

BRITISH AND AMERICAN BROADCASTING IN RELATION TO NEW ZEALAND.

The standard of broadcasting existing in the United Kingdom has now reached a high plane, the aim being to so serve the country with broadcasting-stations of suitable power that reception will be possible to almost the entire population by means of a crystal type of receiver. The organization of broadcasting in the United Kingdom is broadly similar to what obtains in New Zealand, with the exception that the original broadcasting company, composed of various manufacturing firms, has now given place to a representative Broadcasting Commission appointed by the Government, and having full powers to carry out the policy of broadcasting in the interests of the public. All tastes are being catered for, and a high quality of service is being maintained. By use of land relay lines a considerable amount of simultaneous broadcasting is done from the different stations throughout the country. Such a scheme goes a long way to minimizing interference from radiating receivers; and, with the large revenue and the variety and high class of talent available, a very satisfactory standard of broadcasting service has been attained and is assured.

The conditions in New Zealand are relatively much more difficult. The smaller population means a smaller revenue, and has involved the necessity of a higher license fee. The larger and more-sparsely-settled area would make it a much more costly problem to furnish equivalent signal strength in all parts of the country, the configuration of which is such that only a small portion of the radiated energy is available over the land-masses of New Zealand. If anything like the same uniform standard is to be obtained it is clear that the problem must be attacked from a somewhat different angle.

In the United States the policy in relation to broadcasting is an entirely different one. Little restriction has been placed upon the growth of broadcasting-stations, and it recently became necessary to appoint a Commission to exercise a regulatory control over broadcasting-stations with a view to minimizing mutual interference. This Commission has already done good work in reducing the number of stations—until recently about seven hundred—and the interference already referred to. No fee is paid by the listener. Programmes are provided largely by commercial firms seeking the goodwill of the public by the provision of programmes of entertainment which constitute what is known as indirect advertising.

On the commercial side the British and American systems are therefore entirely opposed in principle; but, as each is providing a radio broadcasting service giving a very great measure of satisfaction to the public at large, it would appear that New Zealand could benefit by absorbing into its future policy the best and most appropriate elements of each.

As far as could be judged at this stage, it would appear that developments in the United Kingdom will be along the lines of forming a chain of high-power broadcasting-stations throughout the country, each link consisting of two stations, located remote from centres of population, and transmitting simultaneously different classes of programmes on different wave-lengths. Such a system would have many ideal features, enabling the great majority of the population to select, with equal facility, one of two different programmes from its local centre, and without the drawback of one being overpowered by the other.

BROADCASTING : GENERAL.

Broadcasting-stations in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada were visited, and the policy and practice of broadcasting in all its aspects discussed with authorities responsible for technical design and operation and for the provision of programmes. In New York two broadcasting-stations, each of 50 kilowatts output, and embodying radically different principles of design, were seen in operation, and relevant data obtained.

At the Hague, Holland, a limited use was being made of subscribers' lines and telephones for the reception of broadcast programmes. The arrangements were such that, upon the receipt of a call from another subscriber, the telephone reverted automatically to its normal use. A special subscription was charged for this service. In the United States, electric light and power wires were also being used to some extent for a similar purpose. These developments have not yet made a great impression upon the practice of broadcast reception.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY TO BROADCAST LISTENERS IN CONNECTION WITH INTERFERENCE.

There seemed to be a unanimous opinion among administrative officers responsible for the oversight of wireless broadcasting that the primary responsibility of the governing administration is to keep the course clear for the listener to the local broadcasting-station rather than to cater for the inevitable but transitory stage of "long-distance hunting." The listener who habitually desires to reproduce a long-distance station while the local station is operating must take full advantage of the developments in the art in relation to selectivity and filtering of unwanted signals. The listener most likely to produce interference to the long-distance enthusiast is usually equipped with a receiving-set which is incapable of cutting out the neighbouring station while it is in operation, and is not likely, therefore, to invade the field of the long-distance listener during the local hours of service.

In this connection it was interesting to learn that in the early days of broadcasting a considerable demand existed in the larger cities of the United States for the observance of silent nights by the local stations. With the progress of the broadcasting art this demand has now practically ceased to exist, and listeners are largely unanimous in desiring that the local station shall give, as far as possible, a continuous service. They have outgrown the desire to chase long-distance stations with their variability and greater susceptibility to interference from static and electric light and power sources. In fact, there is in many cases little temptation to seek after distant stations under the same administration, as it not infrequently happens that the same programme is being simultaneously broadcast from all stations. It is admitted that the above arguments, while discouraging to long-distance reception, assume that everything possible should be done to create local programmes of a satisfying nature.