reception, and the lighting that is used by the clients when staying up to listen to broadcasting programmes.

THE major point, however, is the determination of responsibility for locating and rectifying leaks that are causing trouble. The suggestion has been made that all the parties interested should combine to provide the necessary equipment and service. Who are the parties interested? First, there is the Post and Telegraph Department which exercises general oversight over the broadcasting service, and derives some revenue from listeners' licenses. In the company days the department undertook a certain amount of responsibility and interest in the problem, and in general that still obtains, although obviously it is not in a position to undertake much expenditure in this field. Next, there is the broadcast service itself. Is it responsible? While it is certainly interested in having its listeners receive satisfactorily the service put upon the air by it, its reply must inevitably be that its funds cannot be taxed to undertake the rectification of leakages in the transmission lines of other bodies. It might be that the Board would be prepared to co-operate with service, and possibly to some small extent financially, with other bodies; but listeners will agree that the funds made available by them to the Broadcasting Board must primarily be devoted to the creation and transmission of programmes. The third party is represented by the power boards and local authorities concerned. It is their function to supply their customers with electricity. Naturally, on principles of economy it is to their interest to check actual leakages and wastes. Their engineers are doubtless continually alert to detect and remedy the more important of such leakages. In the very nature of things, however, there are some radiations which cannot be controlled, and minor leakages are continually developing. Can the power boards and local authorities

be expected to undertake the admittedly expensive service of clearing up all radiation likely to give trouble to listeners? Their reply doubtless will be that they were in existence before radio. They have established their lines in accordance with the requirements of the Public Works Department, and their obligations begin and end with service to the buyers of their power. Where administrations are sympathetic they may go a certain distance to help radio listeners, but their reply in the main generally is that they are not in a position to undertake the full service that would be required to completely eliminate all interference.

THE fourth body represented on the Special Committee dealing with the matter is the Public Works Department. This department in this field may be taken as representative of the Government itself, being concerned to encourage, on the one hand, the fullest possible use of the power supplied to the power boards and local authorities, and on the other, to protect the consuming public. It again has little money at hand to meet the problem of this expenditure.

FROM the citation of the foregoing factors, it will be apparent that the problem, while a very definite one to radio listeners in both town and country, is by no means easy of solution. It may be that by contributions from the interests concerned some technical equipment and service can be provided which will do something to rectify the trouble. Listeners will be grateful for every such aid. It is admittedly annoying in the extreme for listeners to spend scores of pounds in equipping themselves with high-class and efficient receivers, in the expectation of enjoying programmes from near and far, only to have their pleasure marred by bursts of not only static, which is beyond control, but man-made interference, which they rightly enough consider should be eliminated. If the Commission in question can make some move forward to help listeners, they will earn their definite gratitude.

THE broadcasting service is not without its humours. One of the principal reasons, we presume, for the establishment of 2YA Auxiliary—hereafter to be known as 2YC—was to give the Capital City not only a stand-by plant in case of emergency, but to provide listeners in Wellington City and environs with a programme alternative to the news session of 2YA, given between 7 and 8 o'clock, for the convenience of

country listeners. City people represented that they were fully acquainted with this news through the daily newspapers, and that this hour was to them a waste hour, however interesting it might be to country interests. The cogency of those representations was recognised, and with the stand-by plant in existence, provision was made for it to operate between 7 and 8 with high-class gramophone records, to give 2YA city listeners the alternative programme they sought. It is fair to say that this additional service has been greatly appreciated, but criticism, as with all things connected with broadcasting, has not been lacking. Perhaps the most extraordinary criticism advanced, however, by any listener was that received last week by the broadcasting authorities. This was from one who wrote seriously and strongly against 2YA Auxiliary because, forsooth, it prevented him hearing the news session from 3YA! That criticism must surely be so choice that comment upon it would be superfluous.

In Phase and Out By "Quadrant"

DEAR Quadrant,—1YA listeners were Terryfied last week by 45 minutes of talk on Irish music.—Eriu go Bragh.

[Do yez think any Sassenach announcer could stop an Irishman saying what he wanted to say about the Ould Sod on Paddy's Eve?]

DEAR Quadrant,—Hast noticed that a very popular announcer is overdoing it a bit? Or is it just my cattiness?—Yours, Felix.

[Come to mention it, Felix, I have noticed some unusual pronunciations, but have always attributed same to my ignorance.]

I SEE someone is to talk on Square-riggers—an interesting and inspiring subject. But it stops short. I suggest our friend follows up by broadcasting a series of tales of "Across the Bar." It should make a good sequel.

DEAR Quadrant,—I suggest: (1) Another old-time dance prefaced or introduced by Darby and Joan, as presented last September. (2) Could not Will Bishop and Company be prevailed upon to present that delightful little comedy "The Flowers are Not for You to Pick" one again?—"Tuai." [Excellent suggestions, but won't Vic Lloyd be pleased to see you referring to his masterful presentation as a "delightful little comedy"?—Q.]

SCHOOLBOY howler: Marconi first made sparks, he then proceeded to Italy and made Muzzerini president. Reaction is what an American thinks about everything. Wavelength is length of wave. (Budding genius this. It varies with the voice of the announcer if he is base or solopranno.