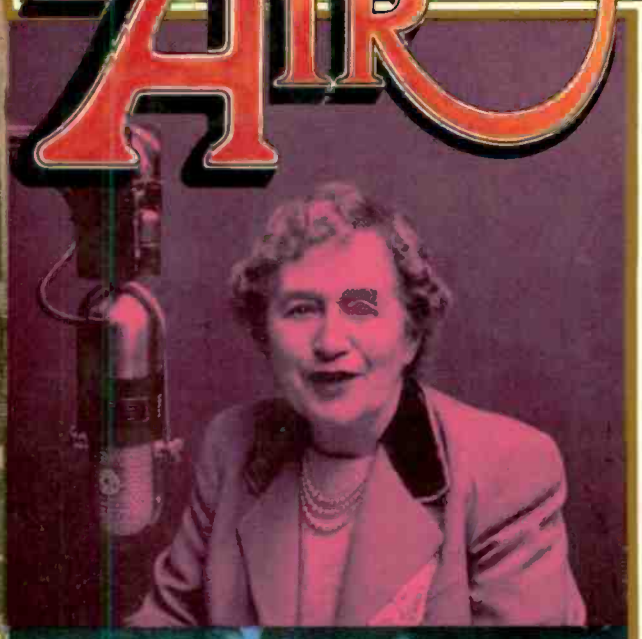
VOICES IN THE AIR



PETER DOWNES
PETER HARCOURT

RADIO BROADCASTING IN NEW ZEALAND: A DOCUMENTARY

VOICES IN THE AIR

Clive Drummond, Aunt Daisy, Uncle Scrim, Selwyn Toogood, Winston McCarthy? Or think about 'Fred and Maggie Everybody', 'Doctor Paul', 'Dad and Dave' and 'Radio Roadhouse' — just a few of the favourites from the story of radio. It all began in 1921 with that exciting moment when Clive Drummond (in Wellington) heard the song *Come Into the Garden Maud*, transmitted from Dunedin in those first experimental broadcasts.

Voices in the Air, fully illustrated with photographs of nostalgic, social and historical interest, tells the story of the people involved in a developing technology, and of a medium conveying information and entertainment to a nationwide audience undreamed of before November 1921. The record (inside back cover) extends the story with the personal recollections and sounds of those delightful, now-classic early voices on air.

With access to Radio New Zealand's official files and archives, Peter Harcourt and Peter Downes take a retrospective look at the programmes, politics, personalities and especially the pioneers of over half a century of broadcasting in New Zealand.

Front Cover (top left to right): Listening to radio in the 1920s. Aunt Daisy at the microphone (bottom left to right): Drayton T. Venables in an early studio setting. Recording live drama.

Endpapers: The first radio in Kaitaia.

Jacket design: John McNulty

Peter Downes' long association with radio began in 1947 when he joined the NZBC as a cadet. He has worked as a compiler, writer, producer and has been for some years Executive Producer in charge of all Light Entertainment for the National network. He was responsible for the popular magazine series, 'Saturday Night at Home', and variety shows like 'The Prickly Thistle Club'. He is the author of *Shadows of the Stage* and last year, in association with Barbara Basham and Ulric Williams, produced the Radio New Zealand documentaries on the history of broadcasting in New Zealand.

Peter Harcourt grew up with broadcasting (his father was managing director of the Dominion Radio Company in the 1920s). Peter joined the National Broadcasting Service in 1941 as a cadet and has been writing and broadcasting as a freelance for over 25 years. His credits include a memorable series of revues with David Tinkham, two popular LP's (*The Land of the Long White Shroud* and *Under the Southern Moss*) and many radio productions, including series on film musicals, Broadway shows and personalities such as Noel Coward, Judy Garland, Edgar Wallace, C.B. Cochran, and Bing Crosby.

$9.50
1/4

Through one of the marvels of modern science, I am enabled, this Christmas Day, to speak to all my peoples throughout the Empire. I take it as a good omen that wireless should have reached its present perfection at a time when the Empire has been linked in closer union, for it offers us immense possibilities to make that union closer still.

I speak now from my home and from my heart to you all. To men and women so cut off by the snows, the desert or the sea, that only voices out of the air can reach them.

From the first Royal Christmas Broadcast
H.M. King George V speaking from Sandringham,
25 December 1932.

RADIO BROADCASTING IN NEW ZEALAND: A DOCUMENTARY

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PETER HARCOURT

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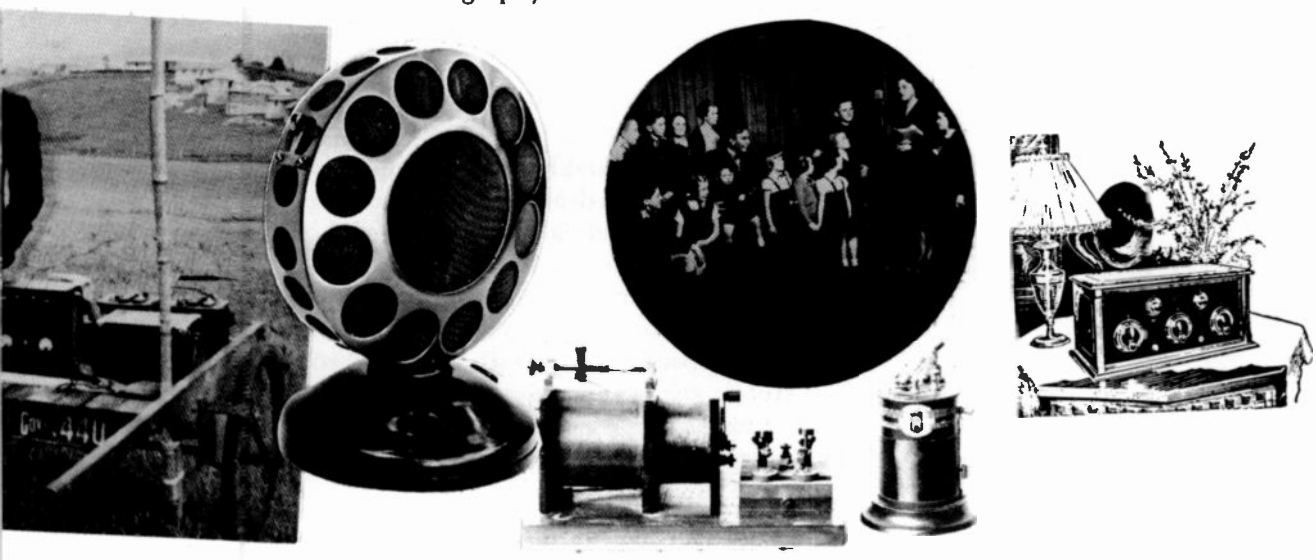
With special thanks and appreciation to
J.H. (BERT) HALL
(1897-1975)
Broadcaster — 1946-1963
Official NZBC Historian — 1966-1972

Contents



Foreword

Our title was no problem. King George V's words in his 1932 Christmas Day broadcast could not have been more appropriate. But how to enlarge upon them with a sub-title that would not seem clumsy or misleading or over-explicit? The simple answer: call it 'a radio documentary', because that is what the book is — a documentary about radio. Also, it's a broadcasting term, and in fact the text is derived to some extent from a series of Golden Jubilee radio programmes broadcast in 1975. But 'a radio documentary' did not quite cover our intention.

'History' was a description we wanted to avoid as being too formal; and although we have both been involved in New Zealand broadcasting for most of our working lives, this is very far from being our own personal account. We have assembled here, for the first time in print, stories and recollections by many of those who were part of the founding and the growth of broadcasting in this country. Some of them were included in last year's radio programmes, others have been added since. Their statements of what happened, what it was like, give this book a distinctive flavour: its 'documentary' touch.

There are of course many others — pioneers, performers, private individuals and staff members — who are not represented or named in these pages. That has been unavoidable in the comparatively limited space at our disposal to cover the development of radio broadcasting over a period of more than half a century. From those whose contribution it has not been possible to acknowledge we ask indulgence, and assure them it is not an oversight or deliberate neglect. It is just that it is simply not possible to mention every one (or even a reasonable number) of the many hundreds of New Zealanders who have given their talent and time and skill to building a radio broadcasting service.

For help in the compilation of this book special mention must be made of the following:
To the late J. H. Hall and Elsie Lloyd whose meticulous researches into the history of broadcasting in New Zealand have been an invaluable source of material; to Owen Jensen and Ulric Williams who compiled and wrote the original 1975 jubilee radio programmes; to Ian Cross, Editor of the *NZ Listener* for placing his journal's files and photographic collection at our disposal; to Asquith Thompson and the staff of Broadcasting Archives; and to Juliet Hobbs for making available material from the research papers of her father, the late R. M. Burdon.

For information, the loan of photographs and other assistance we

must also gratefully acknowledge the valuable help of Barbara Basham, Bill Beavis, Carol Brownlie, John Gordon, Ray Haggett, Gwenda Kidd, Pat Lawlor, Sue McTagget, John Stokes, Beverley Wakem, P. D. H. Wilson and Dudley Wrathall.

Finally an especial 'thank you' to the many people, both broadcasters and listeners, who gave so generously of their time to record memories of radio in New Zealand for the various jubilee programmes, transcriptions of which appear in this book.

Acknowledgments

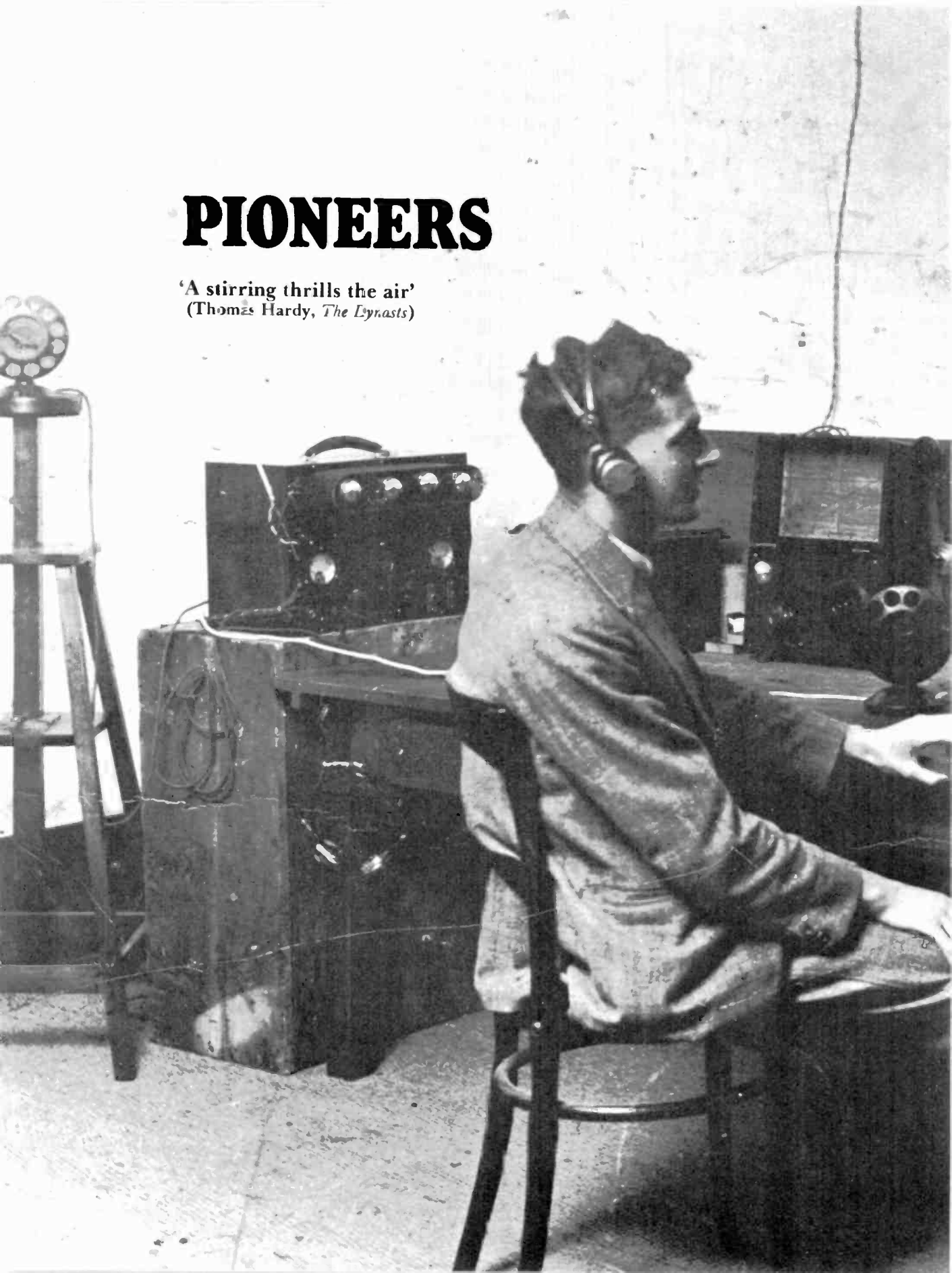
Excerpts from the *Otago Daily Times,* the *Auckland Star* and the Wellington *Evening Post* are printed with the permission of the respective newspapers; the quotation from the song *Canberra* is included with the permission of the author-composer, Neil McBeath; the quotations from *Broadcasting in New Zealand* by Ian K. Mackay and *The New Dominion* by R. M. Burdon are by permission of the publishers, A. H. and A. W. Reed Ltd, Wellington, from *Broadcasting Grave and Gay* by Ken G. Collins by permission of Caxton Press, Christchurch, and from *It's a Goal* by Winston McCarthy, by permission of Pelham Book Ltd, London. Despite extensive enquiries we have been unable to trace any representative of The Associated New Zealand Authors' Publishing Company, publishers in 1933 of *Restless Earth* by W. Graeme Holder, an excerpt from which is included.

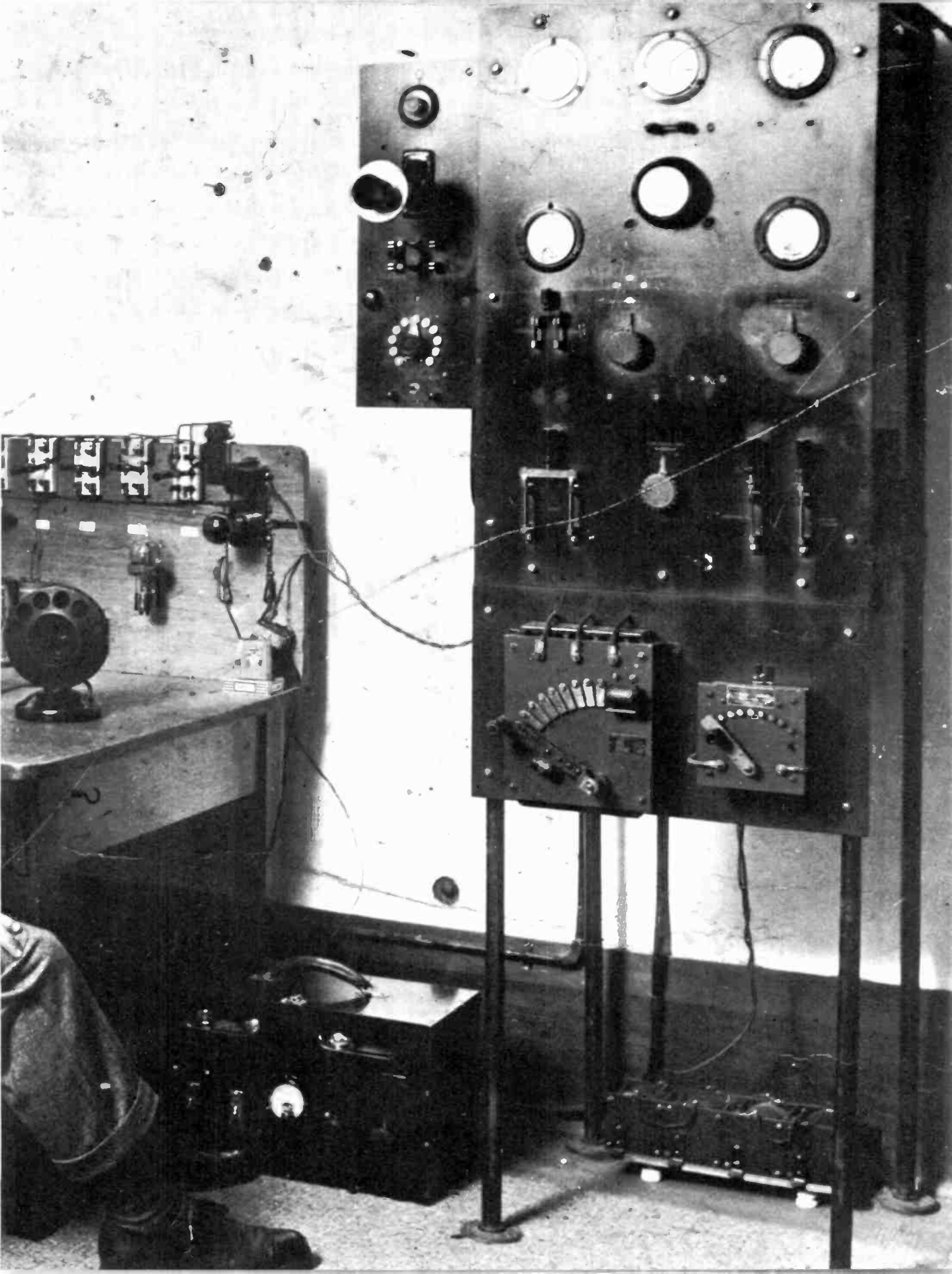
For the use of photographs and other illustrations we are indebted to the following:

Alexander Turnbull Library: 12, 19, 44, 54, 60, 86, 94, 101. Huggins Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library: 13, 24, 30, 37, 114. Taafe Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library: 78. Bill Beavis: 126, 141, 165, 168, 173. *Dominion:* 75. Ray Haggett Collection: 14, 69. Hocken Library: 11. National Film Unit: 90. *NZ Herald:* 22. *NZ Listener:* 10, 21, 25, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 63, 65, 69, 79, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 119, 125, 126, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 136, 138, 140, 141, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 157, 159, 161, 162, 163, 165, 167, 169. *Otago Daily Times:* 172. Radio New Zealand: 11, 18, 19, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 39, 41, 47, 50, 51, 54, 58, 62, 64, 71, 80, 84, 88, 89, 95, 96, 97, 103, 110, 112, 113, 116, 123, 124, 127, 132, 135, 136, 137, 142, 147, 158, 160, 170. Greig Royle: 87. Henry Rudolph: 127. John Stokes Collection: 17, 30, 91. *The Times,* London: frontispiece, 154. Dudley Wrathall: 113.

PIONEERS

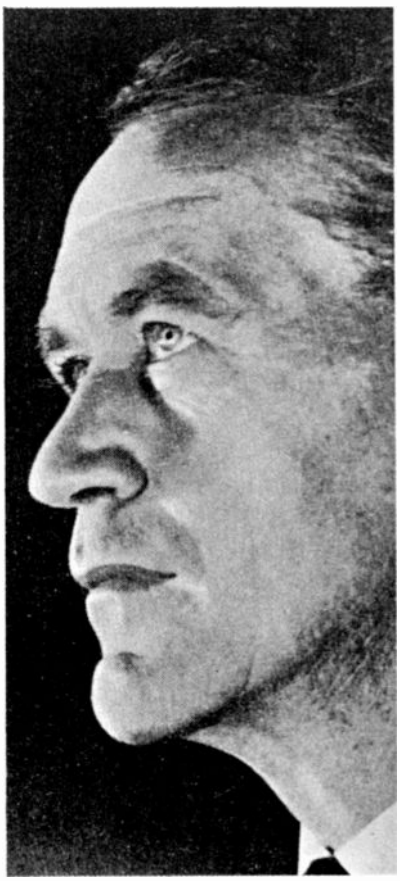
'A stirring thrills the air'
(Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*)





Chapter 1

PREVIOUS PAGE: The 1YA transmitter at Scots Hall, Auckland, in 1925. Bill Huggins at the controls.



Clive Drummond, the popular 'voice of 2YA' from the opening of the station in 1927 until his retirement in 1955.

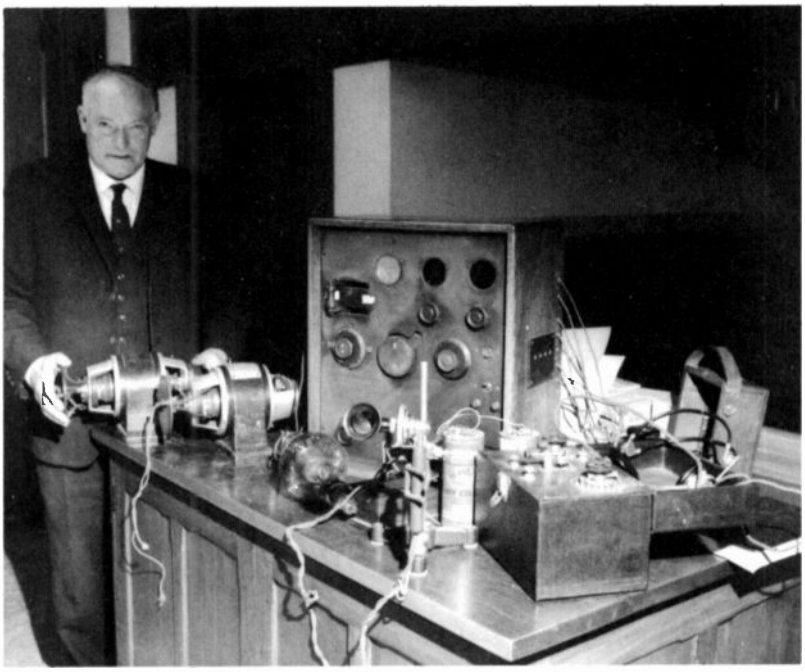
'I used to listen for three or four minutes every quarter of an hour, night after night. So one night I started at half past 8 and heard *Come Into The Garden Maud.* I can't tell you what I said, but I nearly went through the roof, as you can imagine. All the sound you ever heard was morse and static, but to hear a voice — well!'

For Clive Drummond, after more than half a century, the memory of that night in November 1921 was still vivid. It changed his life dramatically; one consequence was that he became in time a national celebrity. Then he was just an obscure Post Office employee listening intently for the sounds that hummed and sparked in the atmosphere. During the Great War his telegraphist's ear, trained to distinguish between the buzz of the key in Allied communications and the sharper note of German messages, had intercepted an exchange of signals between the heavy cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau.* What he heard helped the Royal Navy to meet and destroy the enemy at the Falkland Islands in December 1914. But Clive Drummond's interest turned from the sending and receiving of purely mechanical transmissions to the thought of broadcasting the human voice.

After the war 'wireless telephony' developed rapidly. As a professional radio operator Clive Drummond knew all about the Westinghouse Company's pioneer station KDKA in Pittsburgh, which had begun broadcasting in November 1920. Now, one year later, suddenly out of thin air he was hearing voices and music here in New Zealand. He remembered: 'I discovered afterwards that it came from Professor Jack at Otago University, so I wrote and told him I had heard this gramophone record. The professor was nearly as thrilled knowing that his set had been heard as far north as Wellington as I was in hearing it at all.'

In New Zealand broadcasting Professor Jack deserves to rank with Hillary on Everest or Lovelock at the Berlin Olympics. With two laboratory assistants, John Sutherland and Edgar Finlayson, he assembled a small transmitter at the university in Dunedin, and on the night of 17 November 1921 he put out the first radio programme ever to be heard in New Zealand. The only known fact about its content is that it included the then popular song *Hello My Dearie.* This was one of several gramophone records supplied by a local music store, which continued to make records available for subsequent programmes. The broadcasts went on air for two hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays each week until Christmas Eve. Even far away Hamilton reported hearing them.

Robert Jack's experimental team was the first group to receive a licence from the New Zealand Post Office to '. . . engage in research connected with the wireless transmission of vocal and musical items'. Like all pioneers Jack found his advanced ideas treated with scepticism and even ridicule. He perceived the almost

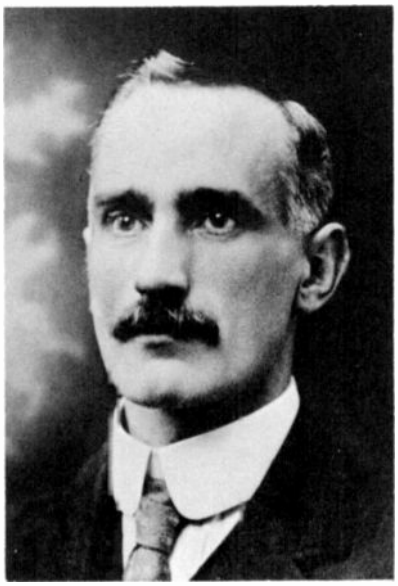


The transmitter and technical equipment built by the Physics Department of Otago University and used by Professor Jack and his associates for their broadcasts of radio programmes in 1921-22. Standing with the equipment is Stan Hughes Senior Technical Officer of the Physics Department who worked with Professor Jack on his early experiments and is still with the university today.

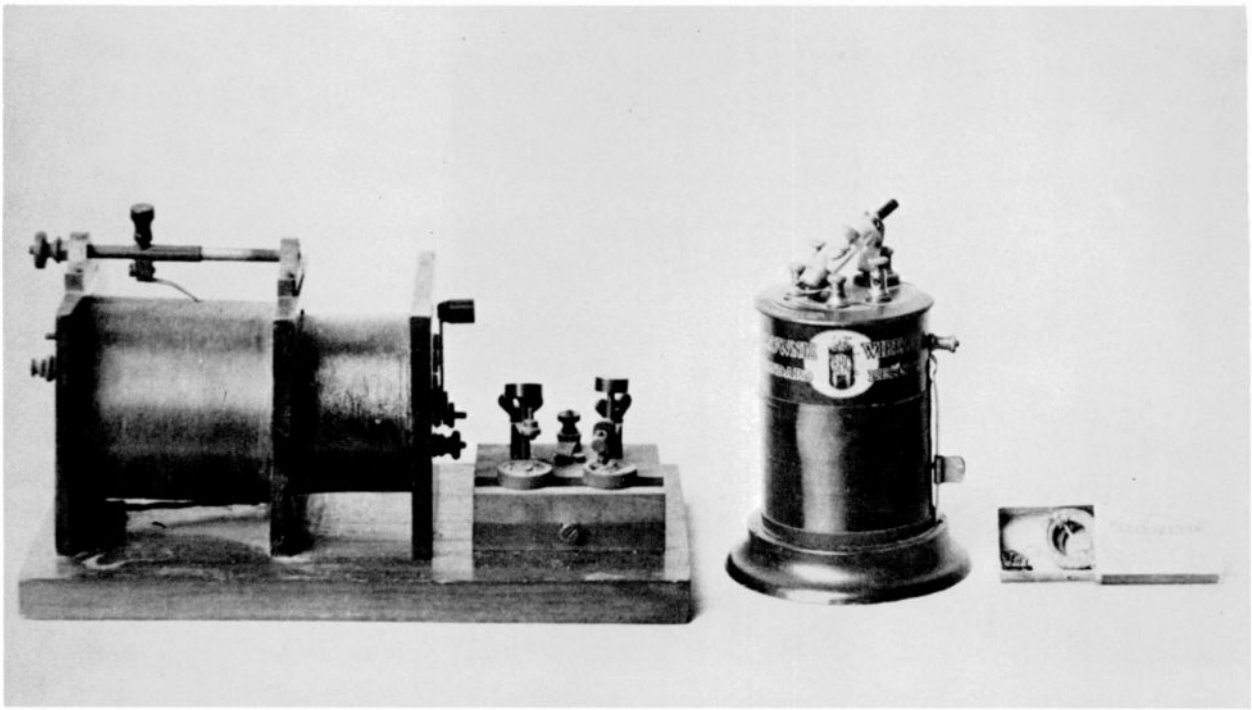
unlimited scope of radio broadcasting as a means of entertainment as well as mass communication. He foretold accurately how it would develop.

'Wireless telephony will develop along its own special lines,' he said to the *Otago Daily Times* in August 1921. 'It will give even wider publicity to all news of public interest, to speeches and entertainments and will thus tend to bring country settlers into close touch with all the life of the town. Further than that, the whole life of the community will be broadened and educated by being brought into more effective touch with the life of the whole world. No country in the world stands to benefit more than New Zealand by thus having the disadvantages of its isolation removed. . . . Why should the people of New Zealand not be allowed to hear the best things going? . . . A man could sit in his room for an evening and switch on to a scientific lecture but if he found that rather dry he could change his mind and switch over to perhaps a comic opera. You would have complete exclusion and could exercise your choice by just turning a handle.'

Those words may have fallen on deaf ears then, but public curiosity was certainly aroused three months later when Professor Jack's twice-weekly 'concerts' gave practical proof of his theories. After a 'break' during the Christmas holiday period programmes were resumed in January and went on until the university opened in March. By that time a demand had been created for regular entertainment by 'wireless'. Reports of reception came in from all



Dr Robert Jack, Professor of Physics, Otago University; the man who first broadcast radio programmes in New Zealand.



Typical radio receiving sets used during the early 1920s.

over the country. City and provincial newspapers announced with pride (and not a little wonder!) that someone in that area had actually 'listened-in' to Dunedin. To the general public, at first, the whole thing was something of a mystery or conjuror's trick.

Lionel Slade remembers:

> People used to laugh at us. I used to tell them I had heard 2LO London and so forth, or Guam — from America, from France — they used to just simply laugh at you. In fact, during that time I used to go round to church bazaars and such like and give demonstrations with radio, and people used to think it was funny getting this stuff from air and nothing about. I told people at the end they were welcome to come up and look around, and if they could find a gramophone they could take it home. You'd see people come up and go on the stage and look at the radio set, put their hands in their pockets and just casually wander round and look under the table and under the stage, just to see if they could find a gramophone.

Dunedin's 'voice in the wilderness' was not on its own for long. In February 1922 Charles Forrest began broadcasting music and speech from Courtenay Place in Wellington on Mondays and Fridays from 7.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Forrest's motives were not altogether altruistic. As the owner of a shop, the International Electric Company, selling radio parts, he was concerned with creating a market. With a certain amount of primitive truth he believed that his customers would increase in direct proportion to the programmes available.

Charles Forrest remembers:

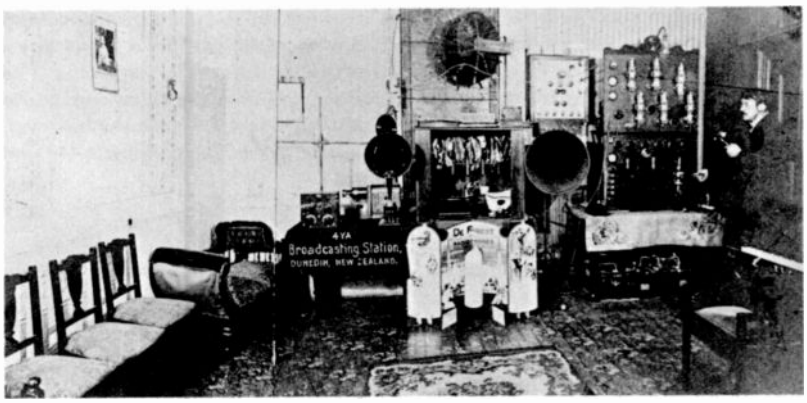
The first person to sing over the radio in New Zealand was a Mrs Violet Gyles. Her husband was a printer — Gyles & Son were the printers — they were in the same building as I was, and she used to come there sometimes and sing, that was before we had a piano, she was the first person. Now, the first man to sing was a fellow by the name of Tony Wood, he was the manager of a picture theatre in Courtenay Place. I knew the man in charge of the music section at Charles Begg & Co., and one time he said to me, 'Will you do something for me? Will you broadcast over the air the words "Yes We Have No Bananas"?' I said, 'Well, tell me, what does it mean?' And he said, 'I can't tell you what it means now, but you will do this firm a great honour and a great help if you do this.' I was looking for monetary support for the station, so I agreed, and I carried this on for quite a long while, and eventually people said, 'He's gone mad, what does he mean — "Yes We Have No Bananas"?' Well, in the end Beggs came out with the song *Yes We Have No Bananas,* and it became a great hit.

Auckland was next on the scene in the middle of the year. Douglas Shipherd and Robert Burrell operated on Saturday afternoons from Radio Services Ltd in the Strand Arcade, with much the same commercial motivation as Forrest in Wellington. Their first broadcast on 13 April was given the signal honour of a notice in the *New Zealand Herald.* 'The music was like that of a very fine gramophone,' wrote the critic, 'but without the smallest suggestion of the whirring or mechanical sound that so frequently accompanies gramophone music.'

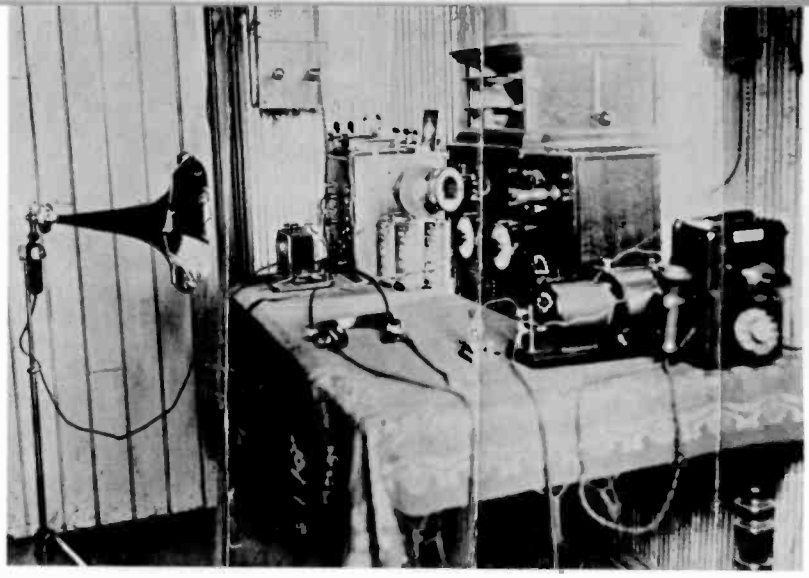
Now the action moved back to Dunedin. Two electrical firms opened broadcasting stations, managed respectively by Norman Arundel and F. J. O'Neill.

Walter Sinton remembers:

The programmes all started off with the Town Hall chimes. Freddie O'Neill pioneered that idea. His studio was right near the Town Hall and he used to put the microphone outside and pick up the chimes each night. Then there'd be vocal solos, piano solos, cornet solos, trombone solos, violin solos and final choruses by the party, so that this particular party would put on a complete show for the evening. They would all perform individually and then perform as a chorus at the end. And they were all very elegantly gowned and the men wore dinner suits.



The studio where Fred O'Neill's 4YA Dunedin programmes were presented from the opening of the station in 1922 until it was taken over by the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd in 1926. The lantern slide projector on the table in the centre of the picture was used to entertain children who were waiting to perform in the 'Children's Hour'.



The studio equipment and 15 watt transmitter used by A. J. H. McLay, Robert Apperley, A. E. H. Simpson, Clive Drummond and Ray Haggett in their shed in Newtown, Wellington.

Stan Mee remembers:

I used to go along as a very junior member of the group, usually carrying the music, and one of my important roles was not to make a noise turning the sheets of paper over in front of the live microphone so that the broadcast was never impaired. There were no tapes, no recordings — it was all done live on the spot, hence the fact that the announcers and the station staff always created a really good concert atmosphere and the artists were right at top pitch.

The number of Dunedin stations rose to three with the formation of one by the Otago Radio Association. In its initial stages this group of amateurs was encouraged by Professor Jack, whose university duties by now prevented him from transmitting except at odd times. For many years he remained as patron of the Otago Radio Association and was involved in its activities for more than quarter of a century. The station launched on the airwaves in 1922 still operates today as an independent, using the call sign 4XD.

James Hartstonge remembers:

I had a little circuit drawn by a school pal when I was 11 years old, but I didn't have the headphones and they were very costly in our terms, probably about 15 shillings a set or something, so I boasted to my father I was certain I could make the set from scratch in an hour and have it working, and if I did would he buy the headphones for me. So I started with a cigar box and took a telephone bell to pieces to get the wire. I didn't have a cylindrical former so I used three pieces of stick tied together and set this in the cigar box, sandpapered the top and put a piece of No. 8 galvanised wire along the top with a tin slider on it for tuning. The cat's-whisker was at the other end of the copper coil, and the thing worked — with borrowed headphones. So I got my headphones and I was in the business. The reception, as I recall it, was good. It may have been that we were fairly well placed — we lived on the hillside in Dunedin.

Edna Gyde remembers:

Everyone was terribly excited over our crystal sets. I can see my father at night now. We had only one pair of earphones in the whole family, and he'd sit there — prick, prick, prick — all night, and then he'd lose it and there'd be some swear words and so on — and we'd beg him to let us have a listen, so he'd lend us half an earphone and he'd have one clasped to his ear and we'd hear a little bit. . . .

Chapter 2

A second Wellington station, established in August 1922, was another that owed its beginning to Professor Jack. After hearing his broadcasts a group of enthusiasts (A. J. H. McLay, Robert Apperley, A. E. H. Simpson, Clive Drummond, Ray Haggett) wrote to ask for specifications of his transmitter. From these they built their own and started broadcasting intermittently. 'We began for the fun of it,' Clive Drummond was to recall. 'I tell you, we thought we were Christmas when ships just a couple of miles out in the Wellington Harbour picked up our broadcasts. Why, they were dancing on moonlight cruises and on moonlight excursions in the harbour — dancing to our faint and crackling little broadcast signals!'

A. E. H. Simpson remembers:

We broadcast mostly in the evenings, practically every night except Sunday. The station was just at the back of my residence in Newtown. The post office was practically next door, and the postmaster there was Clive Drummond. He had a rather pleasant voice and a good vocabulary so we made him our official announcer — unpaid of course — and he carried on for quite a while. Ninety percent of what we broadcast was phonograph music from disc phonographs, and we used to get telephone calls from various people requesting certain items. There's a little incident about that. One was *The Bells of St Mary's*, played by Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. The announcement was made, I don't know who by, of course the modulation wasn't too clever in those days, and someone rang up and asked 'What are you doing, broadcasting four white men in Auckland?' Well, of course that was the announcement of Paul Whiteman's Orchestra — they didn't get it too clearly.

Broadcasting had its hazards in those early days. The microphone had to be 'live' nearly all the time, which could lead to trouble. A. J. H. McLay was winding the gramophone one night when the spring broke. His reaction was short, vocal and unparliamentary. Listeners may have been surprised, but none complained.

After operating for a time as the Federal Telephone Company the group changed the name to Dominion Radio Company when they moved to the Dominion Building on Plimmer's Steps, off Lambton Quay.

Clive Drummond remembers:

We built the transmitter, which was operating quite well, on the fifth floor, but we wanted to be able to broadcast outside so we had to put up an aerial. We went out into the bush and cut down a tree, about 40 feet high, and hoisted it up on to the top of the Dominion building. But the point of this was to get it up on its end. Five chaps who didn't know much about it could easily get themselves killed. So we got some chaps from the waterfront, and they put the mast up for us perfectly. We used to broadcast gramophone records two or three nights a week. Then in 1924 the All Blacks were playing their final match at Twickenham after their wonderful series of successes on that tour. We arranged to get the final score direct from London at the end of the game. The technician came to my home in Wellington and we had supper, then walked about four miles into the city after 2

o'clock in the morning. We thought the programme would be finished round about 3.00 a.m. We hadn't been there long before there was a ring on the telephone from Auckland — 'Stand by'. I had my 'phones on and the station was on the air — we'd told them, you see, that we were standing by to see if we could get the score from Twickenham. A voice came up and just said, 'London speaking, the final score 17-11.' So I said, 'Final score from Twickenham, All Blacks 17-11.' I didn't know which way it was. I'd risked it was All Blacks 17 — which it turned out it was. Well, the amazing thing was, the score was put on trains in various parts of New Zealand — the train from Auckland to Wellington. And anybody who heard it stuck it on public notices — at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Another organisation of amateurs, the Radio Society of Christchurch, began broadcasting in 1922. That brought the total number of stations operating up to seven by the beginning of the next year. Official permits had been issued for 572 receivers.

From an editorial in the *Evening Post,* Wellington, 1922:

Three years ago few people would have imagined that the wireless telephone (scarcely, it seemed, more than an undependable and very delicate piece of apparatus) could become in so short a time a powerful factor in social life. Yet it is already that. But it is one thing to provide for the reception in a private home of useful information, or entertaining music, or the latest piece of drama, and quite another for the householder to throw open his doors and the minds of the members of his family to the intrusion of all sorts of propaganda, much of which may be positively hurtful.

Ways to prevent the 'intrusion of all sorts of propaganda' were to be an over-riding concern of the authorities in their approach to the problem of controlling this new medium. A set of Regulations for Broadcasting (issued under the Post and Telegraph Act 1920) came out in January 1923. Previously a receiver or transmitter owner had been required to obtain a permit from the Post and Telegraph Department. No charge was made, but neither was a permit issued without close investigation into the proposed use of the equipment. Every applicant was closely scrutinised.

John Stannage remembers:

Believe me, it was quite an ordeal applying for a radio licence in the days of crystal sets. In the nineteen twenties you were actually required to draw a circuit diagram of the receiver you proposed to use and have it certified by a solicitor or J.P., and also to swear on the Bible you wouldn't disclose any secret messages you might hear. I can well remember the J.P. I took my first application to, and his worried expression when he examined the circuit diagram!

Under the new regulations the country would be divided, from north to south, into four numerical transmission regions. The owner of a receiving set had to pay an annual licence fee of 5 shillings; for permission to transmit the fee was £2. Programme content was not overlooked. Licensed stations were told exactly what they were allowed to broadcast. They were also told what was not allowed, and advertising of any kind was strictly prohibited.

Religious programmes were to be given priority on Sundays from 11.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., and again between 6.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m.

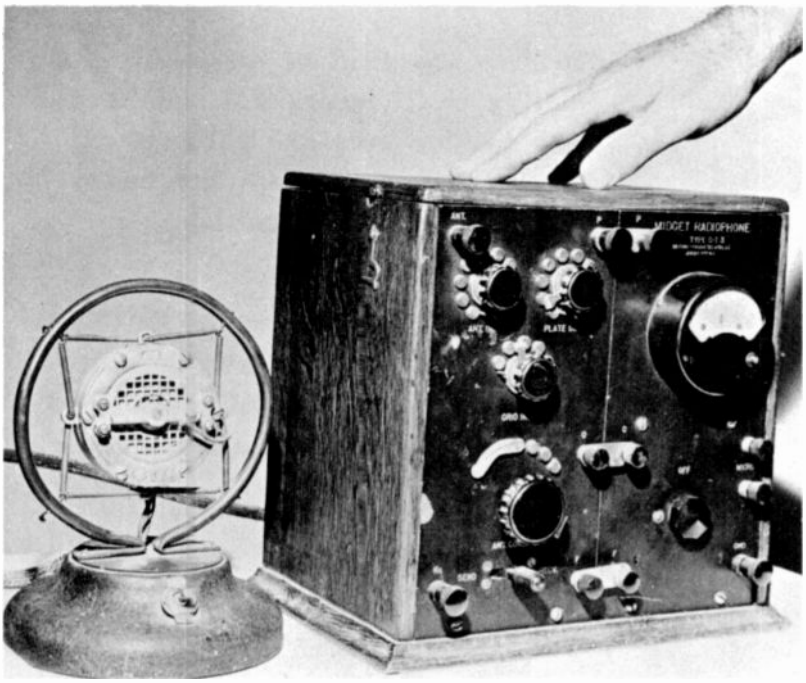
By the end of 1923 11 stations were operating, conscious that the New Zealand Post Office, as the appointed guardian of the 2,000 licence holders' moral welfare, kept a zealous eye and an attentive ear on everything they broadcast.

Also in 1923 each station was given an identifying call sign.

1YA	Radio Services Ltd, Auckland
3AC	Radio Society of Christchurch
4YA	British Electrical & Engineering Co. (O'Neill) Dunedin
4YO	Radio Supply Co. (Arundel), Dunedin
4AB	Otago Radio Association, Dunedin

Others were 1YB Auckland, 2YM Gisborne, 2AH Wanganui and 2YA Nelson (using battery power as Nelson's electricity supply did not come into service until October 1923). 2YA transmitted only briefly and closed before the year was out. As new stations opened up during the next few years they too were given an appropriate call sign. A constant factor throughout, however, has been the use of 1,2,3 and 4 as the numerical prefix for each region as was originally designated.

Wellington's Dominion Radio Company became 2YK. Charles Forrest merged with the Hope Gibbons organisation to form



The original transmitter and microphone of station 2YA, Nelson.

Wellington Broadcasters Ltd and, with a studio at the top of the Ford Building in Courtenay Place, broadcast as 2YB. Conditions were cramped, makeshift and often very trying — as they were in most of these pioneering studios. The Post Office collected the 5 shillings licence fee, leaving the broadcasters to fend for themselves. Only stations run by firms trading in radios and radio components could rely on a budget, however small. Those without any affiliation were sustained by their own enthusiasm, their own pocket and the donations of their supporters. The equipment might be temperamental; the operator could not afford to be.

Charles Forrest remembered the 2YB room as being perhaps 12 feet square, furnished with a piano (later a pianola), a springwound

STATION 4 Y.A.

THE

British Electrical & Engineering Co.

BROADCASTING.

To Listeners-in and the General Public:—

Following the lead of other Broadcasting Stations in N.Z., we have now decided to open a Subscription List to help to defray the heavy expenses of transmitting programmes.

We have carried the whole burden of broadcasting for over 12 months, and we now respectfully ask for your co-operation and assistance.

Donations will be thankfully received at our address

219 Moray Place,
Dunedin.

A card sent by Fred O'Neill to 4YA's listeners in 1924 appealing for funds to help keep the station on the air.

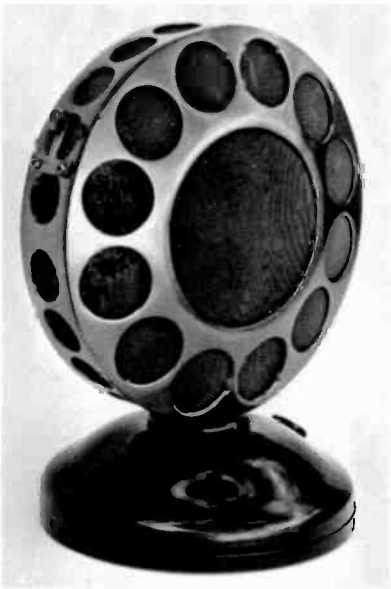
gramophone, and a carbon microphone. Occasionally the microphone stopped working without, of course, showing any sign that it was 'dead'. The first indication the announcer had that all was not well would be when a listener telephoned to say, 'If you think you're broadcasting, you're not!' Then the microphone would be taken down, knocked until the granules came apart, and 2YB would be 'back on the air'. Programmes consisted for the most part of gramophone records, but sometimes there would be a live concert on the open roof of the building.

Charles Forrest remembers:

Artists would come along and sing into the microphone. We also had a band which came up occasionally to help us out. Believe me, it helped us out in more ways than broadcasting music. Frequently after the selection had been finished the band would fall to talking and relating anecdotes . . . the joke was however that on more than one occasion the microphone was left switched on. Some of the broadcast was not a compliment to radio. But everybody enjoyed the joke, for radio was a novelty then.

J. V. Farrell, in a letter to the *Radio Record,* 7 October 1927:

About five or six years ago I was playing in Tutschka's Orchestra, the leading band then. We were asked to broadcast from the studio at the top of Ford's Building, Courtenay Place, which we did on two occasions. To give you an idea how early in broadcasting we were, I recollect the announcer before and after every item asking listeners to phone the studio if they had heard us playing. It came as a very great suprise to us when somebody rang up from Wanganui, although listeners in the city could not hear us too well. The studio was a small room a few feet square, and it became so hot with the crowd in it that we were obliged to play with our coats off.

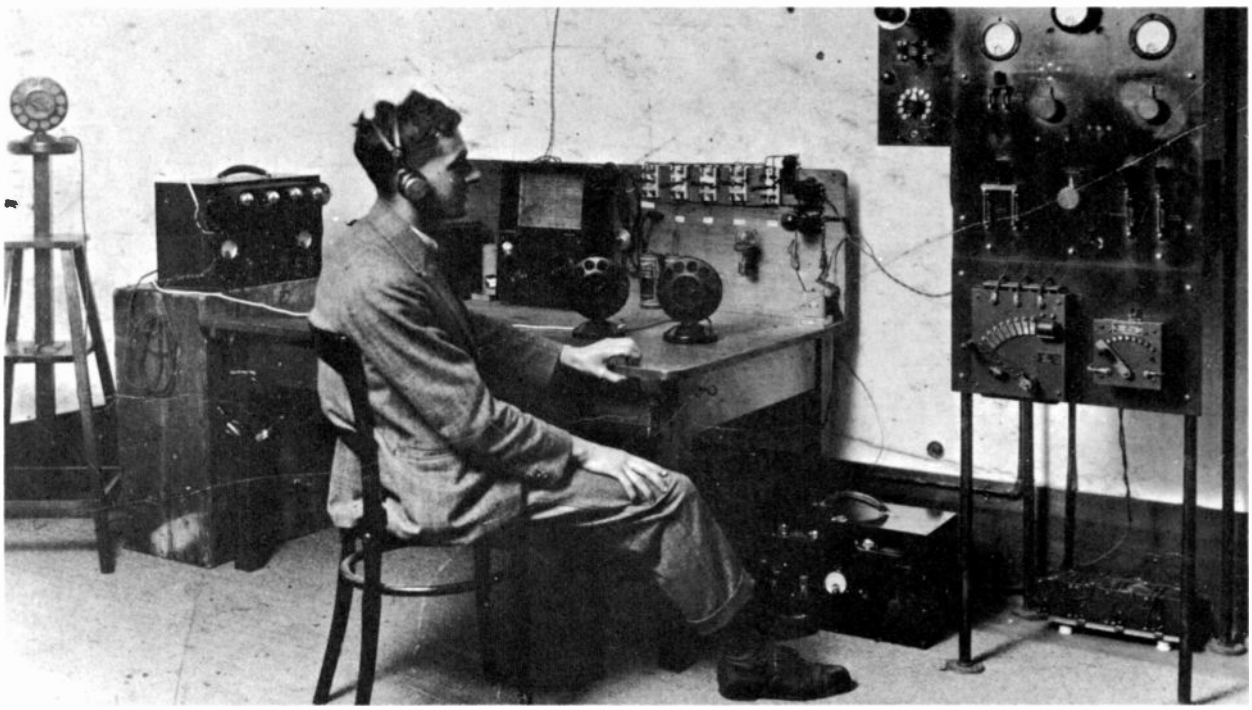


Typical carbon microphone used by radio stations during the 1920s.

H. J. Tutschka and his Dance Orchestra which broadcast frequently from Charles Forrest's station 2YB Wellington. It was the first dance band to broadcast in New Zealand.

In Auckland 1YA was cramped into a room about 20 feet by 15 feet at Scots Hall in Upper Symonds Street. The walls were hung with scrim to deaden any echo, and the floor was covered with large sheets of coconut matting. A microphone was suspended over a gramophone. Every hour or so the transmitter closed down to allow the generators to cool. An actor and singer who performed frequently at 1YA from the middle nineteen twenties onwards was John Gordon, a pioneer who became a veteran and finally almost a vintage personality. He remembered how the entertainment would stop at about 9.00 p.m. and the station would close down. Then, for quarter of an hour or so, staff and artists alike enjoyed a supper interval. When the cups of tea were finished the programme would resume, the performers (and possibly the listeners too) rested and refreshed by the break.

If programmes were haphazard, amateur and sub-standard in quality the blame could be put on lack of revenue and lack of official action. That this situation might change was indicated in November 1923 when the Postmaster-General, Gordon Coates, announced a government plan for radio broadcasting. As a first step an Act of Parliament was introduced to amend existing legislation and to enable the setting-up of a Dominion-wide service. The year 1924 was spent investigating ways and means of doing this to the best advantage.



The 1YA transmitter at Scots Hall, Auckland, in 1925. Bill Huggins at the controls.

Chapter 3

A decision was finally made. The government would enter into a contract with any person or company prepared to operate a station in each of the four main centres. 1 April 1925, 'all fools' day', was regarded as something of a bad joke by many listeners faced with a 600 percent increase in their licence fee — from five shillings to thirty shillings. The bulk of the money from this source would finance the central broadcasting authority. Public dismay and indignation were widespread, and many disgruntled taxpayers decided not to renew their licence until they felt it was worth their while.

As an interim measure, until the scheme proposed by Coates (who had since become Prime Minister) could be fully implemented, the government undertook to pay a subsidy of £15 per week to one station in each of the four main centres. The chosen few were 1YA, 2YK, 3AQ (transferred to 3AC) and 4YA. It would be their fate (or destiny) to be taken-over by whatever organisation accepted the government's terms.

On 30 August 1925 these stations passed into the hands of their new masters, the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand, when it assumed control of the country's official broadcasting policy. Its chairman was William Goodfellow, known previously as the man responsible for forming the New Zealand Cooperative Dairy Company. The general manager was A. R. Harris, who had his own electrical firm in Christchurch and a background of experience that included several years in the United States where he had worked in the Edison laboratories.

The Broadcasting Company was aware of some severe limitations on its movement and progress. It had undertaken to purchase the four private stations already receiving a government subsidy. It had agreed to establish and operate 500 watt stations at Auckland and Christchurch within six months from the date of its contract. When those two stations were fully operational it was in duty bound, at the request of the Minister, to provide similar facilities at Wellington and Dunedin. While construction and installation were in progress it was required to maintain programmes of a standard equal to whatever had existed previously. And, although the government accepted liability in the use for broadcasting of patented inventions, the company had had to agree to indemnify the government against all actions, claims and demands made in respect of any injury arising from acts of the company or its agents. It says much for the courage and the optimism of Harris and Goodfellow that they took upon their shoulders a burden so heavy and a task so thankless.

There were other restrictions, some of them political, some administrative. Among the latter was a loosely-worded instruction that the use of mechanically-operated musical instruments would

Ambrose R. Harris, Managing Director of the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd.

be permitted '. . . provided that the use of such instruments is strictly limited to a comparatively small part of the time occupied by the station in transmitting programmes'. It was to be a handicap to programme organisers for some considerable time, even if it did give welcome opportunity to local talent. Programmes were to consist of 'educative, informational or entertaining matter', and they were to fill at least 12 hours each week, not including Sundays. Approval could be given for one silent day a week, but again that did not include Sundays.

'The Family Tunes In.' Listening to a valve radio in 1928.

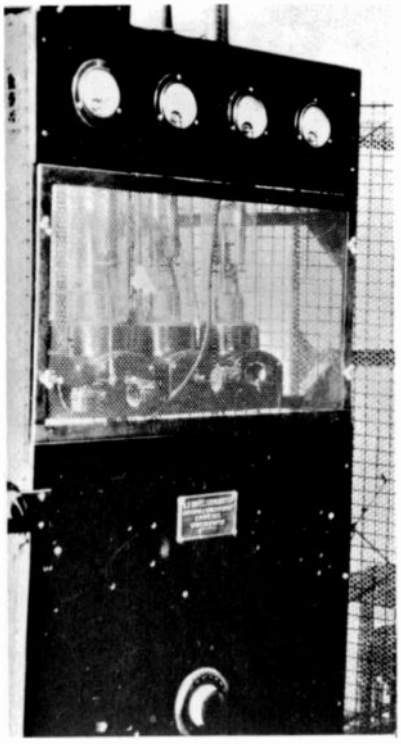
In most centres where broadcasting was established the start of the company regime had little or no effect. Only in Wellington was there any notable consequence. It was what any medium depending on sound alone dreads above all: silence. The explanation was simple but absurd.

The 'D' day was to be 30 August — the end of the Dominion Radio Company and the start of the Radio Broadcasting Company. In November 1924 2YB had merged with 2YK to make only one station in the capital city — and that one under threat of more or less compulsory take-over. The management and staff of 2YK wanted the best possible price for their station. To force the issue they decided to use the only card they held— a shutdown. Without disclosing their intention they ended transmission for good at the close of the normal programme on 30 August. The following night the company, now apparently responsible for the programme, had nothing with which to fill the gap. Not unnaturally listeners were enraged by what seemed to them to be cavalier treatment.

At a hastily convened meeting the Post Office was entrusted with the job of providing interim programmes. Their efforts must have been reasonably satisfactory, judging by the reaction when their service was discontinued a few weeks later. As part of the general outcry one critic wrote of the disappointment he felt '. . . just when the Post and Telegraph Department were beginning to produce highly interesting results in the matter of improving the quality of the output. The stoppage of the service here has imposed real hardship upon those whose receivers are not suitable for long distance reception. They have paid their fees and they are getting nothing for their money.'

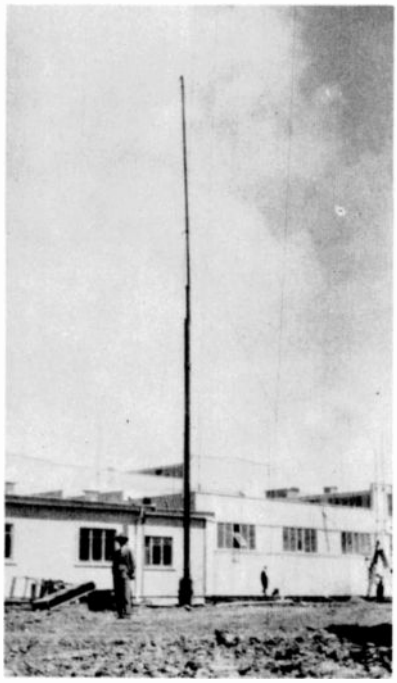
That 600 percent increase in the licence fee still rankled. Many listeners refused to pay the money; those who did expected a comparable rise in the quality of reception, style of programme and standard of presentation. They were frustrated to hear nothing — or next to nothing.

Apart from a brief return to air in November to broadcast election results 2YK maintained a stubborn silence. Not until the company took up its duties officially just before Christmas was the dispute resolved. Then the familiar voice of Clive Drummond was heard again introducing a temporary schedule of programmes while plans were made for a new high-powered station. Wellington's tactics to gain a better price were not repeated by station owners in the other main centres.



The VLDN transmitter.

Chapter 4



The 80 foot transmitter aerial mast of Station VLDN, in Logan Park, Dunedin.

Head Office of the Radio Broadcasting Company was in Christchurch but, appropriately enough, it was in Dunedin that the new era had its pioneer days. A New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition was to open there in mid-November. AWA Ltd, a private company, applied for a permit to set up a transmitter in the grounds but were turned down by the Postmaster-General. Shrewdly, he recommended the idea to the new Radio Company, who were quick to see the advantages it offered.

Hurriedly the firm of A. R. Harris Ltd put together a new 500 watt transmitter. It was rushed to the Exhibition site just in time to cover the opening ceremonies on 17 November. So, by a curious coincidence, the first official transmission of the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd took place from Dunedin four years to the day after that first experimental programme of Professor Jack's in the same city.

There was one drawback. Construction of the transmitter and its accompanying studio gear had been so hasty there had not been sufficient time for full-scale tests. For the first few weeks its performances were deplorable. The main trouble was a wandering wavelength which made reception difficult, but that problem was complicated by bad placing of the microphones for outside broadcasts. Trying to ignore the abuse and rude advice being offered to them freely, the company's technicians struggled to correct the faults.

By mid-December their efforts seemed to be meeting with success. According to the *Otago Daily Times* the station had been, '. . . turned upside down, pulled inside out, remodelled, redesigned, and again remodelled, until today it is altogether a different proposition. . . . On Wednesday last came a remarkable change in the quality of the broadcasting. So sudden was it that one is tempted to believe that the administration had also been overhauled.'

Among musical performers engaged for the Exhibition were the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Band, combined Wellington and Dunedin Choral Societies, Elsa Stralia, Winnie Fraser and Harrison Cook — and the Broadcasting Company was also able to make use of their talents. As well as speeches, band items, lectures and recitals listeners enjoyed two concert performances of *Il Trovatore* by the Festival Choir. There was also an Exhibition Cabaret from which items were relayed.

On 3 December an experiment took place here which was believed to be unique in the history of broadcasting up until that time. Arrangements were made to see if a particular item could be transmitted across the Tasman to Australia.

The particular item was a song written by a visitor to Dunedin, Neil McBeath. Since its title was *Canberra* he thought it might be

Elsa Stralia.

Harrison Cook.

Winnie Fraser.

suitable for the famous English music hall star Ella Shields, then appearing at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney. Letters passed backwards and forwards setting up the necessary date, time, place of reception, and other preliminary details.

At 9.30 p.m. on 3 December Neil McBeath stepped up to the microphone in Dunedin and spoke the words of his song. More than a thousand miles away, on the other side of an ocean, Ella Shields with a shorthand writer and a musical arranger listened at the offices of station 2FC. Faintly but clearly through the surge and crackle of interference they heard:

Make for old Canberra in the morning,
In the dawning of the day;
Make for old Canberra in the morning,
The sun will show the way.
There's no need to hurry, no need to worry,
When everything seems wrong,
Make for old Canberra in the morning,
And you'll find you're singing a song.

Neil McBeath spoke the words at dictation speed, then sang the melody through so that the music arranger could copy it down. Finally it was played twice by Manuel Hymans and the Cabaret Dance Band, after which McBeath said, 'Goodnight, Miss Shields, and goodnight Sydney'. The broadcast was over, and radio history had been made. The purpose of it all was accomplished when Ella Shields sang *Canberra* in her act at the Tivoli the following night.


MAKE FOR OLD
CANBERRA
IN THE MORNING.
FOX-TROT
By NEIL McBEATH
"HULLO, AUSTRALIA"
SONG DICTATED TO SYDNEY.
EXHIBITION BROADCASTING SUCCESS
UNIQUE RADIO EXPERIMENT
PUBLISHED BY
NEIL McBEATH
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND
Copyright.
2/-

To cover the period of transmissions from the Exhibition a call sign of VLDN was given to the temporary station. When the Exhibition closed 12 months later the equipment was moved to the rooms which had been occupied by Fred O'Neill in Moray Place. At the same time the company took over his station and assumed the call sign he had been using, 4YA. 3YA in Christchurch had been added to the growing network in March 1926, and before that, in late November 1925, Auckland's 1YA had been taken over.

The studio of VLDN, at the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, Dunedin, 1925-26. Left to right: W. P. Huggins (engineer), J. E. Bingham (engineer), J. W. Webb (announcer).

Although orders had been placed overseas well in advance for the 500 watt transmitters that were to be installed at both 1YA and 3YA, neither was received within the time specified. Consequently the opening of both stations had to be postponed, and did not take place until a full year after the date intended. The strain this imposed on the young company's ability to carry out its undertaking showed all too clearly in second-rate programmes and inferior standards. This, in turn, laid them open to criticism and protest. Aucklanders were especially vociferous, their sense of grievance being inflamed when they compared what they were getting with what they had had when 1YA was a private station. Significantly, the number of receiving licences dropped by about a quarter during the first year of the increased fee.

The new 1YA building in France Street, Auckland, 1926.

At last there was hope for an improvement. In August and September of 1926 the new transmitters were installed and began operating, first at 1YA, then at 3YA. In his speech at the 1YA re-opening the chairman of directors told guests and listeners, 'Every endeavour will be made to obtain the best talent available in news, instruction and entertainment.'

The new 1YA studio, France Street, Auckland, 1926. The tent-like drapes on ceiling and walls were an attempt to stop undesirable echoes from getting into the microphone and spoiling the sound.

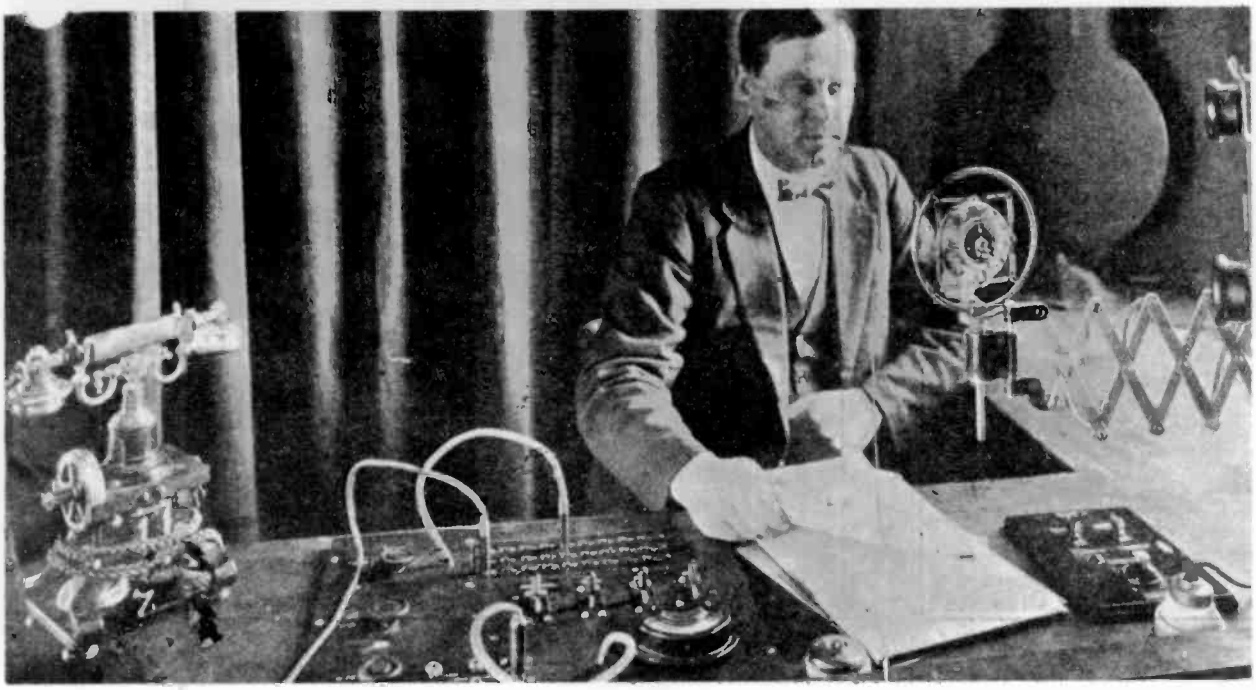
By then there was an agreed interpretation of the phrase 'mechanically operated musical instruments', which was taken to include gramophones, and of the vague definition 'comparatively small part of the time' when they could be used. It was accepted that 25 percent of the time was a reasonable figure. With that settled, the company's newly appointed programme organisers could tackle the job of trying to satisfy irreconcilable tastes.

It was difficult, if not impossible, to vary the programmes much. Apart from recordings and player-piano solos the main source of material was local artists, who received (at that stage) no performance fee. Another valuable reserve was the large number of professional musicians in cinema and theatre orchestras and in small dance bands.

The upgrading of programmes however, took second place to the acquisition and equipment of adequate studio buildings and the installation of high-quality technical apparatus. It says much for the ingenuity and the determination of programme organisers that they overcame restraints on their enterprise to achieve what they did.

The new 3YA transmitter masts on the top of George Court's Building, Karangahape Road, Auckland, 1926.

P. Booth at the 3YA control panel and announcing microphone, 1927.



Programme:

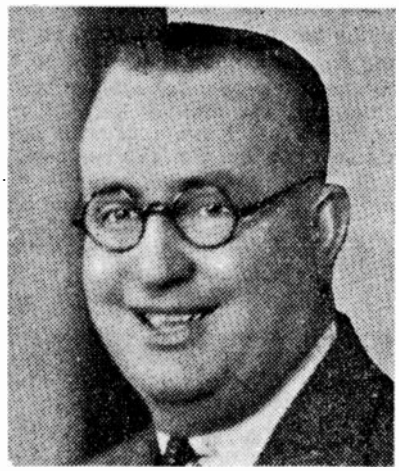
1. *Overture* — "*Light Cavalry*" — *Suppe*
   Burnnand's Orchestra
2. *Speech by Postmaster General* — Hon. W. Nosworthy
3. *Songs* — (*a*) "*Carmena*"
   (*b*) "*Thou Art Risen My Beloved*"
   Miss Laura Walker
4. *Speech by His Worship the Mayor* — Mr. G. Baildon
5. *Pianoforte Solo* — "*Liebestraum*" — *Liszt*
   Mr. Leo Whitaker
6. *Speech by Secretary Post & Telegraph Dept.* — Mr. A. T. Markman
7. *Songs* — (*a*) "*The Volga Boatsong*" — *Korsakoff*
   (*b*) "*I Did Not Know*" — *Trotere*
   Mr. Ernest Thomas
8. *Speech by Chief Telegraph Engineer* — Mr. T. S. Gibbs
9. *Instrumental Trio* (*a*) "*Midsummer Night Serenade*"
   (*b*) *Melody in F* — *Rubenstein*
   The Moore Sisters
10. *Speech by Chairman of the Radio Broadcasting Company*
    Mr. Wm. Goodfellow

INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

11. *Selection* — Silver Band
12. *Hawaiian Melodies* (*a*) "*Invercargill March*"
    (*b*) "*Waimana*"
    Waikiki Hawaiian Orchestra
13. *Songs* — (*a*) "*Waiata Maori*" — *Alfred Hill*
    (*b*) "*Caller Herrin*"
    Miss Laura Stone
14. *Violin Solos* — (*a*) "*Chanson Triste*"
    (*b*) "*Lane Song*"
    Miss Grace Cameron Johnson
15. *Song & Instrumental* (*a*) "*Yearning*"
    (*b*) "*Maisie*"
    Bohemian Duo
16. *Songs* — (*a*) "*A Castilian Lament*"
    (*b*) "*It is not Because Your Heart is Mine*"
    Madame Towsey (*Mr. Cyril Towsey at the Piano*)
17. *Male Quartettes* — (*a*) "*Love's Old Sweet Song*"
    (*b*) "*'Cause I've Nothing Else to Do*"
    New Zealand Four
18. *Selection* — Silver Band

GOD SAVE THE KING

RIGHT: Technical equipment used on board one of the Auckland Harbour Ferries for describing the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York in 1927.

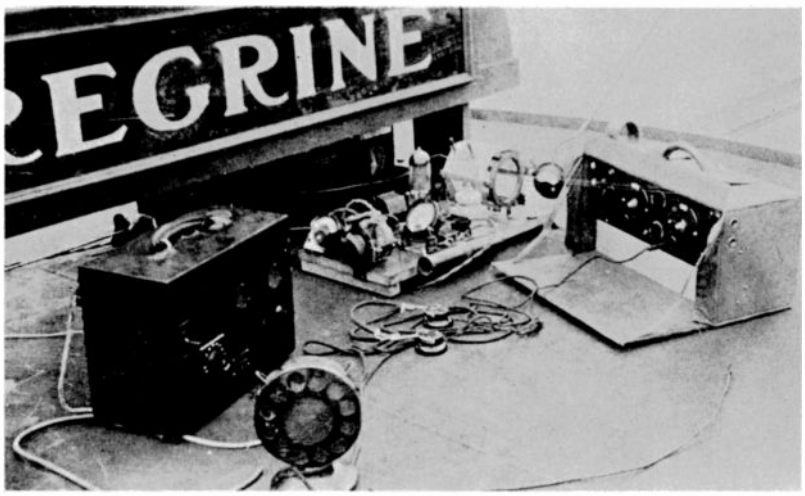


John Prentice, 1YA Announcer.

From the magazine *New Zealand Radio* 5 March 1927:

Radio listeners from all over the province of Auckland and also possibly outside greeted H.M.S. *Renown* and followed her up the harbour in spirit through the agency of broadcasting station 1YA, on the occasion of the arrival of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York. Elaborate preparations by the staff of 1YA resulted in almost every interesting function being described . . . . The portable transmitter was installed on one of the ferries which took visitors down to greet the *Renown*. Mr J. M. Prentice seemed to thoroughly enjoy giving his distant audience a picture of the scene. It was obvious that the overcast weather prevented a good view of the scene on the harbour, and the showers which swept across the harbour occasionally blotted things out, making it difficult for the man at the microphone. The microphone was afterwards installed near the Town Hall, from which vantage point a good view of the welcoming crowd and the procession was obtained. The expectant crowd, the arrival of the Duke and Duchess and the inspection of the guard of honour were described, after which the announcer regretted that the proceedings inside the Town Hall could not be described, permission to broadcast having been withheld.

To 1YA then must go the credit for New Zealand's first broadcast of a royal occasion. And the same station achieved what must have been another 'first of its kind' only two months later.



From the magazine *New Zealand Radio:*

The possibilities of wireless broadcasting in assisting the man in the street to have a general knowledge of international events were well demonstrated on Thursday 5 May. The writer considers the evening in question one of the most interesting ever organised by 1YA. The popular announcer Mr J.M. Prentice (brave man!) undertook to answer at a moment's notice telephoned questions relating to international politics. The station's telephones were so arranged that the voice of the questioner went on the air as well as the answer by Mr Prentice. As a result, the atmosphere of a 'round-the-table' chat was conveyed to listeners . . . .

There, in essence, was what became known in radio 50 years later as the 'talkback programme'. The questions and topics discussed in 1927 covered a wide range: from the possibility of war

between Japan and Siberia to a beer and tobacco blockade in Britain; from the Monroe Doctrine to a description of a Bolshevik.

'Many of the questions were extremely pertinent,' said the correspondent of *New Zealand Radio,* 'and showed a keen interest in foreign affairs on the part of New Zealanders.'

The honours did not all go to Auckland. Christchurch scored a memorable 'first' on 29 May 1926 with the broadcast of a rugby commentary from Lancaster Park. Actually, this preceded the company's complete take-over and belongs more to the caretaker stewardship of the Canterbury Radio Society. The teams were High School Old Boys and Christchurch, and the commentator was Alan Allardyce. To him must be paid a special tribute as the man who would eventually lay the foundations of the whole radio sports service.

Alan Allardyce, New Zealand's first sports commentator.

Perhaps unaware of the historic importance of the occasion, the local Rugby Union authorities expressed some annoyance at the way the commentator had interfered with the game by making too much noise. Allardyce was at a loss to understand how this accusation could be made. He and his microphone had been safely tucked away on a tower well above the field, from where his voice could not have been heard. A day or two later the mystery was solved. A radio enthusiast, anxious to share his pride in this momentous event, had carried his loudspeaker outside and put it on the park fence. There, with the volume turned up full, Allardyce's words carried clearly across the field to players, referee and the crowd. One could suppose that 'radio interference' had a meaning of its own from then on at Lancaster Park.

BELOW: Alan Allardyce at the microphone, describing the first rugby match ever to be broadcast in New Zealand, the Christchurch v Old Boys charity match, 29 May 1926.

Christchurch may claim the first rugby commentary, but the first commentary on a sporting event took place in Nelson. The date was 28 April 1923, and the station was the short-lived 2YA. With a temporary permit allowing it to make this one transmission the station broadcast a description, from a travelling launch, of the Australasian sculling championship between Felton of Australia and Hannan of New Zealand.

What may well have been a 'first' for anywhere in the world accompanied the Canterbury Jockey Club meeting of August 1926. 3YA covered all three days of the meeting — possibly the first complete broadcast of a meeting ever made. The commentator was again Alan Allardyce. Echoes of the Lancaster Park affair may have reached the ears of the Riccarton stewards as they agreed to let him describe the races only on condition that he kept well away from the grandstands and did not distract the patrons. How was he to see the horses? True broadcasting man that he was, he found a way. With the help of the Post Office a telephone line was laid-on to the top of a haystack just across the road. Perched on this uncomfortable vantage point Allardyce kept faith with his listening public without disturbing anyone actually present at the course.

From the top of a nearby haystack Alan Allardyce describes races at the Canterbury Jockey Club's meeting in August 1926. The first complete broadcast of a race meeting in New Zealand and possibly the world.

Chapter 5

The last major addition to the Broadcasting Company's flotilla was, if not its flagship then at least its dreadnought. Experience with the 500 watt transmitters in Auckland and Christchurch decided the company, after consulting the government, to increase the power of its Wellington station. The strength of the planned increase was considerable: from 500 watts to 5,000 watts. It would be the most powerful station in the Southern Hemisphere and the second most powerful in the British Empire. Programmes beaming out from the new, twin masts on top of Mount Victoria, soon to be a landmark and a symbol in themselves, would be heard in most parts of New Zealand.

The launching ceremony for station 2YA was performed by the Rt Hon. J. G. Coates, Prime Minister, before a gathering of state and civic dignitaries, invited guests and broadcasting staff on 9 July 1927. The station's new premises, on the corner of Waring Taylor Street and Featherston Street in the heart of the city, were 'new' only in the sense that broadcasting was occupying them for the first time. As the Wellesley Club the building had already seen a good many years of service. It was to see many more, remaining a focal point of radio broadcasting's innumerable outposts scattered about the city until the early 1960s when it entered on a new life as the headquarters of NZBC Television.

If Mr Harris and Mr Goodfellow needed proof of the public's growing confidence in the service they were providing, they could find it in the official figures of licences issued. In March 1926 there were 3,588 registered listeners. By September 1927 the total had risen to more than 30,000 and was increasing at the rate of 1,500 a month.

Housed, staffed and powered after two years in operation the Broadcasting Company was firmly established. Attention could now be given to those two critical areas, programmes and public relations. Hard on the heels of the 2YA opening (and that had been a news story of the year) came publication of the weekly *Radio Record,* a magazine with broadcasting information, technical data and programme schedules a week in advance. Looked at today, its pages reflect the state of radio in 1927: a thriving, progressive and expanding industry which saw itself as *the* entertainment medium of the future.

Retaining the mandatory 'silent day' (taken in turn by each station, to be scrupulously fair to both broadcaster and listener) plans were made to extend hours of transmission. Apart from sports commentaries, the first afternoon broadcasts were introduced by 4YA with an hour and a half, twice a week. Women were the obvious audience. They were treated to a talk, usually on cooking or an approved topic of equally 'suitable' content, and were entertained with recitals of light music relayed from a city tearoom.

The Radio Broadcasting Company of N.Z. Limited

Opening
OF
The Company's Wellington Station
BY
The Right Honourable J. G. Coates
Prime Minister of New Zealand
TO BE HELD AT
The Studio, 124 Featherston Street
ON
Saturday, 16th July, 1927
COMMENCING 8 p.m.

R.S.V.P.
The Station Director,
2 YA, Wellington

Dress

Invitation to the official opening of 2YA.

When the other stations began similar programmes they varied the format only in local details.

Weightier matters were the concern of John Ball, 2YA's newly-appointed editor-announcer, who would later manage the station for 10 years. He began a series of talks on international affairs. For his material he could call on information supplied by the Imperial Affairs branch of the Prime Minister's Department, despatches received daily from Britain through British Official Wireless and current news in the daily papers. It is hard to imagine today what the 'lecturettes' were like, based as they were on such narrow and necessarily one-sided sources.

Much of the emphasis had been on technical development, but a team of experts was being recruited in other fields. When W. P. Huggins went from Christchurch in May 1926 to take charge of 1YA's technical side he met Drayton T. Venables, the newly installed programme organiser. Forty years later Huggins recalled that this post was no sinecure; it required the holder to be 'office boy, announcer, artist and manager as well'. Venables, a small rotund man with a deep voice and a colourful turn of phrase, was promoted in 1933 to a position in Wellington as national programme organiser. For the last 13 years of his life he managed station 2YD.

Sharing the job with Venables at 1YA was Dudley Wrathall, an early performer in radio who continued as an employee for some

Rt Hon. Gordon Coates, Prime Minister, declares 2YA officially open, 16 July 1927. This photograph was taken in the main studio.

PROGRAMME.

1. Eight O'Clock Chimes — **Wellington General Post Office Clock.**
2. Band March—"The Red Shield" ... ... *Goffin*
   The Salvation Army Citadel Silver Band.
3. Official Opening Address by **The Right Honourable J. G. Coates,** Prime Minister of New Zealand.
4. —Soprano Solo—"Laughing Song" ... ... *Manon Lescant, Auber*
   Miss Myra Sawyer.
5. Address by the Postmaster General, **The Honourable W. Nosworthy.**
6. Instrumental Trio (violin, piano, cello)—"Trio in B flat" *Schubert*
   Miss Ava Symons, Messrs. Gordon Short and George Ellwood.
7. Address by His Worship The Mayor of Wellington, **Mr. G. A. Troup.**
8. Bass Solo—"Prologue from I. Pagliacci" ... ... *Leoncavallo*
   Mr. W. W. Marshall.
9. Violin Solo—"Ballade and Polonaise" ... ... *Vieuxtemps*
   Mr. Leon Jules de Mauny.
10. Contralto Solos—"The Silent Vale" ... ... *Stevenson*
    "Hills of Donegal" ... ... *Sanderson*
    Miss Nora Greene.
11. Band Selection—"The Army of the Brave" ... ... *Marshall*
    The Salvation Army Citadel Silver Band.

INTERVAL.

12. Instrumental Trio (Violin, piano, cello)—"Theme and Variations" *Tschaikowsky*
    Miss Ava Symons, Messrs. Gordon Short and George Ellwood.
13. Tenor Solo—"The Old Spinet" ... ... *Squire*
    "Passing By" ... ... *Purcell*
    Mr. William Renshaw.
14. Band Patrol—"Jamie's Patrol" ... ... *Sydney Dacre*
    Wellington Municipal Tramways Band.
15. Maori Songs—"Pokare Kare" ... ... *Maori*
    "Waiata Maori" ... ... *Alfred Hill*
    Petone Maori Variety Entertainers.
16. Hawiian Steel Guitar Trio—"Kamiki March" ... *Smith*
    "Hawiian Islands March" *Smith*
    Mr. J. W. Goer and Party.
17. Vocal Duet—"Oh Fairy Wand Had I Thy Power" ... *Wallace*
    Miss Myra Sawyer and Mr. W. Boardman.
18. Violin Solo—"Nocturne in E flat" ... ... *Chopin-Sarasate*
    Mr. Leon Jules de Mauny.
19. Bass Solo—"Aria from Ernani" ... ... *Verdi*
    Signor Lucien Cesaroni.
20. Band Selection—"Gems of Harmony" ... ... *Smith*
    Wellington Municipal Tramways Band.
21. Contralto Solos—"My Ain Folk" ... ... *Lemon*
    "The Night Nursery" ... ... *Arundale*
    Miss Nora Greene.
22. Flute Solo—"Bravura" ... ... *Lorenzo*
    Signor A. P. Truda.
23. Bass Solo—"The Calf of Gold" ... ... *Gounod*
    Signor Lucien Cesaroni.
24. Band March—"Dawn of Freedom" ... ... *Rimmer*
    Wellington Municipal Tramways Band.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

John Ball, announcer and later manager of 2YA, Wellington.

Programme for the opening of 2YA Wellington, 16 July 1927.

years then left to enter private broadcasting. When commercial radio was institutionalised in 1936 he re-entered the official organisation and remained with it until retirement in 1965.

Completing a trio, with Wrathall and Venables, was S. J. (Sid) Hayden, originally a musician, then a versatile jack-of-all-trades at 1YA, later a senior executive at Head Office, and for the last few years of his career, supervisor of recorded programmes.

Some idea of the sheer desperation of the programme organiser's lot in those early days may be gained from the experience of Tom Venables. After trudging the streets all day trying to persuade artists to give their services (fees had been promised but had not yet materialised) he would return to the studio to wait and see if they turned up. Sometimes they did, more often they did not. To keep things going Venables would play records or the pianola, sing a little, tell stories, ramble on inconsequentially — and keep an eye

Drayton Venables at the microphone and Jim Hutton at the piano in the old 1YA Studio, Scots Hall, Auckland, 1925.

Wednesday, September 21st.

1YA AUCKLAND (333 METRES)—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21.

3 to 4.30: Afternoon session.
7.15 to 7.45: News and information session
8.0: Chimes.
8.1: Relay of overture from Prince Edward Theatre. Mr. Geo. Poore, conductor.
8.16: Contralto solos—Miss Robina Chellburg, (a) "Beloved, Sleep" (Slater), (b) "The Nightingale" (Kjerulf-Boosey).
8.24: Violin solos—Mr. Norman Watson, (a) "Orientale" (Cesar Cui), (b) selected.
8.32: Baritone solo—Mr. Clinton Williams, "The Floral Dance" (Moss).
8.37: Flute solo—Mr. Vic. Bedford, "Paraphrase" on "Alice Where Art Thou?"
8.41: Soprano solo—Mrs. Cyril Towsey, "With Thee is Peace" (Schubert).
8.46: Piano solo—Mr. C. Towsey, "Holberg Suite" (Greig).
8.52: Whistling solos—Mr. Reg. Bell, (a) "Let the Rest of the World Go By," (b) "Bird Mimicing."
9.0: Weather report.
9.1: Relay from Prince Edward Theatre.
9.16: Contralto solo—Miss R. Chellburg, "Yonder" (Oliver-Larway).
9.21: Violin solo—Mr. N. Watson, "Ballet Music" from "Rosamunde" (Schubert).
9.26: Baritone solos—Mr. C. Williams, (a) "Stone-cracker John" (Coates), (b) "For the Green" (Lohr).
9.34: Flute solo—Mr. V Bedford, "Song Without Words" (Clinton).
9.43: Soprano solo—Mrs. C. Towsey, "O, Divine Redeemer" (Gounod-Chappell).
9.48: Piano solo—Mr. C. Towsey, "Devotion" (Schumann-Liszt).
9.55: Whistling solo—Mr. R. Bell, "Three O'clock in the Morning."
10.0: Close down.

2YA WELLINGTON (420 METRES)—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21.

SILENT.

3YA CHRISTCHURCH (306 METRES)—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

3 p.m.: Afternoon concert session.
6.0: Children's session, by Uncle Jack.
7.15: Addington stock market reports.
7.30: News.
8.0: Chimes. Relay of orchestral selections from Everybody's Picture Theatre Orchestra.
8.15: Male quartet—Beckenham Quartet (Messrs. Pitman, Odell, Archer, and Jackson), (a) "An Evening Lullaby" (Shaw-Curwen), (b) "Little Tommy Went a Fishing" (Macy-Ditson).
8.21: Euphonium solo—Mr. T. H. Hughes, "The Broken Melody" (Van Bien-Ascherberg).
8.25: Mezzo-soprano solo—Mrs. G. L. Bull, "By the Waters of Minnetonka" (Lieurance-Chappell).
8.29: Pianoforte solo—Miss Marian Hayward, "Nocturne No. 5, F Sharp Major" (Chopin-Peters).
8.33: Mezzo-soprano solo—Miss Ruby Clarke, "Lullaby" (Scott-Elkin).
8.37: Brass instrumental quartet—Woolston Band (Messrs. Trenbearth, Hughes, Creagh, and Wilson), "Lohengrin" (Wagner-Haigh-Hume).
8.42: Male quartet—Beckenham Quartet, Thuringian Volkslied" (Abt-Novello).
8.46: Pianoforte solo—Miss Marian Hayward, "Cappriccio in B Minor" (Brahms-Lengnick).
8.50: Cornet solo—Mr. S. Creagh, "Peristyle Polka" (Chambers-Smith).
8.55: Mezzo-soprano solos—Miss Ruby Clarke, "Curios," (a) "China Mandarin" (Crampton-Cramer), (b) "Persian Prayer Rug" (Crampton-Cramer).
9.0: Talk—Mr. Les Hayward, "A Round Trip Thro' the Southern Lakes and Mt. Cook District."
9.15: Relay from Everybody's Picture Theatre.
9.25: Euphonium solo—Mr. T. H. Hughes, the waltz song, "Il Bacio" (Arditi-Boosey).
9.29: Pianoforte solo—Miss Marian Hayward, "Sonata No. 24, Op. 78" (Beethoven-Albert).
9.33: Mezzo-soprano solo—Mrs. G. L. Bull, "Lament of Isis" (Bantock-Breitkopf and Hartel).
9.36: Cornet duet—Messrs. Creagh and Trenbearth, "Down the Vale" (Moir-Boosey-Hume).
9.40: Mezzo-soprano solo—Miss Ruby Clarke, "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere" (Fearis Ercells).
9.44: Male voice part-songs—Beckenham Quartet, (a) "Every Rustling Tree" (Kuhlau-Novello), (b) "A Catastrophe" (Sprague-Banks).
9.51: Brass instrumental quartet—Woolston Band Quartet, "Passing Clouds" (Round-Wright and Round).
9.56: Mezzo-soprano solo—Mrs. G. L. Bull, "The Lass With the Delicate Air" (Arne-Chappell).
10.0: Close down.

Typical programmes as printed in the *Radio Record* in 1927.

on the door in case anyone came in. Silence was the enemy, time the relentless foe. To keep both at bay one night Venables grabbed the newspaper wrapping of Bill Huggins' fish-and-chip supper. He started to read out loud a funny story still legible through the grease. It should have taken a few minutes but his own laughter and the difficulty of deciphering the print prolonged the joke. At the end of 20 minutes (at closedown) Tom Venables was still laughing — and still hadn't got to the end of the story.

Other names from the days of 'hope and play': Colin Trim, programme organiser in Wellington and a stalwart for many years after; Culford Bell in Auckland; J. W. Webb, musical director in Dunedin; H. N. Snelling (described, we are told, as 'ex-2LO London'); and E. J. Marklow. None of the last three remained for very long.

W. J. Bellingham, Director of Music for the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd.

A significant indication of long-term policy was the appointment in September 1927 of a director of music. The first holder of the post, W. J. Bellingham, did not stay long enough to do more than set guidelines and form an attitude. He stated his philosophy.

'Do not under-rate the capacity of the audience to appreciate good music, well played. I believe in a varied programme with a major proportion of standard works. The essential feature is that what is done, whether it be a foxtrot or symphony, must be well done. . . . In order to get efficiency it will be necessary to develop a number of highly-trained professional players who will be able to read at sight and intelligently and artistically interpret the whole range of music from classical to modern times.'

Putting this idea into practice, Bellingham formed permanent instrumental trios or quartets at each station and encouraged the engagement of better artists. This, of course, brought the company face to face with the question of artists' fees. In the 1926 Annual Report they had resigned themselves to the inevitable: 'The sources for obtaining free talent for programmes are becoming limited and the present standard generally cannot be maintained six nights each week. Already several performers have asked for fees.'

It seems incredible, but Dudley Wrathall in Auckland was allowed a budget of three guineas a week — an amount he 'stretched' by flattery, cajolery and shrewd manipulation. He would approach local music teachers and invite them to perform several items for payment of one guinea — a condition of acceptance being that they brought along some of their leading pupils to fill out the programme, for nothing.

In Wellington Colin Trim had to use similar methods, even though his 'national' status entitled him to spend £10 — but he had 12 hours of programme time to fill. Disposal of the funds was a wayward business. Only now perhaps is the full richness of the absurdity apparent.

Walter Sinton remembers:

If you were a singer or a pianist or a woodwind player you were classed as a *standard* performer, and regardless of the quality of the performance the fee was always one guinea. But if, on the other hand, you played a brass instrument or any other type not classed as standard, you were a *novelty* performer and you received half a guinea. So if a player blew brilliantly through a saxophone made of metal his reward was only half that of a clarinet player who may have blown less brilliantly through his wooden instrument. Yet despite this obvious anomaly the system existed for years and I cannot recall any grumbles. This I attribute to the fact that in those days the fee was secondary — it was a delight to be on the air at all.

Bellingham insisted that the best available professional performers were to be engaged, and they were to be supported by paid amateurs who had passed a fairly stiff audition. Once it became accepted practice this system eliminated second-class performers who had until then enjoyed a free run, turning to their advantage the fact that the programme organiser's need would overcome his better judgement.

Fees gradually became more generous. In its second year of trading the company was able to compare a total of £4,000 spent on local artists with the previous year's £319, and to claim at about the same time that it was '. . . already the greatest employer of concert talent in New Zealand'.

Children's programmes, a great favourite and already something of a tradition, achieved a new dignity during 1927. The general manager himself made a statement of policy. 'It is the aim,' he said, 'to so arrange the programmes for the children's hour that they will prove instructive as well as entertaining, at the same time avoiding the heavy, pedantic form of tuition.' To carry out the aim a national head of children's programmes was appointed, Mrs Anna Rose Hall.

Winifred McCarthy remembers:

In those very early days the programme was run mostly by the children themselves giving items, singing songs. Sometimes we had kiddies who could do duets or recitations. Quite often we would read them stories, they seemed to like serial stories. We held competitions. One I remember was a peggy-square thing for the Red Cross. We had to improvise things all the time because there was nothing much else for kiddies to do. They loved their programmes and there was never any difficulty in getting them to come and participate. The difficulty was sorting out those who were good from those who weren't. Some who did go on weren't as good as we thought they were going to be.

Many of today's adults will remember the spellbinding appeal of those unsophisticated, unprofessional, often impromptu 'Children's Hours' of their younger days. Guiding them skilfully was a dedicated band of Aunts, Uncles, Big Brothers and Cousins, many of whom (especially the ladies) reigned over their loyal followers for lengthy periods. Aunt Pat (Miss Maynard Hall) began in

The new 3YA studio, 1927.

Christchurch in 1928 and continued for a decade. When 2YA's Aunt Gwen (Miss G. Shepherd) was married in 1930 the wedding ceremony and reception speeches were broadcast. Her successor, Aunt Molly (Mrs D. Evans), was a loved personality for 21 years. In Auckland 'Cinderella' (Miss Ruby Palmer) was equally loved for just as long. It was during her annual holiday that one of radio's greatest radio personalities (not then as famous as later) adopted the name by which she would be known in every household throughout the land. In formal terms, she was Mrs Frederick Basham.

Barbara Basham remembers:

In the late 1920s mother used to go up to Auckland to do programmes on composers' birthdays, singing their songs and giving stories about them. Then they said would she stand in for Cinderella while she went on leave for two weeks. But they had to play their own records in those days. Everyone had gone home leaving her to hold the fort for this hour, and I can remember sitting down in the country waiting for her to put on a record and hearing, I'm afraid, a long silence while she turned the wrong knob! And that was when she first became an 'aunt'.

'Aunt Daisy'. Her theme tune *Daisy Bell* and cheerful introductory, 'Good morning, good morning, good morning — good *morning,* everybody!' helped to break down a curious but stubborn (and largely unspoken) opposition to the very idea of 'personalities'. Even Clive Drummond, whose voice was known from one end of the country to the other, was never allowed to say who he was or to let his name be mentioned. There was one memorable exception, when the rule was broken by the visiting English soprano Isobel Baillie.

Clive Drummond remembers:

It was her birthday, and as a special gesture we asked her if she would select her own programme: four of her favourite songs. I announced them separately, and in answer to any question I asked her about her birthday and things of that sort she had to refer to me as 'Mr Announcer'. So after she had finished the second song and I made some comment about things, she had to answer and she said, 'Well, according to the script I have to use here the announcer doing my programme tonight is somebody who has a really good Scottish name, and why in the name of goodness I have to call him "Mr Announcer" when he has a name like Drummond I can't imagine! So from now on if I have any comment to make I'll refer to him as Clive Drummond.' I broadcast for almost 30 years, and I never mentioned my own name once on the microphone during all that time!

In a world that accepts the personalised radio programme, the use of theme songs, catchphrases, vocal mannerisms and attention-getting devices it may be hard to imagine the furore that was created 45 years ago when Clive Drummond's individual way of saying 'Goodnight' was temporarily banned. Persons conveying information and public messages must it seemed be bland and anonymous.

'Aunt Pat' of 3YA.

'Big Brother Bill' of 4YA.

'Aunt Molly' of 2YA.

'Cinderella' of 1YA.

'Aunt Gwen' of 2YA.

'Uncle Jasper' and 'Spot' — favourites on the 2YA 'Children's Hour' during the late 1920s and all through the 1930s.

D. A. V. C. Drummond ('Clive' to everyone) had continued his career with the Post and Telegraph Department after 2YK's abrupt demise. Then the Broadcasting Company invited him to announce the all-important opening night concert programme of their new Wellington station 2YA. After that he continued to make occasional spare-time broadcasts. As 'Uncle Jasper' he also became a popular contributor to the 2YA 'Children's Hour', and when he introduced his dog Spot over the air their radio audience embraced listeners by the thousand, young and old alike. So it was a shock when, in April 1928, the Post and Telegraph Department transferred him to Paeroa as postmaster. Radios everywhere brought into sad homes a farewell message, broadcast in the 'Children's Hour' from the platform at Thorndon Station. It seemed like the end of an era.

In a little over two months, however, sorrow turned to celebration. Clive was back! The Broadcasting Company had arranged for him to be transferred to their full-time staff, on a permanent basis. Uncle Jasper and Spot were heard again on the children's session, and the warm clear delivery became a feature of 2YA's programmes for many years to come.

Ken Collins remembers:

Clive Drummond, the chief announcer, *was* 2YA to many thousands of listeners in the 1920s and 1930s. His public relations were fantastic. To walk down Lambton Quay with him was like walking with royalty. People turned and pointed and people would be saying, 'There's Clive Drummond'. He had a presence in front of the microphone and every word he uttered was treated as gospel truth. But in the late 1920s he stood in front of the studio microphone in dress clothes with the celebrated international tenor Browning Mummery standing by his side ready to broadcast. And in those dulcet tones of his he announced, 'Ladies and gentlemen, the Broadcasting Company has great pleasure in introducing the celebrated tenor Mrowning Bummery!'

Chapter 6

In prize fighting history Chicago on 22 September 1927 means only one thing: 'the long count' that cheated Jack Dempsey in his bid to regain the heavyweight title from Gene Tunney. New Zealand listeners were not far from the ringside. 'Arrangements were made . . . for the reception of the shortwave broadcast, and both at Auckland and Wellington it was possible to receive sufficient of the fight for shorthand notes to be taken and announcements made over the air.'

Reception had been 'completely spoilt at exciting points' but it was hoped that 'as technical equipment and skill advance, this feat will be possible of development'. That hope was realised within a matter of weeks.

On 11 November 1927 a shortwave broadcast was relayed from the BBC's overseas transmitter at Chelmsford. To end the programme the Director-General of the BBC, Sir John Reith, sent greetings '. . . to all those thousands of listeners overseas and particularly to those in Australia and New Zealand'.

'Many a humble crystal-set owner must have stared agape,' commented the *Radio Record*, 'when he realised that what he was hearing was being said in old England. It was an achievement that makes a crystal-set no longer a "humble crystal-set". It stands exalted now. It has heard London calling. . . . It was wonderful, and listeners who stayed up late were well rewarded.'

What the midnight listeners heard was an Armistice Day service from Canterbury Cathedral and an organ recital from the Church of St Mary le Bow. Five years were to pass after that first thrilling broadcast before a daily Empire Shortwave Service began transmission from Britain.

In the late 1920s trails were being blazed through the sky by nonchalant adventurers in matchstick aircraft. The Tasman Sea was a challenge to their daring and courage. On 10 January 1928 two young New Zealanders, Captain G. Hood and Lieutenant J. R. Moncrieff (names to be inseparable for ever more), took off from Sydney and headed towards the long coastline of their homeland.

Their flimsy monoplane was fitted with an automatic radio transmitter. Its single note, fading, faint, but audible, was a link that kept the waiting crowd in suspense all day long. The country's 38,000 radio licence-holders sat by their loudspeakers, their number swelled by family, neighbours, friends — even gate-crashers.

Expected time of arrival was 7.00 p.m. at Trentham race-course near Wellington. A crowd of nearly 12,000 gathered to give welcome. 2YA's John Ball was there to announce the landing. The signals had been heard quite plainly soon after 5 o'clock, but since then — nothing. Reports came in of a plane being seen or heard near the Cook Strait area. The crowd waited: 8 o'clock came and

went, then 9 o'clock. No sign. Their excitement now turned to apprehension, their happy voices subdued, the crowd dwindled away.

2YA stayed on the air till 2.00 a.m. to keep the public informed, but the only news they had to report was: No news. Mysteriously, Hood and Moncrieff had vanished while a nation waited and listened. The power of radio to involve its audience in great events had been proved beyond all doubt.

In September 1928 Charles Kingsford Smith and C. T. P. Ulm, after being in radio contact throughout their flight from Sydney, landed safely at Wigram Airport. As the *Southern Cross* touched down the moment was described by Alan Allardyce to a radio audience that had waited for hours, tuned to the four YA stations in a special all-night vigil. The reception given by the waiting crowd was shared by thousands at home, the whole scene pictured in their mind's eye by a voice from out of the air.

Swinging the propeller of the *Ao-tea-roa* as Lieutenant Moncrieff and Captain Hood prepare to take-off from Richmond Aerodrome near Sydney on their ill-fated attempt to fly the Tasman.

The *Southern Cross* flies over Wigram airport just before landing on 11 September 1928 after completing the first successful flight across the Tasman. The journey had taken 14 hours 25 minutes. On the roof of the hangar building, the seated figure fourth from the right is Alan Allardyce broadcasting a description of the plane's arrival through all the YA stations.

Boxing again brought the country almost to a standstill in August when Gisborne's Tom Heeney fought Gene Tunney in New York. Alan Macgregor remembers:

I had been given a crystal set by an aunt in 1927 on her return from Italy. I used to lie in bed at home and listen to the Wellington broadcasting station, using the wire wove on the mattress as an aerial. On the day of the big fight, Friday 3 August 1928, I took the set to school (Wellington College) and hid it in my desk during a French lesson with that grand old master W. F. C. 'Froggie' Balham. I had dismantled the set of earphones, so I was able to hold one earphone in my hand with the lead going up my sleeve, down inside my shirt and connecting with the crystal set in the desk. The fight was relayed from the local station and I received the broadcast clearly, giving a quiet running description to the boys near me. Sometimes when the key was moved across the set there'd be a squeal. When that happened Mr Balham would look up and wonder where the noise came from, but he made no comment.

News while it was happening was not the only thing radio brought to listeners in out-of-the-way places. 'Many a country home . . . will have cause to thank Madame Ainsley,' said the *Radio Record* after a broadcast of *Carmen* just before Christmas 1927. Relayed from the stage of His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland, the opera had a cast of 60 headed by Irene Ainsley in the title-role.

Broadcasting to schools was not to begin as a regular service until April 1931, but initial programmes went out to 30 selected schools in December 1927. The Director of Education, T. B. Strong, stated he was greatly impressed with the possibilities of radio as an aid to teaching.

December 1927 was significant for another reason. An entire evening's entertainment from 2YA was given by Otaki Maori College. One soloist was an 'old boy' of the school, Kingi Tahiwi. Ten years later he was a popular 'personality' announcer at the Wellington commercial station 2ZB. He was killed in action in World War II.

Madame Irene Ainsley.

The Wanganui Maori Party in the 2YA studio at the time of the Maori Pageant broadcast on 6 February 1928. Clive Drummond is standing third from the left and the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, is seated in the centre of the picture, wearing a Maori cloak.

Stanley Warwick.

Cedric Gardiner, who was included in the cast of *Jane*, the first full length play to be broadcast in New Zealand. He was then at the beginning of a lengthy career as an actor and producer for Wellington radio and theatrical groups.

Reaction to that first programme was so good that a much more ambitious presentation was broadcast on 6 February 1928, Waitangi Day. A group of 30 performers from Wanganui took part in an elaborate pageant of Maori history, song and story. All four stations carried the programme, which was repeated at a later hour the following night for listeners in Australia and the Pacific Islands. It was thought that no previous broadcast had reached so wide an audience.

A *Radio Record* programme note in 1928 advised listeners that '. . . a feature of very great interest will be presented on Thursday 3 May, when a three-act farcical comedy will be given in its entirety'.

Special attention was drawn to this item because it was the first presentation on New Zealand radio of a full-length play. The producer, Stanley Warwick, may have chosen *Jane* because he knew it so well after three previous productions for amateur societies. His cast included Cedric Gardiner, who remembers: 'There were three microphones and you had to stand directly in front of one to be heard, so the actors seemed to spend most of the time dashing madly from one to another to get a place where you weren't out of range, so to speak.'

Little attempt was made to adapt the play for radio purposes. It was performed in three separate acts, with appropriate intervals. During these the preceding action was summarised '. . . to enable all those who might tune in late to understand the plot'.

If a listener in Karori, Wellington, is typical of general reaction then the play was a smash hit. 'Last night my wife and I listened-in to . . . the comedy *Jane* and we thoroughly enjoyed the performance,' he wrote. 'We had quite a job to restrain ourselves from clapping and stamping our feet.' Opinion from Palmerston North was equally favourable: '. . . the play was exceptionally clear and proved a most delightful change from the usual musical and elocutionary programmes.'

Only one day later Auckland followed with a performance of the one-act play *Bobbie.* Mr J. F. Montague produced a company that included Irene Day, Lynda Murphy and Phyllis Torpy.

Although plays featured regularly from then on, not until 5 July 1929 was one heard which had been specially created for the new medium. A 'listening play' it was called: the BBC's original broadcast in January 1924 had introduced a completely new kind of drama. The author, Richard Hughes, commissioned to write a play for hearing only, imagined a situation that would take place entirely in the dark. He set the action in a coal mine and began with the words 'The lights have gone out!' The title was *Danger* and it was the world's first radio play.

The New Zealand production, from 2YA, was preceded by a warning that it would be unsuitable for young children and those

with very weak nerves, as '. . . the dramatic atmosphere of the play will be considerably intensified by appropriate noises'.

'Noises' there were. The effect on listeners of hearing them may not have been as great as the nervous strain on the producer, Victor S. Lloyd, in creating them. Playing the only female role, at the start of what was to become a lifetime in broadcasting, was Elsie Lloyd. For her it was a memorable experience.

Elsie Lloyd remembers:

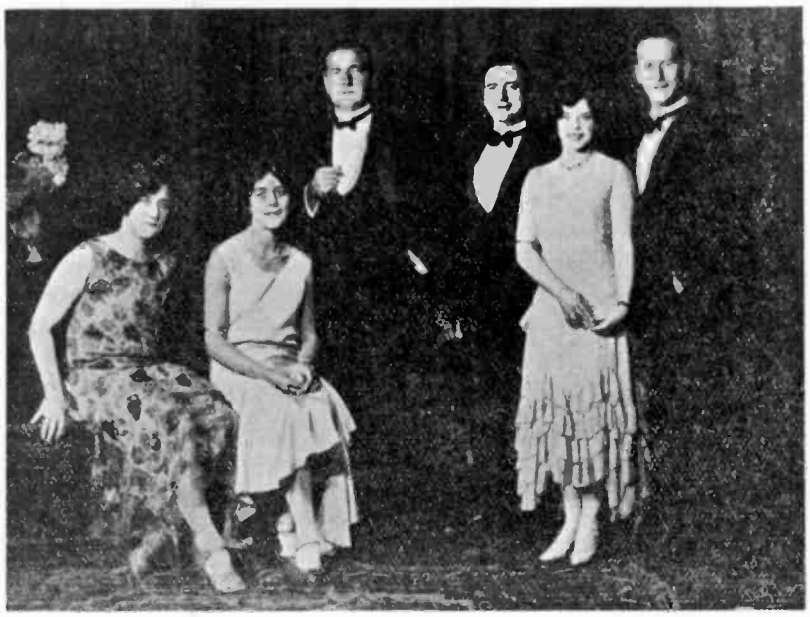
There had to be an explosion. Ken (Pop) Collins was the technician and he loved to find out how to do noises that would be effective over the air. And it isn't always the exact noise that sounds right when it goes through the microphone. Anyhow, he found that to cause the rumbling of the earth before an explosion you had to get new potatoes rolled round in a tin. I don't know why they had to be *new* potatoes, but old ones apparently wouldn't do!

Ingenuity did not always produce the right effect. Some things defied all attempts at faking or imitation.

Gretta Williams remembers:

I was asked to do some plays, and in those days they didn't have many records of 'noises off' and we used to have a lot of fun. I can remember once trying to get the shutting of a window and we just couldn't get it; we tried all sorts of things and in the end in desperation someone said 'Why not try shutting a window?' Which we did, and it was perfect!

J. F. Montague.



A popular series of broadcasts in the late 1920s and early 1930s was that given by the Eight O'Clock Revue Company directed by Will Bishop, who wrote much of the comedy material himself. From left to right: Elsie Croft, Rita Kemp, Will Bishop, Will Hancock, Gretta Stark and Ray Kemp.

John Gordon, who was a prominent member of J. F. Montague's Auckland Comedy Players in the late 1920s. Regular plays were presented by this group on 1YA.

Chapter 7

'The tendency definitely is in overseas countries to provide feature evenings, appealing to specific audiences at one time. In New Zealand the Maori Pageant and the recent Shakespeare evening, St Patrick's night concert etc. indicate the trend. Each feature attracts its own audience and provides a memorable occasion. Handicapped as the Dominion may be to some extent by limited talent, the demand may yet be met by encouraging those who are able to give the quality performances desired, to concentrate and develop feature evenings. The performance of *Jane*. . . and the one-act plays arranged for 1YA all indicate the tendency, which will certainly strengthen the appeal of broadcasting and bring in new audiences.'

In May 1928 the *Radio Record* discerned a slowly evolving pattern. Miscellaneous 'concerts' night after night, even though the items changed, became stale and dull through repetition. Some sort of dynamic new approach was needed. One possible solution might be co-ordinated programmes: each station presenting a different type of entertainment (classical, operatic, popular, brass band) on one night, taking turn and turn about. Saturday night would be uniformly 'vaudeville' and Sunday just as uniformly sacred.

This, claimed the planners, would overcome listeners' objections that they lacked an alternative. But it ignored a technical difficulty. Distant stations were often beyond the range of early model radios. Even if they could be picked up reception was usually noisy, variable and subject to electrical interference. It made listening an effort. And the days when 'wireless' was such a novelty that the public tolerated its shortcomings were already past.

Letters reflect the considerable shift in emphasis that had taken place. Early grievances had been concerned with the quality of reception and the technical problems of a home-made set. After five years, with radios a household commodity, what people were complaining about was the 'rubbish' force-fed to them. What constituted 'rubbish' depended on your brow level — high, middle or low.

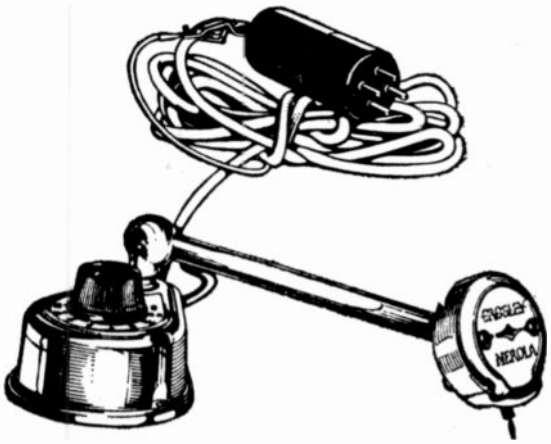
Letter from the *Radio Record,* 9 November 1928:

Are you aware that, on the whole, your afternoon sessions of gramophone records (especially the Sunday afternoon sessions) are rotten? Why is it that you cannot get better records? The records you transmit are, to say the least of it, absolutely awful in their mournfulness. Cannot you look out and put on a decent record now and again? The majority of listeners in this district are of the same opinion as myself. Hoping for some decent music in the very near future — Yours, etc. Fred J. Martin (Pahiatua).

Will Bishop, a favourite 2YA entertainer from the late 1920s and 1930s.

The year 1928 saw a technical improvement which took the pressure off programme organisers and brought relief to the ear of the listener. Until then records had been broadcast by the simple expedient of hanging a microphone near the sound-box of the old-

fashioned acoustic gramophone. That clumsy and inefficient method was now superseded by the introduction of the electric pick-up, carrying sound directly from the record surface. Treated at first as a bit of a novelty, its real value was demonstrated in a broadcast from 3YA. The tenor Percy Nicholls challenged listeners to distinguish, if they could, between songs he performed 'live' in the studio and recordings he had made of the same items.



The Best Gramophone Pick-up

CROSLEY MEROLA

'Opinions as to which was the record and which the voice have been fairly evenly divided,' reported the *Radio Record.* 'The test proved a great compliment to the excellence of electrically-reproduced records.'

There was an immediate benefit from the change. Programme arrangers now had access to such previously unavailable works as symphonies and complete operas in an acceptable version. The world's finest artists began to appear, discreetly, as a replacement for some of the local performers whose talent may have been rather less than their self-esteem.

Eric Waters remembers:

Fresh talent was recruited by . . . an advertisement inserted in the paper that 'aspirants for microphone honours could report to the station on a given Sunday at 9.00 a.m. and their capabilities would be looked into'. So on a fine Sunday morning the sun would shine on France Street and a milling crowd nursing fiddle cases, flute cases, cornet cases, cello bags and what-have-you, the balance apparently nursing their voices. The programme organiser and accompanist (myself) would fight their way through this football scrum to the locked door, which the organiser would open — and thereupon this assorted crowd surged into the rather small lounge which they just about filled by standing close together, side by side. Anything more like sheep in a crush-pen I've never seen. They were

decanted into the studio in their assorted groups, one or more, and put through the mill: all types of performances from straight fiddle solos to the musical saw, all types of voices — good, a few, sometimes — bad, very many. I think the highlight was reached perhaps on the occasion when a gentleman arrived with a small boy aged eight and they proceeded to render (I think is the word) a duet for euphonium and cornet. Quite interminable and unaccompanied. I remember it was only with the greatest difficulty that we prevailed upon them to stop. . . .

Because recorded music could now be guaranteed to have a more natural sound a decision was made to extend transmission time. An hour of 'Dinner Music' was begun at 6.00 p.m. ('harmony as an adjunct to domestic tranquillity' as Wilkins Micawber might have put it). Uncertain whether this daring innovation might meet with general approval the Broadcasting Company took the precaution of a five minute silence every quarter of an hour. This was explained as a 'tacet' period, '. . . to avoid the monotony of unbroken music, and to conform to the accepted practice of leading hotel bands'.

Programme organisers know to this day that nothing pleases everyone. 'Why does the company inflict some screeching soprano or sour bass on to peaceful citizens when they are endeavouring to eat their dinner?' demanded an irate householder in Wanganui. To show that he was impartial and that it was not just the noise that disturbed him he added grumpily, 'I do not concur with the tacet idea either. . . . '

As the use of recorded music grew so did the company's obligation to the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA). This organisation was formed to protect composers' interests, to license public performances of all copyright music, and to collect royalties on behalf of its members. The Broadcasting Company's liability had been fairly small, but the increase in performances meant a corresponding rise in fees. Complex negotiations resulted in a fixed rate of payment to APRA of six percent of the company's share of licence revenue.

Members of the 1YA Musical and Dramatic Advisory Committee, 1928. The chairman, seated in the centre, is Karl Atkinson who joined the staff of the Radio Company in 1931 as supervisor of recorded music and writer and producer of special musical programmes. He remained a professional broadcaster until his death in 1948.

To establish a liaison between itself and its listeners the company had set up public advisory committees for music, drama, religion and children's programmes. From them, and from a widely scattered selection of 'official listeners' came the sort of reaction that today might be described as 'audience research'. Unfortunately, while it might be given an insight into programme ratings the company did not always have full control over their availability.

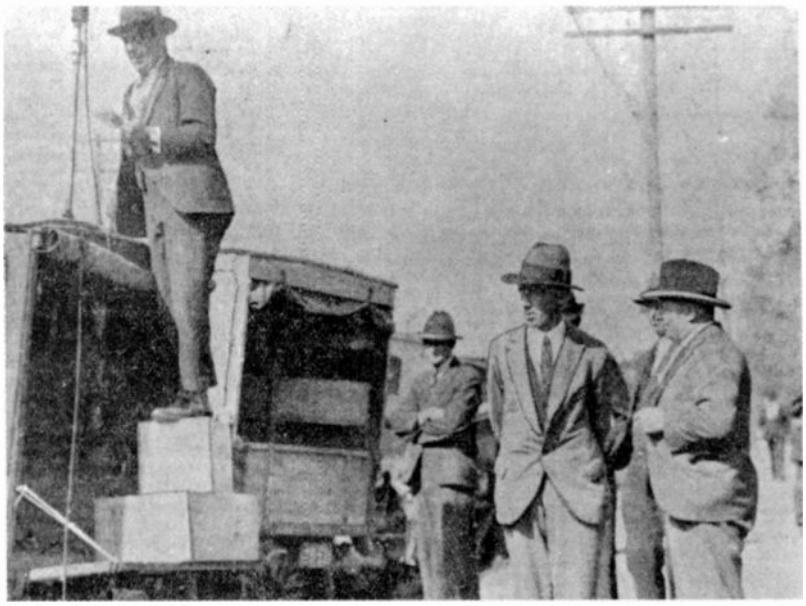
Members of the 3YA Children's Session Advisory Committee, 1928.

As a service to the public, and as something that contributed to popular enjoyment if not entertainment, racing commentaries had filled a lot of air-time. During a single year (1927-28) 64 racing or trotting meetings had been broadcast — a total of over 300 transmission hours. The company would be hard put to do without them. Suddenly however the stable door was slammed in its face.

The Racing and Trotting Conferences passed resolutions prohibiting any further direct broadcasts from tracks they controlled. They offered a pious hope that this might discourage illegal betting and expressed concern at the 'disadvantages to the business community' they might have been responsible for unwittingly by condoning widespread listening to race commentaries. But they were not unreasonable. Radio reports could follow the same procedure as the Press and '. . . take notes (to) enable the broadcasting of race meetings as part of the evening's programmes'.

Barred from the track, the company did the next best thing: looked on from over the fence. By using step ladders, motor trucks — anything that gave the commentator a 'Scotsman's grandstand' view — they kept faith with the public and maintained their own tradition of service. In spite of regular approaches to the racing authorities permission to relay from the course was obstinately withheld for the next four years.

This photograph is best described by the caption which accompanied it when it was first printed in the *Radio Record* of 26 October 1929. 'This illustration shows the difficulties encountered by 1YA in broadcasting the recent trotting meeting. The announcer had perforce to work in the street on whatever vantage point was obtainable, and during the course of the day he worked from step-ladders erected on the footpath, three motor lorries, a fruit delivery van, and a Chinaman's vegetable cart. It was necessary, owing to traffic movements, to shift the relay line and all relay gear no less than six times during the broadcast of the eight races, yet not one detail of the meeting was missed and the results were announced as soon as the placings appeared on the judges's board. While the officials of the Traffic Department necessarily had to see that compliance was made with traffic regulations and requirements, every assistance and consideration was shown the broadcasters within those requirements. Members of the public were much interested in the sight of the relay which appealed to their sporting spirit as "beating the ban".'



John Proudfoot remembers:

Every race day I used to get on my bike, go along to the bookies' headquarters which were opposite the GPO in Wellington, get the race cards marked after every race, and whip it back to the studio for Clive Drummond to announce the race results. That was how they came. It was an illegal operation but everybody knew where it was. There must have been about 40 phones in the one room. The chap who ran this agency was getting into a Buick car outside one day as I came out with him to get on my bike, and he said, 'Young fellow, you don't see punters getting into these things, do you?'

The general elections of 1922 and 1925 had both received partial broadcast coverage. Not until the election of November 1928 was the reporting extended to give a full account of progress and a summary of results on the night of the poll.

'The broadcast of the election results on 14 November will undoubtedly go down in radio history as the most sensational and outstanding public service so far given by radio in New Zealand,' said the *Radio Record.* The magazine estimated that probably more than half a million people would have followed the progress reports — among them almost certainly being the Rt Hon. J. G. Coates, architect of the radio plan, whose government was defeated.

The company was not unaware of the huge number of people who could be expected to listen on election night. Shrewdly timing the announcement for 9 o'clock, when excitement would be at its most intense, they appealed to unlicensed listeners '. . . to recognise their obligations to licensed listeners and enrol'. Extra revenue thus derived, they argued persuasively, should be available for the benefit of all concerned.

Chapter 8

The Broadcasting Company was conscious of its metropolitan bias. Stations in the four centres were convenient, but they implied a neglect of provincial towns and country districts. To adjust the balance a plan was made to set up relay stations in such places as Hamilton, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Gisborne, Napier-Hastings, Nelson, Greymouth, Timaru and Invercargill. The idea was to establish an eventual landline connection with the four YA stations.

New Plymouth was chosen as the first link in the chain. In partnership with the North Taranaki Radio Society, the company opened 2YB on 27 April 1929. Part of the cost and some of the equipment were the company's share. The society, under its president E. J. Payne, ran the station as a community effort. It would operate, said John Ball at the official opening, '. . . until such time as circumstances make practicable the substitution of something much better and more worthy of Taranaki as a whole'.

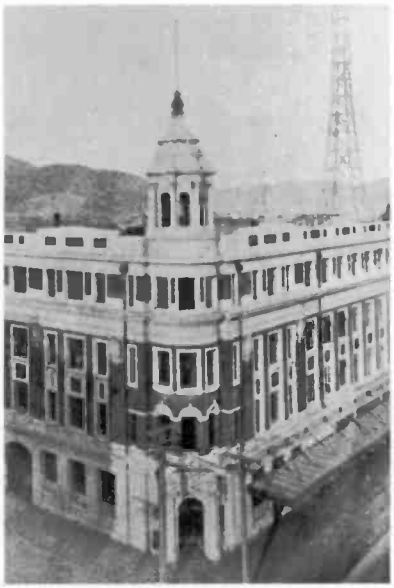
In fact, for the next seven years many areas of the country were almost wholly dependent on the service provided by small local radio stations. Privately owned, poorly financed, prevented by law from advertising as a means of revenue, and kept alive only by the dedication of their loyal staff 'B stations', as they were called, represented a miracle of survival. From eight at the beginning of 1929 their numbers multiplied over the next two years until they extended to Masterton, Napier, Eketahuna, Invercargill, Wairoa, Hamilton, Hastings, Dannevirke, Greymouth, Inchclutha and as many more towns and cities. Sustained by local pride the B stations battled on against all odds until finally they became a major political issue in 1935.

Licence revenue went up by seven percent in 1929. The company said it would use the extra money to improve the service. As in their handling of the Hood and Moncrieff tragedy, broadcasting staff were unsparing in their efforts to keep the country informed of the situation after the disastrous Murchison earthquake of June 1929. Service of that kind needed no improvement. The programmes, as ever, failed to meet with universal approval.

Letter from the *Radio Record,* 7 September 1928:

> I would draw the attention of the company to the fact that from 2YA the quantity of news is not as great as it is from other stations, nor does the man at the microphone use as much discretion in what he puts over the air. If Mr Coates attends a dog-fight we get the fact the same evening supplemented with a five-minute talk which is nothing more than propaganda. Hoping for more news and less rubbish, Yours etc. Listening-In (Rangataua).

Meanwhile back in Dunedin, the place where it had all started, broadcasting was getting a new look. After some years in 'temporary premises' (a dreaded phrase in broadcasting circles even



The *Evening Star* building in Dunedin, 1929, showing the new 4YA transmitter mast.

RIGHT: E. J. Payne, President of the Taranaki Radio Society.

Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd.

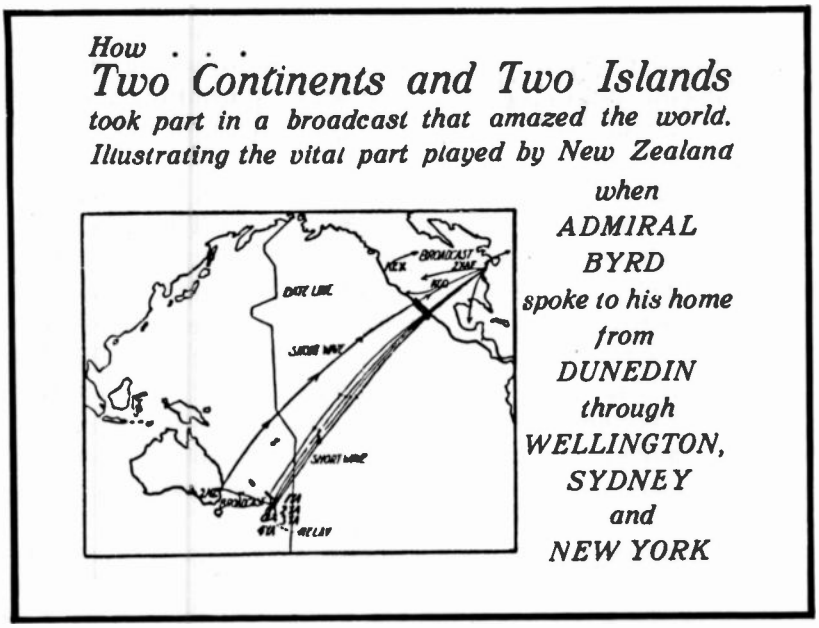
now) station 4YA emerged into full glory with a place it could call its own. The transformation was completed at just the right moment.

In March 1930 the American explorer of the Antarctic, Rear-Admiral Richard E. Byrd, returned to civilisation. Stepping ashore at Port Chalmers he was met by a welcoming horde of 'mainland' hero-worshippers. But their number was nothing to the huge audience that shortly listened and marvelled throughout the world. In a unique 10,000-mile link with the United States the Admiral spoke to his New York friends and heard them reply. Their conversation was overheard by millions, and marked an historic 'first' in the progress of broadcasting.

Originating at 4YA and carried by landline to 2YA, the transmission was picked up by station 2ME in Sydney and beamed by shortwave to 2XAF at Schenectady in New York. Voices making the return journey were relayed by an equally complicated process, thanks to weeks of preliminary testing, international co-operation and a nice calculation of split-second timing. Few people would have said beforehand that it was possible.

Stations in Australia, Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Germany all reported that reception was 'loud and clear'. They may have heard the 'official' programme, but they had missed a little comedy of errors that preceded it.

When the trans-Pacific, transcontinental link was finally established, at each end an announcer sat in front of a microphone. They had a slight problem; they had not been introduced. An exchange of names was attempted. New Zealand had little trouble in finding out that the man in Schenectady was a Mr A. B. Hitt.



This map explained to *Radio Record* readers how Admiral Byrd's broadcast to America was achieved in 1929.

It was the local man who found himself with a minor identity crisis.

'What's your name?' asked Hitt.

'4YA Dunedin, New Zealand,' came the formal reply.

'No,' he said, 'we want the name of your announcer.'

'Curry,' came back the voice from 'Down Under'.

'Beg pardon? We didn't get that.'

'Curry.'

'Sorry.'

'Curry. C-U-R-R-Y. Something hot. You eat it with rice. Curry!'

The penny dropped.

The 'hot stuff' announcer was to leave his mark on broadcasting in years to come. Chief announcer at 4YA in 1930 Arch Curry had joined the company three years earlier as a junior announcer in Wellington. Posted to Dunedin, he stopped over in Christchurch on his way south to carry out a special assignment. He had been chosen to introduce the inaugural BBC shortwave programme on Armistice Day 1927. Much of his later reputation was made as chief announcer in Christchurch, and he added further laurels during the war as a correspondent with the Broadcasting Unit in the Middle East.

Russ Tulloch remembers:

When (Arch Curry) did the news he always used to stand. He was unusual in that respect and the news session in those days ran between 7.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. He stood for that full hour and you can imagine the papers he had around him as he announced each item, he just let it flutter to the floor and by 8 o'clock he had papers all round him.

A. L. Curry.

Admiral Byrd spoke briefly to the people of New Zealand after his broadcast to North America. 'I came down to talk to New York,' he said, 'but I want to congratulate most heartily this station on the wonderful thing they have done in making a world's record in communication.'

A week later he was greeted ecstatically by two separate audiences of 3,500 schoolchildren in the Dunedin Town Hall, and gave an address each time which was broadcast. For these unprecedented speeches the Broadcasting Company and the Education Department installed radios in classrooms, halls — even in parks all over the country. The Post Office helped out with 2,774 km of relay line from Invercargill to Auckland — including branches to Wellington and New Plymouth — to create the most extensive hook-up of stations, both company and private, yet achieved. It stimulated the demand for educational programmes on a regular basis.

To his own countrymen Admiral Byrd was a figure larger than life. He was a scientist and explorer of world renown. In New Zealand he has a special claim to fame. His was the first voice to echo simultaneously from Spirits Bay to Foveaux Strait.

School children in the Kilbirnie Stadium Wellington, listening to the special broadcast to boys and girls by Rear Admiral Byrd.

Chapter 9

In the winter of 1930 the word 'depression' still had its original meaning: a hollow, a sinking, a temporary emotional upset. The economic crisis was soon to change that. But the radio industry and the broadcasting profession in North America had been expanding rapidly. The next decade would see the medium come into its own as a form of mass communication and entertainment. The general manager of the Broadcasting Company, A. R. Harris, decided to go and see for himself what progress it was making.

A development that caught his attention was the 'transcription disc' — a 16-inch recording with a playback speed of 33⅓ rpm on which could be contained a single half-hour programme. These were manufactured for use only by broadcasting organisations, either for pre-recording or for 'cutting' material being presented live. To test their possibilities Harris arranged for some of these 'transcriptions' to be sent to New Zealand.

Wednesday night had always been 2YA's 'silent' period. So it came as a surprise, in February 1931, for listeners to switch on and hear the new 'feature' programmes. A growing agitation for an end to the outdated 'silent day' idea seemed to have produced results. But for the time being 2YA's dispensation was given solely to gauge public reaction to a novelty in programming.

The company had obviously anticipated a negative, or even hostile reception by some listeners. In a shrewd move to disarm their critics they played some examples of programmes which, they said, were highly popular in America but were *not* being purchased for New Zealand. In other words, 'See how we look after your interests, you lucky people! We wouldn't subject you to *this*'.

The *Radio Record* took a hand in the softening-up process. Some of these 'undesirable' programmes, it was explained, were from '. . . lengthy serials which are said to create the greatest furore imaginable among listeners all through America. They would not, however, be acceptable in New Zealand'. Not then perhaps; but six years later the 'greatest furore imaginable' came here too.

What Harris had done in fact was to bring to New Zealand broadcasting an early form of the kind of syndicated radio production that would grow into a flourishing satellite industry. Some firms were creative and supplied the market, others were branches or departments of existing networks. They operated largely in Britain and America, distributing recorded versions of the world's best in entertainment.

Those pioneer 'features' included such musical half-hours as Dr Eugene Ormandy and his Salon Orchestra, The International Singers and the Ambassadors of Melodyland. Entertainment of a different kind was provided by the composer-author-actor Gene Lockhart and his wife in an amusing and unusual series of travelogues called 'Abroad With The Lockharts', and by 'a sort of

The hours given over to the new 'transcription' programmes were described as 'International Nights' and the musical fare was broken mid-evening with a talk on international news and current events by Dr Guy Scholefield, seen here at the 2YA microphone.

Hi-Wide and Handsome.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in music' who called themselves Hi Wide and Handsome: 'two worthies, one an ex-cowboy who prefers the life of a gentleman of leisure; and his valet, a coloured gentleman'.

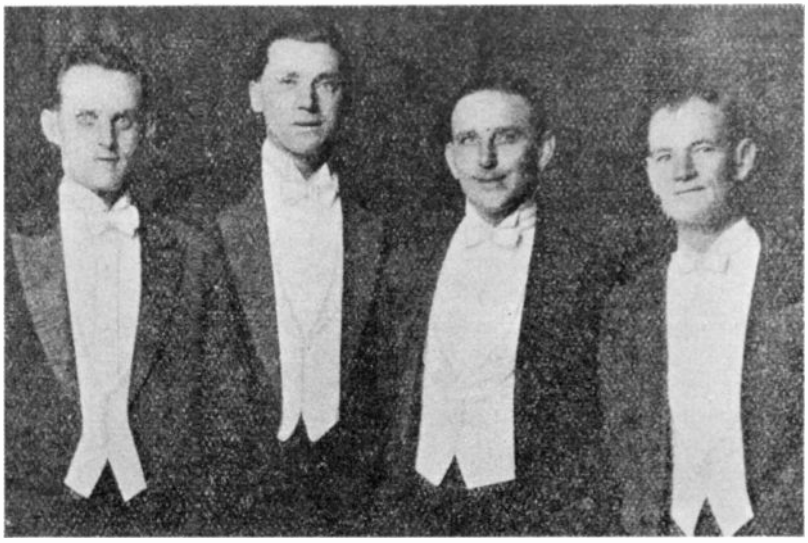
These were followed, in time, by programmes with such self-explanatory titles as 'The Golden Hour of Music', 'The Flying Song Squadron' and 'The Mirthquakers' — although at this late date an eyebrow may be raised (and so may speculation) by the title 'Adam And Eve'.

'Observer', in the *Radio Record,* February 1931:

Two things . . . impressed me greatly: atmosphere and continuity. The Americans have certainly mastered the difficult art of presenting radio entertainment in the most acceptable manner . . . It appears that the American aim is to make the listener forget his loudspeaker — forget his valves and batteries — and to induce him by subtly disguised suggestion to call on his imagination, unconsciously. The latter is important, for if flights of fancy are conscious they are not effortless. And if effort is involved the entertainment will not appeal, for its hearers have in all probability completed a hard day's work and relaxation above all things is desirable. The second point, that of continuity, is perhaps more important. From start to finish the programme flowed on evenly, in well-defined sections, each lasting for a generous length of time. What a change from the contralto solo, talk on pigs, orchestral selection type of programme!

The 'feature' programmes were one innovation. Another was their re-broadcast on relay from 2YA through the private stations 2ZF in Palmerston North and 2ZD Masterton. The same procedure was followed a few months later when other stations had the use of the 'features'. 1YA was repeated through 1XH Hamilton, 4YA through the Invercargill Radio Society's station. Sometimes co-operation was more to the listeners' benefit than competition.

Clearly there was a move away from the stereotyped and fairly parochial approach to broadcasting in New Zealand. An older generation might condemn any syncopated rhythm as 'jungle music', 'American trash' or, most often and inaccurately, as 'jazz'. Not all their furious muttering could stop the attraction the new dance music had for the young. While the company's programme department cautiously allowed for that, they had to bear in mind that conventional attitudes change slowly. Trying to reconcile new trends in social habits with the increasing side-effects of the world recession made the programme organiser's job no easier.



After six years however a distinct concept was emerging of broadcasting as an entertainment medium. It owed little or nothing to its established rivals. For one thing, the listener was an individual whose reaction was not part of a mass audience reaction. As individuals, listeners responded on a very personal level. Their imagination was stimulated, and listening to the radio could be an intensely private experience. As they came to terms with their shared involvement both listener and broadcaster developed a new relationship.

Radio had already demonstrated its effectiveness in times of emergency or national crisis. It did so again in the days following

"Cinderella Up-to-Date"

A pantomime arranged and adapted by

ERIC F. B. WATERS and "L.C.B."

Presented by

"THE PANTOMIMISTS"

Assisted by

Reg. Morgan and his Orchestra, and--

JOCK LOCKHART,

Scottish comedian

From 1YA December 26

The Melodie Four, a favourite radio vocal quartet in the late 1920s and early 1930s. From left to right: Sam Duncan, Frank Bryant, Sid Allwright and Wally Marshall.

the disastrous Hawkes Bay earthquake of 3 February 1931. Normal communication being impossible because of the destruction, amateur radio operators had a vital role to play. Together with the contact established by the radio-room of H.M.S. *Veronica,* they provided the only link through which information could be sent or received. Company stations cleared the air for official bulletins, news despatches, requests for help in tracing missing people, and lists of casualties. Few radio sets can have been silent, few listeners not have shared the anxiety, the relief and the sense of national calamity.

Extract from the novel *Restless Earth* by W. Graeme Holder:

Shopkeepers were standing upon the sidewalk conversing with each other and passers-by. . . . Several women were looking at each other in awe and speaking in whispers as they crossed the street. . . . The motorman greeted her with the grave respect of one speaking to a person bereaved. . . . The tramcar moved south-

The wreckage of Dr Moore's Hospital in Napier shortly after the earthquake of 1931. The flagpole at the left of the picture was used as a mast for the aerial wire of one of the first amateur radio transmitters to send messages out of the stricken town.

wards, and Patricia could contain her curiosity no longer. She rose and spoke to the motorman. 'Excuse me.'

'Yes, Miss Weybourn?'

'What has happened?'

The motorman looked his surprise. 'Haven't you heard?'

'I've been out all day. Is it this morning's earthquake?'

'Yes. Napier and Hastings have been destroyed'.

Patricia blanched. 'Is that true?' she gasped.

'It came over the wireless. The shake came without warning, and in five seconds the places were in ruins.'

There was a strange hush in the town. Business was at a standstill. Motor-cars were parked thickly on each side of the single shopping street in defiance of all traffic by-laws. People stood in groups upon the sidewalk and in the roadway, discussing, conjecturing, arguing in subdued tones. The two paper offices were besieged by orderly, silent crowds awaiting the scant news.

It was a moment of national disaster.

(First published as a serial in 1931 this story appeared in book form in 1933. Its author, W. Graeme Holder, won a national radio play contest in 1937. His success led directly to his being engaged as a writer full-time on a contract basis for the N.B.S. He worked, until his untimely death in 1944, on scripts, dramas, serials and radio material of all kinds. Warm, observant, humorous, friendly — Bill Holder was a true character and unquestionably a radio pioneer. Many 2NZEF soldiers may know of him through his song *Bungin' Em In, Blowin' Em Out (Oh We're Barmy In The Army!)* sung at innumerable camp concerts by Wally Marshall and others.)

From a letter to the *Radio Record:*

I am very disappointed that there were no letters in appreciation of the service rendered by the Broadcasting Company immediately following the disaster in Hawkes Bay. Surely the assurance of safety of so many names daily broadcast has allayed the fears and anxieties of hundreds of people as far as wireless is heard. In districts where mails are only once weekly and neighbours far apart, wireless has been of the greatest benefit. The news broadcast has the stamp of authority — idle rumour has no place . . . I am writing to express my thanks and gratitude for the wonderful service given.

Aunt Daisy remembers:

Clive Drummond was on the air night and day (after the earthquake) telling the people what was happening. You could never say enough for him. He was beloved of New Zealand. 2YA was a personality in those days. It was quite different.

The day of the Hawkes Bay earthquake was made memorable for the Wellington staff of the Radio Broadcasting Company by an incident which, although related, had its own drama. It was also a sign of things to come.

A newcomer to the programme department was that same Mrs Basham who had become 'Aunt Daisy' for the 1YA 'Children's Hour'. On the morning of 3 February she was talking on the telephone. Suddenly the building shook, heaved and creaked

violently. Other people froze with horror or dived for shelter in a doorway. Not Aunt Daisy.

'Oh dear, there seems to be an earthquake,' she said brightly — and carried on her conversation, unrattled. A woman who could go on talking in the face of imminent catastrophe was worth her weight in gold to a broadcasting organisation. Sadly, at that time they failed to recognise her value.

The staff of 2YA Wellington in 1932. Back row (left to right): L. Workman, Ken Collins, Roy Neate. Second row: Ruby Frisken, Gordon Short (station accompanist), Russ Tulloch, Dorothy Evans ('Aunt Molly'), S. W. McDonald, Mrs J. McFarlane. Third row: Dorothy Tighe, Clive Drummond (chief announcer), John Ball (station director), Owen Pritchard (programme organiser), Daisy Basham ('Aunt Daisy'). In front: Cyril Brown.

A Popular Children's Session
Conducted by Aunt Daisy

AMONG the brightest of children's sessions broadcast from the YA stations is that conducted from 2YA every Wednesday evening by Aunt Daisy (Mrs. Daisy Basham). Since taking charge of this session about a year ago, she has built up a programme incorporating novel and attractive features of great interest to children and adults alike.

Aunt Daisy.

Among these are her talks of the hour — little chats on anything of topical interest. For instance, on a recent Wednesday, her topical talk took the form of a bright account of her trip down the harbour in the tug "Natone" to meet the Jubilee Dock. The various incidents of the trip were well described and country children would be able to form a clear idea of this event. Again, on the Wednesday following, as "Wizard" Smith and his proposed attempt on the world's speed record was the talk of the hour, she persuaded a gentleman who had raced at Brooklands to come along and talk to the children. In this connection she thinks nothing of hunting up anyone, resident or visitor, to come before the microphone, and it speaks much for her bright personality that rarely is she refused.

Another interesting feature of her session is her talks on animals. Periodically she visits the keeper of the Wellington Zoo, who always has a fund of true animal stories which Aunt Daisy retells over the air. We imagine they lose nothing in the telling.

So great has been the interest taken in these by children and grown-ups alike that she has received from all parts of New Zealand accounts of true animal stories which she is asked to broadcast.

Aunt Daisy is perhaps best known, however, by her "Cheerful Chirpers," a group of kiddies who are known from one end of New Zealand to the other for their bright entertainments and in particular for their community singing.

Aunt Daisy is very interested in the children in the paralysis ward of the Wellington Public Hospital, and she often mentions them over the air, though she makes no direct appeal. Nevertheless, she receives from all over New Zealand literally hundreds of presents of all kinds sent by small listeners-in to their less fortunate mates in hospital. Some of these gifts, which are home-made and are so ingenious that they must have taken hours to construct, reveal a genuine desire to give on the part of children who are evidently not so fortunately situated as to be able to buy their presents. If only this phase of her many activities is considered, Aunt Daisy is doing wonderful work. That it is appreciated is evident by the sheaves of letters she receives from all over N.Z. every week, from listeners both small and grown up.

Amy Woodward, distinguished Wellington soprano who was featured by Aunt Daisy in her 2YA musical programmes.

Aunty Daisy, as featured in the *Radio Record* in October 1931.

Her position at 2YA had been offered only after she had bombarded A. R. Harris with more than a hundred letters full of ideas for brighter programmes. Overwhelmed by her barrage, he sent for her — almost as a last resort. The company was nearing the end of its contract and wanted to back up its claim for a renewal. If programmes improved noticeably it would make a strong argument. Would Mrs Basham give them the benefit of her knowledge? Aunt Daisy was taken on to do a children's session on Wednesdays and programmes of classical music on Sunday and Monday nights.

The staff of 1YA Auckland in 1931. Back row (Left to right): R. B. Allen, Dora Jordon, Ruby Palmer ('Cinderella'), Mrs G. Morrison, N. Brown Front row: Cyril Towsey (station accompanist), Culford Bell (announcer), Len Barnes (manager), Colin Trim (programme organiser), Gordon Hutter (sports announcer).

Even with Aunt Daisy's livewire support the company's days were numbered. The government had its own plans for broadcasting. The pioneer administration would come to an end at midnight on Thursday, 31 December 1931. For Aunt Daisy the same unhappy dismissal was not much longer delayed. Because of the depression the government instructed its departments to employ only men. Whatever her qualifications and her ability, Aunt Daisy must leave. Her finest hour was yet to come.

On New Year's Eve 1931 station 1YA was broadcasting the festivities from the Auckland Ferry Building, 2YA's microphone was out at the Post Office Square, 3YA was describing the celebrations in the Cathedral Square and 4YA's announcer was outside the Exchange Building. Just before the stroke of midnight all four stations made a similar announcement:

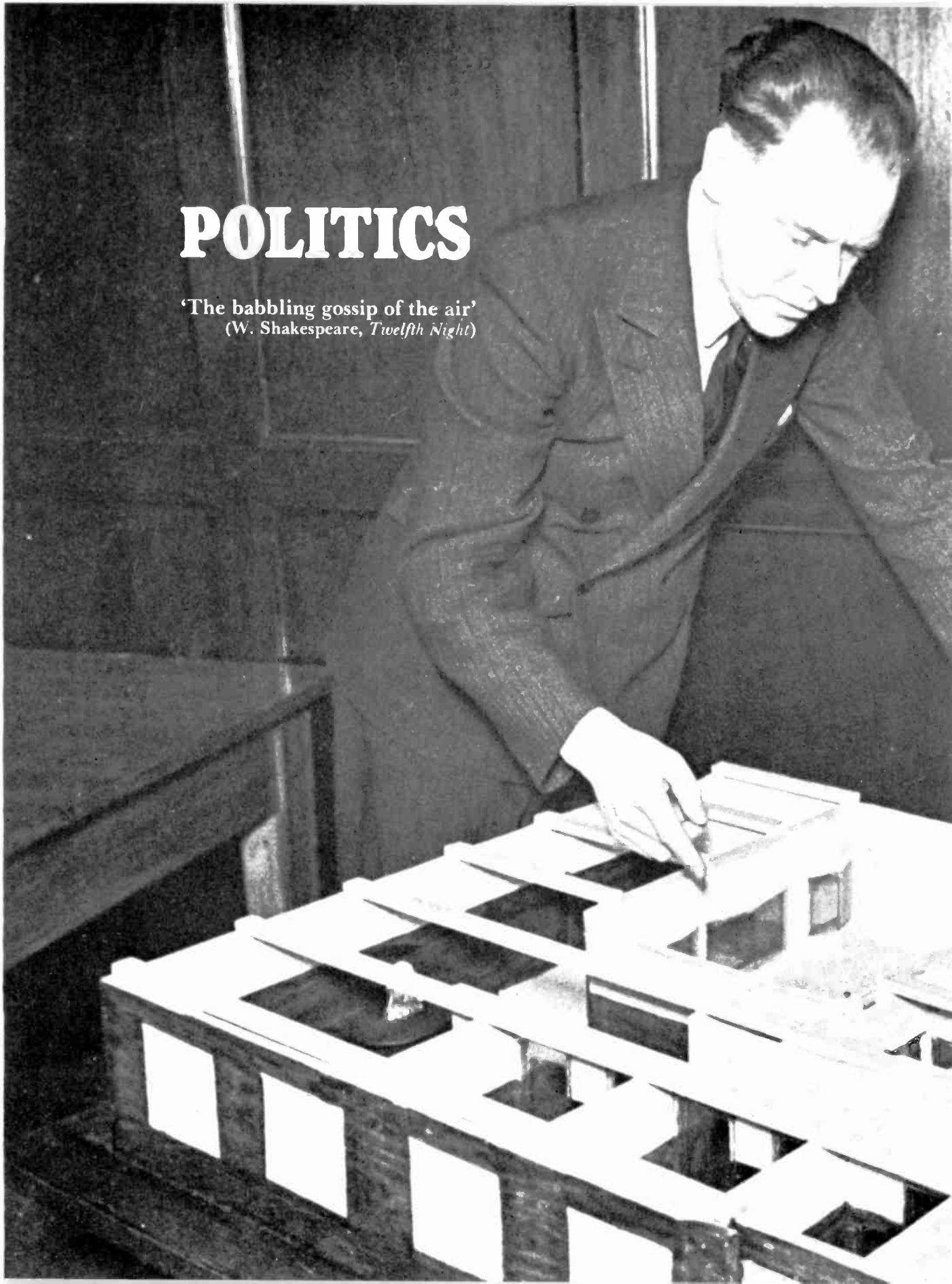
'This is station . . . operated by the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Limited.'

The last note of the chimes tolled the passing of another year as they sounded the beginning of a new regime. The announcers signalled it with a different statement.

'This is station . . . I have now to remind listeners that from midnight just past the broadcasting stations in New Zealand will be controlled by the Broadcasting Board recently appointed.'

It too would pass away.

The 2YA Orchestrina, which Aunty Daisy often engaged to play in her programmes of classical music. From left to right standing: W. McLean (1st violin), W. Ainsworth (flute), H. H. F. Wright (clarinet), J. Glennie (trombone), C. Martin (double bass). Front row: Claude Tanner ('celo), Ava Symons (leader), A. P. Truda (conductor), Phyllis Aldridge (pianist) Sydney Bernard (trumpet).



POLITICS

'The babbling gossip of the air'
(W. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

Chapter 1

Radio broadcasting was just a 'distant voice in the darkness' at the end of 1921. Only a few months later its whisper had grown to a healthy cry and was getting louder. It reached the ears of the Postmaster-General, Gordon Coates, and he began to devise ways and means to keep it from becoming a nuisance.

Thanks to the far-seeing Liberal administration of Richard John Seddon,parliament had been given power to cope with the situation that existed by 1923. The New Zealand Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1903 was the first in the world to legislate for state control of sound waves. It specifically authorised the government to '. . . establish stations for the purpose of receiving and transmitting messages by what is commonly known as "wireless telegraphy", including in that expression every method of transmitting messages by electricity otherwise than by wires, *whether such method is in use at the time of the passing of this Act or is hereafter discovered or applied.*'

Even more specific had been the statement of the Attorney-General in 1903, the Hon. Albert Pitt. 'The government,' he said, 'intends to acquire the monopoly of this system, just in the same way as had been done in regard to telegraph lines and telephones.'

That intention would finally be realised more than 30 years later by a political party that had consistently advocated state control while various alternatives were being tried first.

In January 1923 the first regulations were issued defining limits for broadcast material. One prohibition which came into force then had long-term consequences. Stations, it was laid down, must not be used '. . . for the dissemination of propaganda of a controversial nature'. What that meant and how it could be interpreted was anybody's guess. In practice it tended to be a handy excuse for avoiding anything likely to be awkward, to offend or to flutter 'establishment' dovecotes.

What could be broadcast seemed to have an echo of the puritan idea that pleasure was not to be taken lightly. It included '. . . matter of an educative or entertaining character such as news, lectures, useful information, religious services, music or elocutionary entertainment and such other items of general interest as may be approved by the Minister from time to time'.

Ministerial 'approval' could have been (but wasn't) taken to imply indirect censorship. In those days the power of authority was less open to question.

The 1903 Act, and its subsequent amendments, more than adequately allowed for radio broadcasting 20 years later. But when Gordon Coates (no longer Postmaster-General but Prime Minister) came to give 'wireless' statutory recognition he chose not to make it a full government responsibility. At the same time he hesitated before letting it be entirely its own master.

The Coates compromise introduced the principle of cabinet as a

watchdog of the airwaves. Other countries let broadcasting develop as a private enterprise with certain basic rules of conduct, or as a corporation owing some responsibility — clearly defined — to government. New Zealand chose to adopt a system that, for more than 50 years, made the broadcaster answerable to government. The difference was slight, but it was significant.

The 1923 regulations were gazetted by Gordon Coates in his then official capacity as Postmaster-General. They set out conditions for private individuals to operate a station under licence from the Post and Telegraph Department. The reception given to applicants, as their recollections have shown, was hardly cordial. Officials seemed to overlook the fact that broadcasting was already a popular form of entertainment. They treated the amateur 'wireless' fiend as either a potential menace or a confounded nuisance who, by his irresponsible use of the airwaves, was a danger to ships at sea — if not to the ship of state itself. Alternatively, he was just a victim of the latest in a series of fashionable 'crazes'.

In 1922 a departmental officer was convinced that 'wireless listening' was nothing more than a passing fad. It would, he said, 'have a bit of a run, like ping-pong or put-and-take, and then die down'. Ancestors of his had no doubt expressed similar views on flying, motoring, the steam-engine and the wheel.

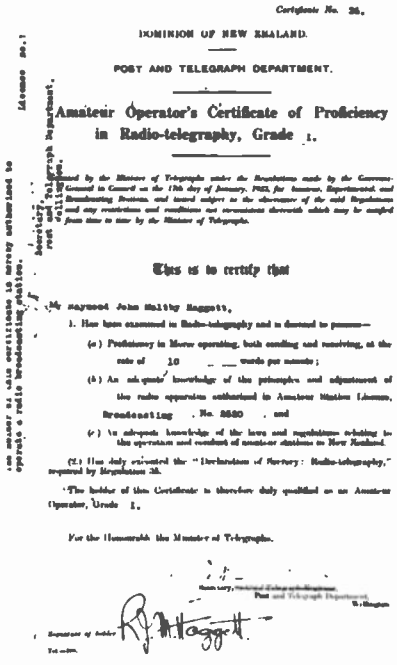
Whatever might be the personal opinion of his staff, Gordon Coates evidently thought 'wireless listening' might be here to stay. Answering a parliamentary question in August 1922 he had informed the House that the government did not intend to operate broadcasting; it would leave it to the private sector.

The licensed amateurs who were New Zealand's first radio station operators were handicapped by financial difficulties. The cost factor may explain why Coates at first kept broadcasting at arm's length — making sure he did not let go of the collar. He was waiting to see how it developed. By November 1923 he had made up his mind.

In that month he made a speech blaming the poor quality of radio entertainment on lack of money. There was only one way to make things better: set up a national organisation run by businessmen in partnership with government officials. The government's role would also include keeping its hand on the pursestrings and an eye on the ledgers.

'Dealers in radio apparatus' were the interested parties who were first approached to take part in the scheme. They demurred. The terms were too one-sided for their liking. What tipped the scales was the government's disinclination to grant a licence valid for more than five years, with no assurance of renewal. That was a pig-in-a-poke they refused to buy. Time passed.

Rt Hon. J. Gordon Coates.



DOMINION OF NEW ZEALAND.

POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT.

Amateur Operator's Certificate of Proficiency in Radio-telegraphy, Grade 1.

This is to certify that

Mr raymond John Maltby Haggett,

Radio Broadcasting Licence No. 1, issued to Ray Haggett of the Federal Telephone Company (later 2YK) in Wellington.

In March 1925 a new set of regulations came out. They repeated the 'do's and don'ts' already in force and added to them the injunction that nothing could be broadcast that was of '. . . a seditious, obscene, libellous or offensive nature'. Again, it was left to the bureaucratic process to make any definitions. They also contained the further instruction that broadcasters must transmit, as part of the regular programme, any communication the government or any department desired to send out. And they emphasised that under no circumstances would advertising be permitted unless the Minister himself said so.

The Minister, in other words, held all the cards.

The regulations were to operate from 1 April 1925. From that date all existing licences were revoked. The receiving licence fee, previously five shillings, would be raised to thirty shillings. Ten days before the change-over the Wellington *Evening Post* foresaw problems:

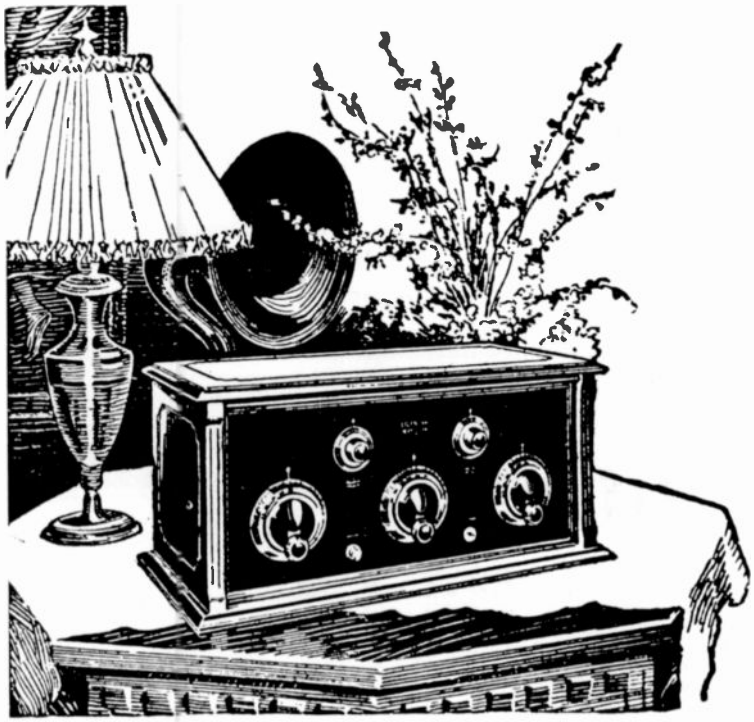
'As regards the actual operation of these rules and requirements . . . there is a difficulty which will have to be got over. Without a licence no station can operate. But the new licence cannot be issued until the station complies with the regulations. As no station complies with them now, and most of them (if not all) cannot possibly comply within the time allotted, there must be either a suspension of services or a special dispensation must be granted to enable the stations to continue operating. It is at the time of writing quite uncertain who will or can carry on the services; but, in view of the general desire that there shall be no hold-up, it may be presumed that a solution will be discovered.'

A reasonable presumption, but a vain hope. The government had justified the huge increase in the licence fee on the grounds that it would create revenue for the official broadcasting organisation when it came into being. By failing to meet its own deadline with the announcement of such an organisation the government invited a hostile reaction from the long-suffering public — and, of course, its political opponents.

Where was the organisation? Why was it taking so long to set up? The questions were pointed, the criticism stinging. On 30 May the *Evening Post* wrote:

'The radio-using public are still waiting not only anxiously but with some sense of irritation for an announcement that some real progress has been made towards the establishment of broadcasting upon the long-promised basis for which they have already been ordered to provide the finance. . . . The new fees were imposed to finance the new system of broadcasting, and the new system is not even visible above the horizon. The difficulties which have delayed its inauguration have been real enough to those responsible, but the wireless community has not been allowed to realise just what they

Gilfillan Neutrodyne



The latest radio receiver — 1926 style.

are. . . . Users of receivers have in many cases declined to pay the fees, and have either abandoned the use of their sets or have gone on using them without licences, taking the risk of being found out and prosecuted. . . . The writer is assured that nobody is deliberately causing delay, and that on the contrary everybody concerned is working to reach an early solution. But even at that, it is impossible to say when the new system can operate.'

By now Coates was like the wagon-train leader in a cowboy picture, hoping for the last-minute arrival of the cavalry. They came, in the person of William Goodfellow from the Waikato. He had shown interest in starting a regional station there, but he agreed to raise his sights a little; not before Coates had obviously brought some pressure to bear.

'After several meetings,' said Goodfellow, 'I finally agreed, rather reluctantly, to go into the national scheme, provided . . . we had some firm assurance that we could get an extension of the contract if we gave satisfactory service. I pointed out to Mr Coates that five years was far too short a contract period, and that what I visualised would happen was that the company would do all the pioneering "donkey work", and then the Post and Telegraph

William Goodfellow, Director of the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand Ltd.

Department would say "Thank you very much" and would take over the concern at valuation.'

Coates denied that such a thing could happen, but Mr Goodfellow (a skilled negotiator) was not to be caught so easily. 'I told him we wanted something in writing,' he recalled. 'He finally agreed to . . . give us a letter of intent, which satisfied us that if the service were satisfactory, a renewal would be assured.'

As a prophet Goodfellow was 100 percent accurate. Six years later, in 1931, a coalition government (including Coates) took over his Radio Broadcasting Company. Compensation was paid after proceedings before Mr Justice Blair in the Court of Arbitration.

Broadcasting was launched. But the shipwright stayed on board to watch the course the helmsman steered.

Chapter 2

The Labour Party had adopted the Seddonian principle of public ownership of broadcasting. Carried to an extreme this belief could cause a dog-in-the-manger attitude. The Broadcasting Company had set up a mast on Christchurch City Council land. The temporary arrangement was satisfactory and they sought to make it permanent. One councillor, Mrs McCombs, declared that because of her opposition to broadcasting being in private hands she was not in favour of granting permission. Rather than provoke a fight the company took its mast somewhere else.

Much of the Labour Party's antagonism was due to suspicion. William Goodfellow's dual role as a leading figure in the dairy farming industry and as chairman of the Broadcasting Company could make things difficult at times. In the 1928 general election campaign he was accused of double-dealing.

In October 1926 the government authorised a loan of £15,000 to the Broadcasting Company for the purpose of establishing station 2YA in Wellington. This was a highly controversial move. A New Zealand correspondent to the BBC's house journal described it as making 2YA 'virtually a government station'. The loan was secured by a first mortgage debenture over the plant, apparatus and assets of the Wellington station for a term of five years at six percent per annum interest. A consequence of this arrangement was a variation of the terms of the company's original agreement. It would now run for five years from 1 January 1927.

It was the contention of Mr H. E. Holland, leader of the Labour Party, that this loan had been a quid pro quo. He alleged that for his support in dairy marketing negotiations during 1926-27 Goodfellow had been rewarded by a grateful government with the extra money he needed for the Broadcasting Company. No proof was forthcoming, and in fact the relevant dates were shown to be inconsistent.

During a parliamentary debate in August 1927 the Labour Party had already queried the circumstances of the loan. The *Radio Record* had not been impressed by their case then. The editor wrote:

'The Postmaster-General deservedly showed some heat in repudiating the inane suggestion that the government had been bribed to grant this loan by "services" rendered in other directions. But the Labour Party, for party purposes, seeks to suggest some hidden ulterior motive. . . . The only safe rule is to completely eschew politics. The "fly in the ointment" from the Labour point of view seems to be that the Leader of the Opposition, although invited to attend the opening of 2YA, was not invited to speak; so he stayed away. Hence the uproar.'

Mr Holland answered this broadside with a few salvoes of his own. It was a sore point that the Prime Minister's speech had been broadcast but no equal privilege had been offered to him.

Supporting his leader Mr Peter Fraser made sinister play of the fact that the editorial chair of the *Radio Record* was occupied by a man who, wearing another hat, edited the *NZ Dairy Produce Exporter.* It was quite a storm in a milking-cup.

In the 1928 election campaign Mr Holland alleged that the government was being allowed to make party political broadcasts but the opposition was not. If the accusation was true it did Mr Coates no good to have had such an advantage, because the eventual winner was the United Party led by Sir Joseph Ward. He had been Postmaster-General in Seddon's government 25 years earlier, but now he was faltering with age and illness. His victory was unexpected, and his party contained few men with either the experience or the ability to hold cabinet rank. Four of his appointments, in fact, were members newly-elected in 1928.

One of these was the Postmaster-General, Mr J. B. Donald. His political naivete may possibly explain the erratic course he pursued for the next two and a half years. He certainly inherited several 'hot potatoes' — notably a dispute involving the Broadcasting Company and the Racing and Trotting Conferences.

Those two bodies had withdrawn permission for their meetings to be broadcast, much to the annoyance of the public and the frustration of the company. Statements made to justify the ban either confused the issue or brought the conferences' real motive into question. Essentially, their concern was that they would suffer a drop in attendances. For the Wellington Racing Club, Mr J. G. Duncan offered a fairly lame excuse: '. . . owing to the almost complete absence of a leisured class in New Zealand, only a small percentage of listeners-in are in a position to spend a day in enjoying the broadcasting of races from the course. Of this section the vast majority could only listen-in at the expense of their duties and avocations, thus reducing their productive capacity and causing friction with their employers and economic loss to the country.'

If your 1926 radio was not equipped with an adequate loudspeaker, here's what you could buy.

The only possible solution, he suggested, was for parliament to decree that no sporting event should be broadcast until after working hours.

That brought a well-deserved and appropriate horse-laugh. There seemed good reason to believe that the ban had been promoted by newspaper interests worried that sales of their special afternoon racing editions might be affected by instant race results. The whole question, touching as it did the hearts and pockets of a racing nation, was debated at various times and at great length in parliament. W. S. Gilbert would have been proud of Mr Donald: he 'did nothing in particular, and did it very well'.

The impasse was not resolved until a racing man came into broadcasting administration four years later. Agreement was reached in August 1932 — conveniently in time for National week at the Riccarton race-course of the Canterbury Jockey Club.

In the *Radio Record,* September 1927, a story illustrates how vulnerable broadcasting could be to petty infringements of the law, especially if malice was possibly intended:

During a relay from the Hutt Trotting Club's meeting . . . the microphone was placed in the stand, well situated for viewing the races. After one event the announcer was giving the placings, and had announced the winner, when a member of parliament, well known in the district in which the event was being held, who was seated behind the announcer, leaned forward and said loudly, 'And the dividend was (so and so)'. The operator at the switch in the studio of 2YA immediately detected the stranger's voice, and instantaneously shot up the switch so that listeners could not catch the sum mentioned. Had it not been for his quickness a breach of the law would have been committed, it being an offence for the press to publish the amounts of race dividends and the same applies to publication 'over the air'.

Thanks to the Broadcasting Company's policy of taking its microphones to every suitable occasion, if and where practicable, a wide and attentive audience was learning to enjoy the sense of being present at a sporting event or public function. In 1926 the company had even proposed to broadcast a commentary on the opening of parliament; but the government was against it.

Admire the courage then (or wonder at the folly) of the management committee of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union. In 1930 they invited the wrath of every true-born Kiwi when they voted to deny the Broadcasting Company the right to broadcast Saturday matches of the touring British Isles team.

The chairman, Mr S. S. Dean, explained the committee's reasoning: 'If we are going to broadcast the four tests, we are going to kill club matches throughout New Zealand on the days of the tests. The broadcasting of other matches on Saturdays will also have a great effect on club football. If you are going to broadcast, broadcast the Wednesday matches.'

But there seemed to be every prospect that even *they* might not be

'Lamps lit in a million homes all over the world', were never to shine more brightly than when the 'Children's Session' came on the air at the end of each afternoon. Young people were invited to visit the studio and to take part in the programmes, just as much as they were encouraged to listen — especially if theirs happened to be one of the 40,000 birthday calls made each year by N B S.

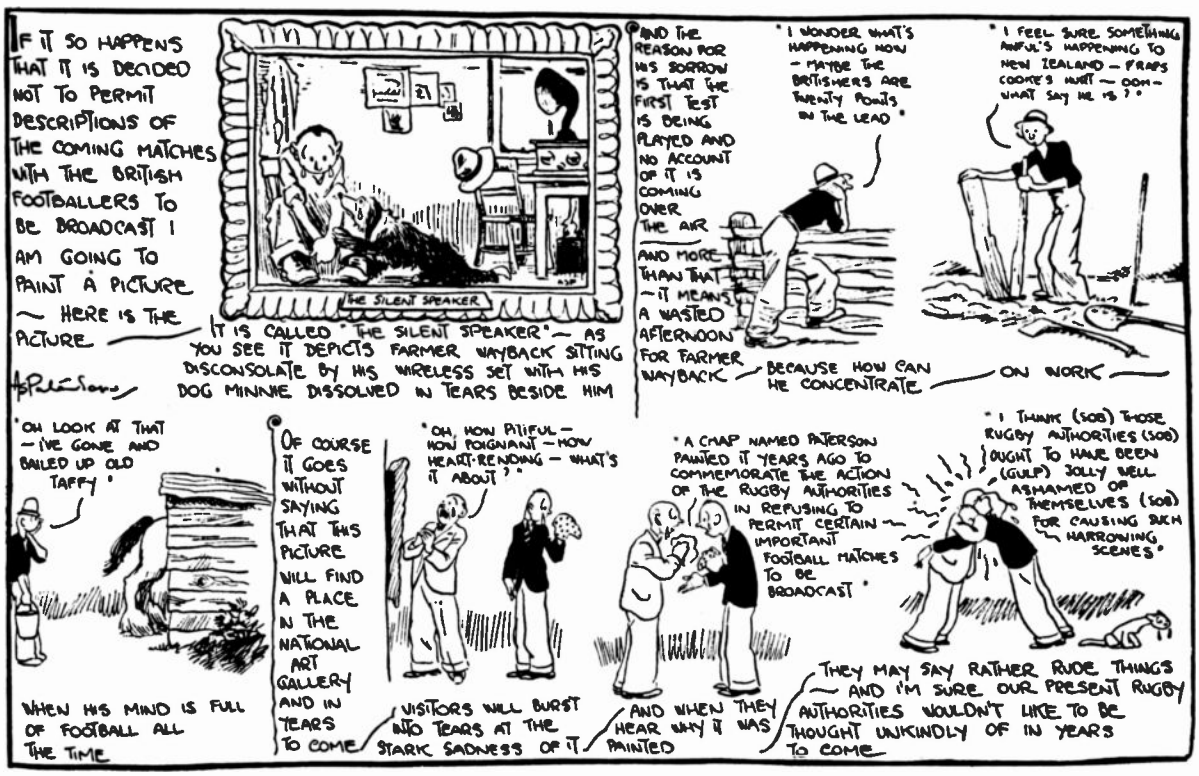
broadcast. Rugby followers throughout the country were roused to fury. By the time the Rugby Union held its annual general meeting the members were divided on how to act. Macaulay had expressed their mood most aptly: 'Those behind cried "Forward!", and those before cried "Back!" '

A majority was for allowing the commentaries to take place, but Canterbury and Wellington held out for an acceptable fee. A settlement was finally arrived at and the commentaries did go on. What had been demonstrated most effectively was the pressure that could be exerted by public opinion when the question arose 'To broadcast — or not to broadcast?'

From the *Radio Record* 12 December 1929:

'Good Manners' (Kelburn) writes suggesting a few hints on radio etiquette. (1) When you invite friends to your home to listen in to a first-class concert, and you find their ceaseless chatter is being interfered with, turn off your set. (2) If your guests prefer *There's A Rainbow Round My Shoulder* don't insist on making them listen to the sextet from *Lucia di Lammermoor.* (3) If you tune in to 3YA Christchurch and you get a roar like a steamer blowing down her boiler, don't attempt to explain that the noise is from a nearby electrical leakage. They wouldn't understand if you did. Just say it's a radio play with realistic effect, and that a train is rushing through a tunnel. Then tune in to good old reliable 2YA, sans static, sans electrical leakage, sans silly questions.

A. S. Paterson's view of the 1930 Rugby-Radio altercations.



Chapter 3

The question of radio as an influence on public opinion, or on political thinking, was raised at the November 1929 meeting of the Dominion executive of the Farmers' Union. Mr K. W. Dalrymple of Bulls proposed, 'That application be made to the Minister of Internal Affairs that the prohibition in regard to the broadcasting of political speeches be lifted insofar as they will permit the leaders of political parties in New Zealand to broadcast their speeches.'

Mr Dalrymple had learned in Australia how effective broadcasting could be in an election campaign. He believed that if a man aspired to lead his country, the people were entitled to find out by the best means available if he deserved their trust. It was particularly important for country people to have this benefit, giving them equal opportunity with townspeople to hear the views of different parties.

If this motion reached the Minister of Internal Affairs and was passed to his cabinet colleague, the Postmaster-General, Mr Donald made no public comment. But a few months later, during a debate in the House on the government's proposed broadcasting scheme, Mr M. J. Savage showed that he understood its significance. He put forward the idea that parliament itself be broadcast. The government saw no merit in the suggestion and ignored it. The more Mr Savage thought about it the more he liked it. Direct communication would overcome what Labour saw as one of its greatest disadvantages: an unfavourable press.

During a parliamentary debate in 1929 the Rev. Clyde Carr (Labour, Timaru), himself an ex-radio announcer, raised the question of the government taking complete control of broadcasting. Mr Donald refused to be drawn, but his reply was sufficiently ambiguous to make the Broadcasting Company uneasy. Their future began to look rather less certain than they had hoped, and doubt was thrown on the value of long-term plans.

Although the medium continued to develop it had entered its most insecure period of administration and control.

From discussion at a meeting of 3YA musical and dramatic committee, 7 August 1929:

> The chairman, Mr W. H. Dixon, said that for a long time during the war he was musical organiser for community singing among the soldiers, and that after the war a scheme was devised by the BBC for broadcasting community singing with some wonderfully successful results. At the first performance in London the conductor, before an audience of 10,000, spoke into the microphone asking the people in their homes to join in, and thousands and thousands of listeners carried it on. He would like to start this in New Zealand, with the singing of national songs of New Zealand. He hoped it might be the means of stirring creative artists into composing songs of their own country. . . .

(In fact, regular community sing broadcasts had already begun,

Welcoming what was probably the first radio receiver in Kaitaia.

on 5 June that year. They were to continue, reaching a peak of popularity during the hardest years of the Depression.)

At this time a *Radio Record* contributor wrote: 'Only recently owners of radio sets were concerned merely with the achievement of picking up something, and the further the distance of the "picked-up" station the greater the delight of the recipient of the transmission. Our early receptionists were not, in the main, musical nor even critical, except upon the point of volume. Now, however, conditions have altered.'

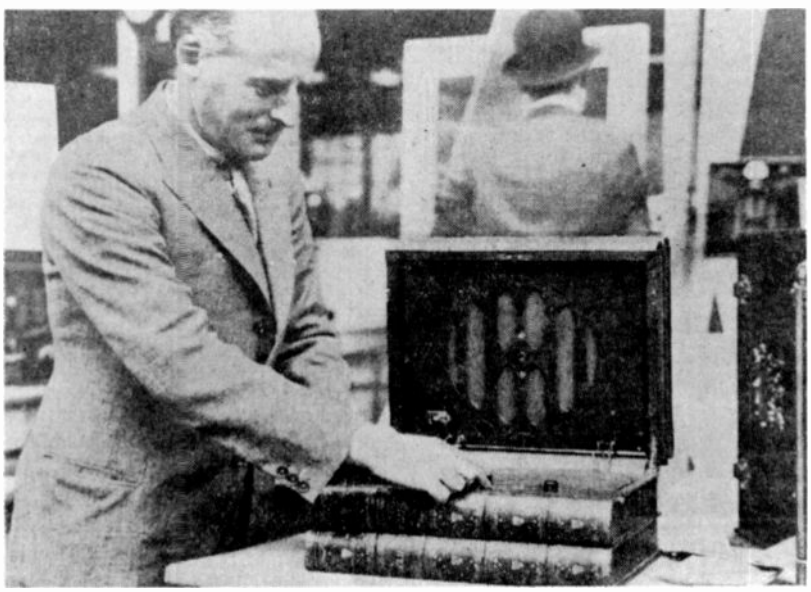
How true. Listeners were musical *and* critical. Also, frequently, they could be unreasonable. Some could not seem to come to terms with the internationalism of radio broadcasting. They disliked the thought of New Zealand being polluted by 'foreign' or 'false' values. The writer of the following letter to the *Radio Record* objected to the cultural damage being done in the name of entertainment (the relay of talking pictures direct from the cinema).

'I have many friends who resent the company's action in broadcasting such poor entertainment. . . . We are a British community and, wishing to preserve British ideals, do not want to be surfeited with American nasal twang and cheap and nasty forms of American "music", either vocal or instrumental. The Americanisation of Australia and New Zealand has gone too far already without the Broadcasting Company furthering the process. If thousands of misguided people do patronise the American sound pictures they do so voluntarily, but wireless listeners have no option but to switch off their sets.'

Against that could be set the opinions of A. R. Harris, general manager of the Broadcasting Company. In an interview with the *Waikato Times* he said:

'There is no doubt that radio broadcasting is now widely recognised as one of the greatest economic and social factors of the age. I have no hesitation in stating that every possible endeavour is being made to cater for every section of the community, without discrimination or favouritism. . . . I would stress the social value of radio in the homes of the people, and more particularly in country homes. The ramifications of the radio service embrace practically every phase of human activity, religious, social, intellectual and industrial. It brings into the home, no matter how remote, a diversity of interests that cannot help but widen the individual outlook, create a better understanding between all classes, and a keener interest in national affairs.'

He made those remarks in the first week of November 1929. A few days earlier the New York stock market had crashed. In the



One of the earliest portable radios available in New Zealand, described as '. . . a five valve portable radio set, self-contained including antenna, batteries and loudspeaker, which may be called the "Library Set". It is built in the form of folio volumes.'

Depression brought about by that collapse the family radio was often to be the centre of family life. It gave comfort, hope, amusement and information when they were most needed; and it proved again and again the truth of what A. R. Harris had said.

By then its control had been taken from him.

From the Auckland Star, December 1929:

As the year 1929 draws to a close one is inclined to look back upon radio achievements throughout the Dominion during the past 12 months. . . . In sports features the broadcasting of running accounts of wrestling contests was the most noteworthy development. In Auckland these accounts were most popular through the special capability of the announcer (Gordon Hutter), but other centres were not so fortunate with their man at the microphone, and the descriptions suffered in consequence.

From the *Radio Record,* 22 November 1929:

With the advent of summer comes the call of the portable. Radio today is so much an essential of our life, supplying information vital to daily needs, that even summertime, with its call to the outdoors, does not dissipate its value. . . . Campers and holiday seekers still feel the need for radio. . . . Indeed the more genuinely they are on holiday, and the more isolated they are from the ordinary means of communication, the more valuable do they find radio as a means of keeping in touch with events of the day with a minimum of cost and trouble. . . . Even at such distant points as Lake Taupo fishing parties nightly listen to selected YA stations through their radio sets.

A children's session in progress at 3ZR Greymouth. This B-class station was started in 1931 by Mick Speirs. Later when it had been taken over by the NBS the call sign was changed to 3YZ. Mick Speirs' moment of glory occurred on 27 May 1932 when he broadcast a recording of *He Played his Ukelele As the Ship Went Down* as a request for the crew of the Kaponga. To make sure they heard it he played it twice — at the identical moment the ship struck the Grey River bar and was wrecked.

Chapter 4

The years when J. B. Donald was Postmaster-General (1928-31) turned out to be fatal for the Broadcasting Company. They were not exactly a shot in the arm for broadcasting as a whole, if it comes to that. In his dealings with B stations he seemed to lack any positive or constructive attitude.

B stations were the eight survivors — in Palmerston North, Gisborne and Wanganui as well as the four main centres — of the early rash of amateur, privately operated radio stations. They survived, but they existed on a starvation diet. They could not benefit from the licence fee. They could not earn revenue by selling advertising time. And they were not protected against claims for royalties by copyright owners. A demand for immediate payment of fees would have forced them to close down.

In September 1928 the *Radio Record* flew a kite on the idea that 'sponsoring', American style, might produce more money and better programmes. But the thought of advertising of any kind met with stiff opposition. There seemed to be an impression that its effects were somehow debasing or demoralising. Furthermore it might not be considered tactful for a young and growing industry to poach quite so openly in an area regarded as a newspaper preserve. But unless they advertised, B stations would go out of business.

At the end of 1928 the three Dunedin stations initiated a move to create an association of radio stations offering alternative programmes to those of the Broadcasting Company. They hoped to get a quick response from the new government, still feeling its way and anxious to please. They lobbied hard for recognition as a separate organisation but more especially for the right to advertise, and a deputation called on the Postmaster-General to put their case. A month later Mr Donald gave them his reply. He was 'not disposed to accede to the request' for advertising to be allowed.

In spite of, or perhaps even because of the Minister's guarded and vague answer, more and more riders joined the bandwagon. Up to 30 new B stations were licensed over the next three years, all of them waiting eagerly for the gold-rush that would come with advertising. They pinned their faith (vainly) to the government's realisation of their desperate plight. Promises, like the carrot to the donkey, urged them to keep going.

When parliament debated broadcasting early in October 1930 for instance, the Labour Party made capital out of public dissatisfaction with the company's slow progress and they rode their pet hobby-horse of state ownership. Mr Donald hinted, somewhat evasively, that he might have a certain course of action in mind. Having given it some thought, he informed the house that when the company's contract expired in December 1931 it would not be renewed. Next he announced, that from 1932 control of broadcasting in New Zealand would be undertaken by the state.

This move took the wind out of the Labour Party's sails. But the Minister had not been clever enough. In executing a bit of political one-upmanship he had gone too far too fast. If he could have produced an acceptable alternative his hastiness might not have been so apparent. But it showed all to plainly when he revealed a scheme that was little more than an expedient, a draft proposal with 'state control' as a not very clearly-defined starting point.

One phrase in the draft gave hope to the B stations. It promised 'plans will be investigated whereby they can be run along with the government stations'. For once their future looked rosy, but a more immediate easing of their lot gave them no time to think of pie in the sky — which is all it was.

Opening the Wellington Radio Show in June 1931 Mr Donald announced: 'I have today signed a letter to the owner of a B station to say that when he is broadcasting a programme from a firm, the firm's name should be mentioned at the beginning of the programme and at the end. That will be of very great interest to B-class station owners, because it will assist them to defray their expenses. At the same time they must not overstep the bounds; because if they do we may take away from them the latitude they have been given today.'

In essence, that was sponsoring. Nobody wasted any time in taking advantage of this loophole. Within a week however one station had been closed for exceeding the instructions. Its owner, protesting innocence, asked more or less 'Why me?' since his was a minor infringement compared with what others were doing.

Mr Donald tried to be helpful but succeeded only in making the position even more obscure. The government, he announced solemnly, would not allow advertising *in any shape or form* to go on the air. This contradictory statement naturally caused some confusion, and the situation was not improved when Mr Donald made yet another well-meaning announcement. This time he said that the government did not consider the naming of sponsors before and after the programmes to be advertising. Sponsorship could continue. Advertising could not.

Dazed and bewildered, B stations turned again to a dream of that day when they would 'run along with' their rich and comfortably settled relations, according to the government's plan. All it would take was some new regulations, simple and plain spoken. That was not too much to expect.

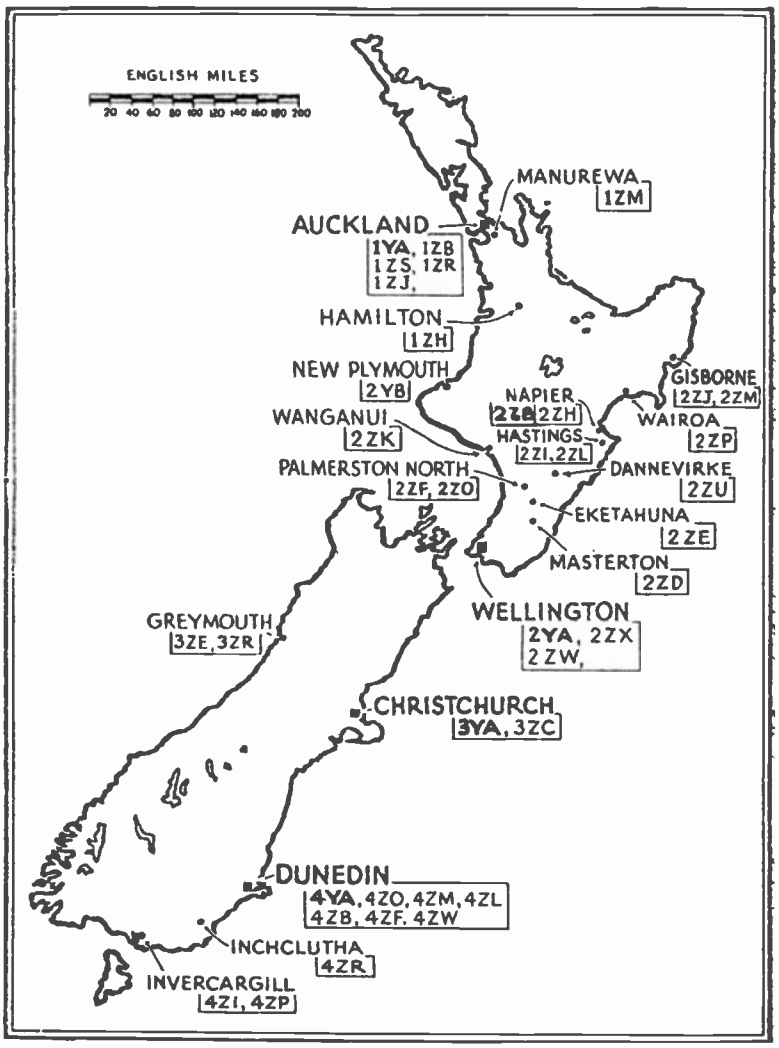
From the *Radio Record,* 28 February 1930:

There are two B-class stations which broadcast regularly in Auckland, and whose programmes are greatly appreciated by a large number of listeners. Station 1ZB is operated by the La Gloria Gramophone Company at Karangahape Road, Mr D. Shipherd being in charge.... The programmes consist entirely of gramophone music, the first Monday in each month being devoted to special

request numbers. . . . Even if Station 1YA becomes no longer silent on Monday nights 1ZB will continue to operate.

The second Auckland station is 1ZQ, operated by Keith's Radio Shack from Mount Albert. . . . 'We began operating in 1922,' says Mr Roy Keith, 'but at that time Sunday was our only broadcasting day. . . . We have a regular programme schedule which is arranged four weeks ahead, and quite often engage outside artists whom we pay. Our aim is not to compete in any way with 1YA but to provide a subsidiary service for listeners. . . . For instance, we never have sacred items on Sunday, nor dance music when 1YA has it.'

After 1931 the B stations issue became increasingly political, their fate linked with the government's irresolute attitude towards the whole broadcasting question. In July 1931 the *Radio Record* sharply criticised the actions taken by the government.



Map published in November 1931 showing all the New Zealand radio stations licensed at that time. The four YA stations belonged to the Radio Broadcasting Company, all the others were privately-owned B-class stations.

'The desirability of reticulating the Dominion with radio broadcasting stations supplementary to those in the main centres has long been apparent. To cover that situation a scheme was submitted to the government over two years ago for distributive relay stations. Nothing was done with that scheme. Indeed, licences were granted to traders, one after the other, to establish what are known as B stations until there exist in this country approximately 30 [of them]. The effects of that action by the government are now becoming apparent, as we repeatedly warned they would. In the situation in which they now find themselves, those stations, although their owners took a definite financial risk, are entitled to sympathy and consideration.'

What the government had failed to do was to require the Post and Telegraph Department to proceed with the installation of land-lines to relay programmes throughout the country. The B stations were encouraged to fill the gap, but they were given nothing beyond encouragement.

Station 2ZW in Wellington had opened in May 1931 for the purpose of creating trade for its owners, Hamilton Nimmo & Sons Ltd, piano and radio dealers. Its chairman, Mr R. H. Nimmo, had some blunt words about government policy. 'We counted, for the successful conduct of our station, upon a certain amount of revenue being secured from sponsored programmes under definite control and used with discrimination . . . Unless the position of such stations is taken into consideration by the government many, if not all of them [B stations] will be forced off the air.'

The Plume Melody Makers who regularly broadcast a weekly three-hour programme on 2ZW Wellington, sponsored by the Plume Motor Oil Company. The director of the band was Bob Bothamley (third from right) who in 1937 joined the National Broadcasting Service as programme organiser for dance music and jazz broadcasts, a position he continued to hold until his death in 1966.

Mr Nimmo rejected the idea that sponsorship by itself — that is, without identification of the sponsor's line of business — had any value. But what he proposed was rejected equally strongly by the government as rank and deplorable commercialisation. They resisted a petition to parliament on much the same grounds, but it received favourable consideration. When sponsoring was given a limited extension stations that were considered to have gone too far were arbitrarily suspended. Auckland's 1ZR was ordered off the air for offending in this way. Enquiries revealed that one of its 'crimes' had been to introduce a talk on 'The Romance of the Coffee Cup' by a man engaged in the coffee trade — even though that fact had not been mentioned. Bumbledom thrives on petty definitions.

For all that they were hard-pressed and hard-up B station operators were nothing if not hardworking. They had all the qualities any good broadcaster must possess: the gift of the gab, the imagination of Scheherazade, the patience of Job and the endurance of Sisyphus. Because they offered a bright, breezy popular style against the YA stations' rather more ponderous approach B stations enjoyed keen public support.

Grace Green of 3ZW Christchurch remembers:

We worked all the hours God made, certainly, and we put on a breakfast programme, which had never been done before. We went on the air at 7 o'clock in the morning, jollying people along, then when the YAs came on we slid out of the picture. We came back and filled in all their gaps and then went on with an alternative programme at night from five until eleven and on Saturday nights until midnight. You rode your bicycle home after midnight and then came back in the morning again. We worked from seven in the morning until nine, then came back again mid-afternoon and went through, as I say, until 11 o'clock. There'd always be folk around because radio 'drew' people so you'd be fortunate if you got away before half past 12. And then back again at seven in the morning, to get the station on the air. Seven days a week.

When B station owners did sleep their dreams must have been haunted by visions of the dreaded Record Company Ban. There was a threat that this would be imposed unless the owners paid a large amount of money per record per performance on air. Having no resources the stations simply ignored the demand, trusting that no action would be taken against them. Records were the life-blood of their programmes, as they were of the YAs too. In fact, a correspondent to the *Radio Record* was moved to protest, 'The New Zealand stations never seem to get out of the rut of records, records, records.'

Government delay and indecision over broadcasting had another sharp rebuke from the *Radio Record* in July 1931: 'Parliament . . . (is) offering substantial proof every day of the inadvisability of broadcasting being mixed up with politics. There is general unanimity on this point right throughout the community. It is now over a year since the Postmaster-General gave an indication of his

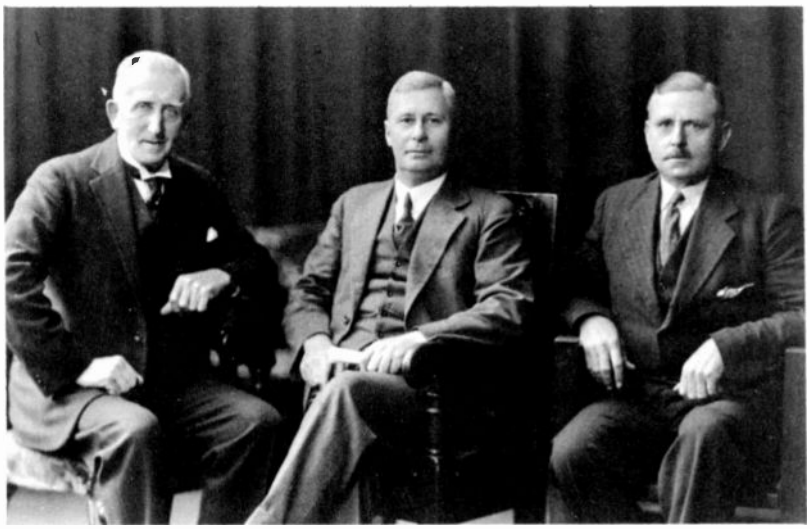
Grace Green, the 'Sunshine Girl' of Christchurch's 'Sunshine Station', 3ZM. She later became a popular personality at 3ZB.

policy, with the promise that legislation would be introduced this session. Announcements made by the Minister since then indicate the complete abandonment of his first proposal. Nothing has yet been submitted to take its place, and a mere policy of drift seems to obtain at the moment. . . . The one outstanding lesson in this situation is the inadvisability of politicians playing any part in a broadcasting service, as by that means an opening is presented for intrigue and procrastination.'

In support of the 'general unanimity' referred to, a Christchurch *Press* editorial may be quoted: 'Practically all that has been heard so far has been a very impetuous statement from Mr Donald many months ago, and another soon after in which he unsaid nearly everything and left only the present uncertainty'. Most newspaper comment had attacked Mr Donald's scheme, the *New Zealand Herald* remarking, 'There has never been a more foolish example of state interference in a field positively marked for private enterprise. . . .'

In the middle of 1931 the government could claim reasonable grounds for their temporising. A financial crisis had overtaken them, adding an extra burden on top of their other problems which they could not cope with alone. In August they made an alliance with the Reform Party and a coalition ministry was formed. The new Postmaster-General was the Hon. Adam Hamilton. He may have taken note of public opinion, if newspaper editorials are its true expression, and decided against direct state control. In November, less than two months before the administration was due to change hands, he informed the House that broadcasting would be under a three-member board of management.

It was, the *Radio Record* noted thankfully, to be non-political.



Members of the first Broadcasting Board. Left to right: G. R. Hutchinson (Auckland), H. D. Vickery (Chairman, Wellington), L. R. C. Macfarlane (Canterbury).

Chapter 5

The Broadcasting Board's years (1932-36) were a period of marking time between the company and eventual nationalisation under a Labour government. They coincided with the worst years of the Depression, which was no help. In spite of the adverse circumstances and in ignorance of its role as caretaker the board, through its capable manager E. C. ('Charlie') Hands, did more than just keep the wheels turning.

During the board's term the number of licence-holders nearly tripled. This may be taken to mean, as much as anything, that radio had seized the imagination of a mass audience. Probably it would have happened anyway, but the rise in popularity is also directly attributable to the Depression. Board members were not progressive in their outlook, but they were prudent, they were careful to expand only within their budget, and they were deliberate in the methods they used to reach the ultimate goal of full coverage. If they lacked imagination they did have their feet planted firmly on the ground.

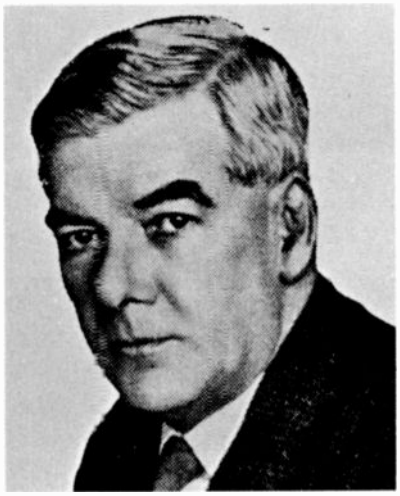
In his book *Broadcasting in New Zealand* Ian Mackay has paid tribute to their record of achievement: 'Outside broadcasts, relays from sporting events, church services and children's sessions were improved and extended, and the informative side of broadcasting grew quite rapidly. . . . The board did improve coverage, greatly increased the hours of transmission, provided an alternative service to the city areas, and left substantial reserves for future development.'

One relay from a sporting event was a stroke-by-stroke commentary on the play-off for the national amateur golf championship in November 1932. Played on the Heretaunga course in the Hutt Valley, the game was described by an announcer using a portable (i.e., carried on a wheelbarrow) shortwave transmitter relaying to 2YA. This was claimed to be the first broadcast of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

James Hartstonge remembers:

> In the early days when I first joined, when I was a young announcer, we used to broadcast news services every evening. We had an arrangement with the newspapers which was fairly restrictive but we could take a certain amount of material . . . and we had one cable per day from British Official Wireless with overseas news. It wasn't uncommon for a news bulletin to last 20 or 30 minutes . . . and we had to collect this, we had to collate it outselves, we had to edit it. . . . It does point to the fact that the early broadcasters were a pretty responsible breed of people. We were probably not nearly so venturesome, but we did give a great deal more service in the way of information. Even in those early days we used to have farm talks, agricultural talks, gardening talks, all sorts of helpful hobbies talks and so on. So the information services even as far back as the 1930s were really quite comprehensive. . . . Even in those very early days we did a great deal with those very limited resources.

Mr Hartstonge, later to be Director-General of Radio New



E. C. Hands, General Manager of the New Zealand Broadcasting Board.

James Hartstonge, first Director General of Radio New Zealand, from 1974 to 1976.

Lionel Sceats, Director General of the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, from 1970 to 1975.

William Yates, Director of Broadcasting from 1949 to 1958.

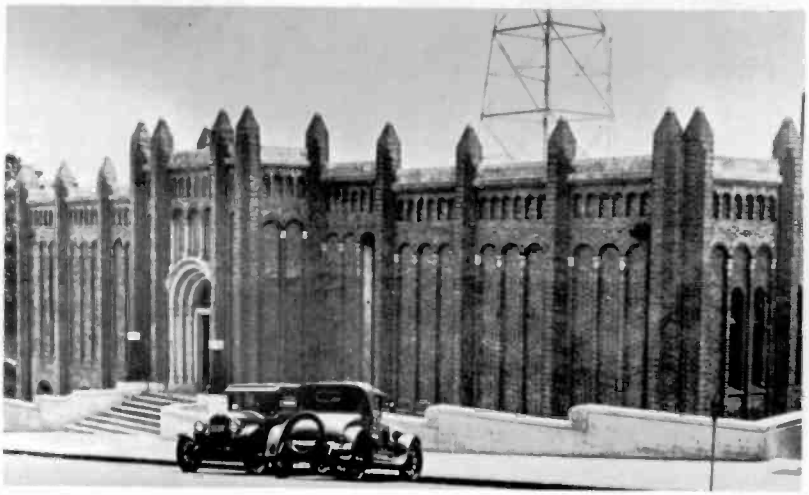
During its term of office the Broadcasting Board made a number of significant technical advances. In 1933-34 the new stations 1YX, 2YC, 3YL and 4YO were opened, offering alternative programmes to the existing four YA stations. The following year saw 1YA moved into this new studio and office building in Shortland Street, Auckland, with a new 10 kilowatt transmitter at Henderson. 3YA and 4YA transmitters were also raised in power in 1935 to 10 kilowatts and in the same year a contract was let for a new 60 kilowatt transmitter to be built at Titahi Bay.

Zealand, joined the board's Dunedin office in 1932. Whatever else they may or may not have accomplished, the board's years were vintage in their crop of staff members. Another young announcer who would rise to the top as Director-General of the NZBC, Lionel Sceats, became a board employee in 1934.

In 1934 William Yates was appointed supervisor of plays. He had been an accountant in the Public Service, but his colleagues must have taken it calmly when he left to go into 'show business'. Since 1929 he had been appearing regularly in broadcast entertainments — most notably in the board's first year, when his sketch 'Filling It In' (for which he took all nine parts) introduced listeners to an official questionnaire on programme preferences. This was the first time any sort of audience research was attempted on a nationwide scale. The results must have gratified Will Yates personally: 'humorous songs and monologues' came second in favour to 'light orchestral items'. After being made secretary of the Broadcasting Department Will Yates became Assistant Director of Broadcasting in 1944 and Director (for 9 years) in 1949.

September 1935 saw the addition of A. E. Mulgan as supervisor of talks. A distinguished man of letters — journalist, novelist, poet and previously literary editor of the Auckland *Star* — Alan Mulgan was a familiar 'old identity' in the corridors of broadcasting's numerous buildings for many years. Under his influence the 'spoken word' on radio acquired a new meaning: topics became more profound, speakers more varied and their style more relaxed. His aim was to bring the listener into a sense of greater intimacy with the person he was hearing. It took time, but he succeeded.

Malcolm Rickard, announcer, ended his career as an Executive Director of the NZBC; Noel Palmer held a similar position, having started with the board's engineering staff in 1933. Other technical



staff members — J. R. Smith, W. L. Harrison, J. M. N. Norman — all held senior administrative posts in broadcasting.

They were some of the professional staff, coping with day-to-day business and the smooth running of the organisation. Their efficiency and ability were not to be questioned, nor were they lacking in ideas. What must have made their work seem frustrating and unrewarding was the criticism, often strongly worded, that the Broadcasting Board and its programmes were unenterprising, prosaic and monotonous.

One explanation may have been the board members themselves. They were conservative businessmen whose personal taste would have been for entertainment that was safe and comfortably familiar. Novelty might have been too disturbing, change upsetting in the extreme. If that was the case, it would account for the frequent appearance in newspaper correspondence columns of letters that did not pull any punches.

ABOVE: Alan Mulgan, Supervisor of Talks for the National Broadcasting Service from 1935 to 1946.

'Mr Gramophone Man'. The technician who played the records for 2YA in 1934.

An extreme view, from the *Radio Record,* 13 April 1934:

It is safe to say that there is (apart from a few crank supporters) no board in the country considered so inept as the Broadcasting Board. It does not represent the people, and it depends for its existence on the Minister in the cabinet, who is obviously not qualified to handle the responsibility. The failure of the board with its many highly-paid managers is obvious in the dull, unpopular YA programmes five nights a week at each station. . . . Most people seem to think a clean sweep of officers at the YA stations, excepting the world's best announcer, Mr Drummond, would be the best solution. Yours etc. H. V. Silverton (Pahiatua).

One of the more far-reaching developments introduced by the Broadcasting Board was the touring of overseas artists for both broadcasts and concerts. Among the many who came for the board was Peter Dawson, popular Australian baritone, pictured here in action, with Fanny McDonald at the piano.

The solution of a 'clean sweep' might have been better applied to the generals instead of the lieutenants. Occasionally, board members could be seen to be out of their depth in some areas of their administration. One of them, Mr L. R. C. Macfarlane, returned to New Zealand from a trip 'home' to Great Britain and said he had been struck by the way English people regarded the BBC with pride and affection. He wondered why New Zealanders could not feel the same way about the board, instead of constantly criticising it. His hurt innocence produced a counterblast of withering scorn.

'We have never yet been able to ascertain what qualifications either Mr Macfarlane or his confreres on the board controlling our radio possess for the job,' wrote the journal of the NZ Manufacturers Federation, 'nor do we know how far our returned tourist is competent to compare the British Broadcasting Corporation with the painful programmes put over the air by his own board, but there are others besides Mr Macfarlane who have listened in to both, and he will find it hard to get anyone to agree with his extraordinary views.'

Mr Macfarlane was a farmer at Culverden in North Canterbury, prominent in local body affairs and in the racing world. A parliamentary candidate in the Hurunui electorate (a seat held by Prime Minister, Rt Hon. G. W. Forbes) his political ambitions evidently receded on his appointment to the Broadcasting Board. The board's chairman was a Wellington public accountant, Mr H. D. Vickery. The third member, Mr G. R. Hutchinson of Auckland, was in the wholesale grocery trade. Never having owned a radio set he bought one as soon as he knew that broadcasting would require his informed attention.

Apart from obvious regional considerations, the choice of those particular men is hard to explain. The Minister had given an assurance that the posts would be offered to men having an appropriate knowledge or experience. In retrospect, it would seem that he was referring to their commercial wisdom and their solidly respectable backgrounds. If so, broadcasting gained from their sense of obligation — but it lost from their inability to grasp the true nature of the medium they controlled.

From the *Radio Record,* 22 June 1934:

> There is comic relief in plenty in the new series of recordings dealing with the Honourable Archie and the Japanese houseboy. The strangely-assorted pair are always at cross-purposes, and the resulting dialogues are really comical. Each recording deals with a separate episode in the lives of the two, and an effort should be made to hear each instalment. The first of the series is to be presented at 2YA on Saturday 30 June.

In April 1935 a new board was constituted. Mr Vickery and Mr Hutchinson kept their seats and were joined by Mr J. L. Passmore

(Dunedin), Dr S. K. Phillips and Mr W. H. Cocker (Auckland), Mr E. Palliser (Wellington) and Mr H. G. Livingstone (Christchurch). The amending Act to authorise their appointments contained other provisions. The conduct and programme content of all B stations came under board jurisdiction. And no station was permitted to broadcast advertising material of any kind 'for the pecuniary benefit of any person' under pain of immediate suspension and the Minister's gravest displeasure.

B station owners were alarmed. They felt they had been placed at the mercy of men whose self interest demanded that they remove the threat of competition. Since 1932 the board had maintained a consistent policy towards B stations. They subsidised some provincial stations (operating in areas of poor YA reception) but resisted pleas for financial aid from metropolitan operators. If only in part, this attitude must have been dictated by concern at their rivals' widespread and enviable popularity. When a petition for the right to advertise had been presented to parliament in 1932 members of all parties spoke warmly in favour of B stations. But soft words were not the same as hard cash. What the B stations wanted was a dependable source of income and shelter under the umbrella of the board's copyright agreement.

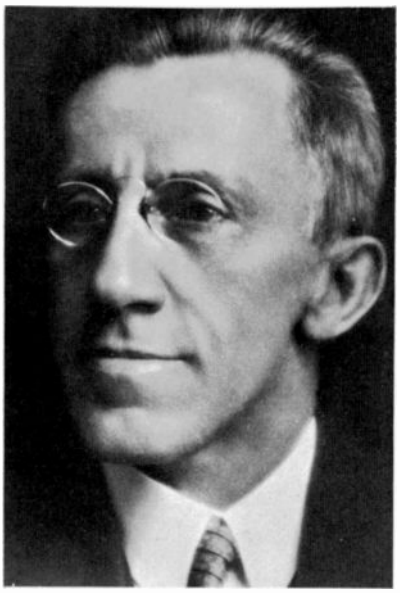
In 1933 the old bogey of royalties — 'Pay up or put up' — was again haunting the station owners. They appealed to the Postmaster-General. He said that he would leave it to the parties to negotiate. In desperation the owners banded together for protest action, with Lewis Eady's 1ZR Auckland and R. H. Nimmo's 2ZW Wellington as standard-bearers. A government not noted for its skilful manoeuvring for once acted swiftly — even though in the long term its move rebounded against it.

Secretly they made contact with Nimmo's and Lewis Eady's and pointed out that, with the gramophone companies breathing down their necks and the ban on advertising about to be implemented, the end was only a matter of time. The government was prepared to buy the stations outright, but the offer must not be discussed with *anyone* and was available for a strictly limited period. Their communications cut, their supplies gone and with relief impossible the garrisons at 1ZR and 2ZW accepted the terms of surrender (£2,200 for 1ZR, £2,300 for 2ZW) and retired from the fight. News of their withdrawal came as a surprise to everyone, not least to their supporters and followers, who were dismayed, and to the Broadcasting Board, who at no stage were consulted. The government felt free to continue its pinpricking tactics against the remaining B stations, with only 1ZB in Auckland, 2ZR in Nelson and 3ZM in Christchurch showing any spirit of resistance.

1935 was election year. When their option is due for renewal politicians are always open to suggestion. If the B stations had a

Reginald Sharland as 'The Honorable Archie' in *The Japanese Houseboy.*

Eddie Holden, alias 'Frank Watanabe' in *The Japanese Houseboy.*

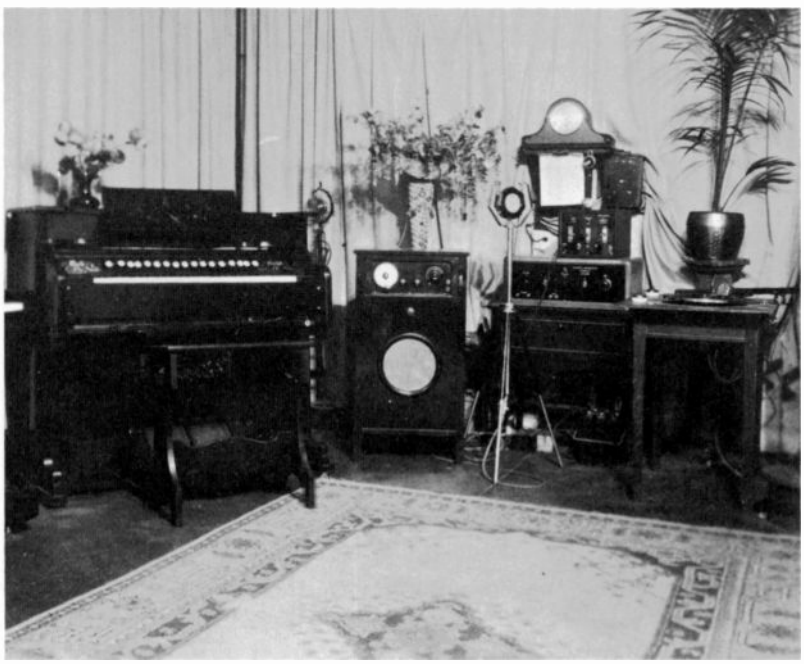


'Uncle Tom' Garland, who first broadcast in the early days of 1YA as a much loved contributor to the 'Children's Hour'. Later he moved on to 1ZR where he became an important member of the 'Friendly Road' organisation with Scrim. When 1ZR was sold to the government he moved with the 'Friendly Road' to 1ZB and eventually became very well known throughout the entire country for the popular broadcasts by his children's choir.

leader they might exert enough influence on the contestants to gain the acceptance they sought. They found their man in Reverend C. G. Scrimgeour (Scrim), a Methodist minister, an eloquently honest and sharp-witted speaker, a man with a genuine sympathy for the underdog — and the owner of 1ZB, a station with no love for the coalition government.

When 1ZR sold out so abruptly Scrim had been left without a pulpit from which to address his followers on the 'Friendly Road', a non-sectarian radio congregation of the humble and the underprivileged. He acquired 1ZB — only to run into a frustrating 'go-slow' of red tape when he applied for a licence. His answer was to organise an impressive demonstration of popular support, backed by the prestige of Auckland's leading citizens, church groups and trade union officials. A reluctant department gave way. But they resisted stubbornly his request for permission to operate a stronger transmitter for longer hours.

The government introduced a Broadcasting Bill in 1934, and Scrim saw the writing on the wall. It would eliminate B stations, he thought, and that decided him to campaign against it. In the months before the election he was the rallying-point for a last do-or-die struggle. Its outcome seemed like a splendid victory. But the B stations learned that while you may win a decisive battle you can still lose the war.



The general studio of Lewis Eady's 1ZR in Auckland, the station which introduced Uncle Scrim's 'Friendly Road' broadcasts. Other personalities who could also be heard from 1ZR were Tom Garland ('Uncle Tom'), and Daisy Basham ('Aunt Daisy') both of whom had previously been popular YA broadcasters, Uncle Tom in Auckland and Aunt Daisy in Auckland and Wellington.

Chapter 6

The Broadcasting Board's term was marked by several wrangles over a too-zealous application of the rule that nothing controversial should be allowed on the air. The *Radio Record* questioned its validity.

'New Zealand is as interested as any other part of the world in the political and economic problems with which all countries today are confronted. Broadcasting can contribute materially to a closer appreciation of these problems and the manner in which they react upon all. Our own political campaign recently was conducted wholly without the aid of broadcasting. Country interests in particular would have benefited by the ability to listen to expositions of their policy by the main leaders. . . . At the moment country interests are heatedly discussing the merits and demerits of the exchange situation. That may be held to be controversial, but controversial or not it is of moment to all responsible individuals in the community, and sound exposition of the points at issue and their economic bearing would be of definite value. As a mature community New Zealand should now be able to stand the strong medicine of controversy on the air.'

In the civil disturbances of 1932, when unemployed men expressed their frustration by rioting, 2YA was criticised for making no mention of this until long after the news was common knowledge. With our present-day awareness of world events almost as they are happening it is quaint (if not medieval) to read a contributor's note in the *Radio Record* at that time: 'The function of a broadcast station is to keep people at home, and in blissful ignorance if necessary'.

A visit to Auckland in 1934 by the Indian philosopher Jidda Krishnamurti had notable repercussions. The script of a talk he was to give from 1YA was rejected because, the Hon. Adam Hamilton said later in parliament, it was '. . . too controversial and perhaps too objectionable from some points of view'.

Rev. C. G. Scrimgeour had no better luck when he asked permission for his Friendly Road station 1ZB to relay Krishnamurti's public address from Auckland Town Hall. He was told that the text contained 'controversial matter'.

'I am very disappointed,' said Scrimgeour. 'I do not see how any harm could come from allowing him to broadcast. . . . New Zealand listeners may surely be given credit for forming a just opinion upon what they hear over the air and not accepting everything without question.'

Krishnamurti himself had the final word. 'As for the address being controversial,' he said, 'everything is controversial. Religion is more controversial than politics. . . . If a subject is not controversial it is useless and meaningless.'

Hardly had the dust settled from that affair than it swirled up

George Bernard Shaw when he was in New Zealand during 1934.

again round the white head and 'red' opinions of George Bernard Shaw. Just before he left New Zealand, after a stay of a few weeks, he broadcast from Wellington. No one knew in advance what he was going to say, so we are left to wonder how officialdom might have explained that he was not allowed to say it. His ideas were extreme, provocative and highly (no doubt deliberately) controversial. Government ministers may have wondered if they should be flattered or offended by Shaw's remarks.

'You are, to some extent,' he said, 'thanks to your admirable communist institutions, now actually leading the world's civilisation. You are second only to Russia. . . . They know that they are Communists, and are proud of it; but the extraordinary thing is that New Zealand, which is leading the rest of the world in communism, does not know that it is communistic. It naturally thinks that communism is a very terrible thing. Let me ask you to put that idea out of your heads. I am a Communist . . .'

In a country not used to hearing such explicit statements on the radio the broadcast came like a thunderclap. But its reverberations failed to shake the blue pencils from the hands of the Post and Telegraph Department, who administered the 1923 regulations.

When talks by two Auckland University speakers in a W.E.A. series were rejected the storm blew up again. One speaker, Professor Sewell, wrote in a letter to the Auckland *Star:*

'The microphone could be and should be an open forum. After all, listeners can switch off. If it does not become open, it will dwindle into the sterility and innocuous monotony of canned music and harmless talks . . . but we shall hear nothing of the social and philosophical problems of our time.'

The Auckland director of the W.E.A., N. M. Richmond, added his comment: 'Controversy is an integral part of education. . . . A broadcasting service which stills discussion of the most vital questions of the day may be a pleasant toy, but its failure as an educational instrument stands self-proclaimed.'

These were all straws in the wind. A sizeable proportion of listeners wanted debate and discussion on radio to be free. Their ranks did not include the Prime Minister, George Forbes. Asked by a journalist if the government intended to follow the British example and use radio for party political broadcasts his reply was a terse 'No'. It would be regarded he said, 'in a similar light to advertising, which is not desired'.

From the *Radio Record,* 1 June 1934:

. . . in broadcasting, especially in a small isolated country such as ours where the radio service must necessarily exist on a limited income, the fashioning of the service along the lines of the BBC is an excellent method. Americans (that is, the ones who deplore the middle-of-the-road mediocrity of many of the sponsored programmes) are turning envious eyes in the direction of the British listener

'Q S L' cards sent to listeners, verifying that they had heard the broadcast of a particular station.

whose ears are unoffended by advertising of any kind. . . .

In the 15 June issue:

Radio has become pre-eminent in the field of home entertainment. . . . It employs artists, announcers, technicians and office staffs. . . . It is bringing enlightenment and happiness to homes that were formerly drear and isolated; in other words, the chaos it may have caused in other industries has been more than offset by the lamps it has lit in a million homes all over the world.

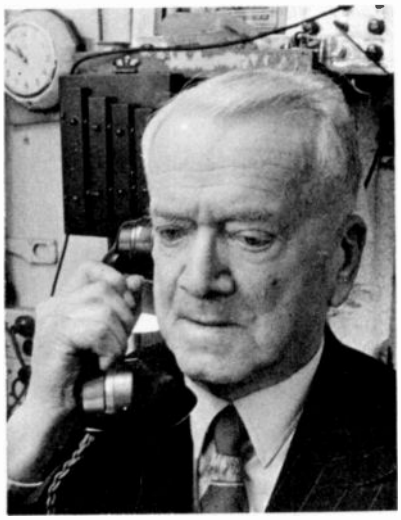
Advertising may not have been desired by the Prime Minister, but for the B stations the desire had become a craving. And their cause had gained a spokesman in parliament: Mr M. J. Savage. 'What is the difference between an advertisement in a newspaper and one given over the air?' he asked. 'I consider that everything of service to the people should be available over the air. . . . What I am arguing is that economic interests are stifling broadcasting. . . . Let us be consistent. If advertising is a bad thing let us stop it. If it is not, let us develop it to its logical conclusion.'

Of all the B stations none enjoyed greater popularity and inspired deeper emotion than Auckland's 1ZB.

Scrim remembers:

The fellow who owned what was called 1ZB was up in La Gloria Gramophone premises in Karangahape Road. He had got sick of it because he didn't have a big enough record business to justify running a radio station, and not only that — the station was completely in a state of disrepair, so he said when 1ZR was bought by the government, 'Look, you can have 1ZB if you like — for £50'. I didn't have £50 but my wife had a piano, so I said to her, 'I can buy a station up in Karangahape Road if we sold the piano'. By this time she was a little bit occupied with the children. and she said, 'I don't want the piano'. So I said, 'Well, we'll sell it.' I took it down to the auction rooms and sold it, and I went up to the fellow who owned 1ZB and bought it for £50. That not only included the station licence, it also included the transmitter, all the records and the right to stay permanently in the premises of La Gloria Gramophones.

In fact 1ZB moved to other premises at Queen's Arcade and continued the 'Friendly Road' broadcasts begun at 1ZR. These were what Scrim called 'ecumenical' programmes, and they had a



D. G. ('Toots') Mitchell, of the longest running private station of them all — 4XD Dunedin. He was closely associated with the station from its opening in 1922 and the Otago Radio Association (he was elected first Secretary-Treasurer) until his death in 1970, by which time he was station director. During his last years he was thought to be the oldest man still holding an executive position in a radio station anywhere in the world.

'Uncle Scrim' reads his morning mail at the 'Friendly Road' office in Auckland.

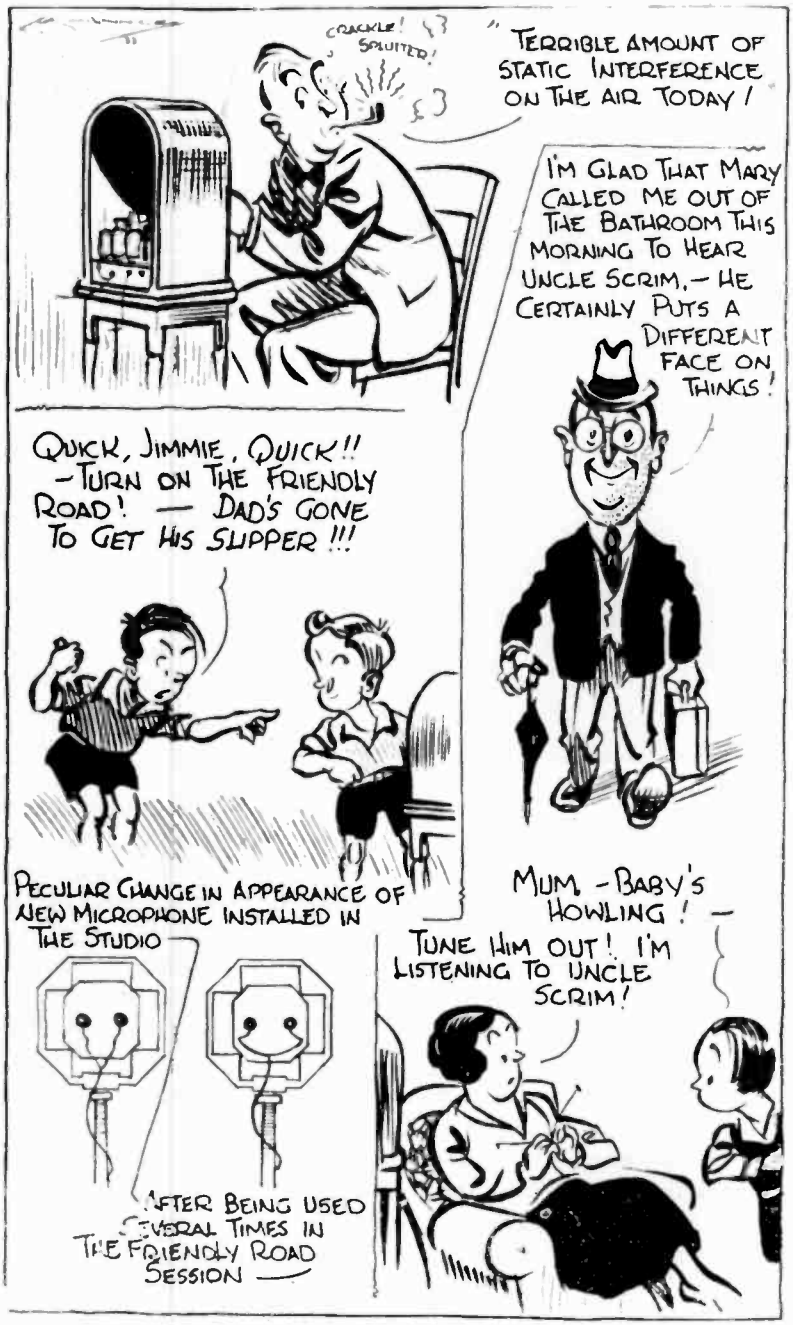
mission-like appeal for the desperate, helpless victims of the Depression. Aunt Daisy joined the station to add her cheery voice and brisk encouragement to raising morale among the unemployed.

1ZB's outspokenness and Scrim's apparently radical stand in politics did nothing to endear him to the Forbes government. The station was harassed and discriminated against in a way that drove Scrim to the furthest extremes in retaliation. At a mass meeting in Carlaw Park he stated unequivocally, 'The Friendly Road is being forced to take political action, and will have something to say to the electors prior to the general election'.

The government saw this as a threat. They took it for granted that Scrim's evangelical movement was allied to the Labour Party. Scrim disclaimed any political affiliation. The Friendly Road, he said, was a way of life. He did not want to see it signposted 'Dead End'. All through 1935 he campaigned actively, warning his audiences that sinister influences were at work to legislate against the B stations' right to broadcast.

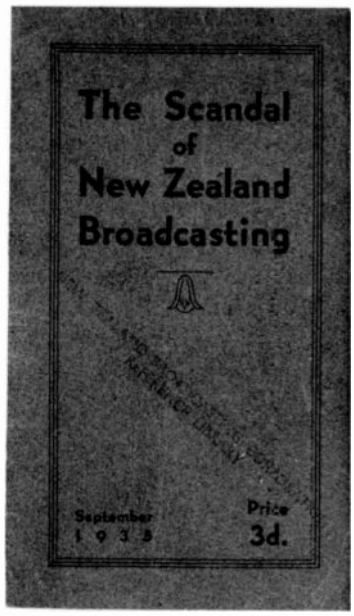
Scrim's activities gave an edge, an extra sharpness to parliamentary debates in 1935 whenever broadcasting was discussed. The government was accused of wanting to suppress or extinguish B stations. The Labour Party gained considerable support by championing their cause. In September Mr M. J. Savage said: 'The B stations have helped to build up our broadcasting service and make it very popular. . . . I should be doing less than my duty were I to sit back and allow this thing (extinction) to happen. It must not

happen. . . . I shall see that the B-class stations generally are developed. The Labour Party refuses to allow their crucifixion to take place in front of our eyes. . . . The B stations are not going to die if I can make them live.'



Audience reaction to the broadcasts of Uncle Scrim from 1ZR as seen through the eyes of a cartoonist.

There were pamphlets and broadsheets. One told Uncle Scrim's life story. Another was called 'The Scandal of New Zealand Broadcasting'. It suggested that the public had a choice, and that the ballot-box was the proper place to exercise it. The Federation of B Station Owners circularised the parties contesting the election asking them to reply to specific questions about broadcasting. Only the Labour Party answered in full, giving unqualified support to — among other things — B stations' survival and their right to advertise.



ACTION !

Radio is *one* of the major issues to be considered at Election time. There is a question of principle involved which is so important that FEARLESS AND DEFINITE ACTION IS IMPERATIVE.

Before Election Day arrives we will inform you what Political Party will mete out the justice our cause deserves. It is useless relying upon the promises of individual candidates. We will see that no Party, by treating the matter in general terms, evades its responsibility to us and to YOU.

DO YOU WANT THE "B" STATIONS? If so, await our pronouncement as to what Party will give you freedom and life—

AND THEN

VOTE

ACCORDINGLY!

Printed for the 1ZB Radio Club by The Unity Press Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand.

Scrim was not the only broadcasting figure on the political scene in 1935. William Goodfellow was a leader of the Democrat Party which came and went and left no trace. One of its candidates, Mr T. C. A. Hislop, Mayor of Wellington, was affected by the government's ban on broadcasting by any candidate on any subject from any station. His speech at a civic reception was the only part of the proceedings not heard by radio listeners. Concern over what might be said was reaching the point of absurdity. It was about to reach the point of utter futility.

On the night of Sunday, 24 November 1935, just before polling day, it was widely anticipated that Scrim's regular weekly broadcast would be the climax of his long fight. There was a rumour that he would indicate to electors the course that was open to them.

Next day the Auckland *Star* described what happened as 'the most sensational development in connection with radio broadcasting in New Zealand'. The sensation was not what had been said but what had prevented it from being heard.

Some outside agency had interfered with 1ZB's transmission, 'jamming' reception over a wide area. The question was: Who?

For the government, Mr Coates denied liability. Later in the day, however, an existing credibility gap widened considerably when a portable transmitter was uncovered (literally) on Post and Telegraph Department property in Newmarket.

The Minister, Adam Hamilton, and the department both proclaimed their innocence — wiping the jam off their lips as they spoke. Rumour, suspicion and accusation filled the air. Scrim had no doubt that the gagging had been politically motivated. Six months later, when a departmental report was read in the House, the Minister (by then ex-Minister) came out very badly, in spite of his protestations. The report said that Mr Hamilton had been told that 1ZB was engaging in political activities contrary to the regulations and would instruct listeners how to vote. He had then authorised whatever steps might be necessary to prevent that happening. It was understood that 'jamming' could be used as a last resort.

The rights and wrongs of the matter were argued for months. What was not disputed was its incidental effect on the election. It contributed to a strong Labour showing in Auckland especially, and cast a shadow on government candidates already struggling in other places.

A Labour government took office with a majority of 26 seats. Among the first of its moves to break with convention was the decision to broadcast parliament.

John Proudfoot remembers:

Well, the government took over radio with the avowed purpose of making it a means of communicating government policy to the people, because they reckoned they weren't getting a fair go from the newspapers. So they were going to make broadcasting their own, and for a while they did. They used it without any compunction for direct political purposes. But after a while the danger of this was seen and although formal non-political broadcasts were not long in coming, it was a very long time before there was a formal acknowledgement that this must not be used any more for direct political purposes by the government.

From *Broadcasting, Grave and Gay* by Ken G. Collins:

Those were the days of bitter and strenuous debate: we started with five microphones, we finished with 14. The broadcasts from the House were frequently 'good programme value' as we say in broadcasting. Not only were political opinions sharply divided but the speakers in the debates were colourful, forceful and unique in expression. I have only to think back to such names as Semple, Lee, Fraser, Langstone, Bodkin, Sheat, Nash, Holland, Nordmeyer and Holyoake. . . . I am quite certain that although broadcasting raised the standard of debates, it also lengthened them. Officially, members spoke to the House. No member could speak directly to listeners. If he did Mr Speaker would call him to order. But they did — and still do.

Chapter 7

'B stations are going to live,' declared Mr M. J. Savage, the new Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of Broadcasting in 1935. B station owners must have enjoyed a novel sensation of security in the firmness of his commitment. 'If they cannot gain a reasonable livelihood from fees or subscriptions,' he went on, 'they will gain it from advertising. I am not aware of any considerable objection by listeners to advertising over the air; and if the B stations, by being given greater liberty, are able to serve listeners better — well, there doesn't seem any more to be said.'

The Prime Minister's statement received added emphasis from the Postmaster-General, Hon. F. Jones. 'We have given a definite promise that we will protect and assist the existing B stations,' he said, 'and we will carry out that promise.'

Mr Savage was well aware of the power of broadcasting. Only a few weeks after the election he was reported as saying, 'Radio, this new means of communicating our work and aims to the public, is being enthusiastically taken up by the Labour government.'

When the Prime Minister himself repeated the phrase, 'We have promised that the B stations will live,' there seemed to be no mistaking what it meant. For the first time however a doubt was raised by his apparent qualification, '. . . but I have never said they would have advertising rights'.

The Prime Minister's vision of a future for broadcasting was extending rapidly. It was the most modern means of publicity, he said in the House, '. . . and we have to decide what is the best way to use it. We wish to broadcast the proceedings of parliament under common sense conditions. We want to broadcast other debates and lectures of an educational character; and we want to carry broadcasting into the schools to a greater extent, because of its educational possibilities. The onus is on the government to provide a plan that will carry the news to the people in their own homes, and will educate the children in our schools. We want news that is worthwhile. I do not see any stopping-place. Even if we tread on a few corns on the way, we must go on.'

Not only corns were trodden underfoot when the Postmaster-General made clear that Labour's actions would differ from its apparent intention. 'I know that opinions have been expressed that we are going to grant advertising rights to the B stations,' he said. 'We are not prepared to give them advertising rights.'

Political expediency may have been behind it, or anxiety to forestall newspaper interests, but the government had come round to the idea of setting up its own commercial network. B station owners could either become incorporated into it by selling to the government or they could remain independent, without advertising but with a subsidy.

It was Hobson's choice.

At the 1ZB microphone, 'Uncle Scrim' congratulates M. J. Savage for his success in the 1935 general election.

In July 1936 Auckland's 1ZB was bought. On 30 October it opened as the first station of the government-owned National Commercial Broadcasting Service.

Among the staff of that original station were Dorothy Wood of Sydney (programmes), Beaumont Sheil (advertising), R. E. Grainger (enginer), A. B. Collyns (announcer) and J. R. Brown. Less than six weeks after its opening 1ZB was getting more than 2,000 letters or cards every day. During the first month a 'laugh of the week' contest brought in 100,000 entries. Then came a 'personality quest' to find worthwhile talent. From the 20 finalists a winner was chosen by listeners' vote: 40 percent of the total of 20,000 votes were for the baritone Stewart Harvey.

The station was quick to capitalise on topical matters. A newspaper correspondents' discussion on the correct pronunciation of Maori place-names was translated into a series of radio programmes based on Maori legends. Then a Maori vocalist, Uramo Paora (Lou Paul) was introduced as an announcer. Following him, similar appointments were made to each ZB station in turn: Kingi Tahiwi in Wellington, Te Ari Pitama in Christchurch, Airini Grennell in Dunedin. She had made her first broadcast 10 years earlier, when her 'beautiful singing voice' was commented on.

The *Radio Record* announcement that commercial radio was about to begin in New Zealand.

BELOW: One of the few entertainers in New Zealand who has been associated with radio through all its phases since the early twenties is Henry Rudolph of Wellington, seen here (standing in the centre) with his 1936 Dance Band during a broadcast from the Assembly Hall in Wellington. The pianist is another well-known broadcaster, John Parkin. Henry's first appearance in front of the microphone was from the old station 2YB in the Ford Building in Wellington.

Two of station 2YA's best-known voices also belonged to Maori announcers. They were Henry Ngata and Charles Bennett, both of whom subsequently had distinguished careers outside broadcasting.

In 1938 1ZB began a 'Happiness Club', and before the end of the year it had 5,000 members. Six years later that number had grown to 13,000, and in that same time the club had raised £25,000 for charitable purposes. Letters from members, messages to boost morale and bulletins on club activities filled a daily session, which was sponsored.

It was typical of the commercial stations' drive to create a sense of participation in their audience.

Meanwhile, in mid-1936 the Broadcasting Board had been done away with and the National Broadcasting Service, a separate government department, had risen from the ashes.

Years before Clyde Carr had suggested in parliament that James Shelley, then Professor of Education at Canterbury University, should be appointed Director of Broadcasting. Now, when that position was advertised, his application was among the 150 received from several countries. It was accepted, and he spoke of the challenge and the opportunity that he faced.

Professor James Shelley, in a broadcast in April 1936:

It is with a real feeling of humility and a deep sense of responsibility that I accept the post of Director of Broadcasting, realising as I do the powerful influence that radio is having and will increasingly have upon the hearts and minds of the world, for good or ill. I know how soundly the foundations of our broadcasting system have been laid by the excellent officers in the service, and I can only say that I shall do my utmost to raise standards and build up traditions upon those foundations that will be worthy of New Zealand. . . not attempting to dictate taste or opinion but upholding principles of tolerance and fair play. . . .

Dorothy Wood, brought from Sydney to help organise the first New Zealand commercial programmes, she worked in turn at each of the ZB Stations. Remember her 'Happiness Club' broadcasts?

Kingi Tahiwi (at microphone) and some strange looking characters entertain the crowds in the street outside 2ZB.

In his book *The New Dominion* R. M. Burdon writes:

> When Professor Shelley was appointed Director of Broadcasting in August 1936 it was generally believed that he would raise the tone of broadcasting to a higher cultural level. To some considerable extent he succeeded in doing so, but it was virtually inevitable that his actual performance should fall short of what was expected from a man with his reputation. . . . Moreover, he found himself, almost from the outset, in competition with another service that was well content to pander to public taste without shouldering any significant responsibility for its education.

Shelley was a striking figure of a man — part Elizabethan sea-dog, part Victorian actor-manager. If Conan Doyle had wished Sherlock Holmes to impersonate Professor Moriarty, Shelley combined the intellectual force and the theatrically sinister looks to serve as his model. Cultured, versatile, academically opinionated and eccentric he had a forbidding presence and a formidable speaking voice, which he used to good effect in performances of Shakespeare. But his fierce aspect belied a kindly nature.

From the start he made clear his impatience with the concept of radio as a mere source of amusement. 'If the New Zealand public really wants vaudeville,' he said, 'it is not the slightest use appointing me Director of Broadcasting. . . . Are we going to use such a tremendous instrument merely to fill in the gaps, or as a background for the noises we make when we eat our soup?'

Altogether, he was just the sort of larger-than-life personality to invest the National Broadcasting Service with a character and an *esprit de corps* its predecessors had lacked. He inspired his staff with a loyalty and affection that keeps his memory alive among those who knew the pleasure of his company.

Ken G. Collins, in *Broadcasting, Grave and Gay:*

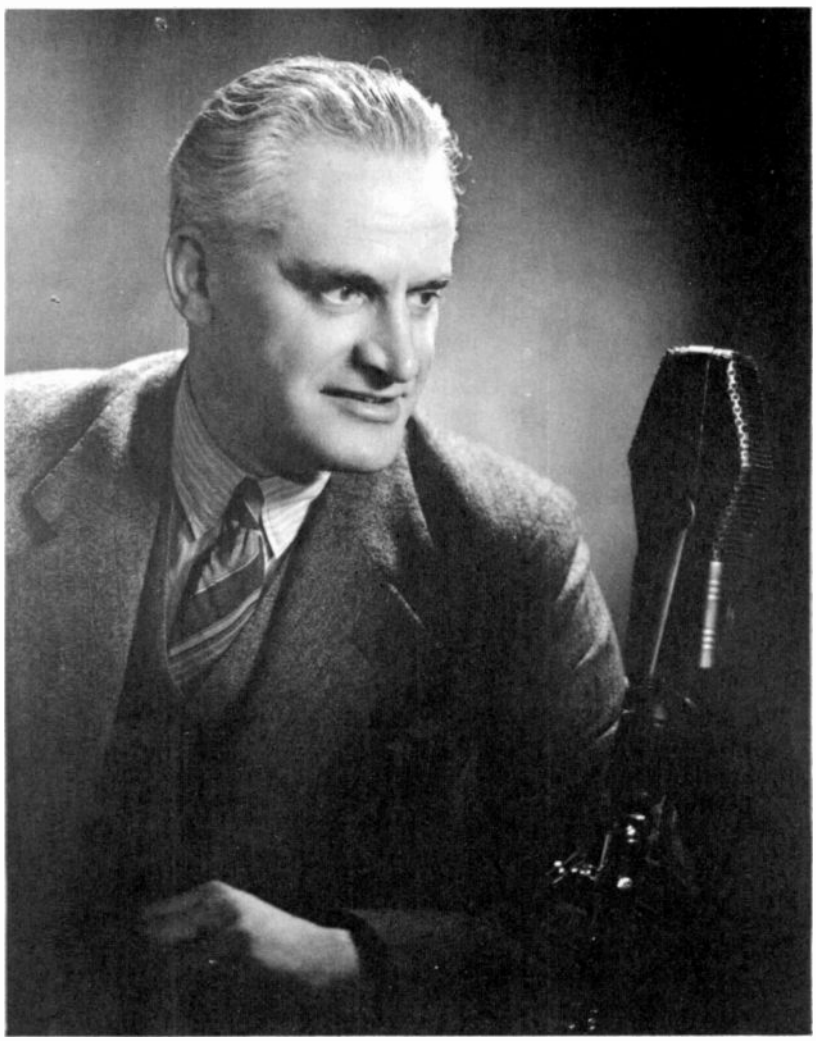
> The first day Professor Shelley took up his appointment we knew that here was someone *different.* During that evening he was, as he was afterwards often to be, in the control-room of 2YA, watching, questioning. Later that evening when the station had closed down, and until an early hour, he held us enthralled as he roamed over many subjects — Greek art, his student days, how to relax (few people, he said, knew the fine art of completely relaxing), painting, drama, music, broadcasting. We were to learn that this was the everyday professor, a university in miniature, willing to share his experience, his *vast* knowledge, his hopes, with any interested listener. . . . No matter what he spoke about he held one's interest, because you *knew* his was the voice of authority, of learning, of experience.

This was the man who would share the broadcasting limelight for the next few years with someone less austere, much more closely in touch with popular sentiment.

Shelley had a private misgiving about radio, one that was not his alone. He suspected its power to give influential status to anyone able to exploit the medium to their own advantage or to a particular end. He thought the *Christian Science Monitor* was right when it

pointed to the brilliant propaganda techniques of Joseph Goebbels in Germany and Father Coughlin in America. By using radio unscrupulously they had created a public image, challenging the democratic process and threatening freedom of choice.

Interestingly, in naming Goebbels and Coughlin as two of the three great geniuses of broadcasting at that time the *Christian Science Monitor* gave as the third — C. G. Scrimgeour. He had achieved equal prominence by using the microphone with consummate skill to campaign for moral and social justice. Even so, Shelley's doubts seemed to be borne out by events. Scrim engaged in a bitter private feud with the second Labour Prime Minister, Peter Fraser. Their enmity became a hotly-contested public free-for-all, ending with Fraser defending himself at the 1943 general election against Scrim



Professor James Shelley, Director of Broadcasting from 1936 to 1949.

as a candidate whose image had been created by radio. For the sake of personal satisfaction Scrim had caused Fraser to lose face. He himself lost far more. But he knew that he would never have got it back anyway.

To Shelley broadcasting was a sacred trust. To Scrimgeour it was a medium for personal contact, for mass involvement, for reaching out to embrace the common man. His effectiveness was praised by M. J. Savage: 'Uncle Scrim is in my opinion the greatest radio personality in the Dominion'. And John A. Lee was equally admiring. 'What makes Scrim New Zealand's "Radio Man Number One"? It is that, first of all, he is a crusader. . . . His taste in entertainment is democratic. He causes a song to be sung because he likes it and not because it has been classically embalmed. He reads any rhyme which pleases him.'

At the particular request of Mr Savage, and urged by Lee to accept, Scrim became Controller of the National Commercial Broadcasting Service.

Scrim remembers:

I said, 'I'll set it up for you on the same terms as the director setting up his new YA service. I'll set it up on one condition: that I do *not* get less salary than he gets.' Well, that raised the question of two directors of broadcasting at £1,500 a year. This was fantastic nonsense. So I said, 'O.K., I'm packing up and going to Australia.' I went to Australia for six months. I took my family and everybody else, and they couldn't do anything about it but send for me to come back. And it was John A. Lee who was the deputy for the Prime Minister and the government to persuade me to come back. . . . I agreed to set it up and I had a very happy seven years as Controller of Broadcasting. Controller not of the National Service, I was controller of my own service and that was the Commercial Service on which today every bit of broadcasting is founded — including Radio New Zealand, Channel 2, Channel 1, whatever you like, it is founded on commercial success. And that was how it started.

Elsie Lloyd.

Scrim's Sunday night 'Man In The Street' sessions, the cornerstone of his reputation, were a major feature of the commercial stations' programmes.

New Zealand listeners, accustomed to the detached, impersonal style of the YA stations, were unprepared for the cheerful, headlong, carefree 'anything goes' approach of their upstart rivals. A mainstay of the new advertising stations was the radio serial. It took some time for the old prejudice against things American to die down, but in one case at least listeners' scruples were gently soothed away.

Elsie Lloyd remembers:

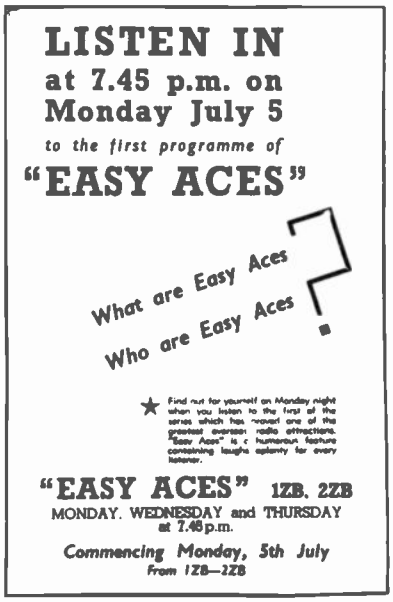
The very first serial ever done over the commercial stations was, I think, 'One Man's Family'. We did it live. It was great fun. Selwyn Toogood was my son, a twin, along with Vivienne Rollings, Lawrie Constable, Jack Yaldwyn and a few others and it was very popular because I think it was a family affair. It was all about a family and all the funny things that happen, so you felt you knew these

people. It's the same with a series now, say 'Coronation Street', you seem to know the people and so it is very popular. We went on for about two years, I think. It was an American script and we used to anglicise it.

Commercial stations opened after 1ZB in sequence — 2ZB in Wellington in April 1937, 3ZB (incorporating the staff and goodwill of 3ZM) in September, and 4ZB in October.

2ZB's programme organiser was Les Strachan, formerly of R. H. Nimmo's lively private station 2ZW. Before that he had been a moving spirit in the Christchurch station 3ZC. And afterwards he joined the Broadcasting Board, arranging programmes and announcing from 2YA. He stayed in radio for the war years and just after — adaptable, experienced, professional.

The original 2ZB announcing team, in 1937. From left to right: Arthur Collyns, Phil Shone, Dorothy Wood, C. T. Agassiz ('Aggie'), Frank Bennet ('Benno'), Barend Harris, Ken Waterhouse. Seated: Bill Elliott, Kingi Tahiwi, Aunt Daisy.



From the *Radio Record.*

K. W. Kilpatrick remembers:

Almost as soon as we were on the air 2ZB was a popular station. I got there in the February of 1937 and the place was just four walls — there was nothing in it, you see. And we had to build the station, put the equipment in — but everybody was terribly enthusiastic, as you can imagine. The technical people had the thing blaring out all day, twisting knobs and that sort of thing. They used to play a thing called *Silver Bells,* and you know that sometimes now I wake up in the middle of the night and I hear *Silver Bells.* They played it day and night, it was just the right kind of sound they wanted for testing purposes. People hadn't really heard of commercial broadcasting, and we were a bit worried about how they would take all those commercials. The night before we opened we had a meeting to decide how many commercials, if any, we would put on. And I said, 'Well, let's take it easy, just give 'em two or three nights.' And the advertising manager said, 'No, to hell with that! They've got to learn to listen to commercials all day long. Give 'em a couple of good ones.' So I imagine that half the listeners just staggered in their seats when they heard a deep voice at the end of one of their programmes say, 'How is your stomach? Take so-and-so!' We had a programme called 'Easy Aces'. Mr and Mrs Ace were Americans, and it was the first of the American programmes and something quite new to listeners then — this very brash American type. It wasn't doing any good, and we were going to take it off, so I said to the advertiser, 'Let's give it another fortnight, see how it goes.' Well, do you know, after that fortnight it never looked back? It became the number one programme.

RIGHT: Jane and Goodman Ace of *Easy Aces,* broadcasting from the famous Bridge Table which was equipped with a built-in microphone.

Serials, stunts, promotions, quizzes, talent quests, on-the-spot broadcasts, commentaries, the latest 'pop' songs, studio performances, personality announcers, competitions, drama productions, sports results, special breakfast programmes — life on the ZB stations was a non-stop merry-go-round. And just as there was Scrim on Sunday nights, so there was Aunt Daisy every week-day at 9 o'clock in the morning.

Broadcasting had never known anything quite like it.

Aunt Daisy — New Zealand's first lady of radio, whose career spanned all aspects of broadcasting administration. Beginning as a talented solo singer with the Radio Broadcasting Company in the 1920s she soon became a favourite children's hour 'Aunt' for the Broadcasting Board in the early 1930s. A job as 'personality announcer' with the private stations 2ZW and 1ZR eventually led to the famous 'Morning Session' which was to bring her nationwide fame and adoration for 27 years. It started from 1ZB on 30 October 1936 and was extended to all the stations of the Commercial Broadcasting Service as they opened. She saw this organisation become in turn the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation. She rarely missed a broadcast during all that time until a few days before her death in 1963.

Airini Grennell, accompanied by two other popular 4ZB personalities of the early days, Jim McFarlane (left) and Ian Watkins.

RIGHT: From the start the ZB microphones were never still. Here, in 1939, 2ZB's Geoff Lloyd broadcasts from Post Office Square in Wellington.

One of 4ZB's earliest popular studio shows was 'Melody Cruise' with Brooke's Accordion Band, Airini Grennell, Denis Sheard and Ted Heaney.

Chapter 8

Something was up at the Waring Taylor Street headquarters of the National Broadcasting Service in Wellington. In the autumn twilight a taxi drew up at the front entrance. Ken Collins loaded into it a pile of 78 rpm records and some 'features' on discs. Then he climbed into the back with Fred Barker, a contract announcer, and the car took off, heading for the top of Mount Victoria. There they carried their precious cargo into the building with its illuminated sign '2YA'. A transmitter, microphone and turntables were ready and waiting. At 7 o'clock Fred Barker went on the air to announce, 'Good evening, everybody. This is your Wellington feature station 2YD of the National Broadcasting Service, specialising in variety, thrills, rhythm, new features and new personalities. . . .'

It was the night of 25 April 1937. The NBS had stolen a march on its vigorous young rival by anticipating the opening of 2ZB on 29 April. Station 2YD adopted a similar style and used the same sort of entertainment material, but it had no advertising. Perhaps its most memorable contribution to New Zealand broadcasting was the long-running Australian series 'Dad and Dave from Snake Gully', first broadcast on 14 December 1937.

In the same year, 1937, the National stations began another long-running series. After nearly 40 years it is still going, probably the title-holder for world's longest continuous radio programme. Its name, 'Rhythm On Record', its compere, Arthur Pearce.

Arthur Pearce remembers:

My first appearance on radio — and I still don't know how I managed to do it in those anti-jazz days — I did 40 minutes on Duke Ellington and his music, late in 1935. Then nothing much happened. I was just a collector and I had a reputation for being a collector, and the late Jim Skedden arrived one day and said would I like to do this programme with my records. I started from the beginning on it and there it was on 2 July 1937, when 'Rhythm On Record' first started. It was originally started as a straight-out dance programme. After about a year those above relented somewhat and agreed that the last four numbers could be anything I put on — Duke Ellington or Wingy Manone. The next thing I knew, which was probably 18 months or so after I'd started the show, it was all jazz.

'Any rags, any jazz, any boppers today?' It's 'Turntable' himself — Arthur Pearce.

Competition bred rivalry — friendly but keen.

Doug Laurenson remembers:

We had the one main job in the Commercial Service in 1937 of beating the YAs. Not for the sake of beating them; but we had to get the public so interested in us that, willy-nilly, they would listen to us in preference to YA. In those days the YAs were really very dull, whereas in the Commercial Service we were bristling with personality. We were personality-plus boys all the way through. Of intent: because the announcer's voice was heard in every home — at least one hoped it was — and the more the audience knew of the person behind the voice the more he was regarded as a friend and welcome guest. So people would listen to us — that was the idea — in preference to the YAs or the YA announcers, who were most strictly anonymous.

Inia te Wiata.

From the time of his appointment as controller Scrim made clear that commercial stations would, as a matter of policy, encourage local talent and promote local programmes.

From the *Radio Record,* 7 May 1937:

Listeners to the early session of 1ZB on Thursday night heard a glorious bass voice singing the Negro spiritual *Go Down Moses.* Many could not believe that the soloist was a 22 year old Maori. Some who took the trouble to telephone the studio manager, Barend Harris . . . insisted it was the voice of Paul Robeson. Barend Harris considers he has made an important find . . . and predicts that the Maori . . . a member of Princess Te Puea Herangi's concert party, will become a famous singer.

(The singer was in fact Otaki's Inia Te Wiata, later to become an opera singer and theatrical star of international class.)

K. W. Kilpatrick remembers:

I used to go on air in special events, special shows. For instance, I started a session called 'Stars Of Tomorrow' where I recruited and auditioned a lot of youngsters who had promise. Well, we did it properly. When they were selected they had their photograph taken signing a contract and then on the night of the broadcast, it was a Sunday night, the announcer and myself and the other officials put on our dinner jackets and the kids put on their party frocks, and the opening theme was the *Grand March* from *Tannhauser.* We got some really good stuff but unfortunately for a lot of them tomorrow never came. One of them you will be interested to know was Ray Harris, you know, who does the jazz sessions on 2YA. He played the piano, he didn't play pop music. I forget what he played now — *Rustle of Spring* or something.

In 1938 a country-wide contest was held by the commercial radio stations to discover the New Zealand Deanna Durbin. The winner was a young Auckland singer, June Barson, who is seen here having a golden laurel wreath placed on her head by Aunt Daisy, carefully watched by Scrim (on the right) and the station manager of 2ZB at that time, K. W. Kilpatrick.

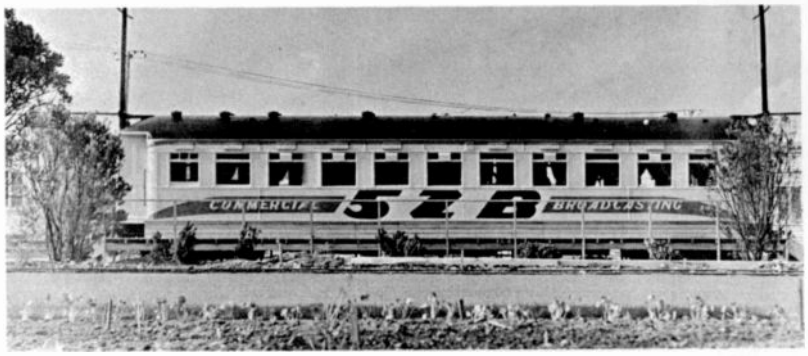
Dudley Wrathall remembers:

'Chuckles With Jerry', now when did that start? Oh, about 1938 or 1939. I think we were the longest broadcasting personality session on record. I think we lasted about five years. George Tollerton was the voice of Jerry and I was the go-between. George used to write the scripts and he'd bring them along and hand me a typewritten carbon copy and we'd go through once in the dressing-room and then walk on the stage in the Radio Theatre and away we'd go. After say six months he'd arrive late, and without any rehearsal we'd blindly go on stage and do it almost at sight.

Early in 1939 the Commercial Broadcasting Service had a temporary additional station, 5ZB. Built into a re-fitted luxury railway carriage it toured the North Island for three months, stopping at 13 different places to give smaller provincial centres a taste of local broadcasting. It made full use of the talent available wherever it stopped, brought officials and dignitaries to the microphone and made itself a centre of neighbourhood pride. It showed a profit of more than 100 percent on outlay and running costs, and generated a similar but intangible return in goodwill. When the Centennial Exhibition opened at Rongotai, 5ZB was taken there to operate as a radio station and as something of a showcase. It proved to be one of the most popular attractions at the Exhibition.

Ian Mackay, an early commercial radio personality and later its top administrator steps down from the carriage of 5ZB, which he managed for the duration of its New Zealand tour.

BELOW: 'Chuckles with Jerry' takes the air. Dudley Wrathall (left) with Jerry and George Tollerton.



The radio station in a railway carriage — 5ZB.

The Railways Department sponsored a 13-part series called 'Our First Hundred Years', described as 'New Zealand's first radio feature'. The centenary itself never became the full-scale festival celebration that had been planned because of the outbreak of war in September 1939. And within a few months the country mourned the passing of its Prime Minister, Rt Hon. M. J. Savage.

The *NZ Listener,* which had first appeared in June 1939, said in an editorial: 'He will be remembered as the Prime Minister who first saw what broadcasting meant in our national economy. . . . Broadcasting was a social and political miracle which he never ceased to think about.'

The casket containing his body was placed on a train and reverently transported the whole length of the North Island, from Wellington to Auckland. It stopped frequently to let the people of the regions it passed through pay their last respects. On board the train Clive Drummond described the scene at each stop for a listening audience of thousands. Unfortunately, what had begun as an act of homage dragged on into a long-drawn-out and increasingly predictable repetition of sentimental cliches. The journey took many hours, but by some miracle of planning the crew brought in their train punctually to the second. It had, announced Clive solemnly and inadvertently, arrived 'dead on time'.

Professor Shelley was speechless.

Chapter 9

Before he died Mr Savage had referred to Scrim as a man with 'a radio personality and an appeal to the great bulk of the public that is unique in the Dominion'. Scrim was not to know it, but he had reached his zenith. With his friend, patron and fellow-Aucklander gone he would find himself increasingly isolated, exposed to vindictive attacks from the new Prime Minister, Peter Fraser. To a certain extent he brought this on himself by openly siding with Fraser's arch-enemy John A. Lee, whose expulsion from the Labour Party coincided with Savage's death. So at the same time Scrim not only lost an ally, he chose quixotically to embrace a lost cause. It was generous, it was typical — and it was fatal, in view of Fraser's unforgiving nature and the opportunity he now had to use his power. As a first act of retaliation he suspended the 'Man In The Street' programmes. When Scrim resumed them some time later the Minister of Broadcasting, Hon. David Wilson, having discovered that the scripts were previously exempt from the censorship regulations, insisted that they must now be submitted like everything else.

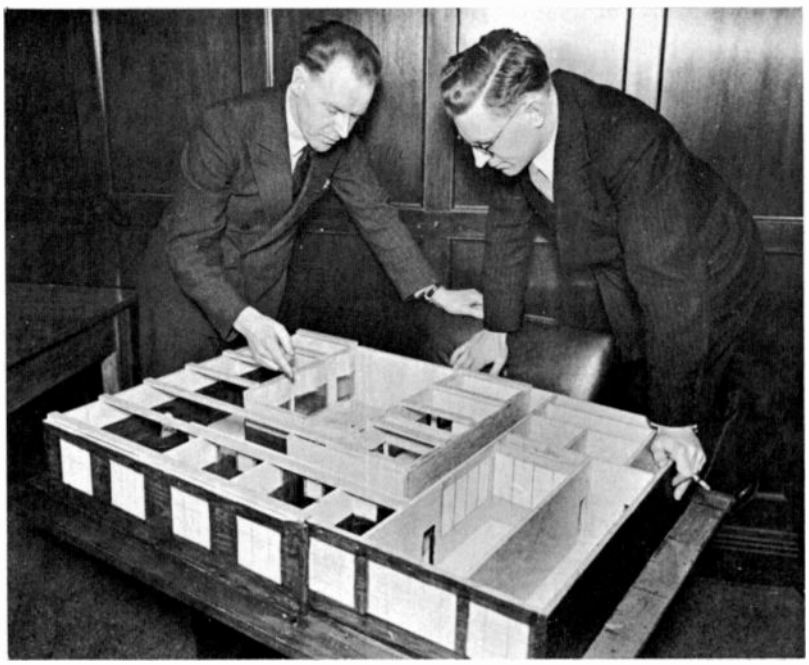
While Savage had been Prime Minister Scrim had enjoyed the status of court favourite. As a VIP he was treated with respect and given ready access to ministerial offices at parliament. Those days were gone forever. He was persona non grata, and his relations with cabinet grew more and more strained. Then Fraser, who had never been favourable to the idea of commercial broadcasting, used the twin grounds of economy and wartime shortage of manpower to justify a proposal to amalgamate the two services. Confronted with a re-organised broadcasting administration in which he would rank second to Shelley, Scrim resorted to a most ingenious ploy. As 'another string to his bow' if he should need it he joined the Auckland Waterside Workers' Union. It was a master stroke by a shrewd and skilled expert in public relations, because while it gained him national sympathy it reflected badly on the government. Fraser's reaction was hostile and inflexible. Scrim must go.

In November 1942 Scrim, aged 40, a married man with three children, was called up for military service. As a senior departmental executive an appeal would normally have been lodged by the government. When none was forthcoming Scrim appealed on his own behalf. The hearing was marked by bitter exchanges between Scrim and the Minister of Broadcasting, called as a witness. It came as no surprise when the appeal was dismissed, although by now the government's virtual persecution of their former 'white-haired boy' was attracting unfavourable comment from the newspapers. Scrim protested that he was being victimised. 'Is it possible,' he asked, 'for . . . a government, desiring to dismiss a public servant, but having no grounds that would commend themselves to public opinion, to take the despicable and cowardly

course of railroading him into the armed forces?'

The next sensation began with a 'Man In The Street' broadcast in February 1943. Because no script for that programme had apparently been shown to the censor beforehand, Fraser and Wilson assumed that Scrim had ignored a direct command. It was the chance they had been looking for. A telegram was sent at once dismissing Scrim for 'flagrant disobedience of instructions'. But Scrim *had* taken the precaution of getting the script approved. It was simply (and deliberately) not identified as being one of his personal programmes. There were red faces round the cabinet table, but the government knew they were caught. Scrim was reinstated — after signing an agreement not to give the press any statements in the future.

Nevertheless, just before he entered camp in June, Scrim issued a denunciation of the government's methods of trying to dispose of him. He accused the Prime Minister and the Minister of Broadcasting of acting maliciously towards him, of deliberately engineering his call-up and — by uniting the two broadcasting services — of depriving him of a job to return to after the war. For Peter Fraser the attack was the last straw — and all the excuse he needed. An agreement freely signed had been broken without good cause. Scrim was fired, this time for good. It was done, Fraser told the House, as '. . . a simple matter of ordinary public service discipline. . . . Every public servant has to obey the instructions given him, or get out.'



Scrim (right) and Beau Sheil examine a model of the proposed 3ZB studios in 1937.

The opposition suggested that the government's action might have been taken because of a certain recording. This, while it confirmed gossip that such a recording existed, only trailed a red herring across an affair that already had a 'very ancient and fish-like smell'. The recording had been made at a farewell party held in the offices of the Commercial Broadcasting Service. It has been described by the journalist, Pat Lawlor, who heard it, as '. . . very funny, but not so funny when a raucous voice in the conversation bellowed out some obscene epithets . . . and so the record proceeded, the party becoming more incoherent and rowdy.'

Merely by being present Scrim was compromised, in the government's view. The Prime Minister, quivering with righteous moral indignation, declared it was a 'drunken orgy' and anyone who took part in it was not fit to be in charge of a government department. But he was even more shocked and outraged by the controller's association with known 'Communists'. Fixing this label on Scrim was Fraser's way of drawing first blood in the coming election campaign, as he knew by then who his opponent was going to be.

By intervening in his electorate Scrim reduced Fraser's share of the vote enough to make him a minority representative. That enraged Fraser and satisfied Scrim; and it rounded off a bizarre sequence of events in politico-broadcasting history.

One footnote should be added. Amalgamation of the two broadcasting services duly took place, with Professor Shelley installed as head of the Commercial Division as well as of the senior body, the National Broadcasting Service.

Truly, he might have mused, slightly adapting his beloved Shakespeare's text, 'Politics acquaints a man with strange bedfellows.'

Chapter 10

The trauma of 1943 left its mark. During the next two decades broadcasting lived quietly within accepted limits — no crisis, no conflict, no confrontation. In the year that Professor Shelley retired, 1949, a National Party government was elected. There were worried frowns on executive foreheads when the name of the Minister of Broadcasting was announced: F. W. Doidge. His voice had been loud in debate alleging shortcomings in the Broadcasting Service. But, as often happens, in office the accuser became the defender.

The 20 years of National power (1949-72, with a break of three years 1957-60) left broadcasting comparatively undisturbed — at least on the surface. A major administrative change was made by statute in 1962: control passed from a government department, the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, to an independent body, the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC). The creation of the Broadcasting Authority by an Act of Parliament (1968) had repercussions that may not have been apparent but were nonetheless severe. To counter a threat of competition from private radio the NZBC undertook stringent financial and administrative measures. Considerable time and expense was involved in the preparation and then the presentation of submissions to Broadcasting Authority hearings. The NZBC found itself engaged in proceedings that were frustrating and unproductive in terms of real broadcasting.

Outwardly however harmony was maintained. The fact that it could seem to exist for so long without a show of protest or argument was evidently cause enough to make the Labour Party suspicious. There was talk of a 'special relationship'. When Norman Kirk became leader of the party he saw evidence of patronage and ministerial direction that convinced him there was government interference. He decided that, no matter what Labour's policy had been in 1936, the time had come to remove broadcasting from overt political influence.

Before his chance came the country enjoyed the exploits of a marauding band of radio 'pirates'. Having equipped a vessel, the *Tiri,* as a radio transmitting station the buccaneers sailed out into the Hauraki Gulf. There, beyond the three-mile limit, they figuratively hoisted the Jolly Roger and began broadcasting illegally to the mainland. Their programmes were commercial and 'pop' — and very very popular.

On shore the official broadcasting authorities and the Post and Telegraph Department fumed and threatened. There was little they could do, and their best efforts were frustrated when, during the 1969 election campaign, the Prime Minister himself (Keith Holyoake) endorsed the pirates' initiative — but not, he was careful to emphasise, their flouting of the law. Sure enough, with the

National Party's re-election permission was granted for the pirates to come ashore and make it legal. Under the terms of the Broadcasting Authority Act private stations would once again be licensed, and applications were lodged from Auckland, Hamilton, Whakatane and Dunedin. Christchurch and Wellington followed at a later date.

During the period 1969-72 the Labour Party grew increasingly restive over what seemed to them to be a favouring of government policy in radio or television programmes. The NZBC was sensitive to the accusation, and in its 1972 annual report gave a strong rebuttal: 'The corporation is conscious of its position in matters of public debate. . . . The corporation strenuously denies assertions of bias or partiality. . . . Much has been said in the past that because of limitations of time it is frequently not possible to achieve balance in any one programme, that it must be sought over a period. Analyses of programmes show that it is, in fact, achieved but it is often not appreciated by critics who may have missed successive programmes in which other viewpoints are expressed.'

It was to no avail. Norman Kirk objected that government pressure was apparent when the Defence Minister appeared on TV and, under the guise of making a first-hand report on the Vietnam situation, actually justified government policy. He also found it intolerable that the government, in making appointments to the board of the corporation, should seem to favour National Party members.

The 1972 election saw Labour become the government, with Roger Douglas as Minister of Broadcasting. His brief was to re-structure the whole organisation. This he did by granting autonomy to a separate radio network, to the existing television channel, and also to a newly-created second channel. The operations of all three came under the supervision of a Broadcasting Council.

On 1 April 1975 it was 50 years to the day since government regulations had established an official broadcasting service. The anniversary was made symbolic. Not only did it celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Coates principle that broadcasting should be accountable to a Minister, it marked its passing.

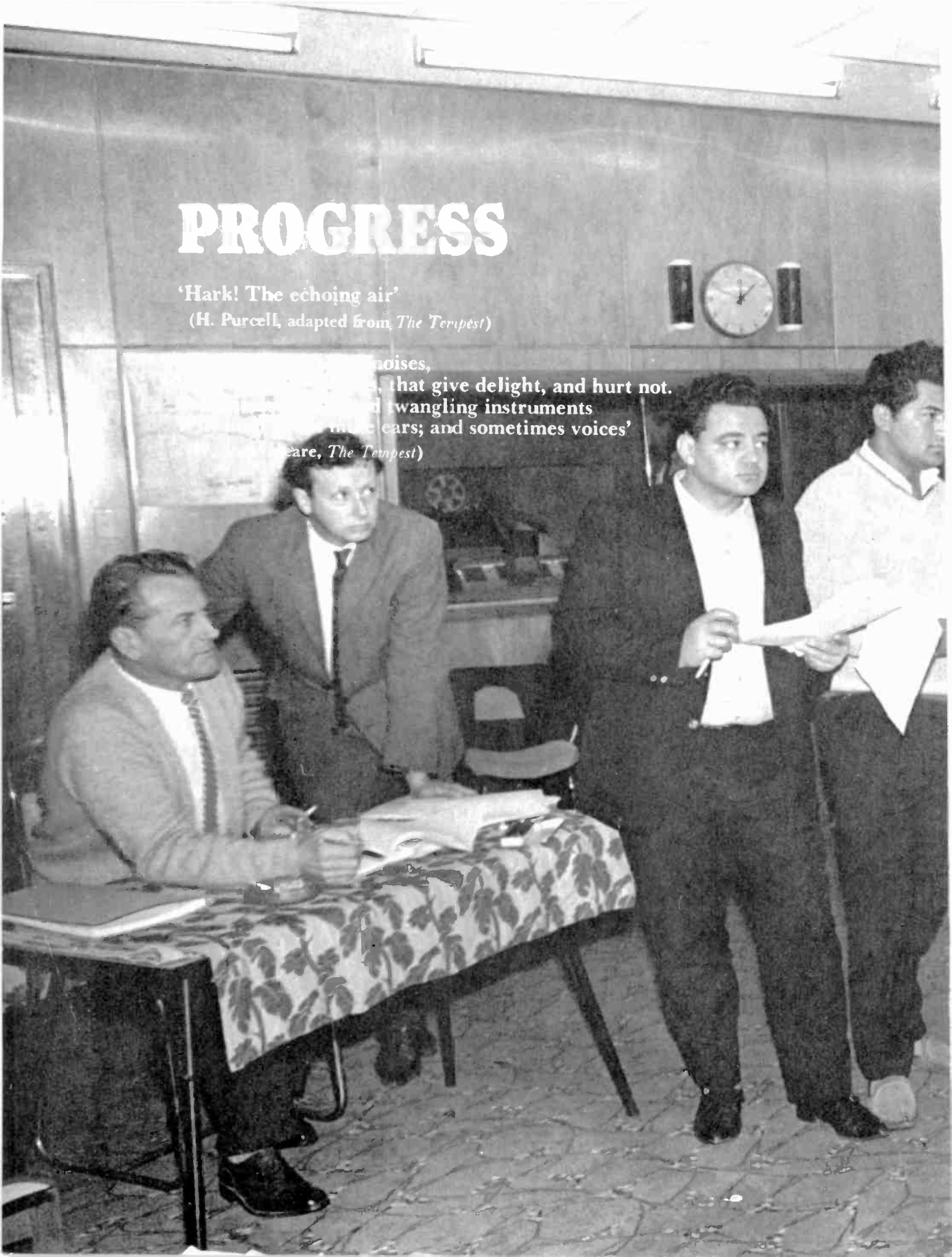
It also marked the start of the first wholly independent radio broadcasting organisation: Radio New Zealand.

Radio Hauraki's second 'pirate' ship, *Tin II*.

PROGRESS

'Hark! The echoing air'
(H. Purcell, adapted from *The Tempest*)

noises,
, that give delight, and hurt not.
twangling instruments
ears; and sometimes voices'
eare, *The Tempest*)



Chapter 1

3 September 1939.

'Both with gratitude to the past and with confidence in the future we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go. Where she stands, we stand. We are only a small and young nation but we are one and all a band of brothers, and we march forward with a union of hearts and wills to a common destiny.'

In a memorable address broadcast to the nation the Prime Minister, Mr Savage, made the formal declaration all New Zealanders were expecting. To be at war brought almost a sense of relief after months of crisis. There was no cheering, only a feeling of grim purpose.

We became aware again of our remoteness. The radio was a link with great events. For six years broadcasting gave us an ear to the world's voices, the sounds of battle, the beat of distant drums.

In one year, 1942, that beat was not so distant. It came insistently louder and closer until it seemed to rattle almost within earshot. Bill Holder wrote a radio play, *It Can't Happen Here,* telling graphically the drama of a family on an isolated coastal farm, frightened and helpless when they realise the Japanese have landed. Too realistic? Too soon after the lesson of Orson Welles and H. G. Wells? The script was quietly shelved. It may not even have gone, as everything had to go in those war years, to the censor's office. There only one Orwellian rule applied: 'All words are dangerous, but some are more dangerous than others.'

Censorship and security. They touched the life of everyone in broadcasting, often lurking in the most unexpected places. Little old ladies telephoned nervously about secret agents in the programme department if they heard such popular songs of the day as *There's A Boy Coming Home On Leave* or *The Fleet's In Port Again.* Weather forecasts and references to shipping movements were discontinued 'for the duration'. Anything that was a potential code was forbidden: birthday greetings in children's programmes were one casualty. Even church services and sermons were not immune. Prayers for 'they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters' could land someone in deep water — and someone else in hot water.

While it was all very necessary, it was also very trying.

Pat Lawlor, in a diary note dated 31 January 1943:

Alan Mulgan rang to ask me whether I would prepare a series of recorded programmes . . . for relaying from Cairo for our soldiers. . . . This programme was made up of one or two topical talks by people selected by me, such selections to be based on their radio appeal, on subjects that would be acceptable to the censor, non political, non advertising, non sectarian. Altogether there were so many 'nons' and so much censor to be considered I wondered how such positive negative talks could be arranged. . . . I can see difficulties ahead, however, with the Censor's Department. J. T. Paul, its chief, is one of the most powerful men in

These weird looking characters are members of the 4ZB staff presenting a Scottish entertainment at one of the station's wartime community sings.

New Zealand just now. It is not with him but with his staff that I am having trouble. Too many delays. (LATER) My fears were realised. After an acrimonious exchange of letters between J. T. Paul and myself . . . I resigned.

The programmes sent from New Zealand to inform troops on active service about life back home were more or less in exchange for recorded material received from the war zone. A specially equipped unit had left with the Third Echelon in 1940 and was attached initially to Base Camp at Maadi in Egypt.

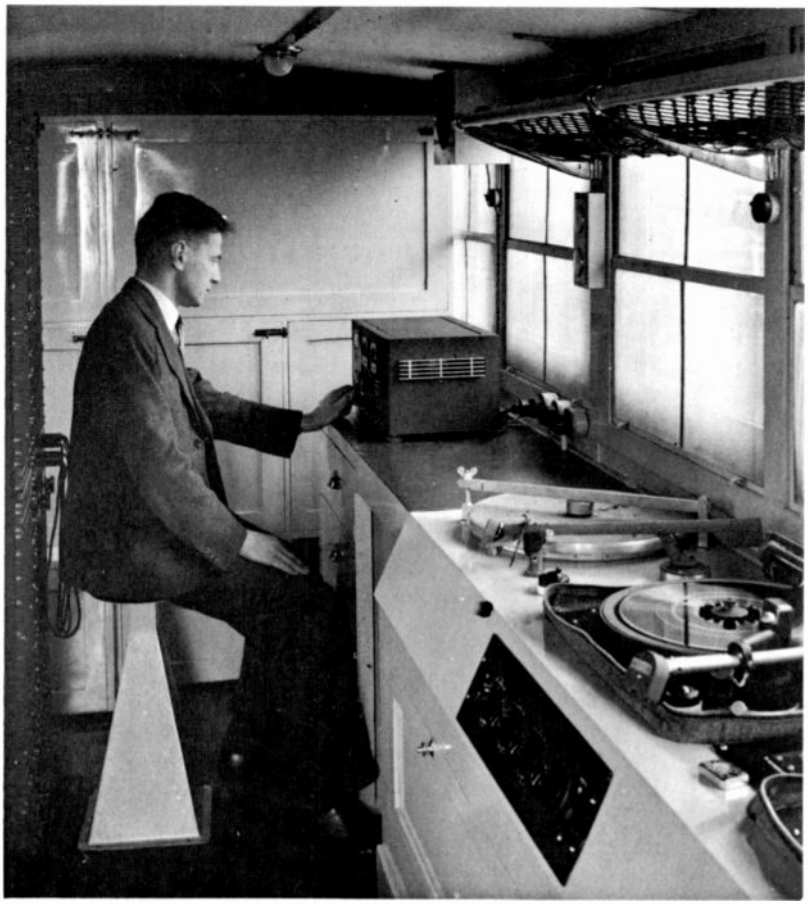
Noel Palmer remembers:

The personnel of the unit when we left was Doug Laurenson, Norman Johnston and myself. After about a year Doug Laurenson was replaced by Arch Curry: he was a first-class commentator whose despatches were often good and often superb. . . . Our job was to gather in a broadcast account of the doings of the 2NZEF: news despatches, personal experiences and so on. I suppose the personal messages which became such a feature of the activities of the unit will be the thing that will be remembered most. In actual fact, this activity was a spin-off which somehow or other became conjured up as an idea and once started was a roaring success. You have got to remember that handling this sort of thing in 1940 was not as easy as it would be today. All our recording was done on disc and I imagine that back here in New Zealand at the time the handling of these must have been quite a headache when the problems arising from casualties and so on started to eat into the names of those people whose messages had been recorded.

The NBS Middle East Recording Unit. The van woodwork was built by New Zealand Railways, shipped to Egypt and fitted to a Leyland bus chassis.

Peter Harcourt remembers:

The 'headache' in New Zealand was mine. I received the discs, auditioned them, timed them and arranged them into programmes. Often they were buckled by heat or pressure, and their grooves clogged with desert grit. But as the pick-up head rhythmically dipped up and down and the needle scratched through the dirt the voices that came out were moving, even in their unending sameness. 'Cheerio mum and dad, I'm in the pink, just a box o' birds. How're you all keeping? Look after yourselves. All the best. So long.' The words hardly varied at all. The men were sheepish, cheerful, sentimental, tongue-tied. A mistake often meant an exclamation, short and pungent. That side would be scored out with yellow pencil, and the whole thing done again. After a visit to Base Records to check the casualty lists came the heartbreaking poignancy of taking out messages from the dead and missing before broadcast. The next-of-kin were informed. Many came to the studio to hear their son, brother, husband — loved ones they would never see again. To share their private grief was an unforgettable and deeply emotional experience. But if there was sadness there was also great satisfaction: never more so than when a telephone call to a stranger's home could bring such pleasure at knowing that Bill or Tom or Harry or Dave could be heard next Sunday. I understood then how it is often not what is said that matters but merely the sound of the voice by itself.



Noel Palmer inside the NBS Middle East Recording Unit.

'With The Boys Overseas'. As the war went on the flow of reports and messages mounted until they came from the Pacific area, India, Ceylon, Canada, the United Kingdom and Italy as well as the Middle East. To the unimaginative and the uninvolved the programme may have sounded exactly the same week after week. But for individual listeners, how personal — and how important.

Noel Coward came here in 1941, on an official 'morale building' tour. His displeasure when the wife of Wellington's mayor told him she thought his song *The Stately Homes Of England* was objectionable was a minor incident. When the National Broadcasting Service told him that they considered another of his songs if not 'objectionable' then certainly unsuitable, and asked him not to sing it during a broadcast concert. Mr Coward was offended. He sent an indignant message saying he would not appear at all. But when the NBS stuck to their guns and arranged a substitute programme of *recorded* Noel Coward items he agreed to accept their condition. Because he introduced the Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein song *The Last Time I Saw Paris* to New Zealand an idea persisted for years that he had written it.

1943 was election year. Broadcasting staff assembled in a room at Wellington's General Post Office to take down progress reports and pass them on to an announcer. At about midnight, when he knew Labour had won, Mr Fraser came to the microphone to say a few words. His tone of voice betrayed his annoyance at the indignity he had had to suffer from Scrim. To follow him the announcer said there would be a message from Mr Holland in Christchurch. But a delay in making the connection had to be covered with music. Someone took the first record that came to hand. Which is why the loser was heralded by the unhappily appropriate strains of *The Donkey Serenade.* Only broadcasting can be so felicitously inept.

Eric Bell at the Novachord in 1ZB's Radio Theatre, a feature of the new Auckland Commercial Broadcasting Building which was opened in 1941. Eric Bell's programmes became very popular and later were recorded for broadcast from all the commercial stations. The Novachord was the only instrument of its kind in Australasia.

Dr H. B. Turbott, the Radio Doctor.

It was in 1943 that one of broadcasting's longest-running public service programmes began.

Dr H. B. Turbott remembers:

I started in July 1943 through, as far as I was concerned, an accident. I got a ring from the Prime Minister, Mr Peter Fraser, one morning to say he wanted me to conduct health talks. . . . He explained that Scrimgeour had been dismissed from his post, and on the ZB circuit he had carried on a three-minute health session each morning, round about 7 o'clock I think it was, in which he himself provided material at times and got other people to supply him with talks occasionally. Now Mr Fraser asked, 'Could you carry on for six weeks?' I said yes, certainly — and the six weeks is still here, I'm still going!

Health talks and 'pep' talks — it was a broadcasting function to keep us not only fit but to keep us cheerful. The drama production studios often seemed to be little more than an extension of some 'morale boosting' department of the country's war effort. Scripts by Bill Holder, W. J. Green, Tom Tyndall, Leo Fowler, Russell Reid and Eric Bradwell dramatised the home front, documented the battlefields and drummed up our enthusiasm. It was propaganda, but it was all in a good cause. And nothing could be said unless the all-powerful censor approved.

RIGHT: A little known activity of radio throughout the war years was the 'listening watch' in Wellington. For twenty-four hours every day an officer was on duty in the main 2YA control room listening to the BBC and other allied and enemy radio stations. He had instant recording facilities and if any news flashes or important announcements were received they were immediately available for rebroadcasting to New Zealand. Seven shortwave receivers were tuned to various BBC and other transmissions and complete, written records were kept of everything received. Here, Basil Clarke records an in-coming news bulletin.

Broadcasting staff engaged in another activity: entertaining the troops at 'camp concerts'. Both the national and the commercial services gathered artists together for this purpose. The 2YA Concert Party (once its performances had been officially recognised as a legitimate aspect of broadcasting) travelled to scattered and often isolated stations to give shows for the Forces. Its members were welcome and popular wherever they went.

The 2YA Concert Party photographed at Waiouru Military Camp in 1942. Front row (left to right): Sylvia Devenie, Dorothy Kemp, Doreen Harvey, Yvonne Andrews, Merle Gamble, Sylvia Petrie, Margot Dallison, Alice Graham, Laurie Jones, Jean McPherson. Back row (left to right): Len Hopkins, Malcolm Rickard, Will Yates, Henry Rudolph, Ken Macaulay, Wally Marshall, Ken Strong, Cyril Brown.

Marion Waite, an American singer who made her home in New Zealand for several years during the middle and late 1940s and who became a popular radio vocalist.

RIGHT: New Zealand's own 'Sweetheart of the Forces' — Wellington singer Jean McPherson.

Because of the large numbers of American servicemen in New Zealand during the latter years of the war, for nine months in 1944 station 1ZM was handed over on loan to the United States Army. It was run wholly for the American troops, who naturally enough were delighted to have their own radio programme. Many Aucklanders too were delighted to be given the chance to hear American radio at first hand.

One of the results of the manpower shortage during the war was the employment of women in jobs which had previously been regarded as only suitable for men. Broadcasting was no exception and this picture shows the first woman technician ever engaged by the NBS, Merval Connelly, then of Wellington.

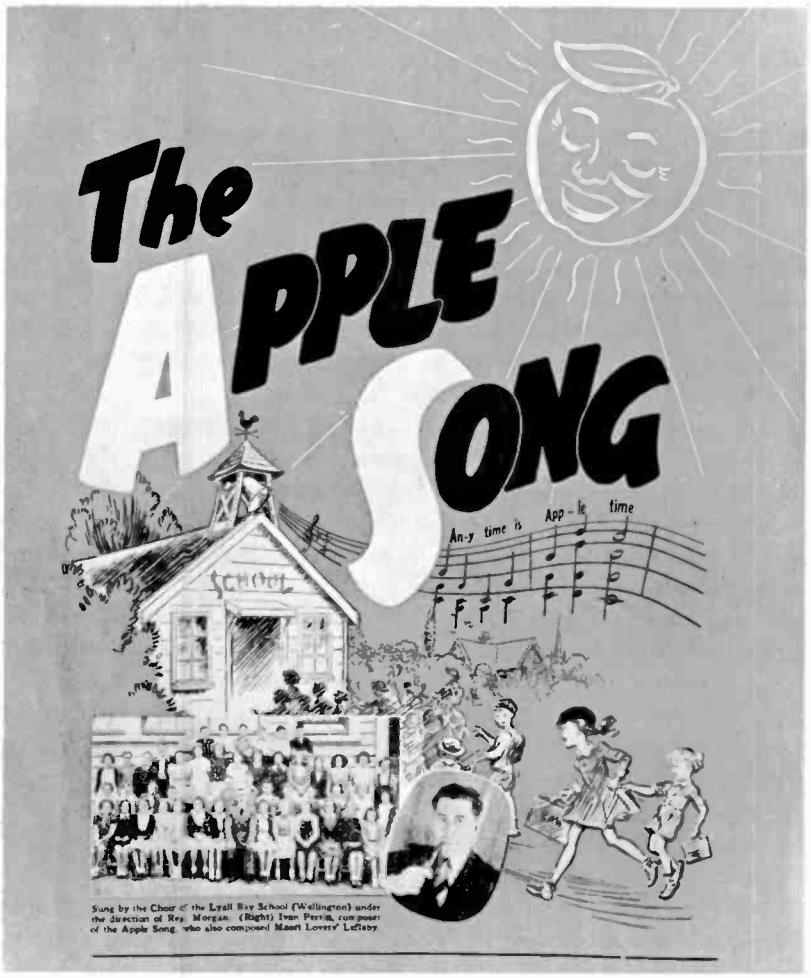
Some of the biggest problems were technical. Equipment had to last well beyond its allotted life-span. Then it was rejuvenated for another spell of duty. There were no spares, no replacements, hardly even enough staff for maintenance and repair. Broadcasting technicians were called up, as were programme officers, announcers and clerical workers. A policy of 'make-do and mend' was unavoidable, but it never showed in the work of those who kept the transmitters humming and the turntables revolving.

Out of those crowded war years what should be remembered? In 1940 we sang *Over The Rainbow* and *It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow* — and *The Apple Song,* as part of a radio campaign to keep us munching away at a surplus of apples. That was a time of telephone appeals — 4ZB broadcast the first one — to raise money for Patriotic Funds and Savings Bonds. With United States servicemen came recorded programmes from America, specially for their benefit. But we listened too.

'So all day long the noise of battle rolled.' We were not in the firing-line but we heard the echoes and felt the vibrations. They came to us, almost as they happened, by radio. Always there were news bulletins, with anxious old men pressing an ear to the loudspeaker and waving frantically for silence. 'This is London calling, here is the news read by . . .' The names of the news readers: John Snagge, Alvar Lidell, Bruce Belfrage, Frank Philips. Big Ben at 9 o'clock and the minute of Silent Prayer, accompanied by Walford Davies' *Solemn Melody.* The Churchill speeches, as stirring as the bugler's 'Charge!'. The shock of Pearl Harbour. The calm reassuring voices of the men who reported or interpreted the

war situation: Quentin Reynolds, Wickham Steed, Raymond Gram Swing. 'On the Russian front the German Army has suffered heavy losses . . .' The roll-call of the battlefields: the River Plate, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, El Alamein, Stalingrad, Cassino, Guadalcanal, the Normandy beaches, Berlin. The death of President Roosevelt. The extraordinary sensation of actually *hearing* the German surrender at Luneburg Heath. Hiroshima. VJ Day.

15 August 1945. Peace.



In 1940 commercial radio stations had a great success with a nation-wide campaign to sell within the country over a million cases of apples which under normal conditions would have been exported. This was a million *more* than was usually required for selling to New Zealanders. All sorts of persuasive tactics were used including a national apple-pie baking contest and a competition for an apple song. The winning song, by Ivan Perrin, was taught to many school children.

Ernest LeGrove, one of the 9 o'clock newsreaders from national stations during the war.

Chapter 2

From 'Radio Viewsreel', *NZ Listener,* 31 August 1945:

During the Japanese war, radio has put a few emphatic finishing touches to the domestic revolution it began some years ago. Has the man of the house noticed that the duty, privilege, burden, dignity, or what you will, of being newsbearer is his no more? No longer the slow sad footsteps from the city — 'My dear, you must prepare yourself for grievous news: our beloved Queen is dead.' Nor the despatch case surprisingly stuffed with flags — 'You may hang them up now, children. The war is over.' The shock of Pearl Harbour crashed into the quiet morning routine of the household after men had left for their work. . . . The heavy task of spreading the news of President Roosevelt's death fell mainly on suburban housewives who rang it through to town offices. And on the last day the war went out as it had come in, during the hours of morning housework, so that those who were alone in their isolated homes had already heard Mr Attlee's first four words when the sirens sounded 'down tools' throughout the city.

Peace. It was difficult to believe the war was truly over. For six wearying years radio had been muzzled and straitjacketed. Tiresome but very necessary restrictions had effectively curtailed any enterprising development not directly concerned with the dissemination of war news or patriotic propaganda. But now the department could relax and get on with the job of resuming and rebuilding lost services and programmes; of putting long deferred plans into practice. Radio broadcasting could look to future expansion with some confidence.

The return of the thrice-daily weather forecasts was the earliest indication that things might be moving back to normal. After four and a half years of silence the anonymous voice of the forecaster had been heard a month before VJ Day. His introductory 'This is the Weather Office . . .' was to become a regular and to some extent essential part of our lives.

Naturally enough recovery was slow. To save precious manpower staff had been reduced to a minimum. Many men and women broadcasters were serving overseas and in time would come back to their jobs but some, like 2ZB's Kingi Tahiwi and Geoff Lloyd, both killed in action, would never return. To shake off the deep-seated effects of six years of hostilities was going to take a great deal of careful organisation and above all, patience. Gradually as staff and technical resources were built up, radio began to assume something of the bloom it once had.

Winston McCarthy provided one of the early assurances that broadcasting was pulling itself back into shape when he was sent to cover for radio the tour of the 2nd NZEF Rugby Team in the British Isles. Not only were British and New Zealand listeners treated to some memorable commentaries of some magnificent games, but it was on this tour — the Kiwis versus England in the first of the Victory Internationals at Twickenham on 24 November 1945 — that the New Zealand rugby catchphrase of all time was born.

Winston McCarthy, writing in his autobiography:

I recall saying into the microphone as he (Herb Cook) began placing the ball that if he were successful with the kick it would be a mighty effort, particularly in the rather heavy Twickenham atmosphere and the eddying breezes that are part and parcel of the magnificent ground. Then I added, 'There will be a terrific roar from the vast crowd if it goes over. I'll let you judge for yourselves how he goes. Here he is moving into the ball. He has kicked it and, LISTEN. . . .' As the ball soared goalwards the roar from the crowd swelled and swelled, and as it crossed the bar I came in again with my piercing voice cutting over the top of the crowd — 'It's a goal!'.

Winston McCarthy at the microphone — 'It's a goal . . .'

Professor James Shelley, broadcasting at the opening of 2YA's new 60 kw transmitter, on 25 January 1937:

We are not content with a poor standard on the football field and we should not be content with a poor standard in music and drama. . . . Very few local performers are in a position to get the necessary training overseas and even if they are, when they come back there is little stimulus to encourage them to aim at higher standards. It looks as if the only consistent source of employment in the

future for such artists will be directly or indirectly connected with radio or teaching and for both of these higher standards are necessary. The government has therefore decided to replace the present inadequate temporary headquarters and studios in Wellington by a great broadcasting centre which will embody in it a national conservatorium for music and the spoken arts. . . .

The Professor was never one to shrink from aiming his sights at the highest possible level. Had it not been for the war the plans he had so carefully nurtured for broadcasting, music and the spoken arts would certainly have been brought to fruition. The Broadcasting House/Conservatorium he cherished so dearly was never built, although work on it reached the foundation stage and there it stopped. Twenty-five years later Broadcasting House, Wellington rose on the same site but it was not the structure Professor Shelley had proposed, nor did it incorporate his school of music and drama. The passing years had brought changed priorities.

Not all his visions were shattered however, and in 1946 at least some of his dreams to improve the New Zealand cultural scene managed to find the light of day.

Professor James Shelley, Annual Broadcasting Report, 1946-47:

It is recognised that social and cultural developments are an essential factor in the successful readjustment of the community to post-war conditions. Creative expression is to a degree the measure of a nation's stature, and it is considered that broadcasting should contribute to the stimulation of such creative expression, especially, but of course not solely, in relation to the musical, literary and dramatic arts. The power of radio in the modern world is such that by its agency the thought and action of a community may be unified to an extent never before approached in the history of peoples.

LEFT: The Broadcasting House that never was. Architect's drawing of the original radio centre planned for Wellington in 1939 but never built.

RIGHT: Broadcasting House, Wellington. The building which eventually rose in 1963 on the site originally planned for the pre-war version.

One of the methods devised by the professor for the NBS to encourage creative expression was the provision of a recording van to tour those parts of New Zealand not within easy access of a radio station. Talented performers in these areas would be able to record on the spot and have their items used in later programmes from one or other of the stations.

The idea was inspired by the success of the recording units which worked with the Armed Forces overseas and plans for peace time versions had been made in 1942 although of necessity these had been shelved. However, with peace barely a year old, Mobile Recording Unit No. 1 (No. 2 was planned but never eventuated), converted from a surplus Air Force mobile control tower, took to the road and began its declared mission of searching for new talent and entertainment and of recording voices and reminiscences of the past. Helped initially by Alf Sanft and then by Geoff Haggett, together with a small technical team, Leo Fowler was officer-in-charge and producer. He toured the backblocks of New Zealand for some years, collecting material of every imaginable description on the massive and cumbersome recorders. Maori concerts, school choirs, pioneer reminiscences, tales of the bush, stories of the goldfields; all were captured by the wandering microphone. Soloists sang, bands played; offers to perform came flooding in from all directions once it was known that Leo and his team were in the vicinity. The quality unfortunately was variable because the recording conditions were frequently primitive but the best was used in specially produced programmes and eventually found its way into radio's sound archives.

Geoff Haggett remembers:

> One of the strong points on the tour was to get as much early historical Maori information as we could. But we spent a lot of time in the goldfields, in Coromandel, getting stories from some of the early settlers there. We tried to document as much of the early history of an area as we could and at the same time, of course, by making up programmes afterwards, provide material to let the rest of New Zealand know what was happening and what these other places were we were visiting.

With the arrival, in the late forties, of the new lightweight, portable tape recorders the need for the Mobile Recording Unit was becoming doubtful. Parallel with this came the tremendous post-war expansion of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, as it was renamed from 1 April 1946. When the resultant individual community stations were eventually opened in most towns of any size the functions of the unit no longer existed and the lengthy and exhaustive tours were brought to an end.

On tour with the Mobile Recording Unit. From left to right: Brian Cosnett (technician), Leo Fowler (producer), Geoff Haggett (commentator), Dick Miller (technician).

Chapter 3

Professor Shelley had another and vastly greater dream that was finally realised in 1946. Its origins went back much further than those of the Mobile Recording Unit and were shared by a good many people not directly associated with broadcasting. This was for the establishment of a symphony orchestra in New Zealand, the seeds of which were sown when W. J. Bellingham had formed string trios and quartets for the Radio Broadcasting Company's stations back in the late twenties. Bellingham himself had resigned in 1929 but not before he had expanded his chamber groups in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch (and later Dunedin) into small semi-professional orchestras of mostly part-time musicians. Under various guises these orchestras contributed to YA programmes and public concerts throughout the thirties and forties.

D. W. McKenzie, a clarinet player with the Wellington Orchestra, remembers:

> We had some sensational times with visitors. The first one I remember was in 1932 when Szigeti came to us to play a Beethoven Concerto immediately after having played it with the Philadelphia Orchestra and I've never forgotten his face as he heard our orchestra playing the introductory section. He couldn't believe it. He reduced the violins to jelly by walking round, leaning over their shoulders, playing with them and snarling, 'What is the mystery?' Then we had a big chord and Szigeti stopped, glared at the conductor and said: 'Basses'. The conductor explained that one of the basses had not had many lessons. 'Throw him out', said Szigeti, so they threw him out. And then we went on and played an extraordinary performance — and the orchestra played as it had never played before. That was a sensational broadcast.

In 1939 a fully professional string orchestra of 12 experienced and high quality players was formed by the NBS under the direction of Maurice Clare, a distinguished English violinist who for some years made his home here. Concurrently the country was preparing for the extensive Centennial celebrations of 1940 and a larger Centennial orchestra for a time absorbed the string players. Shelley — and others — made no secret of the fact that they hoped the government would see fit to retain the larger group after the celebrations as a permanent state orchestra within the broadcasting organisation. It seems likely that this would have happened, had not the war intervened. 'All centres have expressed a strong desire for the orchestra to be made permanent,' Shelley noted in a memorandum to his Minister, but went on to acknowledge that the war situation made the expenditure impossible. 'I am therefore loath to press forward with the original intention.' But in September 1945, with the last shots of the war scarcely over, press forward he did, with urgent representations to the government that a full-time national orchestra should be formed under the control of the Broadcasting Service. 'This is the one important respect in

The 3YA Orchestra which was formed in August 1928. From left to right: A. P. de la Cour (double bass), William Hay (flute), Stan Mundy (clarinet), Irene Morris (violin), Aileen Warren (piano), Nellie Ellwood (cello), Joseph Mercer (viola), Harold Beck (conductor), W. Marquet (cornet), Frank Bishop (trombone), Florence Miller (violin).

Leon de Mauny conducts the 2YA Orchestra in a broadcast during the 1930s.

Maurice Clare, solo violinist and conductor of the NBS String Orchestra.

which New Zealand can be challenged in comparison with other countries,' he said. 'New Zealand is the only member of the British Commonwealth of Nations which has no orchestra of this kind, so that when eminent conductors visit Australia they cannot be attracted to New Zealand, because of the lack of an adequate orchestra for them to conduct.'

Prime Minister Peter Fraser had acquired a close personal interest in the project from his predecessor, the late Michael Joseph Savage. These feelings were shared by J. W. (later Sir Joseph) Heenan, Under-Secretary for Internal Affairs. The professor thus had powerful allies and in October 1946 the symphony orchestra was formed, incorporated the full-time string players, and met together for inaugural rehearsals. Vincent Aspey was leader, the conductor was Andersen Tyrer. The opening concert by the National Orchestra of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service was given in the Wellington Town Hall on 6 March 1947.

Rt Hon. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister, writing in the first National Orchestra Concert Programme:

The inaugural concert of the National Orchestra marks an important step in the development of the cultural life and opportunities of the Dominion. The National Orchestra will stimulate an interest in good music and will enrich the lives of the people. Appreciation of good music has flourished in New Zealand and great credit is due to the musical societies which have done so much over many years to bring the world's greatest musical works to our people. With the advent of broadcasting, interest in good music widened and deepened, aided by the establishment of part-time orchestras. . . . Hitherto our knowledge of the great symphonies has largely been confined to recordings, and I am convinced that with a real orchestra of our own and musicians to interpret them there will be a new flood of enthusiasm among all music lovers. . . .

The first photograph of the National Orchestra, taken shortly before its first public concert in 1947.

Haydn Murray, Principal Second Violinist in the original National Orchestra:

You've got to remember that out of the original personnel of the symphony orchestra there might have been two of us who had ever heard a symphony. When I was a kid Henri Verbruggen brought his New South Wales Orchestra and Winifred Carter was the harpist . . . but the rest of these people didn't know what a symphony orchestra was. We had no tradition, no repertoire, and we used to take away piles of music each night not knowing what was going to come up the next day. . . . Our first guest conductor, from memory, would have been Eugene Goossens and he produced such music as *The Magic Fire Music* which, of course, you understand, is terrifying for violinists and viola players — all string players. So he heard us for one afternoon's rehearsal and then he sent us away for three periods on our own — a whole day and another morning, and picked up the threads there. This started to show us that life was real, life was earnest.

Professor Shelley was not a great advocate of popular music and was known to have an intense personal dislike of the more extreme forms of vocal and instrumental swing or jazz. B.P.W.U. and A.P.W.U. were junior broadcasters' underground jargon on the YA stations for many years, secretly classifying the suitability of certain recordings for use in the daily breakfast sessions — 'Before Professor Wakes Up' and 'After Professor Wakes Up'! No one seemed quite certain of the exact minute, but the general tone of the programmes usually quietened down somewhat after 6.30 a.m.

The professor never denied such music its place in the programmes although 'body-line swing bands' as he used to call them were generally relegated to fairly late at night, at least on the national stations. He tolerated jazz and dance music in his

Andersen Tyrer, first conductor of the National Orchestra — as seen by the first violins of the orchestra.

schedules but reserved the right, as of any radio owner, to switch off anything he didn't want to hear. However in reply to criticism of too much emphasis on one form of musical entertainment or another he never hesitated to make the point that radio's function was to provide all types for all tastes, but always the best. The distinction, he claimed, was not between 'serious' and 'light' but between good entertainment of whatever variety well performed and poor entertainment indifferently performed.

Coming into the first of these categories was the introduction on the commercial stations in 1946 of a competitive variation on the 'hit parade' method of presenting new records. Sid Vause, of Commercial Division Head Office, was one of the moving forces behind the innovation, as he was of so many, with a popular 2ZB announcer Rex Walden as compere and an even then 'large' personality, Selwyn Toogood, as announcer. With Rex's departure to Australia Selwyn combined both duties and at 8 o'clock every Tuesday evening the 'Lifebuoy (later Lever) Hit Parade' as it soon became known, attracted thousands of listeners from all over the country eager to be well-informed about the latest hit songs and records.

Preparing the 'Hit Parade'. Rex Walden stands between Sid Vause (left) and Selwyn Toogood.

Chapter 4

Selwyn Toogood was the man who brought to New Zealand radio the promise of rich rewards that made compulsive listening for so many during the 20 years after the war.

Selwyn Toogood remembers:

Quiz contestants had looked for no bigger reward than a small cash prize. The first really big 'giveaway' programme was 'Posers, Penalties and Profits', dreamed up by Ian Mackay. I was engaged as compere at the then fantastic fee of £35 per show. There was no sponsor but, in return for brand mentions, advertisers gave their products: fur coats, radiograms, portable radios, dishwashers, £100-worth of groceries and so on. Staged in the four main centres and played over the ZB stations the show took the country by storm. Literally everything stopped while it was on. There was no audience research then so we don't have any figures, but it's enough that cinemas in many country towns didn't bother to open their doors on Thursday nights. I don't know why the NZBS didn't continue it, but the end was a blaze of glory: 600 Aucklanders plunging fully-clothed into a cold Auckland harbour in midwinter hoping to win a portable radio. In the early 1950s I did 'It's In The Bag' — sponsored this time, which made a problem. The sponsor was Lever Bros and they'd arranged for Fisher & Paykel to supply prizes which would be named 'on air'. But the NZBS considered that to be 'space-farming', an unforgivable. sin. That was awkward for them because they wanted the programme, but not if it meant breaking their own rule. Nobody actually *said* Levers were getting the prizes in exchange for a brand mention, and the NZBS wisely didn't ask — so it was more or less by unspoken mutual consent that we compromised: if there was no description prizes could be named for the listeners to picture them. That's how it was left for such following programmes as 'Birdseye View of the World', 'Number Please' and others. It's worth mentioning that Lever and Fisher & Paykel had a long association without a signed contract — and Fisher & Paykel never put a limit on the number or the value of prizes.

For some years before he went to work in Australia the market for these shows was shared by Jack Maybury who had brought us 'The Quiz Kids' in 1948 and followed it with 'Money-Go-Round' and others. With his wife and assistant Dorothy Jean he too was a familiar figure on the touring circuit of packed town and village halls and cinemas where the programmes were recorded.

Dorothy Jean Maybury remembers:

You may remember a boy in the 'Sixty Four Hundred Show' who I think was one of our most outstanding contestants. He was 12 years old and his name was Kevin Hume. He took the subject of British monarchs and royal families since 1066, and he won. . . . This child's knowledge was so incredible that the audience gasped all through the programme. You know the programme wasn't prepared for a child — the series of questions was prepared for an adult. He stopped when he wanted to but the audience were so keen about him that they asked him would he like to answer the last two questions — which he did, word perfectly, and we gave him an extra prize of a canteen of cutlery. . . . He was considering whether he would be a school teacher. I don't know what did become of Kevin but he certainly had a wonderful memory.

(Kevin Hume now works for Radio New Zealand Current Affairs.)

Quiz shows, of course, were far from new in these post-war years

Jack Maybury.

but the innovation of rewarding successful contestants with such large and expensive prizes as refrigerators, washing machines, radiograms and so on assuredly was. Much doubt was expressed whether these programmes could justifiably be called 'quizzes', but they were loads of fun for participants and listeners alike and undeniably attracted enormous radio audiences.

RIGHT: Selwyn Toogood broadcasts one of his 'give away' shows from on board the *Wanganella*.

BELOW: New Zealand radio's 'kings' and 'queens' of quiz, in 1948. From left to right: Mary Paul (Christchurch), Ralph Dearnley (Wellington), Jim Winchester (Wellington), Alice Woodhouse (Napier).

The genuine adult quiz had come to New Zealand in 1938 with 'Information Please' conducted by a gentleman known as 'Professor Speedee', named after the sponsor's trademark. The idea had been brought from America and after an initial fortnight on 3ZB proved so popular that it went on to all the commercial stations, each with its own 'professor'.

The way was clear then for a superabundance of question-and-answer competitions of all types: 'Give It A Name Jackpots', 'History And All That', 'The District Quiz', 'The Junior Quiz', 'Housewives' Quiz', 'Good Idea Quiz', 'Tongue Twister Jackpots', 'Mixed Grill Jackpots' and dozens of others, for which the rewards were usually small but tempting — often a sample or supply of the sponsor's products.

'King of Quiz', which was probably the most discerning of them all — certainly the most intellectually demanding — began in 1944 as the brainchild of the then 2ZB announcer Lyell Boyes. He devised the questions and ran it for just on 20 years, the first 500 weekly broadcasts being from 2ZB and then from the entire commercial network. Out of it came such 'Kings' and 'Queens' of the game as Ralph Dearnley, Jim Winchester, Alice Woodhouse and Mary Paul. In later years Dearnley and Winchester were to carry their royal banners into the international field by winning, as a team, world quizzes conducted via the inter-Commonwealth telephone cable between Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Lyell Boyes conducting the 'King of Quiz' programme.

New Zealand's undisputed 'Queen of Quiz' Alice Woodhouse of Hawkes Bay. She was an active participant in question-and-answer programmes and also a regular guest on the 'Stump the Brains Trust' panel until the end of 1975 when she decided, at the grand old age of 92, that she would 'retire' from active broadcasting. Miss Woodhouse was certainly the oldest quiz panelist in New Zealand and most probably in the world.

'The Quiz Kids'. Jack Maybury (in gown and mortarboard) hands over the compering of the show in 1956 to Selwyn Toogood.

Chapter 5

Professor James Shelley, Annual Broadcasting Report 1946-47

So far broadcasting has been considered from a national point of view — that is, providing the best programmes available without much regard to the locality of artists or stations. The time is now opportune for the adoption of a supplementary policy — that of using radio as a local institution to serve as an instrument for developing the cultural life, artistic endeavour and civic consciousness of towns and districts. The development plans therefore include provision for . . . a chain of low-powered local stations . . . outside the chief centres, which will to a considerable degree depend for their appeal upon local interest in the artists and their work, or the local significance of talks or relayed ceremonies.

The explosion of new stations which followed this pronouncement brought, over the years, Community Radio to New Zealand. Regrettably Shelley was not able to see the completion of the entire network although he was certainly the moving force behind it. With the exception of 3XC Timaru, the openings of all the new stations post-dated his term as Director of Broadcasting, for he retired in April 1949 and shortly afterwards returned to Britain. He was knighted in June of that year and died in 1961. Shelley's successor was William Yates, whose previous position as Assistant Director was taken by John Schroder, himself to become Director in 1958.

J. H. E. Schroder, Director of Broadcasting from 1958 to 1961.

With four new stations opened and transmitting in 1949 and two old ones raised in power and re-equipped before the year was out, the NZBS hardly had time to catch its breath from a round of official ceremonies and speeches before the demands and problems of the 1950 Empire Games in Auckland surmounted all others.

Radio Reviewer in the *NZ Listener,* 24 February 1950:

There are some people who resent the time allotted on the radio to racing and perhaps also to football, at the expense of other sports. I am one of them. But he would be a sourpuss indeed who could find faults with the radio coverage of the Empire Games. This was, I should say, the most exacting piece of radio journalism ever undertaken by the NZBS — a major test of its resources and efficiency and I, for one, believe that it was not found wanting. . . . From the impressive opening ceremony to the final presentation of the flags, the radio was on the job, with running commentaries, interviews, summaries and results. Through it we shared the heat of the day, we fancied ourselves jammed in the crowd, shouting at the finals, roaring when New Zealand got a place, cheering such a popular win as that of the Fijians and even enjoying the downpour of the last two days. The whole series of broadcasts was a remarkable piece of teamwork. Behind the voices of the commentators one was aware of a huge network of organisation, of the careful harmony of technicians and officials which brought the Games to us hot on the plate. . . . Our radio will seem quieter for a week or two (unless we inadvertently tune in to a Stan Kenton recording) but something vital will have gone from it. The Games were a grand occasion and, so far as I am concerned, radio grasped its opportunities firmly with both hands.

Flattering praise perhaps, but fully deserved. There was no doubt in the exhausted minds of the hardworking administrators, producers and commentators who had planned and executed the wide-ranging coverage that broadcasts from the Games were on a

scale far beyond anything attempted before. Moreover, by providing facilities for overseas commentators and reporters the service was also repaying a great deal of assistance it had itself been given over the years from other broadcasting organisations. The domestic broadcasts too were carried in full by Radio New Zealand, the 18 month old shortwave transmitters of the NZBS which were now beaming regular programmes to the eastern coast of Australia and the islands of the Western Pacific.

The electricity shortages which beset New Zealand for several years following the war brought shortened broadcasting hours in an effort to save power and special programmes were presented to persuade people to switch off unwanted lights and appliances. To demonstrate just how much could be saved, one night in 1949 3ZB's Grace Green climbed up the Christchurch radio mast and, broadcasting live from a point perilously near the top, she asked all her listeners to switch off their lights. As the splashes of light disappeared, house by house, street by street and finally suburb by suburb she was able to describe what Christchurch city looked like in near darkness — an awesome but strangely beautiful sight.

Die Forelle — as Neville Lodge pictured the song being broadcast from the YC Programme.

F. W. Doidge, Minister of Broadcasting, in April 1950:

We have 450,000 registered listeners in New Zealand. There are those of them who would banish the talker to make more room for dance rhythm; there are those who would banish the crooners to make room for more Bach. It is not easy to balance conflicting tastes. But the main complaint is that there are times when every station seems to be given over to one type of programme, and times when the listeners' choice is limited to an irritating sameness. . . . The main causes of this complaint are about to be removed. . . . The YC stations are being re-powered. Their range is being extended. More listeners will be able to hear them. Broadly everyone who hears a YA station will hear its alternative YC just as well. . . . Listeners, many more listeners, will then have a choice of programmes not open to them now.

The result of these changes — which incidentally had been in the planning stages many months before the Minister was appointed to cabinet — became the lasting memorial to the Yates/Schroder management team of these years: the YC (Concert) Programme.

'Three-level listening' the *NZ Listener* labelled the new system when it was introduced in Auckland during June 1950. The other centres followed within a few months. YA remained the channel for news, national announcements, schools broadcasts, most sports material and middle-brow music. YD (later ZM) was to be designed to meet light listening and ZB was to continue as before with light and varied entertainment. The revolutionary change was with the YCs. Previously, although they had provided a theoretical alternative to the YA station, there had been no clear-cut line between the two. Now there would be no doubt. The YC output was, in effect, to be the local equivalent of the BBC's 'Third Programme' with music, drama, talks and discussions of the highest standards, designed unequivocally to appeal to more specialised and intellectual tastes. It was welcomed unreservedly.

Radio Reviewer in *NZ Listener,* 30 June 1950:

It would be presumptuous to advance any definite opinion on Auckland's 'new deal in radio' after a single week's listening. I formed one clear impression, however, especially where 1YC was concerned, and this was (if I may coin a phrase) an *embarras de richesse* . . . I felt like a choosey filmgoer who has one night free in a week in which the only decent films of the year are screening simultaneously. . . . At the moment, the only doubt I have is — will it be possible to keep up to this standard? We can, of course, only wait and see, but for me the 'new deal' has got off on the right foot.

Chapter 6

On the commercial network radio was unashamedly designed to attract the masses. It was serials, serials all the way. With popular music. And advertising. Just as it had always been since virtually the opening of the ZB stations in 1936 and 1937.

Such earlier titles, which had attracted thousands of moths to the soap opera flame, as 'Easy Aces', 'The House of Peter McGregor', 'Ma Perkins', 'Big Sister', 'Mama Bloom's Brood', 'Linda's First Love', 'Officer Crosby', 'The Lone Ranger' and 'Doctor Mac', to name but a few, had now in the early 1950s given way to 'Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories', 'Dr Kildare', 'A Man Called Sheppard', 'Night Beat' and 'Dr Paul' among many others. To the ardent serial addict they were the bread-and-butter of radio itself and family life revolved around them.

Criticism had been raised yet again, in 1946, that too many of the feature programmes were American. So the staff counted them. Of 82 different serials running 67 were from Australian production houses, 4 came from Britain (there were no more available from what was then the haven of *non*-commercial radio), 6 had been produced by the NZBS itself and only 5 came from the United States. Even so, no new American features were imported for 10 years from 1946, although the continuing serials were continued until they ended. Emphasis was placed on the Australian product, many of which in fact were re-creations of American scripts.

An interesting entry in the Saturday ZB programme schedules for 1952 shows a further run of 'Fred and Maggie Everybody', probably the most popular of all the serials in the first five years or so of New Zealand's commercial radio. The slightly off-centre Australian couple and their muddle-headed domestic life in Bottle Boulevard became part of New Zealand life from the second half of 1937. 3ZB and 4ZB had carried it from their openings, 1ZB and 2ZB from not long afterwards. On three nights a week at 7 o'clock the clarion call of the signature tune *Round About Regent Street* and a commercial for chewing-gum brought young and old alike running to the radio in time to hear the inevitable opening phrase 'Oo-hoo Maggie, I'm home dear . . .' and the ensuing crazy adventures in the Everybody household.

In 1939 the actors who played Fred and Maggie came to New Zealand to see and be seen. As Edward Howell and Therese Desmond (Mr and Mrs Howell), with their daughter Madeline (who played the kid next door, Daisy Sproggins) they were brought across the Tasman, ostensibly to visit the Centennial Exhibition, and were mobbed wherever they went. That they were real people, completely removed and totally different from the characters they had created, made no difference to the multitudes who swarmed around them, in hospitals, at race meetings, tourist resorts, in the street, at all four ZB radio stations and especially at the Exhibition.

Crosbie Morrison, whose wild life talks attracted enormous audiences to commercial radio stations.

Marshall Crosby as 'Sergeant Crosby' — earlier he was 'Officer Crosby'

'Aye it's me . . . Doctor Mac . . .' Lou Vernon as the much-loved Scottish doctor.

'Tusitala, Teller of Tales' otherwise known as Kenneth Melvin, Auckland radio actor and writer.

Ma Perkins herself.

The Lone Ranger — and Silver.

Thelma Scott . . . as 'Big Sister'.

Diana Perryman as 'Portia' in 'Portia Faces Life'.

BELOW: 'Life With Dexter'. Amber Mae Cecil (as Jane) tells a few home truths to Ray Hartley (as Ashleigh) and Willie Fennell (as Dexter), who is having some trouble with the mower.

The cast of 'Doctor Paul'. Back row (left to right): Alan White (Dr John Cabot), Pat Burrington (Vicki Cabot), Neva Carr Glyn (Elizabeth Lowe), Dinah Shearing (Virginia Martin), Ron Roberts (narrator). Front row (left to right): Michael Plant (Ricky Scanlon), John Saul (Dr Paul Lowe) and Reg. Johnston (producer).

To the fans they were Fred and Maggie and no one else. It was a demonstration, probably for the first time in New Zealand, of the enormous power of radio to transform actors into fictional characters — who in turn become real people in the minds of many listeners.

It happened also with 'Dad and Dave' on 2YD and other non-commercial stations, although the leading actors for most of this Australian-made serial's incredible life of 2,276 episodes (George Edwards as 'Dad' and his wife Nell Stirling as 'Mabel') did not come to New Zealand for personal appearances. For many of its staunch listeners the whole gaggle of bizarre but believable inhabitants of Snake Gully were living, breathing people — their hopes and fears, pains and pleasures were all shared. They were the 'family next door', or 'the folk around the corner'.

'Fred and Maggie Everybody'.

D. T. Venables, station manager of 2YD 1940-1953, remembered in 1948:

> One year — it was about a week before Christmas and at the time of the visit to New Zealand by the real-life actors of Fred and Maggie Everybody — the 2YD announcer unthinkingly ad-libbed something like: 'Make sure you are with us next week on Christmas Day when Dad and Dave will be holding a special Christmas dinner'. Numbers of listeners misunderstood this as meaning that Dad and Dave were going to be present in Wellington in person, and the station was inundated with letters and phone messages from people asking for invitations. In vain they were told that Dad and Dave would be present only on the usual recordings. Many thought they were being done out of a novel Christmas treat. . . . On another occasion the usual Thursday night's 'Dad and Dave' episode was by mistake left out of 2YD's programme. As the time for the broadcast drew near and then passed, telephone calls began to pour in from indignant listeners. High broadcasting officials were dragged away from their firesides while at 2YD the telephones jangled incessantly. Eventually the Postmaster-General himself rang to find what the trouble was, because the city's telephone exchange was becoming choked with calls to 2YD.

George Edwards, Australian radio actor and producer who numbered the role of 'Dad' in 'Dad and Dave' among the hundreds he played. He is holding a 16 inch transcription disc on which radio serials were recorded in the days before tape recording. Revolving at 33⅓ revolutions per minute each side gave a playing time of up to 15 minutes.

Glamorous Australian actress Nell Stirling, wife of George Edwards and originator of the role of 'Mabel' in 'Dad and Dave'.

'The wasps are coming! The wasps are coming!'

The cry might have been heard in any Auckland suburban street on the morning of 1 April 1949. Phil Shone, the 1ZB breakfast session announcer, had just put over a special bulletin: 'A swarm of wasps has been sighted moving east of Papatoetoe. It's reported to be one mile wide and several hundred yards deep, and it's being kept under observation to give fair warning of the direction it takes as it approaches Auckland city.'

Between records and commercials from then on for about half an hour Phil Shone kept listeners informed of the progress of this extraordinary invasion. Housewives dutifully heeded advice on anti-wasp precautions. Smear jam or honey on bits of paper and leave them outside the door. Close all windows. Wear protective clothing. Excitement and apprehension were intense — until Phil gently reminded everyone what day it was and admitted he had been pulling their leg.

His little joke had a mixed reaction. Laughter, relief, annoyance, chagrin at being made to look foolish — Aucklanders remembered (too late) that Phil Shone had caught them before on April Fool's Day. Only one man failed to see anything funny in it at all, the Hon. F. Jones, Minister of Broadcasting. In a statement to the House he condemned such irresponsible behaviour, such a wicked hoax. Later he informed members that steps were being taken (ominous phrase) to ensure that nothing like it would happen again.

Memories of the panic caused by the broadcast of the *War of the Worlds* in America ten years earlier may have moved the Christchurch *Press* to tut-tut disapprovingly at the 'danger that can be done' and to comment that 'an important question of broadcasting ethics has been raised'. The *New Zealand Herald* thought otherwise — '. . . simply good fun . . . a little nonsense now and then is good for everybody'.

Professor Shelley, who retired that April, would have known the most appropriate comment. It comes from *Hamlet* Act II, Scene 2, and the line is simply, 'Buzz buzz'.

George Lowe (left) and Edmund Hillary broadcast to New Zealand shortly after their arrival home from the Everest Expedition of 1953.

Chapter 7

A peak year for New Zealand radio was 1953. To begin with, after almost a quarter century of waiting and enduring inadequate makeshifts, high fidelity landlines at last became available from the Post and Telegraph Department. NZBS stations now were able to link over long distances for programmes of music and other material without any loss of quality at all. Listeners in Invercargill could hear a National Orchestra concert being given at that very moment in the Auckland Town Hall and it would sound no different from a broadcast originating in their own Civic Theatre.

Successive managements had agitated for these 'wide band' lines ever since the Radio Company had announced its long term scheme of linking metropolitan and provincial stations in 1929. It was only the lack of suitable landlines which prevented the plan from being carried out and made it considerably more 'long term' than anyone had ever intended.

'Compared with similar organisations in other countries, the board's greatest handicap on the programme side is the unavailability of suitable relay lines to permit the relaying of programmes presented at the National (Wellington) station,' parliament was reminded in the 1932 Broadcasting Report. Professor Shelley in turn made repeated requests which were vigorously renewed after the war but the Post Office had its own problems. The insistent demands to extend its long distance telephone lines were sufficient to place any broadcasting improvements well down the list of priorities. In 1953 however the first radio lines were completed, tested and made ready for use in time for the coronation broadcasts.

None of the hundreds of thousands throughout the country listening to the official New Zealand coronation observance being held in the grounds of Parliament Buildings on the morning of 2 June will ever forget the exultant announcement by the Acting Prime Minister, the Hon. Keith Holyoake:

'A news flash has just come through advising us that the New Zealander, Hillary, has succeeded in conquering Mount Everest. If the news is correct, and I am assured absolutely that it is, then our New Zealander, Hillary, has climbed to the top of the world. He has put the British race and New Zealand at the top of the world. And what a magnificent coronation present for the Queen.'

After that everything not unnaturally came as something of an anti-climax. To celebrate the triumph a radio documentary was hastily assembled from some material which had been prepared in anticipation of the event and it was broadcast throughout the country within hours of the announcement. Included were the voices of Edmund (later Sir Edmund) Hillary and George Lowe, the second New Zealand member of the expedition, but we were

forced to wait until their return home before the full story could be told.

Edmund Hillary, broadcasting in July 1953:

The summit was a symmetrical, beautiful snow cone. Tenzing threw his arms around my shoulders and we thumped each other on the back until we had no breath left. I glanced at my watch. It was 11.30.

The coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey and the royal procession back to Buckingham Palace were broadcast direct from London throughout the night. By its own sheer magnificence, aided by the superb descriptions of the BBC commentators, the crowning of our Queen managed to regain its rightful and historical place as the premier event of the day. Even so it merely whetted the appetite of many New Zealanders for the tremendous excitement to come six months later when H.M. Queen Elizabeth and H.R.H. Prince Philip arrived to tour the country — the first visit ever by a reigning monarch.

For 40 days, apart from two short rest periods, radio covered every facet of the Queen's progress through both islands; the culmination of months of planning, preparation and intensive rehearsals. The organisation behind the broadcasts was enormous and complicated, with staff and equipment interchanging from town to town and going through intricate manoeuvres to augment local radio facilities. But it meant that no one in the country with access to a radio was denied the opportunity of sharing directly in what rapidly developed into a nationwide festival such as New Zealand had never known before and will probably never know again. The tour itself was unique in that subsequent visits by royalty have never been as comprehensive nor have they roused the overwhelming excitement of the country quite as much. Radio coverage too reached a peak never likely to be surpassed.

There were many highlights, almost every individual person having his or her own; discussions and comparisons provided

Her Majesty the Queen broadcasts to the Commonwealth from Government House Auckland, on Christmas Day, 1953.

conversation points for months. For most broadcasters though, particularly those whose 'back room' jobs cut them off from the full-bodied enthusiasm of the crowd, there was a culminating moment: the occasion of the traditional royal broadcast on Christmas Day. It was delivered from Auckland, the first and to date the only time a Sovereign has spoken this annual message from anywhere outside Great Britain. Every possible precaution was taken against a breakdown either within New Zealand or outside.

For sending the message overseas, all suitable outlets available were used. Radio telephone transmissions were directed to Britain, to San Francisco and to Australia, with an auxiliary circuit to Britain being routed through Barbados. The shortwave service, Radio New Zealand, also carried the message to Australia and the South Pacific. To provide the facilities resources were pooled by the New Zealand Post Office, the Navy Department, the Air Department and the NZBS — an essential co-operation in the days before the installation of the international COMPAC cable made links with Europe or America a relatively simple process. To complicate matters still further Her Majesty's message had not only to begin precisely on time at 9.00 p.m. but was to follow immediately after an introductory cue had been spoken, not from New Zealand but from England, as part of an elaborate round-the-world presentation originated by the BBC but produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney. Sir Edmund Hillary, from his sister's home in Norfolk, about 20 miles from the Queen's home at Sandringham, was to give Christmas greetings to the Queen who was to be in Sir Edmund's home town. Immediately after this the whole Commonwealth would switch to the NZBS in Auckland, and Her Majesty would speak.

As the crucial moment approached no one in the master control rooms at Wellington and Auckland, key points in the evening's worldwide link-up, had time to worry whether something might still go wrong. It had been a day too full of tension and tragedy, a day when carefully prepared programmes expressing joy and festive jollity had been cast aside for others less jubilant. The name on everyone's lips was 'Tangiwai' and the tired, emotionally drained broadcasting staff waited to see if the Queen would depart from her prepared text to refer to it. When she did, it was in most moving terms.

'And now I want to say something to my people in New Zealand. Last night a most grievous railway accident took place at Tangiwai, which would have brought tragedy into many homes and sorrow into all upon this Christmas Day. I know that there is no one in New Zealand and indeed throughout the Commonwealth who will not join with my husband and me in sending to those who mourn a

message of sympathy in their loss. I pray that they and all who have been injured may be comforted and strengthened.'

The stunning impact of Tangiwai was all the greater because of the country's universal mood of rejoicing. From an improvised broadcast point hurriedly installed not far from the wrecked train news of the disaster continued all through Christmas Day. The hours seemed to pass with an endless alternation of hastily assembled sombre records, long lists enumerating the names of passengers known to have been killed and on-the-spot news and interviews from Lionel Sceats, at that time the manager of 2ZB, who had been rushed to the accident from Auckland where he was acting as official radio reporter with the royal party. The Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Sidney Holland, also flew to Tangiwai and he too broadcast several times from the temporary studio.

Throughout the royal tour, in addition to the many direct broadcasts of various functions and ceremonies, several news magazine features were compiled each day to give highlights of the Queen's progress in digest form. Special reports were also prepared with a more feminine slant and these were included in the regular daily programmes designed especially for women — which by these years in the 1950s had become an indispensable component of both national and commercial radio.

Chapter 8

Each division had re-shaped its service programmes for women in 1948. Since their inception the commercial stations had provided for women's interests in several ways, mostly built around a basis of advertising, but from June 1948 the series of short afternoon sessions was unified into one expanded 'Women's Hour'. Included were such matters as home economics, film and theatre news, book reviews, interviews, fashion guides, home maker's quizzes, health and beauty information, competitions and of course advertising, all devised to attract a predominantly, though not exclusively as it turned out, female audience. Joscelyne Parr (Marina) in Auckland, Elsie Lloyd in Wellington, Molly McNab in Christchurch and Maureen McCormick in Dunedin fronted the early programmes at the ZB stations, and Jessie McLennan was appointed supervisor at Head Office. On her resignation in 1953 she was replaced by Elsie Lloyd who was to hold the senior post until her own retirement from active broadcasting nine years later. As the X-class stations opened they too included a 'personality' on their staffs whose job it was to look after the interests of women in their particular areas.

Elsie Lloyd remembers:

We had to get lots of programme material and some advertisements. Some of them were sponsored but we had to go out every morning and collect all our advertising from the clients and then the next day it was put over the air. I often think this part of broadcasting, at least my part of it, was the golden age of broadcasting, when we had enthusiasm and we could think things out, and we had imagination and we went out to get stories. It was very exciting, especially when VIPs came. It was marvellous to have this contact with the outside world and to go down to the hotel, or wherever it was, and interview them. I can remember when Sybil Thorndike came out. She was the most marvellous person to interview because you would ask her one question and she would tell you the whole story. I remember going to her hotel and asking her to give me an interview, which she very kindly agreed to do. Her husband was there and she said to him, 'Now dear, make yourself scarce and don't come anywhere near. This is women's stuff. So get out and take the telephone off the hook'. Then she said, 'He won't hear anyway because he's quite deaf!'

On the national side the service had inherited short lectures on home affairs and health from the board. These were prepared by the Association for Country Education at Otago University and were read twice a week from April to November, fulfilling an important need. To them the YA stations in the late thirties added some talks and discussions of their own, on more broadly educative subjects. 'Home Front' talks of information and advice, again on domestic problems, had been directed to women during the war but with the coming of peace serious thought was given to widening the horizons of these somewhat housebound topics.

In the six months following September 1948 a positive move was made and all YA stations in turn were given additional staff to

Jessie McLennan.

produce and present properly organised women's sessions which would recognise that their listeners were intelligent and discerning as well as good cooks and housekeepers. Pioneered by such broadcasters as Airini Grennell, Barbara Basham, Cynthia Dale, Cherry Raymond, Norma van't Wouldt and Jocelyn Hollis, the new programmes reflected feminine interests and gave expert home advice. They also covered a wide variety of serious and entertaining talks, discussions, interviews, short stories and documentary features intended to be both informative and entertaining.

The post-war years also saw radio drama take on a more extensive and ambitious role. The year 1953 marked a major step forward with the opening of production centres in Christchurch and Dunedin. A special studio for the recording of plays had been flourishing successfully in Auckland since 1947 and with the addition of the new facilities in the South Island drama presentations of a high standard were now possible with casts of actors assembled from all parts of the country.

A lighter moment in the 4ZB 'Women's Hour'. Station personality Prudence Gregory helps fellow announcer Peter Dawson in a special 'Women's Hour' knitting derby.

National station women's session organisers meet at a conference in Wellington during 1956. From left to right: Sheila Anderson (Napier), Rhona Davis (seated — Wellington), Beverley Pollack (Dunedin), Celia Morris (Christchurch), Cherry Raymond (Auckland), Marjorie Green (Rotorua), Jane Smith (Invercargill), Barbara Basham (Head Office).

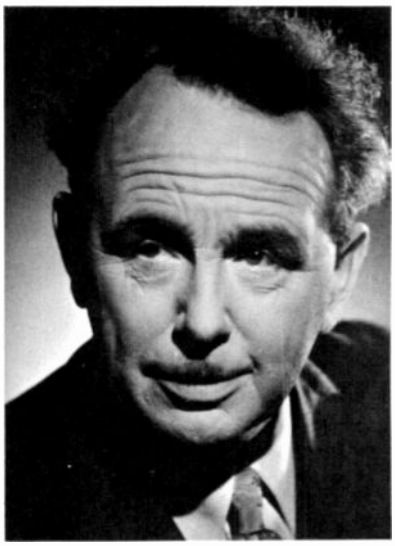
A gathering of 'Women's Hour' personalities from commercial stations in 1960. Back row (left to right): Sheila Atkinson (Masterton), Valerie Griffith (Nelson), Marina (Auckland), Patricia Coleman (Dunedin), June Irvin (Gisborne), Margaret Isaac (New Plymouth), Patricia Cummins (Napier), Betty Loe (Hamilton), Christine Chamberlain (Palmerston North), Pam Carson (Whangarei). From row (left to right): Molly McNab (Christchurch), Elsie Lloyd (Head Office, Supervisor) Doris Kaye (Timaru), Prudence Gregory (Invercargill), Shirley Maddock (Head Office assistant), Doreen Kelso (Wellington), Dorothy Bryant (Wanganui).

Drama production in Auckland during the late 1940s. The panel operator in the foreground is playing recorded sound effects while the cast, through the window in the studio, are reading their lines.

'The writing of plays, serials and features is now a recognised branch of the service,' Professor Shelley had reported in early 1940. Indeed play production and writing was a section of the arts very close to his own heart and as a consequence he gave it every personal encouragement and support. From time to time his unmistakable stentorian voice could be heard in plays that particularly interested him — especially Shakespeare which he adapted for radio as well as performed.

The drama department Shelley had taken over from the Broadcasting Board was tiny but healthy, carrying on largely in the traditions established under company control with contract producers in each centre finding, casting and directing plays for live broadcast from their local YA stations. William Yates, the first supervisor of plays, initiated a policy of finding and developing New Zealand writers. One of his discoveries was W. Graeme Holder whose play *The Time Factor* was the winning entry in a radio playwriting contest.

In 1938 Yates was succeeded by Bernard Beeby, formerly a contract producer in Christchurch. As supervisor of productions he built up a radio drama centre in Wellington, established it on firmly professional foundations and concentrated on improving performances and production methods. With the installation of the requisite technical equipment the hazardous business of broadcasting plays live was thankfully abandoned in favour of recording all productions. Although this meant that in the meantime nothing could be produced outside Wellington, the standard improved noticeably and the discs of the plays, serials and features which



W Graeme Holder.

Bernard Beeby rehearses his cast in a radio drama being recorded in the Wellington studios.

Bryan O'Brien, whose 'Storytime for Juniors' enthralled younger listeners during the late 1930s and early 1940s, just as the programmes based on his extensive travels overseas fascinated an older audience during the ten years after the war.

came out of the new studio were sent in turn to each national station for broadcast — and repeated if necessary. Any possible extension of the work to other centres in the country was prevented by the war and the shortage of technical apparatus during the years immediately afterwards. As soon as the way was clear recording machines were assembled and studios in the other centres were commissioned.

A production department for commercial radio had been formed by Scrim in Wellington during 1940 under the control of W. E. (Bill) Elliott. Bryan O'Brien, already widely known and loved for his work in commercial children's programmes and for his spellbinding 'Storytime' series, was appointed assistant supervisor and producer. They were joined the following year by Elsie Lloyd, who had by then a distinguished record of almost 15 years continuous but part-time experience in New Zealand radio drama and entertainment. Her most recent success at that time had been in the commercial serial 'One Man's Family'. Production of the serial and its encouraging reception by listeners had proved what New Zealanders could achieve in popular radio drama.

Early in the war it became obvious that importing the overseas product was likely to be increasingly difficult, so Scrim decided to set up the commercial production department. Many successful light entertainment and feature programmes were produced by the unit until, with the amalgamation of the two radio services, it was combined with its national counterpart under the wing of Bernard Beeby.

BELOW: A group of players in a commercial production under the direction of Bill Elliot.

Beeby retired in 1960 but his successors William Austin and Anthony Groser continued and developed Shelley's edict to encourage local writers to a degree which must have been well beyond the professor's dreams. Many outstanding productions by New Zealand authors have been presented in the years between: in the 12 months ending 31 March 1975 alone 59 radio plays, 66 short stories and 89 serial episodes. And this had risen steadily from a total of only 47 scripts of plays, short stories and features accepted from local writers in the first year of expansion, 1953.

Planning conference at the Commercial Production Studios. From left to right: Kingley Brady (continuity writer), Bill Elliot (production manager), Scrim, Stewart Duff (sales manager), George Boyle (chief copywriter).

Recording technicians Brian Petrie (right) and Kelvin Hustwick rehearse their work for a commercial production.

Chapter 9

During the mid-1950s came a twofold revolution in the overall *sound* of radio broadcasting, although it was not confined to New Zealand.

Of one development listeners were almost unanimously in favour, which for broadcasting was something of a revolution in itself. This was the injection into programmes of the new microgroove recordings, slowly at first but increasing rapidly as supplies became available. With beautifully noise-free surfaces and an uninterrupted duration of nearly half an hour per side, these long playing (LP) 33⅓ rpm recordings soon completely ousted their 78 rpm ancestors whose time limit had been not much more than four minutes. The new records were a boon for the programming of serious music for no longer was the aggravating 'pause to turn over the record' necessary. LPs were first heard on radio in New Zealand in 1952 and their companions, the 45 rpm popular single discs, began to appear in 1955 and 1956. Before many years had passed both took over the market entirely and manufacture of the 78 rpm variety was stopped.

The second change in radio sound to arrive at this time was by no means as favourably received as the microgroove recordings although there is no doubt about its eventual impact. Until these years popular music had moved along a fairly predictable course with perennial singers like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Perry Como providing regular recordings for the hit parade along with more recent arrivals; among them — Guy Mitchell, Frankie Laine, Rosemary Clooney and Jo Stafford. But it was all based on a precept of easy-to-listen-to sentimental songs intermixed with swing music and some jazz. It was happy, it was relaxing, and it seemed to be all the public wanted.

Until the mid-fifties, that is. Then suddenly without warning and almost overnight, the face of popular music altered completely. With Bill Haley and his Comets blasting out *Rock Around The Clock* and a dark-haired, thigh-thrusting country boy named Elvis Presley belting his way through *Heartbreak Hotel* popular music radio programmes were never to be the same again. The age of Rock 'n Roll had arrived.

But if popular music was to be revolutionised, then the style of presenting it had also to go through some form of transformation. Announcers on commercial stations took a convulsive plunge, shed their formality and eventually emerged as a species, known overseas but strangely new to New Zealand, called disc jockeys — deejays for short. Established rules were cast aside and 'personality projection' took over. Rapid-fire Austral-American accents frenziedly scattered the latest 'hip talk' jargon in between and over the top of the supercharged but infectious beat of the records. Cautious managers tended to regard the breed with suspicion and

there is no doubt that some of the deejays abused their new-found freedoms. Older listeners considered them incomprehensible, young people thought them the saviour of radio. All the fans wanted in their radio entertainment was for Neville Chamberlain (Cham) or Des Britten or Scott Newman to be riding the airwaves with a pile of the latest releases from Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, Ricky Nelson or Connie Francis or any others of the scores of new generation pop singers. Echoing the frenetic music they championed, the deejays were noisy, talkative and (with teenagers and advertisers at least) wildly popular.

Neville Chamberlain remembers:

I well remember starting on this deejay business at station 2ZC Napier about 1959 and I have a feeling that I can claim to have put on the first 'Top Forty Show' in New Zealand. It was difficult too in those days because both the supply and the information about hit pop discs was anything but plentiful. The 'Lever Hit Parade' was well established and it seemed to have a first mortgage on most of the new discs arriving from overseas. In Napier we used to get our tape copy of the hit parade about a week before it was due to go on the air, and after 15 years or so I guess I can safely confess to having been guilty of dubbing off some of the numbers and presenting them before the big programme itself was heard. Such were the joys and tribulations of being an early disc jockey.

The disc jockey invasion started tentatively, with half hour shows at a time, but when the fifties had become the sixties and the pop music scene was aflame with Beatlemania the halves had turned into hours or more. The deejays were all set for the near complete take-over they were to achieve a decade or so later. The biggest tragedy, as the deejays themselves were to discover, was that life at the top is perilously short. Like the hit parade contenders they promoted, today's 'golden boy' slipped imperceptibly into yesterday's 'golden oldie'.

Neville Chamberlain in his 'Gather Round' days.

BELOW: A gathering of disc jockeys. From left to right: Scott Newman, Basel Tubert, Des Britten and Ted Thorpe.

Chapter 10

Advertisement, June 1956:

Sharing in the belief that New Zealand's vocal talent should be afforded greater opportunities, Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. (NZ) Ltd are very proud to announce their sponsorship of the 1956 'Mobil Song Quest' . . . the first national vocal quest to be held since 1938. . . . All entrants will be judged on the basis of the best voice for radio entertainment and all decisions will be by panels of adjudicators. . . . (This) represents an unsurpassed opportunity to New Zealand singers to win fame and success and to be heard to their best advantage. . . .

In complete contrast to the 1956 pop revolution commercial stations in the same year embarked on the first search for talent under the 'Mobil Song Quest' banner. At the other end of the entertainment scale, the contest was an attempt to encourage serious singers and was based on a similar competition organised in Australia by the same company. The first 'Mobil Song Quest' winner here was Donald Jack, a dentistry student from Dunedin. His fine bass voice gave him first place out of 1,500 entries of whom 40 had been heard in the six weekly programmes of semi-finalists. Nine contests, all equally successful, followed and the event itself grew immeasurably in stature and prestige. At least five of the solo winners continued their professional careers in Europe: Malvina Major, Anne Rasmussen, Mary O'Brien, Patricia Payne and Kiri te Kanawa.

'Sunday Showcase'. That was another innovation brought into the ZB station formats during the middle 1950s. It could have deceived dyed-in-the-wool listeners into wondering whether the programme administrators had over-reacted to all the pop fare and were trying to prove that the commercial programmes could also be cultural. So on any Sunday night from 1955 onwards ZB listeners could hear an hour or more designed, said the Head of Commercial Radio, '. . . . to develop programmes that would find their audience among what might be termed the specialist listener'. He went on to add that the 'Sunday Showcase' slot would '. . . feature a very wide variety of programmes, some of which made their appeal through their excellence in a particular field, some through their topicality and others again through their unusual treatment of a subject.'

Richard Farrell.

Brian Salkeld (who planned 'Sunday Showcase' in its heyday) remembers:

Our idea was to present the best of entertainment we could lay our hands on. This included a New Zealand produced play every second Sunday and the other Sundays were devoted to documentaries, musicals — just about the whole gamut of entertainment. We dressed up the highlights from the big films and musicals of the period. We did the first broadcast of *Under Milk Wood.* We even had Bertrand Russell's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech and there was also that marvellous series of three one-hour programmes produced by Bill Austin, on the German battleship *Emden,* written by Al Flett. This was perhaps the best of the

material we researched locally. Then occasionally we stepped right out of what our character was deemed to be by some people and presented concerts by visiting artists — Colin Horsley, Richard Farrell, both appeared on 'Showcase' in special programmes. Larry Adler broke new ground by actually introducing his own items. It doesn't seem over-startling today but to have a musician break silence and actually talk as well as perform was really something all those years ago. Another field we pioneered was the presentation of complete operas, recorded with New Zealand artists and accompanied by the then National Orchestra. There was certainly a terrific variety.

William Austin, producer (seated at table) and Bruce Mason, author (standing at table), rehearse Inia te Wiata (extreme right) and others in the cast of the 'Sunday Showcase' production of *Awatea* in 1965.

The only criterion placed on material aired on 'Sunday Showcase' was that it should be the best of its kind. As a result, week by week over the years such dramas as *Richard III* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* rubbed shoulders with musicals like *The King And I* and *My Fair Lady*. This latter incidentally received its first New Zealand broadcast in 'Showcase'. Mozart and Donizetti met up with Irving Berlin and Lionel Bart; serious classics with popular comedy. It was all a great mixture but it undoubtedly attracted large and widely divergent audiences.

Actually it was all part of a plan to attract more listeners to ZB stations on the advertising-free Sunday nights. BBC comedy shows, book reviews, serials and smoothly presented light music in the early part of the evening all wooed the listeners towards the *piece de resistance* of 'Showcase'. The scientifically calculated idea behind the whole thing was the theory that once tuned to the ZB stations on Sundays these people would leave their sets switched that way overnight — and bingo! In the morning the ZB 'Breakfast Session' (and its advertisers) would have more listeners. Whether it really worked or not was never made clear but there is no doubt that for the 10 years or so of 'Sunday Showcase' some of the highest quality single radio shows of the day were displayed and reached enormous audiences. What is more, many members of that audience found themselves listening to, and even enjoying, dramas, operas,

'Man Saturday' himself enjoying some 'e-e-asy listening' — 'Saturday Night at Home's' Gary Chapman.

During the 1950s the Auckland produced radio comedy show 'Radio Roadhouse' achieved considerable popularity and ran for several series on national stations. It was written by actor Barry Linehan (left) seen here with Noeline Pritchard.

documentaries and so on which in the normal course of events they would have avoided had the programmes been on any other network.

Sunday nights on the commercial network could not go unchallenged. The national stations made Saturday night their own with a programme that used to open promisingly with a voice saying, 'Good evening — this is Gary Chapman speaking. My pleasure to introduce 90 minutes of e-e-easy listening for a "Saturday Night At Home" . . . .' It was a 'catch-all' a 'grab-bag', a patchwork that defied description but met with a high standard in its content and choice of material.

Gary Chapman remembers:

There were many reasons for the success of 'Saturday Night At Home'. One is that I personally believe that radio's a collaborative business, this one-man-band is nonsense. Presenter, technician and producer just have to work together or it's no show. I first worked with John Reed as producer when I took over the programme from Gavin Yates (now the Rev. Gavin Yates — or is it Dean? — down in Nelson) and then came Peter Downes with whom I established instant rapport. Another contributing factor in the programme's success was that everybody in broadcasting, from all over, used to find items that were 'orphans' — they didn't belong to any specific category — too long, too short, too offbeat — and they'd pass them on to Peter Downes. The 'Musical Stakes' of Reon Murtha and Alwyn Owen of 3YZ in Greymouth were first heard in SNAH. So was Peter Read's nutty 'Professor Dilbeck'. . . . And we devoted 20 minutes to the Beatles long before they became a phenomenon. But for real pioneer stuff, I think we could lay claim to have been early in the field with telephone interviews. If I remember, Peter Downes got a very nervous me talking (on the *telephone*, mind you) to Shelley Berman — the original telephone talker himself!

Peter Downes remembers:

We had ghost stories, short stories of all kinds, personal experiences, recollections from old identities of some remarkable event in their lifetime — and I like to think we also gave perhaps the first opportunity to quite a number of writers that came up. Heather Marshall, for instance, who wrote all those 'Alexander' stories, later published as a book. Ivor Snowdon is another man who wrote a lot of talks; Alexander McLeod, Richard Easton, Bill Toft when he was down in Greymouth sent us some local colour from there too, and I remember Graham Kerr writing us a short story and reading it long before he ever became the 'Galloping Gourmet'. Sarah Campion, Alan Dunford, Eve Hughes, Marilyn Duckworth, Elsie Locke — yes, there were many of them.

The format followed by 'Saturday Night At Home' was one radio organisations overseas had found successful as a complement to television in its early days. When TV began in New Zealand in 1960 this was also found to be the case here.

Chapter 11

Entertainment television began on 1 June 1960 with programmes transmitted from Channel 2 Auckland. Christchurch followed exactly a year later with Wellington on 1 July 1961 and Dunedin 31 July 1962.

Naturally enough the energies of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service were mostly geared to the expansion of TV at this time. On the face of it radio seemed to take a back seat, yet while the full glare of publicity certainly centred on the younger medium the 'sound only' department continued to give as good a service as it always had.

On 31 March 1962 the NZBS as a government department ceased to exist and, under the authority of the Broadcasting Act 1961, control passed to the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation. The management which had lasted for 25 years and 9 months was able to look back with considerable (and justifiable) pride at many of its accomplishments and those of its embodied predecessors the National Broadcasting Service and the National Commercial Broadcasting Service.

They had:

- Carried a programme of development from eight radio stations (two in each main city) taken over from the Broadcasting Board to 35 spread over 20 centres from Whangarei to Invercargill. One of them (2YA) had been broadcasting 24 hours a day from October 1961.
- Increased maximum power of transmission from 10 kilowatts to 100.
- Expanded programme services from 27,000 hours a year to a little short of 180,000.
- Established commercial broadcasting and watched its revenue grow from less than £200 in the first week to almost £2,000,000 in the last year.
- Created the National Orchestra and maintained it solely from broadcasting funds.
- Set up shortwave broadcasting.
- From an inherited 210,000 licensed listening households bequeathed to their successor a number in excess of 600,000.

Hon. A. E. Kinsella, Minister of Broadcasting, 31 March 1962:

Ladies and gentlemen — it's just on midnight. I am now out of a job and I'm handing over to the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation under Dr Llewellyn for the operation of our broadcasting and television services for the next few years.

'The next few years' proved to be exactly 13. In its first 50 years broadcasting had five separate administrations, which makes an average term of 10 years for each one. Only the NZBS (1946-62) and the NZBC (1962-75) enjoyed long periods of comparative

Oswald Cheesman, a name synonymous with light music throughout New Zealand. With his orchestra and singers his programmes over the years have ranged from gently swinging jazz through to the lighter classics and a series in the early 1970s when he arranged and presented radio versions of all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Gilbert Stringer, Director General, NZBC from 1962 to 1970.

calm. Not surprisingly perhaps those were the years of maximum development, maximum consolidation, maximum profit.

For radio the NZBC years (the first eight under Gilbert Stringer as Director-General) had the extra burden of competition from television. No previous administrative period had been troubled by a counter-attraction so seductively enticing. The competition was not just from programmes: for much of the time television had priority in expansion of services and technical progress. To meet the changing situation and the challenge of the new medium radio began to adapt its style — in presentation as well as in actual programmes.

One of the earliest signs of a new departure in radio policy was the introduction, in July-August 1962, of a broadcasting news service. It was long overdue. Ten years earlier Ian Mackay had written '. . . with the possible exception of South Africa the news sessions broadcast by the YA stations are the worst in the . . . Commonwealth. . . . It would appear that the NZBS possesses neither the facilities nor the inclination to provide news sessions.'

At about the time that criticism was published the NZBS did have the inclination but were denied the facilities. In 1955 and again in 1957 negotiations took place with the New Zealand Press Association with a view to sharing their wire service. Although talks were developed 'fully and in a very cordial atmosphere' the final outcome had been advice from the NZPA that 'its members did not wish to sell their news services to the Broadcasting Service'.

Commenting on this rebuff in its annual report (1957) the NZBS said: 'Without these or similar facilities the service is handicapped in broadcasting home news both in point of comprehensiveness and in point of timing. Official news for the main bulletin is supplied by the Publicity Division of the Tourist and Publicity Department.'

Although other sources were at its disposal the service clearly felt itself to be hampered in a vital function and deeply embarrassed by its dependence on a government agency. There could be only one satisfactory answer: an internal news-gathering and broadcasting unit employing its own 'tricks of the trade' — or in other words radio and television techniques.

With R. E. (Ben) Coury as editor the NZBC News started with midday bulletins, followed a month later by bulletins during the breakfast session and in the evening. It was recognised that while newspapers could not match radio's immediacy they did have the advantage of supplying background stories and 'in-depth' material. Programmes to give a wider perspective were added at the earliest opportunity.

Ken Funnell remembers:

The emergence of something called ' current affairs' has undeniably been one of

the main features of broadcasting in New Zealand during this past decade. I say 'called current affairs' because it was only in 1967 that a separate current affairs section was set up, charged specifically with producing programmes dealing with and providing background to events, particularly New Zealand events, as they occurred; and dealing with them in a probing and questioning, analytical way. This was a new departure in New Zealand broadcasting. Of course we had had programmes of comment before, very successful programmes like 'Lookout' which for many years each Saturday night provided the only locally-produced regular programme of comment on events to be broadcast in New Zealand. It dealt exclusively with international events. Then later we had 'Point of View' which took in the New Zealand scene and dealt with a different topic each week. And there was 'Looking At Ourselves', still running, a commentary from an individual viewpoint on developments of the week in New Zealand. But none of these provided day-to-day analysis and comment. That was first introduced in the early sixties with 'News Review', a nightly newsreel type of programme. That was something of a breakthrough but it wasn't until the setting up of the Current Affairs Section in 1967 that things really took off. It began in May that year with the launching of 'Checkpoint', a 20-minute programme which singled out for scrutiny by way of analysis, interview or discussion two or three topics thrown out by the news of the day whether at home or abroad. This provided the opportunity, for the first time, for an up-to-the-minute look at current developments at some depth. Politicians could be closely questioned about their actions and policies at considerable length. Protagonists in public controversies confronted each other in argument, specialists were brought into the studio to provide background comment — and not only specialists in New Zealand. 'Checkpoint' soon learned to cash in on radio's ability to get immediate on-the-spot reports and reactions from observers overseas. Nowhere was farther away than a telephone call — or almost nowhere. We never did manage to get through to Phnom Penh. But speakers in Tokyo, Washington, London, Moscow and a host of other places were at our disposal, ready to explain the situation or background a crisis while it was still developing. The element of immediacy had entered our radio.

Peter Fleming and Vincente Major, stars of 'The Prickly Thistle Club' the Dunedin produced Scottish comedy-variety programme which broadcast regularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s and is still heard occasionally in 'specials'. Not only were the radio shows popular but touring stage versions attracted large audiences in the South Island and New Plymouth. A TV version ('Ceilidh') was also made.

As part of its policy to update and diversify radio to counteract television's lure the NZBC made some significant changes in 1964 and 1965. On 15 September 1964 the National Programme came into operation. Because it originated in Wellington it met a certain resentment from places which felt it threatened their local identity; 'programme colonialism' one Auckland critic called it. But the intention was not to impose a central authority. It was more a matter of rationalisation, adopting a system already tried and accepted for many years in other countries.

As its flexibility became apparent much of the initial opposition disappeared. It was seen that there was considerable latitude for local 'break-outs' — times when a regional station could give precedence to a broadcast originating in its own studio. The single main programme was always more or less 'on tap', but it could be turned on or off according to circumstances.

Another innovation in 1964 was the setting-up of a Maori programme section. Its value was immediately apparent and its intention much appreciated. For over 30 years recordings of Maori music and lore had been slowly assembled, and now there was an

opportunity to establish them in a permanent self-contained library.

The creation of the Overseas Programme Exchange in 1965 was perhaps the strongest indication that New Zealand broadcasting was no longer just a consumer in the world programme market. As a producer and exporter the NZBC began to supply material covering all aspects of our social, cultural and civic life to other national broadcasting organisations — in Russia, the Far East, Albania, Canada and the Pacific Islands.

One event pinpoints 1965 as a watershed year in New Zealand broadcasting: the coming of the first 'talk-back' programme. It happened because Prudence Gregory, Supervisor of Women's Programmes, went to America on a broadcasting travel grant. She chose deliberately to study in Colorado because it is similar to New Zealand in size, topography and pastoral industry, with a main city (Denver) corresponding in population to Auckland. It was in Denver that a throat infection confined Prudence to her hotel room — with only a radio for company.

Angela D'Audney at the 1ZB microphone.

Prudence Gregory remembers:

I lay there, filled with germs and sulfa drugs, and heard this programme — a woman called Mary Lou or something, asking people to phone in. Somehow I got myself round to the station, and next minute I was on the air! So I brought home a tape, thinking everyone (including the Post Office) would be against the idea — but they liked it. They were going to try it out in Wellington, but I said firmly, 'No. If New Zealanders won't ring up we'll find out away from the spotlight'. In the end we opted for a quiet experiment in the Wairarapa, since this was a farming community something like Colorado and since the Masterton station had Jessica Weddell at the helm. She'd had acting experience, and she was the guinea-pig. There she was in the hot-seat, wondering if anyone would ring up, and vividly aware that half Head Office was listening. Well, of course, they did ring in — and 'talk-back' took off from there, and quite suddenly it seemed to be jumping out of the afternoon into other time slots all over the band.

Talk-back was the phenomenon of the last decade of broadcasting's first half-century. So wide was its audience and so great its influence that even the Prime Minister, Norman Kirk, felt impelled to ring up and correct a caller's mis-statement. The talk-back hosts thrived on argument, contradiction, opinion, debate and political cross-examination.

And yet in the beginning a government regulation had expressly forbidden 'dissemination of propaganda of a controversial nature'. That was a measure of how far we had come.

The last word belongs, by right, to Professor Jack. In August 1921 he had said, 'Wireless . . . will give even wider publicity to all news of public interest . . . and will thus tend to bring country settlers into close touch with all the life of the town. Further than that, the whole life of the community will be broadened and educated by being brought into more effective touch with the life of the whole world. No country stands to benefit more than New Zealand by thus having the disadvantages of its isolation removed. . . .'

So in addition to a crystal set the professor had had a crystal ball. Now we have transistors and satellites and worldwide direct communication: a call to Salamanca or Samarkand is commonplace.

What further wonders are in store? What marvels will we hear of tomorrow? What does the future hold for broadcasting? How will radio change in its next 50 years?

Be with us again, same time, same station, for the next enthralling episode in this continuing story. . . .

Paddy O'Donnell, 'talking back' with his 2ZB audience.

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