

The Broadcasting System: As we have it

Na Whatarangi Winiata Komiti

The broadcasting system of Aotearoa has been under the continuous control of the pakeha. In addition public broadcasting has been funded totally from the government's consolidated account and license fees. Advertising revenue has been insufficient to meet all of the operating expenses.

Among the annual operating costs of BCNZ which the license fees have helped to defray is the net cost of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (a totally pakeha institution with an annual net short-fall of about \$4 million) and YA/YC services. The YA/YC stations attract very few Maori listeners and, on the average, would command the interest of less than 5% of the total population. Rough estimates of the cost of those services fall in the region of \$15 million to \$20 million per year.

The content of radio and television programmes is primarily foreign. In the case of television, more than two thirds of the content is from foreign sources. A consequence is massive foreign cultural invasion.

Over the years the public broadcasting system has committed resources, primarily on the job, to train and to develop a large number of people in broadcasting. Accordingly the depth of human resources and talent in the broadcasting system of Aotearoa is broad and deep with pakeha people. Very few Maori people have participated.

The Maori participation in the broadcasting system has been largely passive as viewers or listeners or both.

Action by the New Zealand Maori Council (NZMC)

The NZMC has had a long standing concern over the inadequacy with which

broadcasters have reflected the Maori presence in Aotearoa. The Council has made or supported submissions to the BCNZ and/or to the Minister of Broadcasting. The Council has requested greater recognition of the Maori component in the New Zealand identity and culture particularly in the content of the material broadcast by the two major services, namely, Radio New Zealand and Television New Zealand.

The action by the NZMC to establish The Aotearoa Broadcasting System Inc. may be seen within the context described as follows:

(a) the accumulation of disappointing experiences of the Council in its dealing with the broadcasting authorities in this country

(b) the rising expectation of the Maori people for a better deal and

(c) the growing evidence and realisation that it is inappropriate to expect members of one cultural group, namely, the pakeha to administer properly and fairly the affairs of the members of another cultural group, namely, the Maori.

In considering the establishment of ABS the logic of the NZMC was compelling in its simplicity. It was as follows:

(a) the Maori claim under the Treaty of Waitangi and the requirements of the 1976 Broadcasting Act remain unmet

(b) regardless of the identity of the successful applicant for the third tele-

vision warrant BCNZ should expect to lose a substantial amount in revenue and

(c) the successful applicant would receive, at no cost, a public asset — the only remaining VHF (very high frequency) available for general broadcasting.

The view of the NZMC was that it was totally unacceptable that funds should be diverted from the public broadcasting system and that an extremely rare resource, namely, the VHF be lost to public broadcasting while the Maori claim continues to languish. Accordingly, the NZMC resolved to establish The Aotearoa Broadcasting System Inc. for the purpose of being a contender for the VHF and the receiver of the funds which would be diverted from the public broadcasting system.

The Aotearoa Broadcasting System Inc. (ABS): Its application for the Third Television Warrant

The essential elements of the ABS application are as follows:

(a) The television channel will be under the continuous control of a bi-lingual and bi-cultural group, members of which will have a dual interest in the maintenance and development of Maori culture and in broadcasting.

(b) The channel will broadcast seven hours daily for seven days a week.

(c) The language of the channel will be as follows:

i) English	65%
ii) Maori	35%
	100%

(d) The content will be as follows:

i) Overseas	33.3%
ii) Local:	
General interest	33.3%
Maori topics (some of which will be of general interest)	33.3%
	100.0%

It is now common knowledge that BCNZ have responded supportively to the ABS bid for the third television warrant. The Corporation has accepted the logic of the case which was formulated by the NZMC and the strength of the Maori claim. It has become public knowledge that the Corporation will provide the transmission facilities (at a total capital cost of about \$46.6 million) and, following the initial settling-in period, will guarantee ABS at least

