Broadcasting Service

During the audit of the accounts of the Broadcasting Service the Audit Office raised with the Service the matter of the cost of the National Orchestra. The Orchestra was formed in 1946, when the Government authorized the Director "to expend not more than £40,000 per annum for the purpose," but the cost has considerably exceeded that figure, the gross expenditure being as follows :—

	£	
1946–47	20,000	(approximately).
1947–48	60,000	
1948–49	70,000	

The Service has credited the following concert proceeds to the Orchestra's account :—

	£	
1946–47	800	
1947–48	10,000	Includes proceeds of thirteen concerts of Isobel Baillie.
1948–49	4,000	

The services of the Orchestra were utilized in recent tours of the opera Carmen and the Italian Grand Opera Company, but it is not intended to make any charge for them.

The Audit Office drew attention to the excess of expenditure over the existing authority, and the Director has advised that he will bring it to the notice of the Minister of Broadcasting. The cost of the Orchestra is covered by the permanent appropriation contained in section 13 of the Broadcasting Act, 1936, and therefore does not appear in the annual estimates.

Tornado Damage, Hamilton

The Government agreed to assist in restoring property damaged by the tornado which struck Hamilton on 25th August, 1948. The assistance was given on condition that should it increase the value of the property above the pre-damage value, the owner would refund a commensurate sum to be assessed by the Valuation Department. Of a total of 425 properties capable of being restored, approximately 400 have been repaired to date, and of this number 33 have been revalued. Enhanced values apply to only 10 of these, and the amounts to be recovered total £521.

Overseas-passenger Duty

Overseas-passenger duty was levied under section 30 of the Finance Act, 1936, subsection (8) of which provided a penalty of 10 per cent. of any amount unpaid two months after due date.

During an audit of collections it was noted that overdue duty had been paid by two air transport companies without penalties, the explanation advanced being that considerable difficulty had been experienced in completing the necessary returns for the principal assessment. The matter was submitted by the Stamp Duties Department to the Minister of Stamp Duties, who agreed that penalty, £792 12s. 7d. be treated as a "claim abandoned" and be included as such in the Fourth Schedule to the next Appropriation Bill.

Section 30 of the Finance Act, 1936, was repealed on 1st October, 1948, by section 6 of the Finance Act, 1948, and passenger duty is not now payable.