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RADIO BROADCASTING  
IN PALMERSTON NORTH 1924 - 1937

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A research exercise presented in partial  
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ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives  
MDT Manawatu Daily Times  
NZH New Zealand Herald  
NZPD New Zealand Parliamentary Debates  
NZR New Zealand Radio

INTRODUCTION

The 1920s and 1930s were a period when many new developments were taking place in the field of leisure and entertainment, like the rise of the motor car and the emergence of the 'talking picture'. The introduction of radio broadcasting was, perhaps, one of the most important of these developments. New Zealanders took up the new medium with eagerness and from the plaything of a few enthusiastic amateurs, it developed into an integral part of community life. In 1924, for example, there were 2,830 radio licenses issued yet by 1934 there were 118,086 licenses current and by 1936 the total had risen to 192,265.<sup>1</sup> This increased interest in radio reflected, to a considerable extent, improvements in the quality, coverage and organization of the Dominion's national radio stations. I would suggest, however, that the B class stations, small stations privately operated by groups of amateurs and radio dealers, played a vital role in introducing the new medium of radio to the community, a role which will be elucidated in the following pages.

This paper relates the experience of two such B stations which operated in Palmerston North from 1924 to September 1937. Study of their origins, their activities and their role in the community is particularly rewarding since the two provide definite contrasts and represent two very different examples of B class broadcasting. Station 2ZF, operated by the Palmerston North Radio Club and, later, the Manawatu Radio Club, played an important pioneering role in the district but was one of a handful of B stations which, unlike the majority, enjoyed harmonious relations with the broadcasting authorities. In contrast, station 2Z0, owned by local radio dealer J.V. Kyle, was conscious of its 'independent' status and of its part in the greater struggle of the Dominion's B class stations.

Although the text does not presuppose any knowledge of broadcasting,

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Official Year Book 1938, p.847. By 1936 the number of radio licenses suggested that radio sets were located in over half of the Dominion's households. See Report of the Post and Telegraph Department, AJHR, 1936, F-1, p.35.

a brief survey of national broadcasting developments is valuable to set the background for local events and experiences. On November 21, 1921, New Zealand's first radio programme was transmitted by Otago's Professor Jack and thereafter developments moved rapidly. In February 1922 the International Electric Company established a broadcasting station in Wellington's Courtenay Place and by the end of the year five more stations were transmitting, many of them operated by radio clubs and societies which sprang up around the country.<sup>2</sup> The interest aroused by these pioneering groups was such that the Government was obliged to take some action and in 1925 it awarded a charter to the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand to develop a broadcasting service for the Dominion. Under the terms of their charter, these "three keen, solid businessmen"<sup>3</sup> were to provide a maximum of twelve hours entertainment weekly, exclusive of Sunday and with an additional silent day each week. The period during which broadcasting was operated by the Company saw an increase in quality, in coverage and in transmission hours but many listeners, who had seen their license fees jump six hundred percent with the introduction of the charter, were critical of the Company and the Government.<sup>4</sup> Hampered by a lack of capital, by the insecurity and short-term nature of its charter and by the 500 watt maximum output prescribed in the charter, the Company was unable to provide a truly national service.

There was a growing conviction among many people that a body which collected funds from the public should be answerable to it and that so important a public utility should not be in private hands. Consequently, when the Company's charter expired in December 1931, broadcasting was administered by the Broadcasting Board. This began a process of state domination which reached its climax in the Labour Government's determination to make radio broadcasting a state monopoly. The years of the Board were exciting ones and witnessed the modernisation of facilities, an increase in the power of the national stations and far-reaching

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2 See R.M. Burdon The New Dominion: A Social and Political History of New Zealand 1918-39, Wellington, 1965, p.91. P. Downes and P. Harcourt, Voices in the Air, Wellington, 1976, p.10.

3 A.F. O'Donoghue The Rise and Fall of Radio Broadcasting in New Zealand : The Tragedy of Government Control and Management, Auckland, 1946, p.5.

4 A radio receiving license cost five shillings per annum from 1923 to 1925. In 1925 it rose to thirty shillings (£1 10s), of which the Radio Broadcasting Company received five-sixths, but was lowered to twenty-five shillings (£1 5s) in 1935.

improvements in programme quality and planning. At the same time, however, the Board found itself subject to criticism reminiscent of that levelled at the Radio Broadcasting Company: that it was aloof and inept, that it neglected listeners in country areas and that it was unjust in its treatment of the B stations.

These B stations were an important part of contemporary broadcasting and the support which they enjoyed from the community was reflected in their proliferation during this period. Numbering only ten in 1928, the total of B stations had risen to thirty-six by 1931, a surprising development in view of the problems which these stations faced.<sup>5</sup> If the B stations' continued existence was "a miracle of survival",<sup>6</sup> it was also a tribute to their popularity and the valuable service which they rendered. This was especially true with regard to those listeners who, although subsidizing the national stations through their license fees, were unable to receive these national stations. Palmerston North listeners, for example, found 2YA transmissions subject to fading, and distortion, especially in the evening. The existence of 'silent days' and of restricted hours of transmission meant that the B stations provided entertainment when the airwaves would otherwise have been quiet while many of those listeners who could receive the national stations preferred, instead, to listen to the friendly and more informal broadcasts of the B stations. The B stations were, as Mackay notes, "the illegitimate offspring of successive administrations".<sup>7</sup> In time they were to be removed from the scene to make way for the new stations of the National Commercial Broadcasting Service whose breezy style compensated, at least in part, for the loss of B class broadcasting.

Anyone embarking upon a local study of broadcasting history, such as this, has many problems with which to cope. As Prothero comments, most of the sixty-odd stations which operated at one time or another in this period "are now only a memory"<sup>8</sup> and one is hampered by the fact that one is dealing with a medium that is transient in nature. While

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5 See A.G. Prothero, 'Broadcasting in New Zealand: Policy and Practice 1921-36', University of New Zealand, M.A., 1946, p.156.

6 Downes and Harcourt, p.53.

7 I.K. Mackay Broadcasting in New Zealand, Wellington, 1953, p.58.

8 Prothero, p.i.

some news about radio in Palmerston North, especially in its pioneering years, was discussed in the community's newspapers, radio offered an obvious and easily accessible medium for the two stations, 2Z0 and 2ZF, to discuss their activities, their plans and their problems. Consequently it is inevitable that much information about local broadcasting is lost forever and this exercise has been based largely upon the study of contemporary newspapers. The intensive nature of this research necessitated that concentration be placed upon one of the town's two newspapers but I am confident that little difference would have been made if attention had been directed, instead, to the alternative local paper. In many respects, by relying on how one medium, print, viewed another, radio, one is able to determine what issues and occurrences attracted the attention of contemporaries and to gain an insight into local relations between the press and the B stations. One also has to be wary of anecdotal material and of press reports which were obviously based upon hearsay or were contributed by organizations like the Manawatu Radio Club. Consequently, where possible material from one source has been checked against material from another source, for example, national radio publications.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor W.H. Oliver both for suggesting a topic which has proved fascinating and rewarding to study and for supervising work on it. I would also like to acknowledge the helpful advice and comments of Ms. M.A. Tennant and the cooperation and obliging service of the staff of the Massey University, General Assembly and Alexander Turnbull libraries. Special thanks are due also to the people who shared with me their experiences of stations 2Z0 and 2ZF. In particular I owe gratitude to Mr J. Vance Kyle and his wife for their hospitality and their cooperation. It is unfortunate that Mr. Kyle passed away during 1980 and did not see the completion of this history in which his own creation, 2Z0, plays such an important role.



PIONEERS

Enthusiasm and local pride played an important part in both introducing radio broadcasting to the Manawatu and in sustaining the district's B class stations in the face of attack from government and commercial interests. The role of local pride was clearly visible in the formation of the Palmerston North Radio Club and when, on July 9th 1924, Ben Hunter convened a meeting for the purpose of forming a local radio club, the Manawatu Daily Times observed that "Any town at present without a Radio Club is behind the times, and it behoves every amateur to get busy and see that one is formed in this district".<sup>9</sup> The meeting, which was held in the Linton Rifle Club Rooms in King Street, drew over twenty enthusiasts who decided to form a radio club, to be called the Palmerston North Radio Club, with the meeting's convener to be its chairman, secretary and treasurer, local Member of Parliament J.A.Nash to be its patron and the Mayor, F.J.Nathan, its president. While the drafting of rules was left to the elected committee, subscriptions were fixed at £1.1s.0d for senior members and 10s. 6d. for boys who had not left high school.

If the men who made up the local radio club were motivated by civic pride, they were also motivated by the enthusiasm which was evident in all radio "fans" and by their conviction that theirs was the medium of the future. Although many hurdles would have to be overcome before this enthusiasm bore fruit, it was readily visible when at the club's fortnightly meeting on August 5th it "was decided to hold a wireless exhibition and public demonstration ... to provide funds for the installation of an up-to-date 50 watt broadcasting station".<sup>10</sup> Although the goal had been implicit in the formation of the radio club, the move to establish radio broadcasting in the Manawatu began in earnest with this wireless exhibition, which was held in the Linton Rifle Club Rooms on the evenings of the 16, 17 and 18 September and which was inspired by the desire to introduce Palmerstonians to the potential of the new medium and to raise funds to build a transmitter. Posters exhorted the public to "Roll up! And help to establish a Broadcasting Station in

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9 MDT, July 9, 1924, p.2.

10 MDT, August 6, 1924, p.7.

Palmerston North Radio Club

# WIRELESS EXHIBITION

PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

Linton Rifle Club Hall

ON  
16th, 17th and 18th Sept., 1924

## ROLL UP!

And Help to Establish a Broadcasting  
Station in Palmerston North

Season Ticket 2/6. Admission 1/6

SEE THE SET

In Watchorn & McNaught's Window

From: Manawatu Evening Standard, May 13, 1967,  
Supplement, P. 3.

Palmerston North" and admission cost one shilling. The club was also hopeful of attracting further donations from the community and a canvass of the town was organized.

The exhibition aroused considerable interest, if only in the two 40-foot masts erected by the club and "C.Q." observed in his weekly radio notes in the Manawatu Daily Times that "The talk of the town at present is the Radio exhibition".<sup>11</sup> The desire to spread interest in radio beyond the ranks of a small group of enthusiasts is evident in a newspaper article which reassured the public that "An absence of any scientific descriptions etc. will be a feature of the exhibition".<sup>12</sup> Instead, the club sought to share with the public "the thrill of capturing music from the air"<sup>13</sup> and visitors to the exhibition were able not only to view numerous amateur-built sets and to have the workings of a multi-valve receiver demonstrated to them, but also heard selections from station KGO Oakland, California, from station 2BL Sydney, from station 27M Gisborne and from station 17A Auckland. Despite the fact that reception was hindered by inclement weather and the actions of local listeners with howling valves, who were denounced by club chairman Ben Hunter as deliberately setting out to mar the club's efforts, the hall was packed throughout the exhibition. A popular novelty was the double reproduction of gramophone music whereby a gramophone record was 'picked up' by a microphone and transmitted to a nearby radio receiver. This attraction utilised the small low-powered transmitter assembled by club enthusiasts within a fortnight of the club's inaugural meeting, a transmitter which, due to an absence of press comment, was probably used only for experimental purposes but which nevertheless meant that the club could boast, with a certain license, that it first commenced transmissions in July 1924.

Confidence that Palmerstonians had awakened to the possibilities of radio and that the town would soon have a broadcasting station of its own was boosted by the public response to the exhibition and by October the club had a transmission cage erected above its King Street clubrooms. Optimism mounted when, later in the month, the club chairman intimated that

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11 MDT, September 17, 1924, p.4.

12 MDT, September 16, 1924, p.7.

13 'ibid.,' p.7.

a complete transmitting station, including motor generator, valves, filter circuit and all accessories had been offered to the club "at a very low figure".<sup>14</sup> Establishing a radio broadcasting station in Palmerston North was not to be so easy, however, and progress was hindered by a lack of finance, Government red tape and the limitations inherent in any amateur body. Lack of finance was a major source of concern and subscription lists were distributed among members while the radio columnist in the Manawatu Daily Times exhorted local radio dealers to support the club. Two of the leading figures in the club, G. Forrest and J.V. Kyle were, in fact, radio dealers and there was an alliance of interests between club and dealers which stemmed as much from a genuine interest in radio as from any ulterior commercial motives. One could suggest, perhaps, that there may have been some radio dealers who questioned whether their interests would be best served by the club's endeavours since the main motivation behind the desire to establish a radio broadcasting station in the town was to enable people to receive broadcasts on comparatively inexpensive crystal sets. The cost of the components for such a set was approximately £3 in 1924 while a good multi-valve receiver could cost between £30 to £40. Astute dealers, however, probably realized that once Palmerstonians had been treated to a taste of radio they would start to demand the better sound quality and range available with a more expensive set. In the absence of a local station radio was destined to remain a minority interest, restricted to the technically competent or the relatively well-off, who could either construct or afford to purchase a multi-valve receiver to pick up the national and overseas stations.

While the club battled with the problems of establishing broadcasting in the town it continued to meet fortnightly, discussing plans for the future, listening to lectures on scientific and technical topics and building up a considerable library of specialist books. Since proficiency in morse was a prerequisite to gaining an amateur operator's license the club also held morse practices, tuition being given by club members, like P. Hunt, who worked in the local Telegraph office. At the same time, however, the club was conscious of the need to keep alive local interest in radio and on December 9 it planned to hold a radio concert in its clubrooms where the public were invited to hear a broadcast of the

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14 MDT, October 29, 1924, p.2.

Fisk Jubilee Singers from Taihape. Local radio enthusiasts frequently listened to broadcasts from Taihape and reception from the Taihape station was generally of a good standard. Technical complications were, however, a characteristic feature of early broadcasting and the club was unable to receive 3AQ Taihape due to a swinging in the station's carrier wave. The large crowd who attended in the hope of hearing the concert attested, however, to the fact that interest in radio had not waned since the exhibition in September although disappointments such as this must have reinforced the prejudices of those sceptical of the blessings of radio.

Interference, the "tearing rasps and heart rending howls, chirps and wails"<sup>15</sup> emitted by an improperly-tuned receiver, was a frequent source of distress to early wireless listeners and the local club made frequent pronouncements calling for a solution to the problem. One of the first acts of the club, in August 1924, had been to form a sub-committee which, in an attempt to restore order to the air waves, was directed to collect data on all aerials and sets in the district. The marked gap between popular expectations and the reality of early radio received prominence when in September 1924 a local Chinese fruiterer, Jack Lewis, proceeded against G. Forrest of the Forrest Radio Company in order to recover £22, being the sum expended on the purchase of a radio receiver from the defendant. The Manawatu Daily Times, in a display of racial insensitivity characteristic of the period, ran the story under the heading "Not Velly Loud" and although Lewis' expectations were unclear, it appearing that he may have expected to be able to monitor the speech of people in the street with the set, he was generally dissatisfied with its performance. The judge, however, ruled that the plaintiff's expectations were unrealistic and Lewis lost the case. An interesting insight into the suspicion with which the authorities viewed the new medium in these early years is revealed in the fact that since he was not a naturalised New Zealander, Lewis could not obtain a radio receiving license.

As time progressed and Palmerston North was still without a broadcasting station concern was expressed at the delay in the town's newspapers and this blow to local pride led a reporter from the Manawatu

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15 NZR, vol.1, no.6, p.5.

Daily Times to inquire into the strength of the local radio fraternity. Although no official local record was kept, it was ascertained that no more than twenty radio receiving licenses had been applied for in the year up to January, 1925. From this, the paper concluded, "it can readily be seen that the wireless movement in the town is very gradual in its development and does not compare very favourably with other centres. Wanganui, for instance, has about 300 practising wireless enthusiasts, and this, on a comparison of population, leaves Palmerston North very much behind".<sup>16</sup> In January 1925 it was revealed that the club had been unable to purchase the transmitter offered to it in October and it was decided that after purchasing the necessary parts club members would assemble the transmitter themselves, powering it with 'B', or dry cell, batteries. Club members gave generously of their spare time to build the transmitter and by February 4 the club only awaited the arrival of its broadcasting license before it could commence transmissions. Luck, and Government regulations, were not, however, on the club's side and new radio regulations gazetted on March 5 prohibited conductively-coupled transmitters so that the club's transmitter had to thus be altered to an inductively-coupled apparatus.

This and other difficulties delayed the commencement of transmissions for several months and the first broadcast recorded in the local press occurred on September 1 when local listeners were treated to items by a banjo trio comprising Messrs Pickering, Boer and Farmer, "the last named also giving a humorous song"<sup>17</sup> and to a talk on the Girl Citizens' Movement. Reports of the concert were "very satisfactory"<sup>18</sup> and three weeks later the club broadcast a second concert when the programme was widened due to the generosity of Berrymans Ltd in loaning a gramophone and records. The club's trials persisted, however, and in November J.V. Kyle, himself a foundation member of the club, commenced broadcasts from his amateur station 2AX which was first licensed in April, 1925. These 2AX broadcasts were of a low-powered experimental nature but were received as far away as Waiata, Colyton, a distance of approximately fifteen miles. Highlight of these test transmissions was an arrangement between Mr Kyle and Mr Crozier, a local listener, who tuned in his receiver to 2AX and then opened

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16 MDT, January 10, 1925, p.6.

17 MDT, September 2, 1925, p.6.

18 'ibid'., p.6.

telephone communications with Mr Kyle, thus enabling the latter to hear his own signals back again and so judge their modulation and quality. The local newspaper noted that Mr Kyle was hopeful of introducing regular transmissions from 2AX within the near future thus providing a service which would "fill the gap caused by the local club's long delay in getting 'on the air' again".<sup>19</sup> Mr Kyle's efforts were, however, rendered unnecessary by the eagerly-awaited official opening of the club's station, 2GI, on December 7 when the transmitting operator was none other than the same J.V. Kyle.

The official opening was a colourful affair and after the official speeches had been made, members of the official party were taken to the homes of club members where they had the pleasure of listening-in to the evening's concert, which was presented by local amateurs. The broadcast was made from the top floor of Messrs Collinson & Cunningham's premises in King Street and the firm provided the club with a room free of charge to use as a studio, supplied heavy drapes to minimise echo and allowed it to erect a transmitting shack and aerial on the building's roof. Apart from any feelings of community service, and the public goodwill which would accrue from this gesture, the management of Collinson & Cunningham Ltd were, no doubt, aware that their generosity to the radio club would have good promotional value since announcers would be sure to state that they were broadcasting from the firm's premises. The move probably owed much to A. Roe, an enthusiastic member of the club who shared announcing duties on the early station with P. Hunt, and who was a departmental manager of Collinson & Cunninghames. The firm also had a vested interest in widening the appeal of radio since they sold radio sets and were, for example, sole agents in the area for the 'King' nentrodyne receiver. In his opening speech the President of the Palmerston North Radio Club, Mr A.H.M. Wright, restated the club's aim of providing entertainment for those without expensive multi-valve sets and this local orientation was reflected in the transmitter's very low output, which was only five watts, although the club was anxious to raise this to at least twenty watts as soon as sufficient funds were available. 2GI, as the station was known, was to broadcast twice weekly, from 7p.m. to 9p.m. on Monday evenings and from 7.30p.m. to 9.30p.m. on Fridays and as well as gramophone records supplied by Berryman's, the club was hopeful of broadcasting concerts by local artists.

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<sup>19</sup> MDT, November 11, 1925, p.3.

Although the establishment of a broadcasting station in Palmerston North was, as we have seen, the result of a long and gradual process, the months following the station's opening saw many developments and improvements in terms of technical standards, programming and community support. As O'Donoghue observed, "events and ideas in Broadcasting move so rapidly that the laggard is soon engulfed"<sup>20</sup> and the members of the Palmerston North Radio Club were conscious of the fact that if they were to convince the local community of the benefits of radio broadcasting, they had to continually up-date and improve the station as funds allowed. In early 1926 the station's call sign was changed to 2YF and its power raised from five to twenty-five watts and in August the call sign was again changed, this time to 2ZF, in response to a government regulation that all privately operated stations had to include the letter 'Z' in their call sign. At the same time the station was remodelled and its power doubled to fifty watts. The optimism and confidence of club members was, however, strong and New Zealand Radio noted on its programme pages that this fifty watt output was only temporary and that output would be raised to 350 watts in the future. Although the station's output was never to rise so dramatically, reaching an output of 150 watts in 1930 which was never increased until the station's closure in 1937, the process of improvement and refinement continued and by December 1926 the club had installed a motor generator which replaced the need to rely on costly dry cell batteries.<sup>21</sup> So burdensome had been the station's reliance on batteries that club members frequently had to bring along their own batteries so that the evening's transmissions might be broadcast and even this did not prevent the station from occasionally having to close down when the batteries failed.

In an attempt to gain the support of the local business community in order to purchase this motor generator, which cost over £48, the club wrote to the Chamber of Commerce soliciting funds. Although the Chamber refrained from giving any official support, several members subscribed to £5 debentures which paid interest at the rate of six per cent. Awareness of the need for the support of the business sector and of the radio station's

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20 O'Donoghue, p.13.

21 Club reports suggest that the station's output was raised to 250 watts in 1933 when crystal control was introduced but The N.Z. Radio Times and the N.Z. Radio Call Book revealed that 2ZF's power remained at 150 watts right up to 1937.



potential for publicising the town no doubt lay behind a competition organized by the radio club and sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in July-August 1927. The Chamber offered a prize of one guinea for the best talk on 'Palmerston North As a Business Centre', a talk which was to occupy no more than ten minutes and which was to be transmitted by 2ZF. Involvement by community leaders in supporting the station increased dramatically with the changes which shook the radio club after December 1927 and this involvement gained recognition with the creation in May 1928 of an Advisory Board comprised of local political and business figures. This body, obviously designed to increase the sense of participation felt by those who were called upon to support the club, included the mayor, A.J. Graham, the Members of Parliament for Palmerston North and Feilding, J.A. Nash and G. Elliott respectively, H.L. Cunningham of Collinson & Cunningham Ltd., H.L. Free, the manager of the C.M. Ross Company, and various leading figures from Foxton, Pahiatua, Shannon and Rongotea.

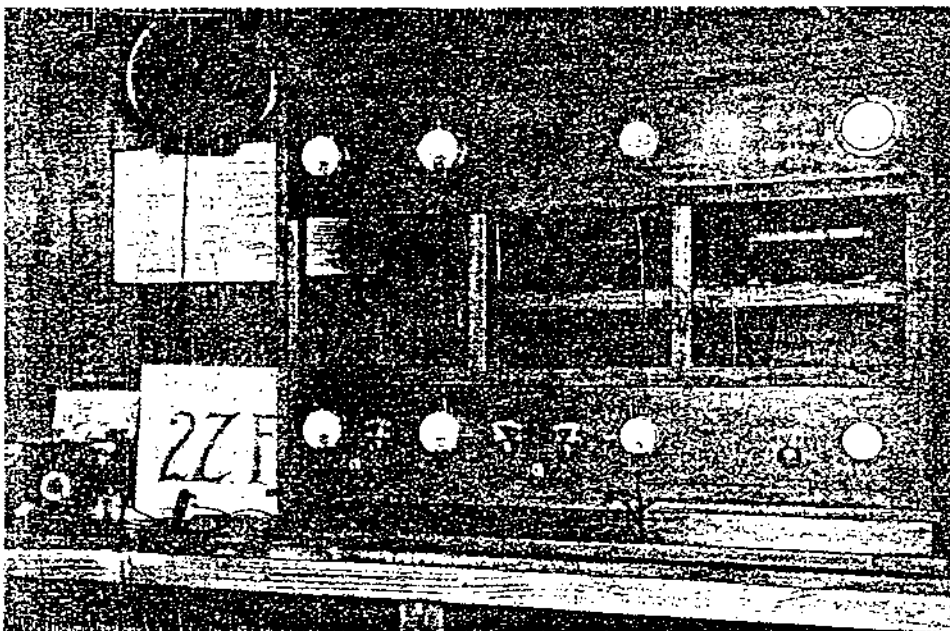
In December 1927 the Palmerston North Radio Club was at its nadir: its membership totalled only thirty eight while debts amounted to £98 and when a valve blew in the club's transmitter, thus putting the station off the air, it seemed probable that this might spell the ignoble end for local broadcasting. At an urgently called special meeting club president A.H.K. Wright was ousted by W.A. Waters, chief engineer with the Manawatu-Croua Electric Power Board and an avid radio "fan" who was to dominate the club right up to 1937. Adjourning the club's annual meeting sine die until he had analysed the financial position, Waters, who was a popular and well-known figure in the community, had within the space of ten days collected pledges and gifts totalling £150 in goods and cash. Spurred on by this support, the previously postponed annual general meeting of the club decided to build a new and much improved transmitting station, which was officially opened by the Mayor in March of the next year. This meeting also decided to change the club's name to the Manawatu Radio Club, thus giving recognition to the support which the club enjoyed from listeners in surrounding districts.

Messrs Collinson & Cunningham continued to give the club valuable support and provided enlarged studio accommodation, had a private entrance from King Street put in for the club and handed over a cheque for £100 towards the improvements while local radio dealers and radio firms in both New Zealand and Australia also donated parts or sold them to the club at cost price. W.A. Waters carried out much of the construction work himself

2ZF FACILITIES IN 1929



STUDIO OF 2ZF—MANAWATU RADIO CLUB. In Collinson & Cunningsame Ltd. Building,  
Palmerston North.



Transmitting Plant of 2ZF—Manawatu Radio Club

and with a new transmitter, a new microphone, a new aerial and a new enlarged studio there was a new mood within the club, one of optimism balanced by an increased awareness of the need to court support from the local community. New Zealand Radio saw the club rising phoenix-like, proclaiming "The old 2ZF is now no more and out of its ruins has risen a newer and better station".<sup>22</sup> In his opening speech the mayor, A.J. Graham, suggested that "The opening of this station marks another epoch [sic] in the progressive development of the rich and marvellous Manawatu" and he expressed his confidence "that the club's efforts would be of permanent benefit, both commercially and socially to the district".<sup>23</sup>

If the station's survival reflected community support for its work, the enthusiasm of radio club members and the improvements which they effected aroused further interest and support from the public. In particular, the club enjoyed the valuable support of both the local press and national radio publications. New Zealand Radio, which later became for a while the official organ of the club, followed its fortunes with avid interest, promising the club, whose membership totalled 38 in December 1927, a set of bound volumes of New Zealand Radio when membership topped the 400 mark.<sup>24</sup> Improbable though this goal might seem, such was the enthusiasm generated by the new station that the club ended 1928 with 408 financial members, thus earning both its bound set and the admiration of New Zealand Radio. Awarding its prize, the magazine upheld the club as an inspiration to other radio societies and "a heartening demonstration of what far-sightedness, keen cooperation and sustained determination can do".<sup>25</sup> The local press also played an important role in gaining support for the club, aiding W.A. Waters as he sought to convince bodies like the Palmerston North Citizens' Luncheon Club that it was in their own self interest, as businessmen, to support 2ZF. The Manawatu Daily Times, for example, chronicled the station's "remarkable achievements"<sup>26</sup> and in a

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22 NZR, vol.4, no.8, p.15.

23 MDT, March 8, 1928, p.6.

24 In September 1929 New Zealand Radio introduced a special section for news from the Manawatu Radio Club and the Radio Society of Christchurch. In late October the magazine also became the official organ of the Auckland Radio Society. This arrangement lapsed after the merger of New Zealand Radio and New Zealand Engineer in 1931.

25 NZR, vol.6, no.3, p.15.

26 MDT, May 10, 1928, p.6.

lengthy article of May 1928, entitled "Boosting Manawatu By Means of Radio", the paper addressed the business community thus:

Three times every week Palmerston North enters hundreds of homes throughout New Zealand and on each of these occasions the thoughts of thousands of people are turned to this city of the Manawatu. How has this been brought about? By the wonderful invention of wireless and the enthusiasm of a band of radio fans who have erected in our midst the transmitting station 2ZF.... the business community of Palmerston North has much to gain from the keeping of the name of the town before the people of the Dominion. That the Manawatu Radio Club is giving the district a splendid advertisement cannot be gainsaid and its reward should be the united support of the community.<sup>27</sup>

With the support and enthusiasm of the public behind it, the club continued to make improvements to the station and 1930, for example, saw the completion of a new motor generator and the commencement of broadcasts on an extra night each week.

Improvements in station plant during these years were accompanied by developments in the field of broadcast content as the station began to offer an increasingly varied programme. June 1926 saw the first of a series of dances under the auspices of the radio club which were held at the Anzac Club and in December concert parties and guest artists began to appear in the regular programmes. By early 1927 local news, weather and sports reports also appeared while the business community was catered for by regular stock market reports. The club also boasted that its transmissions, which, in the years up to 1932, were generally restricted to between the hours of 7p.m. to 9.30p.m. two or three nights a week, were especially tailored for country dwellers who had to retire early in the evening.

Children's sessions, composed of birthday calls, stories and items given by children and guided by a dedicated band of 'Uncles', 'Aunts' and 'Cousins', were a popular feature of broadcasting in these years and many

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27 MDT, May 7, 1928, p.8.

New Zealanders would tune in to the children's sessions on the Sydney stations 2BL and 2FC.<sup>28</sup> These sessions, popular with children and adults alike, were given the peak evening listening time by many stations and they did much to boost the popularity of 2ZF. Attempts had been made at broadcasting a children's session on several occasions, and had been comprised largely of the reading of children's stories. However, regular weekly children's sessions, conducted by 'Uncle Jim' (I.N. Leet) and 'Uncle Ken' (K. Collins), did not begin until early 1927. These sessions, of which birthday calls comprised an increasingly large portion, soon developed an avid following in the town. By September the club had a roll of nearly one hundred nieces and nephews who contributed to the session. Flexibility, and the potential for community involvement which it bestowed, was, perhaps, the main virtue of the B class stations and 2ZF was able to broadcast special programmes for the Children's Health Camp held at Awapuni Racecourse in 1930.

With the 'rebirth' of 2ZF in 1928, a rebirth which reflected a re-discovery of radio by the local community, programming developed apace. In an attempt to encourage listeners in surrounding districts to feel a part of the station, these districts were invited to organize their own programmes of items by local artists. As a result the studio was booked many weeks in advance and artists from Shannon, Feilding and other districts availed themselves of the club's invitation to perform. November 1928 saw 2ZF's first broadcast of band music when the Palmerston North Garrison Band was broadcast from the open space on the roof of Collinson & Cunningham's premises. Previous attempts at broadcasting such a concert had been cancelled due to inclement weather and the necessity to play outdoors reflected the cramped studio conditions of the station at this time. 1928 also saw a special session during Show week, when the station was "almost continuously on the air"<sup>29</sup> and a relay of the A & P smoke concert, including speeches by the Governor-General, Sir Charles Ferguson, and the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates. With characteristic adulation New Zealand Radio stated its conviction that 2ZF had "the honour of being the only station in New Zealand to broadcast a speech by the Governor-General, Sir Charles Ferguson"<sup>30</sup> and the highlight of the year for the club was the successful relay of this concert to the Southern Cross aviators through station 3YA in Christchurch.

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28 K.G. Collins, Broadcasting Grave and Gay, Christchurch, 1967, p.48.

29 NZR, vol.5, no.4, p.4.

30 'ibid.', p.4.



*2ZF STATION ORCHESTRA*

*[Lewis Photo.]*

*Standing: J. Creighton, J. Codd, H. Duchman, G. Thompson, H. Newth, Miss C. Wood, A. Roe (Announcer), I. N. Leet (Announcer).  
Sitting: Miss G. McKenzie, Mrs. H. Prince, Miss J. Hankin, W. A. Waters (President), H. Prince (Conductor), Miss F. Howley, Miss C. Bailey.  
In front: G. Beattie, A. De Malmanche.*

From: New Zealand Radio, vol. 7, no. 11, p. 11.

By 1929 support from local artists allowed the club to present a truly varied programme and during the year studio concerts were given by groups as diverse as the Woodville Boys' Band, the Palmerston North Junior Orchestra, the Palace Theatre orchestra, the Salvation Army Band, Larkin's Dance Band and parties from Feilding, Pahiatua and Ballance as well as from the local departmental stores, Rosco's and Collinson & Cunningham's. By 1929 the station also had its own permanent orchestra of fourteen and the club claimed with characteristic modesty that "2ZF is the only B Class station in New Zealand and probably in Australasia where a permanent orchestra is to be found".<sup>31</sup> So enthusiastic was the response of local musicians to radio broadcasting that the club boasted that the size of the orchestra could easily be boosted to twenty-four players if adequate studio accommodation was available.

If programming was hindered by technical features, like cramped studio conditions, it was also beneficially affected by technical advances. The granting of permission to broadcast a description of the Possibles vs. Probables match to be played in Palmerston North in May 1929, before the first test against the British team, spurred the club into constructing a special portable microphone amplifier for relay work such as this. Used in conjunction with landlines to the Opera House and the Showgrounds this portable amplifier was to be increasingly used by the club to broadcast important rugby, boxing and wrestling, as well as social, fixtures.

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<sup>31</sup> NZR, vol.7, no.10; p.10.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Like its fellow B class stations up and down the country, 2ZF was in an unenviable financial position for much of its existence, deprived of license fees and advertising revenue and under attack from the gramophone companies.<sup>32</sup> Although 2ZF was, as we shall see, to enjoy a privileged status after the inauguration of the Broadcasting Board in 1932, it was still largely dependent on the goodwill of the community, the generosity of local business firms and the dedication and enthusiasm of the men and women who ran the station. Of these people, some, in the early years, were radio dealers and salesmen, and the majority were avid radio enthusiasts, to whom running the station was not only a community service but, more importantly, perhaps, a fascinating hobby and a chance to mix with like-minded brethren. The club was also dependent on the generosity of its listeners, who were encouraged to show their appreciation of the station's broadcasts by becoming club members. The club's president noted in 1931, however, that there was "a decided tendency in these times for the listeners, after paying their 30/- license fee to the Government, to feel that they have paid enough for the privilege of listening to any broadcasting".<sup>33</sup> Although the club generally received an income just sufficient to meet expenses, during 1931 the number of financial members fell by seventy from the previous year's peak of 589 and the club's financial position was such that a canvasser had to be engaged to raise sufficient funds to carry on broadcasting.

If 2ZF had to cope with the repercussions of straitened economic circumstances, it had also to cope with the fickle tastes of the listening public. As the Radio Record Annual noted, "There is a psychology peculiar to radio which somehow suggests to the individual listener that the service should be conducted to suit his own particular needs"<sup>34</sup> and in May 1927 the club acknowledged that "A fair amount of criticism has been levelled at the quality of the programmes broadcast, often, unfortunately, by people not in the position to judge".<sup>35</sup>

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32 See p.19.

33 MDT, November 10, 1931, p.5.

34 Radio Record Annual 1934, p.11.

35 NZR, vol.2, no.12, p.17.



Generally, 2ZF enjoyed an uncritical attitude from the community, though this was to change when the introduction of another local station led to divided loyalties, and people tended to recognize the unselfish motivation and amateur status of those who provided this service. Criticism of the station's programmes could, however, be vociferous and in May 1932 the prevalence of 'American trash' on 2ZF prompted 'Anti-Black' to write to the Manawatu Daily Times suggesting, among other things, that the principal of the station take "the whole of Sunday's (last night's) programme down to the Fitzherbert bridge and drop it over."<sup>36</sup> The vigour with which the editor of the paper sprang to the defence of the club in replying to this letter provides an insight into the support which the club enjoyed. Turning criticism of the station into an attack on public apathy, the editor called for increased public support of the club, which was at this time once again experiencing financial difficulties, and he suggested that "Its officers, who do their arduous work for the love of it, cannot be expected to continue indefinitely without the backing of listeners. Criticism under such circumstances is hardly fair".<sup>37</sup>

The club also encountered criticism from the local churches for its apparent unwillingness to broadcast local church services. The club had broadcast the occasional church service in its early years but in 1929 it made tentative arrangements with one church for special church services, arrangements which it later abandoned. The club justified this decision on the grounds that those who sought such broadcasts were already adequately served and that it lacked sufficient qualified operators. Instead, it offered a Sunday night programme of "carefully selected gramophone records and occasionally studio items".<sup>38</sup> As a result of its actions, however, the club was "attacked from the pulpit with certain remarks that were untrue"<sup>39</sup> and, having resorted to what the club attacked as "unfair tactics",<sup>40</sup> the local Council of Christian Congregations was instrumental in having 2ZF ordered to halve its power on Sunday nights on the grounds that its transmissions impaired local reception of 3YA's church services. The apparent anxiety of the local churches to break into the

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36 MDT, May 2, 1932, p.6.

37 'ibid'., p.6.

38 MDT, July 29, 1929, p.7.

39 NZR, vol.8, no.4, p.11.

40 'ibid'., p.11.

ether tells the lie to Grigg's claim that "There has never been a great demand for radio services as the people prefer the actual worship itself"<sup>41</sup> and while the radio club's relations with the Council of Christian Congregations were to remain soured by this episode, its rival, 220, was to actively court the favour of the body.

If the club's generally warm relationship with the local community was to be tempered by the occasional outburst and a reluctance to pay for the privilege of listening-in, it was to face a far more serious challenge from the world of business. The first dispute was with the Australian Performing Right Association over the matter of performing rights. Although the club had amicable discussions with the body in 1930 when station announcer A. Roe was in Sydney, discussions which led to an agreement whereby the club would pay a nominal fee to the association, the club became embroiled in the association's dispute with the B class stations in 1931. As a result of the dispute 22F had to cease transmissions for several days but negotiations continued by cablegram and by January 28 the club was able to resume broadcasting, having reached its own agreement with the association.

The dispute with the gramophone companies, who demanded a copyright payment for every record broadcast, was, in contrast, a long drawn-out one and, coupled with the desire of a Labour government for a monopoly of commercial broadcasting, was to spell the end for the majority of New Zealand's B class stations, 22F and 220 included, in 1937. After 1932, however, the dispute was to be of only academic interest to the club since 22F, as a subsidised B class station, was protected by the Broadcasting Board's agreement with the gramophone companies. The dispute remained, however, a matter of great concern to 220 and supporters of "independent" B stations, like 220, were frequently critical of the fact that while the government was reluctant to enter into the dispute, a few subsidised stations were protected from the treats and manoeuvrings of the gramophone companies.

The first inklings of the seriousness of the dispute came in November 1930 when all gramophone record dealers in the country were forbidden to loan records to broadcasting stations, a move which hit

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41 J.R. Grigg, The Last Ripple: A Century of Methodism in the Manawatu, Palmerston North, 1972, p.80.

particularly hard these stations, like 2ZF, which were not owned by a firm which sold records themselves and could thus circumvent the embargo. The club had previously relied on records loaned by Berrymans and Cole's Music Shop, who had their contribution acknowledged over the air, but it was now forced to appeal to its members who by December had pledged the loan of over four thousand records for the station's use. As many of these records were in far from new condition, however, the tone and quality of the station's transmissions noticeably declined. Although the embargo was to lapse, and 2ZF was to find protection under the wing of the Broadcasting Board, for the majority of the Dominion's B class stations the years up to 1937 were haunted by the spectre of the gramophone companies, who pressed their claims for copyright with legal threats at regular intervals throughout this period and who enjoyed the neutral stance of successive governments, who refused to step into the dispute.

In the face of such problems, the radio club was fortunate to enjoy significant support, support which went beyond that which we have already discussed. In 1928, for example, the Palmerston North Borough Council decided to give the club a subsidy of £50, although the grant had originally been estimated at £30. Moving that the subsidy be raised to £50, a suggestion opposed by the Mayor, A.J. Graham, on financial grounds, Councillor A.E. Mansford claimed that "There was not a shadow of a doubt that the station was of immense advantage to Palmerston North.... and it was a big advertisement for the town".<sup>42</sup> The subsidy was again granted in 1929 but the club decided not to reapply for it in 1930 due to the economic situation and its conviction that the station should be financially supported by its listeners. Help for the club also came from further afield and, unlike the majority of its fellow B class stations, 2ZF was to enjoy a harmonious relationship with the Radio Broadcasting Company and its successor, the Broadcasting Board.

In February 1931, when the club was experiencing difficulties with programmes due to the dispute with the gramophone companies, it decided to accept the offer of the Radio Broadcasting Company to relay the Wednesday night 'International' programme from 2YA using a Post and Telegraph landline. This weekly transmission, which consisted of a

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<sup>42</sup> MDT, May 22, 1928, p.6.

recorded programme of American popular music and a talk on international affairs was an important innovation which heralded the introduction of 'feature' programmes. This arrangement, club officials claimed, made 2ZF the first B class station to commence regular relays from an A class station and it must be taken as a significant qualification to Mackay's claim that the Radio Broadcasting Company "acted as though they were unaware of the existence of these [B class] stations."<sup>43</sup> It also revealed the extent to which programming difficulties had forced the club to modify its earlier attitude towards the Radio Broadcasting Company. In July 1927, for example, dissatisfaction with the Company's programmes motivated the club to call a public meeting which unanimously passed a motion protesting at the quality of broadcasts from the Company's stations and, in the event of the Company failing to improve its service, urging the Government to "exercise its rights and take over the control of the stations".<sup>44</sup>

The introduction of broadcasting control by the Broadcasting Board in 1932 saw not only the end of the Wednesday night 'International' programme but also the beginnings of an attempt to meet the demands of those who claimed that the national stations gave a service that was far from national. Within three months of the Board's inauguration it had appointed a coverage commission to investigate radio reception throughout the Dominion and to evolve ways of improving the service. The commission, which tested reception in 188 areas, both in the North and South Islands, and which reported back by July 1932, found that the reception of transmissions from stations taken over by the Board was unsatisfactory in various areas. Acting upon this advice the Board granted a monthly subsidy to eight private stations throughout the country, including 2ZF. Prothero suggests that the subsidised B stations were also helped through the circulation of programmes of gramophone recordings.<sup>45</sup> The announcement of financial assistance from the Board came at a timely moment since the club had been forced to admit in May 1932 that unless it received urgent financial aid from its listeners the station would have to close and although the club was reluctant to discuss the Board's subsidy to it, it was to later admit that this subsidy played an increasingly important part in ensuring the station's survival.<sup>46</sup>

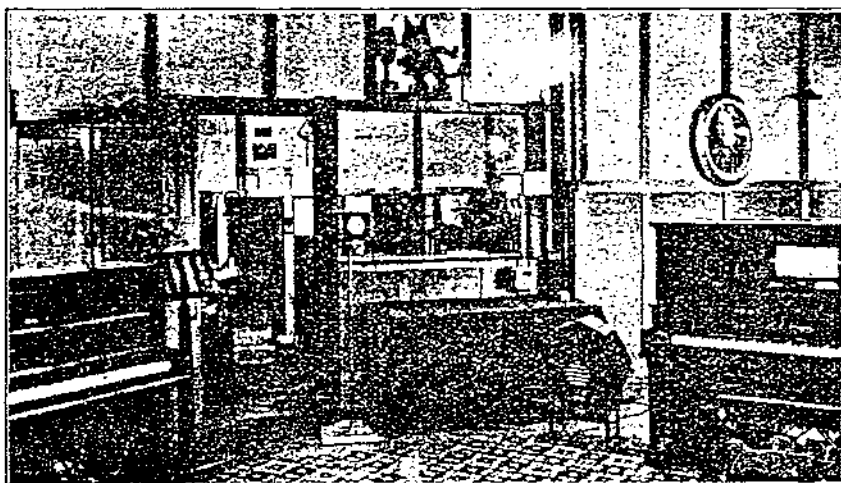
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43 Mackay, p.36.

44 NZR, vol.3, no.6, p.15.

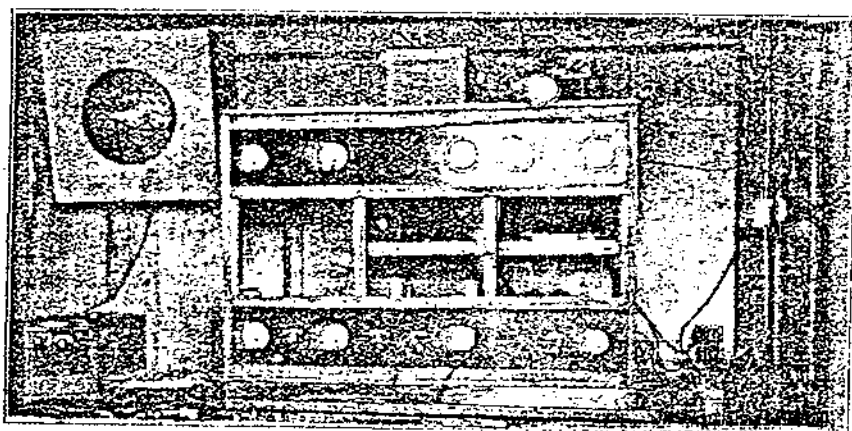
45 Prothero, p.78.

46 See IDT, May 19, 1937, p.5.



*View of 2ZF's studio, showing the announcer's room in the background. All the amplifiers, relay lines, etc., and gramophone turntables are in the small room, and the controls are arranged for easy operation by one man.*

—Lewis Studio, Palmerston North.



*View of transmitter room on the roof. Meters are provided to read tank amperes; aerial amperes; oscillator and modulator currents; plate volts; first stage plate current; filament current and volts; oscillator grid current; and grid current in modulators. The monitors' receiver and speaker are on the left, while the wave-meter is in the centre of transmitter.*

—Lewis Studio, Palmerston North.

From: The N.Z. Radio Times (and Traders Digest including The Radio Log), vol. 1, no. 6,  
P. 4 (Top), P. 5 (Bottom).

Significantly, the Broadcasting Board had already acknowledged the area's poor reception of 2YA a month before the report of the coverage commission was released and June 8 saw the announcement by club president W.A. Waters that, beginning that evening, 2ZF would relay 2YA by landline on Monday, Thursday and Saturday evenings. He stated, however, that it was the Board's wish that 2ZF preserve its own identity and the club would continue to organize its own programmes on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday evenings. This arrangement was to continue under the National Broadcasting Service introduced by the Labour Government and persisted until the station's closure in August 1937.

In an attempt to give at least the semblance of listener representation the Board also appointed an advisory council of eight members who were, "in the main, representative of amateur radio societies or clubs"<sup>47</sup> and W.A. Waters, President of the Manawatu Radio Club, was appointed to this body. Increasingly, however, the council found itself subject to criticism of its apparent impotence and there were those who observed that once its members had secured subsidies from the Board for their own particular clubs they were little concerned with the plight of the remaining B class stations.

By 1932 it is possible to talk about the various features that went together to define the character of the club and its radio broadcasting station. Firstly, the club liked to see itself as playing a pioneering role and W.A. Waters suggested on one occasion that the experiences of the club in its early years were similar to those of the local Aero Club, with which he was also associated. Dating its first transmissions from July 1924, the club frequently claimed in the local press that it was the oldest station still transmitting regularly although it is interesting to note that the club was more cautious about making such claims in national radio publications.<sup>48</sup> The club was eager to add to this pioneering reputation and hence it claimed to be the first B class station to commence regular relays from an A class station, the first B class station to receive a borough subsidy, the first B class station to come to an agreement with the Australasian Performing Right

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47 Prothero, p.68.

48 The club's claim would appear to be disproved by the fact that 4XD Dunedin began regular transmission in October 1922 using the call sign 4AB. See H. Paske, "Radio Alpha: Doing It For Love", The New Listener, Vol.96, No.2130 (Nov.8,1980), 44-45.

Association and, in 1929, the only B class station in the country to have its own permanent orchestra.

This pioneering role was evident in those long distance relays which early broadcasters, like children playing with a new toy, were particularly fond of and which were to bring New Zealanders closer in touch with the rest of the world. These relays so caught the imagination of the listening public that by 1927 the club had a landline from W.A. Water's residence, where his short-wave receiver was located, to the station. So successful was this arrangement that by the end of the year New Zealand Radio was lauding 2ZF as "a small broadcasting station with a big record".<sup>49</sup> With the help of W.A. Waters and the Post and Telegraph Department the station had successfully relayed PCJJ Holland, 2XAF, 2XAD and KOA America, an achievement unequalled by any other New Zealand station and one which the club added to in the following year. In November 1928 the station treated listeners to a rebroadcast of a short-wave radiophone conversation between 2ME Sydney and 2XAF Schenectady, New York, a considerable feat since the two operators were a distance of ten thousand miles apart. New Zealand Radio cautiously noted that "It is claimed by the secretary of the Manawatu club that this was the first time that both the short-wave stations carrying on a two-way conversation have been rebroadcast by a Dominion station".<sup>50</sup>

If this pioneering image was an important element that the club built into the lore surrounding its station, it was equally proud of its amateur status. Unlike the majority of the country's B class stations, which were owned and operated by companies or individuals who had a financial interest in popularising gramophone music or radio, the club's station was operated by a small band of enthusiastic amateurs who were happy to devote their leisure hours to an endeavour which was both a community service and a rewarding hobby. Associated with this amateur status was the club's eschewal of activism with regard to national broadcasting policy. The first moves to organize the B class stations, in 1928, had been directed solely at company owned stations and by the time that further efforts were made to form a common front in the 1930s the Manawatu Radio Club had reasons of its own for refraining from taking an aggressive stand on broadcasting affairs. Reliant, from 1931, on the Radio Broadcasting Company

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49 NZR, vol.4, no.2, p.6.

50 NZR, vol.5, no.13, p.5.

to provide one third of its weekly transmissions and, from 1932, on the Broadcasting Board for both financial assistance and relays which comprised half of its transmissions, it would have been imprudent in the extreme to have criticized the Government's broadcasting policy. Club president W.A. Waters, who dominated the club and to whom much of the credit for the station's continued survival must be accorded, was, as a member of the Board's advisory council, hardly likely to question its policy with regard to the B stations. Waters appears, in fact, to have shared that adulation of British broadcasting, a system untroubled by the existence of private stations, which motivated successive Governments in their attitude to the medium. Speaking, for example, to the Feilding Civic Club in 1933 he stated his conviction that "The British Broadcasting Control was the best in the world and sooner or later every country would adopt that policy".<sup>51</sup>

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51 MDT, November 8, 1933, p.8.



2Z0

If 2ZF paved the way for broadcasting in Palmerston North, it was, perhaps, 2Z0, the station owned and operated by J.V. Kyle, which reaped the rewards, in terms of listener popularity, that accrued to many B class stations during the 1930s. As in any endeavour, 2Z0 owed much to a large number of helpers and supporters but the station was, above all, the creation and the hobby of J.V. Kyle, whose warm personality explained much of the station's popularity and whose tenacity not only played a large part in ensuring the station's survival until its closure in 1937 but also provided a ready source of controversy. A signaller with the Wellington Mounted Rifles during the First World War, Kyle returned to Palmerston North in 1919, working for F.A. Wollerman at the Central Electric Company before establishing his own business, Wireless Supplies Ltd, in 1924. In the same year he joined the Palmerston North Radio Club, was elected its president in late 1924 and played a prominent part in the club's activities, both as an operator and an announcer, until 1926.

According to published accounts of Kyle's life<sup>52</sup> he continued to be an active member of the club until 1931 when a club rule passed by its president, W.A. Waters, forbade anyone who sold or serviced radio sets from being a member of the club. Rejected by the club he had so loyally served, these accounts tell us, Kyle set up his own broadcasting station, 2Z0. Research, however, has proved this version, probably based upon the vagaries of the human memory, to be untrue and rather than being the spontaneous creation of a case of pique, 2Z0 was the result of many years of experimentation and of growing public interest in Kyle's work. This version still, perhaps, has some value for it provides a pointer to possible relations between Kyle and the man who dominated 2ZF, W.A. Waters. Although the annual report of the radio club in November 1926 records that, during the past year, the club had lost the services of its operator, Kyle continued to devote much of his spare time to radio work and was one

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52 See A.R. Harris, "J.V. Kyle", Break-In (Official Journal of the New Zealand Association of Radio Transmitters Inc.), vol.46, no.3, 49-50. Mancer, J. "Personality of the City: J.V. Kyle", Manawatu Evening Standard, May 13, 1967, Supplement, 3.

of four local radio amateurs in 1927. Aware, no doubt, that the popularisation of radio was in his business interests Kyle also continued to support the club through the donation of parts and equipment.

Described by A.R. Harris as 'one of New Zealand's pioneer Broadcasting and Amateur Radio personalities',<sup>53</sup> Kyle was, within a short while of leaving the club, experimenting with extremely low-powered transmissions on the broadcast band using his amateur station and an episode from 1927 provides an example of the way in which the bonds of radio united Kyle and the radio club. In July of that year 2ZF burnt out its main filtering condenser, thus putting the station off the air for the night and rather than leave local small-set owners without their radio entertainment, Kyle transmitted a two hour programme on the broadcast wavelength using his amateur station 2AX. Even after Kyle had commenced regular transmissions from his own station, 2Z0 and 2ZF overcame any rivalries that may have existed between them to provide a service to the community. This was evidenced in the complementary manner in which their broadcast hours were arranged, Station 2Z0 providing a programme on Tuesday, 2ZF's silent day, and the way in which they cooperated on special occasions. During Show week in 1932, for example, 2Z0 provided special broadcasts from the Showgrounds and in order to allow the station to come on the air 2ZF did not relay 2YA on the Thursday and Saturday nights and closed down for half an hour on the Wednesday and Friday nights.

The process of experimentation and refinement continued until November 1930 when, encouraged by the response from those who had heard his test transmissions, 2Z0 came on the air and transmitted on a low power, awaiting the arrival of high-powered material and valves from overseas. The official opening was set for February 3, 1931 but was delayed a month due to the Hawkes Bay earthquake and the dispute involving the Australasian Performing Right Association. The Hawkes Bay disaster was, as Collins notes, "a triumph for amateur and professional radio"<sup>54</sup>

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53 Harris, p.49.

54 Collins, p.38.

and Kyle placed his amateur station at the disposal of the authorities, one of a handful of radio amateurs who provided a vital link between the isolated disaster area and the rest of the Dominion. The episode revealed radio's worth in times of crisis and emergency, its ability to communicate and to reassure, and station 2ZF also played its part, going on the air every night in order to assist with inquiries for missing relatives and friends.

The demands of the Australasian Performing Right Association were met by the actions of local listeners, enthusiastic about 2Z0's transmissions, who subscribed to a fund to pay the performing rights which the body demanded and by March 3 2Z0 was officially on the air, broadcasting from 7 to 9.30p.m. on Tuesdays, from 1 to 3p.m. on Saturdays and from 11a.m. to 12.30p.m. on Sundays. These transmissions were made from Kyle's Waldegrave Street residence where the station's transmitter was located in a shack at the rear of the property and connected by cable to the studio in his front room. Harris observes that any construction work done by Kyle was "the acme of perfection"<sup>55</sup> and a significant proportion of 2Z0's popularity was due to the technical excellence of its signals, which made for both better tonal quality and easier tuning. Hence the transmitter, which by changing the coils could also be used for shortwave work, represented the 'state of the art' in radio and included, for example, provision for relays and for the fading of music, either out or one into the other. Although the arrangement was an elaborate one, with both telephonic communication and visual signals to link performer and operator, the cramped studio conditions necessitated, for example, that when the Salvation Army band performed for 2Z0's popular Sunday morning transmissions it did so on the front lawn of Kyle's residence.

2Z0 soon developed a wide following who were intensely loyal to it and who were quick to protest whenever it appeared that the station was not getting a 'fair deal' from the authorities. The intense loyalty of regular listeners to the station and the feedback, both negative and positive, enjoyed by broadcasters in this period were revealed in

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55 Harris, p.50.

November 1931 when 2Z0 received a phone call criticizing its programmes. Mr. Kyle's 'on air' reference to the call, as the Manawatu Daily Times noted in a lengthy article on the episode, "brought forward shoals of condemnations and the studio telephone was kept going continuously by indignant listeners who voiced their opinions of the culprit in no uncertain terms".<sup>56</sup> The incident not only revealed the loyalty of 2Z0's listeners, it also revealed their geographical spread and communications complimenting Mr Kyle on his transmissions were received not only from Foxton, Dannevirke and Levin but also from places as far away as Hawera and Blenheim.

The first grumblings of discontent with the authorities came when it was revealed in July 1932 that 2ZF was to relay 2YA on Monday, Thursday and Saturday evenings and was to receive financial assistance from the Broadcasting Board in order to allow it to provide this service. 2Z0 had applied for permission to broadcast on Thursday evenings, a request supported by a petition bearing 160 signatures, but due to the Board's arrangement with 2ZF to relay 2YA on this night the plea was turned down. 2Z0 was, however, granted extended hours, which totalled one hour's extra broadcasting per week, as a concession. This addition increased 2Z0's weekly broadcast schedule to a total of six and a half hours, a total which was to remain approximately the same until the station's closure in 1937. Towards the end of July Mr Kyle announced that unless financial aid was forthcoming he would be forced to close the station down and there were many in the community who felt that by giving assistance to 2ZF and not to 2Z0 the Government was attempting to determine which station should survive. 'Another Super-Het', in a letter to the editor of the Manawatu Daily Times, questioned the Government's right to decide whether 2ZF or 2Z0 should live and he observed "Surely we are not going to be weak enough to let it [the Government] decide our entertainments".<sup>57</sup> Local listeners were also motivated by fear that Palmerston North would be deprived of both its B stations since it was rumoured that the Government was to shortly commence relaying 2YA from a transmitter at Woodville, a move which would see the end both of 2ZF's relays of 2YA and its Government support.

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56 MDT, November 19, 1931, p.4.

57 MDT, July 28, 1932, p.6.

The issue led to a voluminous correspondence in the local press and although 2Z0 supporters were indignant about the important principle which they saw as being involved, they were also motivated by their conviction that both the quality of 2Z0's transmissions and its programmes were superior to those of 2ZF. It was during the Sunday morning broadcast on July 24 that Mr Kyle announced the station's imminent closure and this Sunday programme was an especially popular one, coming at a time when most stations were silent. '20 Miles From Town', for example, found these two hours "a great tonic in these depressing times, being away on the lonely hills all the week and Sunday being the only morning I can sit and enjoy the music".<sup>58</sup>

So intense was the reaction to the possibility of the station's closure that a public meeting was called for August 2 to discuss the fate of 2Z0 and approximately three hundred people packed the Kosy hall while many had to be turned away. The meeting, chaired in the Mayor's absence by his deputy, J. Hodgens, "carried without a dissentient voice"<sup>59</sup> a motion supporting 2Z0 and expressing its opinion that the station should continue broadcasting. It was also unanimously decided that an association, the Manawatu and Districts Radio Listeners' Association, be formed to assist Mr Kyle with the running of the station. Subscription to the association, which was to have branches in country districts and a central executive in Palmerston North, was to cost five shillings per annum and it was decided that the body would make strong representations to the Broadcasting Board for a subsidy for 2Z0. After telegrams of support for the station had been read out and a provisional executive appointed, one hundred and forty-five members were enrolled for the newly-formed association. Evidence of the extent to which emotions were aroused by the issue came when a member of the audience asked whether Mr Kyle had not realized when 2Z0 first went on the air that he would not receive a subsidy. The Manawatu Daily Times coolly observed that, in response to this, "A good deal of argument took place in the body of the hall, the chairman being obliged to call the meeting back to the point of issue".<sup>60</sup>

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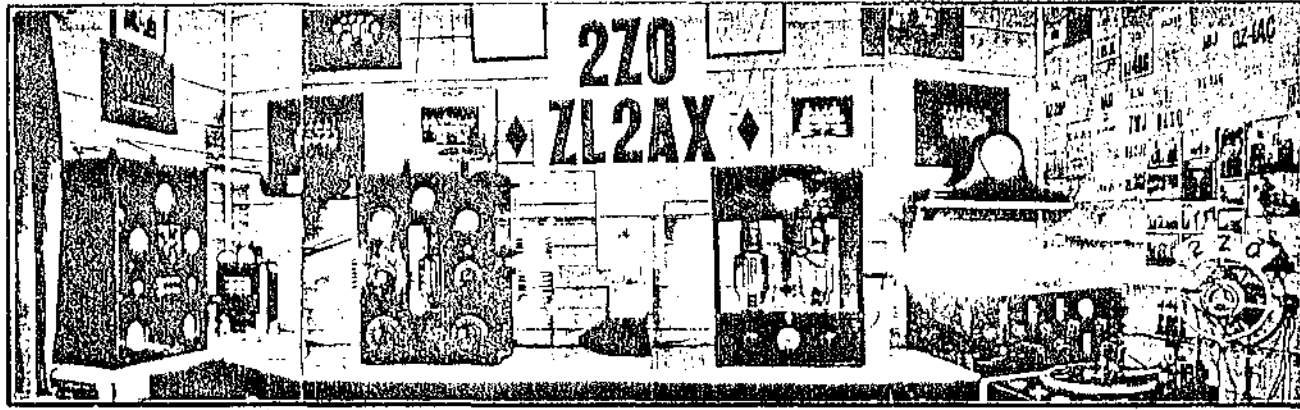
58 MDT, July 29, 1932, p.6.

59 MDT, August 3, 1932, p.4.

60 'ibid'., p.4.



50 WALDEGRAVE STREET, PALMERSTON NORTH,  
"The "HUB" of New Zealand."



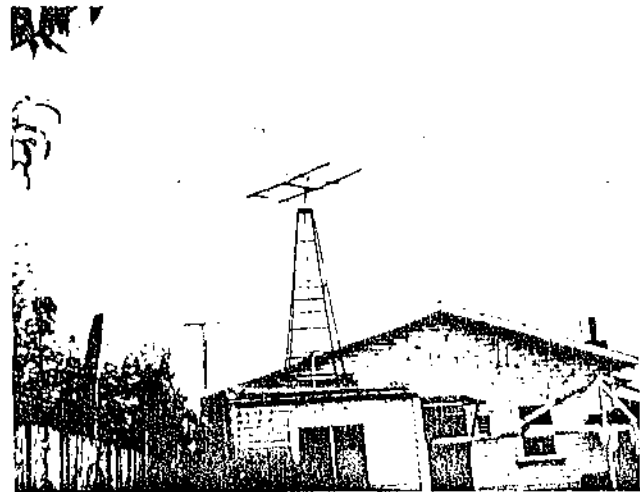
TRANSMITTER:- E.P.C. Circuit, 1500 Gen. Heising Mod. Philips MB 2/200 Tubes, Power 50 watts a.c.m.  
J. V. KYLE, Owner Operator.

N. HOPPER - PRINT - WANGANUI.

TRANSMISSIONS

270 - 1050 K.C.  
SUNDAY 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.  
TUESDAY 6.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.  
ZL2AX - 3975 K.C.  
N.Z.A.R.L. Official Broadcast Station  
Your ... Sigs R ... G. ... ORN ... RM ...  
ORM ... ORN ...  
on SG, Det es 2 Aerial  
75 de ...

To ...  
I thank you for your report of ...  
...  
ON 270 of ... NZAF  
Your report is much appreciated (with a  
report and suggestions are welcome and  
I trust you continue to enjoy the program.  
Announced



... shed at the rear of J.V.Kyle's  
... residence from which 270 broadcasts  
were transmitted.

50 WALDEGRAVE STREET, PALMERSTON NORTH, N.Z.

To ...  
I thank you for your ... of ... at ... NZMT  
Your ... Sigs R ... G. ... ORN ... RM ...  
TRANSMITTER ... Gen. Heising Mod.  
150 Wal ... Aerial  
TRANSMISSIONS:- 270 1050 K.C. Sundays 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
Tue ... 7:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.  
Sat ... 1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
ZL2AX 3975 K.C. Sundays 5 ... m. ... NZAR ... acast.  
Also ... regular ...  
Your report ... suggestions  
a ... to enjoy any programs.

J. V. KYLE,  
Owner-Operator.

N. HOPPER - PRINT - WANGANUI.

... cards sent out by composite station 270/ZL2AX.

Station 220 was soon back on the air again and within three months of its inaugural meeting the Manawatu and Districts Radio Listeners' Association, whose boundary extended north to Raetihi and south to Otaki, had a membership totalling just on one thousand, a tribute to 220's popularity. Further developments for 220 came in November 1932 when the C.M. Ross Company, mindful, no doubt, of the example of their rival, Collinson & Cunningham Ltd., offered the station the use of the top floor of their building, the Rosewood tearooms, to use as a studio. Like its rival, the C.M. Ross Company also sold radio sets, including the 'Briton' brand which boasted in its advertising that its sets were 92½% British. Henceforth the announcer and his equipment were to be sited on a podium in the tearooms, which provided ample space for large concert parties, while the transmitter remained in the shack at the rear of Kyle's residence, to which the studio was connected by landline. The siting of the studio in the Rosewood tearooms meant that admission would frequently be charged for broadcast concerts thus aiding the station's funds, which were also augmented by occasional art unions.

Like the numerous other listeners' associations throughout the Dominion, the Manawatu and Districts Radio Listeners' Association was critical of the Government's attitude towards the B class stations, especially its reluctance to intervene in the stations' dispute with the gramophone companies. Consequently, it lobbied local Members of Parliament in order to bring the seriousness of the situation to the Government's notice and supported statements made in the House by the Member of Parliament for Palmerston North, J.A. Nash, a politician who, with the exception of some Labour members, was, perhaps, the most vocal supporter of the B stations in the House during this period. The association was also involved in moves during 1933 which resulted in the formation of a national listeners' federation and an alliance of B class station operators and under the leadership of C.G. Scrimgeour (1ZB) and I. Mackay (2ZR Nelson) it joined with stations in Nelson, Greymouth, Christchurch, Dunedin, Cromwell and Invercargill in calling for a more positive Government attitude to the B stations. The association's general concern with broadcasting matters was also reflected in frequently voiced comments on the problem of interference and calls for the authorities to take steps to remedy the situation.

Members of the listeners' association saw theirs as part of a wider

struggle and the conviction that 2ZC was being discriminated against by the authorities because they were envious of the widespread popularity which it enjoyed persisted. Criticism of the Government's apparent hostility tended to centre on the station's alleged breaches of petty regulations and its repeated pleas for increased broadcasting hours. 2ZC's old time dance broadcasts, for example, which were extremely popular, came to a halt in 1934 due to the authorities' unwillingness to grant extended transmission hours but they had already been subject to official censure during the previous year. This censure was directed at matters so trivial, like the claim that the name of the orchestra playing the music should not have been broadcast, that the episode appears to have owed more to Kyle's long-standing feud with the local telegraph engineer than to any official rulings. The controversy nevertheless prompted the station's loyal supporters to write in to the local press. '1 of 1000', for example, not only claimed that it was "time that listeners realised that independent 'B' class stations in general and 2ZC in particular are being subjected to unfair abuse in an endeavour to close them down" but suggested that the trouble arose because "2ZC is giving a service and broadcasting programmes that definitely have a greater popular appeal than those to be heard from the Government stations".<sup>61</sup> 2ZC was frequently denied the opportunity to broadcast sporting or social functions due to the reluctance of the authorities to grant the station extended hours and the issue was again raised in May 1934 when a deputation from the local Council of Christian Congregations met with the Postmaster-General, A. Hamilton, when he visited the city, to urge him to grant permission for 2ZC to broadcast Sunday evening church services. Mr. R.S. Robinson, a member of the deputation, observed that "The Palmerston North churches had had no encouragement from 2ZF, whereas 2ZC was quite willing to help"<sup>62</sup> but the Postmaster-General remained firm. "Cabinet", he stated, "had decided twelve months ago not to increase the hours of B stations or to allow them added power or the privilege of transferring their licenses",<sup>63</sup> and the station, he claimed, should re-arrange its hours if it wanted to broadcast church services, a move which

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61 MDT, July 18, 1933, p.6.

62 MDT, May 23, 1934, p.10.

63 'ibid'., p.10.



G. Houston, the president of the listeners' association deemed unacceptable.

If the association was to be rewarded by the support of local listeners, it was to encounter a far less rewarding attitude from the Government. Recognition of its inability to sway the Government from its increasingly harsh policy towards the B stations came in August 1934 when the association was disbanded and the 2Z0 Radio Club formed in its place. Through this move, it was felt, listeners would receive a more direct return for their support of the club, all the revenue of the new body being directed solely to financing 2Z0's broadcasts. While Mr Kyle owned and operated the station's transmitter, the listeners' association and its successor, the 2Z0 Radio Club, was in charge of organizing programmes and met all expenses associated with the running of the station. There were even those in the community who suggested that the club paid Kyle handsomely for his services, a rumour which it was found necessary to frequently deny. The desire to project 2Z0 as something more than just the personal possession of J.V. Kyle and, perhaps, to allay criticism of his commercial interest in radio, was evident in Kyle's dissociation of himself from the Manawatu and District Listeners' Association's inaugural meeting, his representation to that body of his willingness to sell the transmitter to a society and operate it on their behalf and even his description in annual reports of the listeners' association as that body's 'technical adviser' or 'station director', nomenclature which cast him in the role of the association's servant.

Like the radio club's station, 2Z0 underwent progressive improvements in plant which enabled it to keep up with developments taking place in the world of radio technology. Output, which had originally been only ten watts, rose from 50 watts to 200 watts in 1933 and it was to remain at this level until the station's closure due to Government opposition to any increase in the power of B class stations. While the technical quality of 2Z0's transmissions did much to endear the station to listeners, 2Z0's programme content and its philosophy did much to set it apart from 2ZF. Just as 2ZF was proud of its amateur status, a status which club members felt set it apart from 2Z0, so 2Z0 was proud of its 'independent' status, which saw it and the majority of the Dominion's B class stations locked in combat with successive Governments. Similarly, although all B

stations shared much in common with regard to programming, 220 tended to be more adventuresome, less studio-bound and hence more community-oriented than 22F. Although 22F provided a valuable service to radio listeners in the Manawatu by relaying 2YA, the radio club may, perhaps, have grown a little aloof from the community, a possibility which is likely considering the fact that the club was largely made up of radio enthusiasts to whom running the station would have been a fascinating hobby even if few people had been listening in to its broadcasts. In contrast, the technical aspects of 220 were largely left to Mr Kyle and his assistant, Eric Autridge, thus leaving the listeners' association and its successor, the 220 Radio Club, free to develop the community links which made the station so popular.

In many respects 220 superseded 22F in terms of listener popularity and community involvement, taking over where 22F had left off and leaving it increasingly dependent on its subsidy from the Broadcasting Board. 22F, for example, had boasted a permanent station orchestra at the peak of the station's popularity in 1929 but, crippled by changes in personnel, it was to lose its orchestra while 220, in contrast, soon acquired its own orchestra. The listeners' association paid for the laying of cables to the Opera House, the Showgrounds, the State and Palace theatres, and to the band rotunda in the Square, although performances at the last venue were liable to interruption by the whistle of passing trains. Similarly, 220 organized and broadcast community sings, which were a frequently used means of raising both money for relief purposes and morale in these depression years but which had hitherto been ignored by 22F. So popular were these 220 community sings that they would, on occasion, be taken to towns like Feilding which provided much of the station's audience.

220's spirit of community involvement was revealed in a range of activities which reflected a desire to do good works and to publicise the station. The station frequently organized charity concerts and its broadcasts of community sings for fund raising purposes were acknowledged as considerably boosting the gifts received by such ventures. Like 22F, 220 provided a valuable channel for civic communications and was used, for example, to broadcast Christmas greetings from the Mayor and requests for food and clothing for the Mayor's Relief Fund. While entertainment and charity were frequently combined in these years, 220 consciously

adopted a public-spirited attitude and the 220 Radio Club, for example, raised money to buy a radio set for the children's ward at the hospital and to purchase an attractive console set for an elderly arthritic who was confined to bed. 220's Christmas treats, visits to the children's ward of the local hospital by the 'Aunts' and 'Uncles' of the children's session, who took gifts purchased with funds raised by concerts and auctions of donated goods, were an annual fixture and the result of many weeks of fund raising and publicity.

The philanthropic urge was also evidenced in the activities of the station's children's sessions which included the collection of peggy squares and of stamps by the one thousand 'radio cousins' who were on the station's register in 1933. So popular were these sessions, whose 'Uncles' and 'Aunts' were local entertainers who possessed the confidence and talent necessary to 'ad lib' and improvise during these loosely structured sessions, that by August 1934 the register of 220's 'radio cousins' had grown to three thousand. These children's sessions encouraged the children to feel that they were an integral part of the station, not only by contributing songs, recitations, poems and humorous items but by encouraging them to write in to the sessions' 'Uncles' and 'Aunties' telling them of events in their life, giving them homemade gifts and pieces of birthday cake and food, much of it rendered inedible by the postal service. It seems likely that this dialogue between child and station personality was especially appreciated by children in surrounding country areas, who lacked many of the opportunities for intercourse with other children enjoyed by their brethren in the towns. That the sessions were also popular with parents was evidenced in the mail 'Uncles and Aunts' received, much of which solicited advice on the problems associated with parenthood, problems which could frequently be personal in nature.

CONTEMPORARY LISTENING

If one is to understand the popularity of the B class stations and their role in the community, it is necessary to make some observations on general aspects of broadcasting, to attempt to appreciate how contemporaries viewed radio and its part in their lives. Much of the appeal of radio in its early years rested on the thrill of capturing music from the air<sup>64</sup> and as Alec O'Donoghue observes of radio listeners in these pioneering years, "Theirs was a life of thrills such as no one with the perfected modern radio receiving set can imagine".<sup>65</sup> Radio, however, only came to enjoy widespread popularity when it was demystified, when the public came to appreciate the role it could play in their everyday lives, but the old spirit of fascination lived on. Throughout this period the many developments taking place in the field of technology aroused much interest and comment and the growing popularity of radio, it appears, owed much to interest in the new technology. The New Zealand Wireless and Broadcasting News had prophesied such interest in 1923, commenting that "The subject and word 'broadcasting' is new and will become very fascinating to the people of New Zealand".<sup>66</sup> Frequent articles in both newspapers and the specialist radio press reflected interest in the role and ramifications of radio, its use by police, by armies, by the church and by propagandists and its effect on language and musical taste. Although such articles tended to be based largely upon naive speculation, press comment on both Soviet and Nazi radio suggests that contemporaries may have feared the potential abuse of radio. The Manawatu Daily Times expressed concern in 1935 at "the torrent of words with which dictators literally are flooding European air"<sup>67</sup> and the New Zealand Radio Record was alarmed by the extent of Russian broadcasting which, it suggested, was "spreading day and night the slow poison of

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64 MDT, September 16, 1924, p.7.

65 O'Donoghue, p.5.

66 The New Zealand Wireless and Broadcasting News, vol.1, no.1, p.1.

67 MDT, July 16, 1935, p.6.

Communism, the effects of which are so terribly patent in Russia at the present time".<sup>68</sup> Interest in broadcasting was not restricted merely to radio and it was observed in 1930 that "The development of television is reaching a stage when the public are focussing their attention upon it, and asking when it will be in the home".<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, the Radio Regulations of 1932 made provision for 'picture-transmission or television'.

Local broadcasters both found themselves part of this mood of interest and speculation, and actively catered for it. This mood was particularly strong in radio's pioneering years, when W.A. Waters' reception of the Australian federal elections on his shortwave set made the columns of the Manawatu Daily Times and when the commencement of test broadcasts by station PCJJ Holland in 1927 made the 'General News' column of the same paper. Popular interest in radio feats also meant that when Marchese Marconi communicated over 165 miles the achievement prompted an editorial in the Manawatu Daily Times and that 2ZF's long distance relays were the subject of much comment and praise. Often this interest was the result of careful planning.

3LO Melbourne's 'Most Perfect Girl' attracted wide publicity for the station when she toured New Zealand in 1927 and J.V. Kyle was no doubt conscious of his business interests when he placed a shortwave set at the disposal of one of the local papers so that it might hear the Melbourne Cup in 1931. Many of those who manned 2ZC and 2ZF were amateur radio transmitters who, having conquered the mysteries of radio, found themselves the focus of much popular interest and fascination. As the Manawatu Daily Times concluded in a lengthy article on the district's radio amateurs in 1933, "It is all very fascinating".<sup>70</sup> In response to such interest local members of the New Zealand Association of Radio Transmitters and the Radio Emergency Corps put on a display of transmitting equipment during the 1937 National Dairy Show. A popular novelty was their transmission of messages from visitors to the show to friends in their home towns.

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68 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.3, no.34, p.1.

69 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.3, no.25, p.6.

70 MDT, January 6, 1933, p.6.

Interest in broadcasting persisted despite the Depression and Harcourt and Downes claim that radio's rise in popularity during this period "is ... directly attributable to the Depression".<sup>71</sup> The B stations were to prove an integral part of community life during these troubled years and through them radio gave comfort, hope and entertainment. People were given the chance to share their experience and their concern, to conquer their feeling of helplessness, and both ZZF and ZZO broadcast many pleas for food, clothing and other necessities for relief purposes during this period. The Depression had other beneficial effects for radio and, the Radio Traders' Digest noted in 1932, it was responsible for lowering the price of radios and radio components and for making radio listeners of those unable to afford more expensive forms of entertainment.<sup>72</sup>

Reductions in the price of radios were paralleled by developments which made radio listening simpler, thus widening radio's potential audience. Early radio listening had not been easy : radio dealers advertised that free tuition was given with all sets sold and early ZZF programmes included several gramophone items prior to the radio concert proper commencing so that listeners might tune in their sets. The advent of the neutrodyne receiver and the A.C. set, however, changed this. The neutrodyne receiver was easier to tune and, if improperly tuned, did not inflict 'howling', or interference, on those radio listeners in the vicinity who sought the station whose frequency it was on. Similarly, the introduction of the A.C. set, which converted AC current into the DC current necessary for radio work, did away with the need to replenish messy batteries, a chore particularly burdensome to those in country areas. Developments such as these, along with changes and improvements in both the private and national stations and, perhaps, the intrinsic appeal of radio, led to that amazing growth in the number of radio sets in use which the Manawatu Daily Times noted in January 1935. The paper revealed that figures for Palmerston North and its immediate environs, the circle formed by Bunnythorpe, Milson, Whakaronga, Aokautere, Linton, Longburn and Kairanga, showed an increase from 239 radio licenses in 1927 to 2,694 in

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71 Downes and Harcourt, p.87.

72 The 'N.Z.' Radio Times (and Traders' Digest including The Radio Log), vol.1, no.7, p.30.

TABLE 1 : Radio licenses in the area included in a circle formed by Bunnythorpe, Milson, Whakaronga, Aokautere, Linton, Longburn and Kairanga.

|           |      |      |
|-----------|------|------|
| July      | 1927 | 239  |
| September | 1928 | 465  |
| July      | 1929 | 634  |
| July      | 1930 | 978  |
| January   | 1932 | 1482 |
| June      | 1932 | 1552 |
| February  | 1933 | 1798 |
| December  | 1933 | 2291 |
| February  | 1934 | 2351 |
| June      | 1934 | 2622 |
| November  | 1934 | 2694 |

Source : Manawatu Daily Times, January 30, 1935, P.6.

November 1934. This more than tenfold increase meant that there was approximately one licensed radio set per ten people and, the paper claimed, showed that "it can truly be said that everybody these days listens in".<sup>73</sup>

Two further developments of the 1930s which reflected the changing role of radio and the increasing part which it played in peoples' lives were the portable radio set and the automobile radio. Neither enjoyed widespread popularity, however. The major explanation why automobile radios did not enjoy widespread popularity in this period was, perhaps, that the philosophy behind them was alien to contemporary listening habits. Radio was a communal experience, one shared by the whole family or several families. This important aspect of contemporary listening attitudes was substantiated by a questionnaire issued in 1932 to all license holders. This, although answered by only forty percent of license holders, revealed that the most popular listening time was 8p.m. to 10p.m., when all the family could gather around the radio.<sup>74</sup> Radio was seen as an important part of family life; it was, as the New Zealand Radio Record observed, "a part of the family fireside"<sup>75</sup> and radio artists were advised to take cognizance of this when performing. "In broadcasting," New Zealand Radio counselled, "the artist should adopt the mental attitude that he is entertaining five or six people in their own home. This is actually what he is doing : the fact that this small group is multiplied many times need not concern the artist".<sup>76</sup>

People, then, came together to listen to radio and in 1930 New Zealand Radio claimed a major victory for radio in preserving the social order, observing that

Possibly the greatest benefit that broadcasting has conferred upon us as a community is the snatching back for us of that 'home' life which was so rapidly disappearing in many places, thereby re-establishing the family circle and making the family something more than a number of acquaintances accustomed to sleep under one roof — a state into which many families were speedily degenerating when wireless broadcasting was introduced to us some few years ago.<sup>77</sup>

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73 MDT, January 30, 1935, p.6. See Table 1.

74 See Collins, pp.43-6.

75 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.8, no.30, p.5.

76 NZR, vol.7, no.11, p.11.

77 NZR, vol.10, no.1, p.8.



Radio had achieved this laudable goal, it was suggested, because it provided the family "with a means of entertainment and instruction which they can share in common, which they can appreciate, enjoy and discuss together, and which therefore tends to hold them together as a body".<sup>78</sup> What radio achieved on a familial level, providing unity and a common bond, it also achieved on a civic, a national and, perhaps, a supra-national level. Through their coverage of local news and events 2Z0 and 2ZF boosted civic awareness and unity but regardless of what they listened to, radio provided people with a sense of shared life and destiny. Marshall McLuhan suggested that "The subliminal depths of radio are charged with the resonating echoes of tribal horns and antique drums" and he saw the medium as possessing the power to re-tribalize mankind, "to turn the psyche and society into a single echo chamber."<sup>79</sup> If radio brought New Zealanders closer in touch with each other, it also brought them closer in touch with the rest of the world through relays of important overseas events, like the opening of the London Naval Conference in January 1930. This event was rebroadcast by 2ZF from W2XAF New York and, it was claimed, attracted "the largest radio audience ever addressed at one time in the history of the world".<sup>80</sup>

Radio was not only a communal entertainment, it was one which demanded concentration from those who listened to it. Due to the existence of silent days and restricted broadcasting hours, radio was not regarded as the background noise that it is today. The Radio Explorer called for "intelligent listening" and suggested that "one-eared listeners are doing the art of radio no good".<sup>81</sup> Since broadcast hours were limited radio was used not so much as an aid to relaxation but as a conscious entertainment. A radio publication suggested that "Those who possess radio receiving sets are never at a loss nowadays to entertain their guests", observing that with radio there was no need to book seats.<sup>82</sup> The standards expected of radio listeners did not prescribe that the listener lead a life of stoic sobriety and radio's entertainment potential was most clearly revealed in the popularity of dancing to radio music.

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78 'ibid'., p.8.

79 McLuhan, M. Understanding Media : The Extensions of Man, London, 1964, p.319.

80 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.3, no.29, p.6.

81 The Radio Explorer, vol.1, no.3, p.3.

82 NZR, vol.10, no.3, p.5.

In May 1928, for example, a programme of dance music by Larkin's Orchestra on 2ZF led to several telephone calls of congratulation, including several bureau calls. Among these calls, a local newspaper noted, was one from Auckland, where "a party of forty at Herne Bay were dancing to 2ZF music"<sup>83</sup> and the orchestra obliged the Aucklanders' requests for certain numbers to be repeated. "Other parties", it was noted, "were also dancing to the radio fox trots and waltzes, including gatherings at Rangiatu, Wangaehu, Kairanga, and in Palmerston North itself".<sup>84</sup>

If the ideal radio listener was one who accorded radio the dignity of not talking to others while listening to it, he or she was also one who strictly rationed their radio diet. Too much radio, it was feared, would lead to jaded appetites. A national radio publication observed in 1928 that "There is a growing feeling in Australia that there is too much broadcasting over there".<sup>85</sup> W.W. Rodgers, the Station Director of 1ZM, claimed that "people who are dissatisfied with broadcasting are almost invariably those who give themselves a surfeit of it"<sup>86</sup> while the editor of The New Zealand Radio Record suggested that "the quantity of radio broadcast daily is radio's own greatest enemy".<sup>87</sup> This concern at limiting radio listening, like concern at the medium's potential for propaganda use, reflected a lingering distrust of radio which persisted despite its growing popularity. Although there was increasing appreciation of radio's role in cultivating musical tastes, a role which broadcasters were, perhaps, more enthusiastic about than listeners, radio listening was frowned upon because it was a passive pursuit. W.W. Rodgers, for example, acknowledged that radio had placed good music within the reach of all who could afford a radio set but expressed concern that "broadcasting is entertainment administered by someone else, whereas the best kind of entertainment is that in which we ourselves take part and to which we contribute".<sup>88</sup>

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83 MDT, May 24, 1928, p.8.

84 'ibid'., p.8.

85 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.2, no.10, p.31.

86 The Broadcaster, vol.1, no.28, p.29.

87 The New Zealand Radio Record, vol.8, no.34, p.5.

88 The Broadcaster, vol.1, no.28, p.29.

Broadcasting in this period had a certain calm and dignified air, an air which meant that while the B stations were generally less formal than the national stations, 2ZC's children's session birthday calls were carefully screened to guard against pranksters. However, it also involved a feedback, a sense of immediacy which made it unique. While radio listeners formed a large, and growing, audience, they were also able to respond on a personal level and as Barnouw observes, "no other medium had ever afforded an audience this illusion of intimacy shielded by privacy".<sup>89</sup> This intimacy between listener and radio station was expressed in the QSL cards issued by stations, the telegrams and letters of congratulation and the phone requests for encores which stations received. The listener was invited to feel a part of the radio station and this sense of immediacy was particularly strong in the case of the B stations, which were run by enthusiastic amateurs who also filled other roles in the community. When, for example, J.V. Kyle suffered ill health in May 1935 2ZC's regular listeners were led to share his plight since the station was closed down until he regained his health. Similarly, when in March 1935 2ZF secretary and Wednesday night announcer J.N. Leet was transferred away from Palmerston North, his farewell was broadcast over the air.

In discussing broadcasting during this period it is important to note that there were distinct differences between the B class stations and the national stations with regard to both character and programme content. Although it was hardly a neutral observer The Broadcaster was voicing a popular view when it claimed that "The flexibility and man-to-man appeal of a B class radio station enables it to render a service of especial character to its listeners and the general public which is not possible from the more rigid and necessarily formal national stations".<sup>90</sup> The personal touch of the B stations formed a sharp contrast to the national stations. So intent was the Radio Broadcasting Company, for example, on mimicking the aloof and impersonal style of the B.B.C. that Clive Drummond's personalised way of saying 'Goodnight' was temporarily banned in 1931.<sup>91</sup> Despite the replacement of the Radio Broadcasting

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89 Barnouw, E. A Tower in Babel : A History of Broadcasting in the United States, Volume 1 — to 1933, New York, 1966, p.164.

90 The Broadcaster, vol.4, no.7, p.3.

91 See Downes and Harcourt, p.40.

Company by the Broadcasting Board in 1932 many listeners criticized the Board's stations for their disregard of the preferences of the listening public, and the B class stations gained many devotees from the ranks of those who rejected the Board's attempts to educate musical tastes. A 'prominent and successful businessman of this Dominion', writing in Radioland, was speaking for a significant section of the listening public when he called for the Broadcasting Board to show signs of "a little more life and more humanity"<sup>92</sup> in its programmes. While musical tastes certainly varied between individuals, in these depressed years the public were seeking amusement and escape from their radio. Consequently, the generally lighter fare of the B stations was more in tune with the public mood than the largely classical fare of the national stations. The 1932 survey of listeners conducted by the Broadcasting Board revealed that there were many who showed a dislike of "the same endless stream of classical 'stuff' which seems to emanate from the YA stations".<sup>93</sup> While band music, light orchestral items, humorous songs and monologues and comic opera were at the top of the list of listeners' preferences, classical and chamber music and long plays found themselves at the bottom of the list.<sup>94</sup>

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92 Radioland, vol.1, no.1, p.7.

93 Letter to the Editor by L. Weston-Webb, MDT, July 20, 1933, p.6.

94 See Mackay, pp.43-6.

POLITICS

As Ian Mackay observes, broadcasting in these years was a subject "tangled with politics and politicians"<sup>95</sup> and early broadcasters had to contend with many Government and bureaucratic regulations. Overseas, suspicion of the new medium led some Americans to blame radio for dizzy spells, changes in the weather and creaky floorboards<sup>96</sup> but in New Zealand a more common attitude was expressed by a Post and Telegraph officer in 1922, who predicted that wireless listening was little more than a passing fad and that it "would have a bit of a run, like ping pong or put-and-take, and then die down".<sup>97</sup> This suspicious attitude, which saw radio broadcasting as a potentially dangerous nuisance, was reflected in the rigid restrictions placed upon early broadcasters, restrictions which were "carefully nurtured by successive Governments".<sup>98</sup> Under the 1923 Radio Telegraph Regulations for Amateur, Experimental, and Broadcasting Stations prospective broadcasters had to supply evidence of British nationality, reference as to character from a reputable citizen and meet certain requirements with regard to technical knowledge. Broadcasting licensees and operators had also to sign a declaration of secrecy, a precaution also required of radio receiving license holders and one which still persists today. Stations were not to compete with Government communication services and were not to transmit "any radio communication of a seditious, profane, obscene, libellous, or offensive nature".<sup>99</sup> "Broadcasting stations", the regulations continued, "shall not be used for the dissemination of propoganda of a controversial nature, but shall be restricted to matter of an educative or entertaining character,

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95 Mackay, p.5.

96 Barnouw (1966), p.103.

97 Downes and Harcourt, p.69.

98 Mackay, p.21.

99 New Zealand Gazette 1923, vol.1, p.149.

such as news, lectures, useful information, religious services, musical or elocutionary entertainment, and such other items of general interest as may be approved by the Minister from time to time".<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, stations were required to give priority to the broadcasting of religious services "and kindred matter" on Sundays during the hours of 11a.m. to 12.30p.m. and 6.30p.m. to 8p.m.<sup>101</sup>

These regulations effectively outlawed controversy from the air-waves and led to an "exaggerated concern for propriety"<sup>102</sup> on the part of broadcasters. However, they were never a source of complaint by Palmerston North's broadcasting stations, neither of whom, it seems probable, would have broadcast controversial material even if they had been permitted to do so. The transmission of controversial matter would have been out of character with the stations' 'happy family' image, which sought to appeal to as wide a cross-section of the population as possible. So intent was 2ZF on not alienating its listeners that in March 1931 Manawatu Radio Club President, W.A. Waters, attacked H.A. Hamilton for being "crude and blunt" in his appeal over 2ZF for food for the earthquake refugees camped at the Showgrounds.<sup>103</sup> B class stations were more directly affected by the ban on advertising, a ban which reduced the majority to a state of constant financial uncertainty and which led license holders to be constantly on the alert for possible breaches of the regulations. 2Z0's 'Uncle Dave' (D.T. Spring) recounts the reprimand he earned from a J.V. Kyle wary of official wrath when he innocently mentioned 'Austin' cars during the children's session. 2Z0 and 2ZF both used a form of indirect sponsorship in that both were based in local department stores, a gesture reminiscent of the early days of American broadcasting, when business firms were content to support broadcasting stations for the public goodwill which such support would generate.<sup>104</sup> Both stations also had gramophone records lent to them by

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100 'ibid'., p.149. This and the requirement above were both included in the 1925 Amateur Radio Regulations and the 1925 Broadcasting Regulations. See New Zealand Gazette 1925, vol.1, p.670, p.728.

101 'ibid'., p.148.

102 Burdon, p.309.

103 For Hamilton's response to Waters' complaint see MDT, March 19, 1931, p.2.

104 Both Collinson & Cunningham Ltd. and the C.M. Ross Company also gave material support to their host stations and although 2Z0's transmitting plant was the personal property of J.V. Kyle the C.M. Ross Company donated a microphone for the station's use.

businesses, like Berrymans, Cole's Music Shop and Garthwells of Feilding, who had their contribution acknowledged over the air and who also probably hoped that broadcasting would generate sales of their records. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that either station took advantage of the limited advertising rights granted to B class stations between 1931 and 1934. These rights were of little value to businesses and provoked many clashes with the authorities due to their vague nature.<sup>105</sup>

Although local broadcasters were restricted by the regulations effected by politicians in general, they were fortunate in enjoying the keen support of local Members of Parliament. These politicians were drawn into involvement with the local stations through their election as patrons. J.A. Nash, who was the Member for Parliament for Palmerston North from 1918 to 1935, was the Patron of the Palmerston North Radio Club while J.G. Cobbe, Member of Parliament for Oroua from 1928 to 1938, was the Patron of the Manawatu and Districts Radio Listeners' Association. However, this involvement, especially in the case of J.A. Nash, apparently went further than an awareness of the need to court the favour of local clubs and organizations. The Manawatu and Districts Radio Listeners' Association, for example, paid tribute to the work of J.A. Nash in introducing deputations to Government and in supporting applications for extended hours. Nash also played an important part in attempting to bring to the notice of the Government the plight of the Dominion's B class radio stations. The Member for Palmerston North was a frequent source of questions which sought to clarify the Government's broadcasting policy and on three occasions in particular his speeches revealed a sympathy with the B class stations, and an appreciation of their role in the community.

The first of these occasions was during an urgent question by Savage on the gramophone company ban on the use of records by B stations in March 1933. Nash interjected in apparent frustration at the attitude of the Postmaster-General, Hamilton, and bluntly observed that the B stations had no money to meet the copyright payment demanded by the gramophone companies.<sup>106</sup>

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105 From June 1931 until March 31, 1934 stations were permitted to acknowledge that programmes had been sponsored by certain firms, but the nature of these firms' business or products was not to be mentioned.

106 See NZPD, vol.235, p.882 (March 2, 1933).

His realistic observation was in marked contrast to the attitude of the Postmaster-General, who was to dismiss the seriousness of the gramophone companies' ban four days later by commenting that "We often hear about such difficulties, but they generally turn out right in the end".<sup>107</sup> Nash spoke out again in 1935, when the position of the B class stations became a major political issue, presenting a lengthy speech on the subject during the reading of the Broadcasting Amendment Bill. He urged that listeners should have at least one representative on the Broadcasting Board and that the B class stations "should receive more consideration than they had in the past".<sup>108</sup> To illustrate the negative Government attitude against which B stations had to contend he gave the example of 2ZC's ill-fated attempts to gain extra hours in order to permit the broadcasting of church services. Prophesising a storm of protest unless the Board changed its attitude, he appealed "to the Minister and the Government to consider the matter further, to try to be generous and encourage the B class stations, to show them some appreciation for the fine services they are rendering to the community."<sup>109</sup> Nash spoke out again later in the year when he urged the passage of legislation to deal with the copyright dispute between the B stations and the gramophone companies and restated the popularity of the B stations.<sup>110</sup>

The treatment accorded to the B class stations by the Government has been regarded by writers on broadcasting matters as playing a part in the Labour victory of 1935.<sup>111</sup> Although the Labour Party was portrayed as the champion of the B stations, mainly due to the utterances of its leader, Savage, broadcasting policy does not appear to have played a significant part in local electioneering. The situation was, perhaps, modified by J.A. Nash's proven record with regard to presenting the case for the B stations and his successor, the Labour candidate, J. Hodgens, does not appear to have expressed an opinion on broadcasting policy in his election

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107 'ibid'., p.1023.

108 NZPD, vol.241, p.301 (March 7, 1935).

109 'ibid'., p.302.

110 See NZPD vol.243, p.76 (October 1, 1935).

111 See Mackay, p.70.



speeches. Public statements on broadcasting by local politicians appear to have been the result not of attempts to court public favour but of personal interest in the subject. When A.E. Mansford, the Mayor, who stood as an independent candidate during the 1935 elections, urged that the B stations get a "fair deal"<sup>112</sup> he was doing so as a person who had come to have much contact with the local stations, both in his official duties and, at least with regard to 2ZF, in his personal life. Mansford's statements on the subject, in which he diplomatically excused the local press of playing any role in attempting to stifle the B stations, may have been motivated by an awareness of the need to at least match J.A. Nash's statements in the House. However, it is interesting to note that he was involved with the work of the Manawatu Radio Club prior to taking up the Mayoral office, thus suggesting a personal interest in the field.

Politics came very much to the fore as the end approached for the majority of the Dominion's B class stations in 1937. Although Labour posed as the protector of the B stations and Savage had claimed in September 1935 that "anything I can do to make the B class stations live will be done",<sup>113</sup> it was soon evident that advertising would not be permitted and that the Government was reluctant to grant the stations any subsidy. It was also increasingly apparent that the Government was anxious to make commercial broadcasting a state monopoly, provision for advertising from Government-owned stations being contained in the 1936 Broadcasting Act, and in December 1936 Savage made explicit the Government's desire to buy out the B class stations. The B stations also remained rigidly controlled by Government regulations and these regulations made it clear that their future was a strictly limited one. The Broadcasting Act of 1936 gave the Minister of Broadcasting the duty of 'supervising' all programmes transmitted by private broadcasting stations and gave him the power to "prohibit, either absolutely or subject to such

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112 MDT, November 27, 1935, p.4.

113 NZPD, vol.242, p.639. (September 25, 1935).

conditions as he thinks fit, the transmission from any private broadcasting station of any programme or part of a programme which in his opinion is unsuitable for broadcasting".<sup>114</sup> These restrictions, which included a prohibition on any increase in the hours, power or number of private stations, came at a time when the gramophone companies, who had been making menacing noises about the broadcasting of their records for over six years, were becoming increasingly serious. In particular, the companies were threatening legal action to secure the payment of the amount which they believed the individual B stations owed them for copyright fees and which represented alarmingly large sums in many cases.

The moves against the B stations in 1937 came at a time when the Labour Government was being subjected to vigorous criticism of its moves to state ownership and control and while the moves against the B stations lent valuable ammunition to this criticism, they may also have been, at least in part, motivated by it. Labour politicians were afraid that if private broadcasting was to continue and, in particular, if it was to be granted advertising rights, it would become dominated by big business interests, especially the newspaper concerns which had been vigorous in attempting to keep Labour out of Government. Auckland's 1ZK already enjoyed financial support from the Auckland Star and Labour spokesmen were quick to attribute ulterior motives to those who criticized the Government's broadcasting policy.

This attitude was apparent in a speech delivered by J. Hodgens to a meeting at the Opera House on May 8, 1937 during which he claimed that there was an organized attempt to bring the Government into disrepute with the electors by suggesting that it had broken its pledge to the B stations. Like the Minister of Broadcasting, however, he was evasive about the nature of Government assistance to those B stations which did not wish to be taken over by the Government. Hodgens would only promise that Labour was "prepared to give certain subsidies to B stations provided always that the stations are not going to sell their interests to the likes of a newspaper". "This Government", he insisted, "is not going to permit the Press of New Zealand to control the ether ... If the B stations are prepared to put over that which is the truth, the

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114 New Zealand Statutes 1936, p.174.

whole truth and nothing but the truth, they will get a fair go".<sup>115</sup> Hodgens was also critical of the attitude of some B station owners towards Government moves to take over their stations, suggesting that they had recapitulated on their earlier offers to sell in order to gain a higher sum for their stations. He attacked 2Z0 owner J.V. Kyle for such a stance. Although not identifying Kyle by name, it was obvious to whom he was referring when he attacked "a certain gentleman in Palmerston North who has had a lot to say recently".<sup>116</sup>

J.V. Kyle, described by A.R. Harris as "a man of very definite ideas who has oft times self-designated himself a rebel",<sup>117</sup> was not one to willingly accept such criticism and a drawn out dispute between the two took place in the 'Letters to the Editor' column of the local press. The dispute centred on Hodgens's claim in his speech that at a meeting of B station owners, at which Kyle was present, "it was unanimously agreed that the Government should take over all B stations but the matter of price would need some consideration".<sup>118</sup> Kyle denied that such a resolution was passed and he provided the local press with the minutes of the conference of B station owners to which Hodgens referred and which took place in Wellington on April 21. Hodgens, however, defended the claim made in his speech at the Opera House and suggested that the conference to which he referred was not that of the B class station owners but that body's subsequent meeting with the Acting-Minister of Broadcasting. During this, he insisted, "no one raised the issues that Mr Kyle now gets so heated about".<sup>119</sup> Argument between the two soon became tedious. Kyle insisted that only one conference took place and that the meeting with the Acting-Minister of Broadcasting constituted a deputation, a claim supported by correspondence from Ian MacKay, the Secretary of the New Zealand Federation of B Station Owners. Hodgens remained firm and called for Kyle and MacKay to disprove his claims by

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115 MDT, May 10, 1937, p.6. Emphasis inserted.

116 'ibid'., p.6.

117 Harris, p.49.

118 cited MDT, June 3, 1937, p.6.

119 MDT, May 18, 1937, p.6.

producing the minutes of their meeting with the Acting-Minister of Broadcasting.

If the argument between Hodgens and Kyle was becoming increasingly a matter of semantics, the dispute was soon submerged by a sense of impending doom and by developments with regard to 2ZF. On May 18 a special meeting of the management committee of the Manawatu Radio Club decided to accept the Government's offer of purchase, negotiations having been in progress for some time. In accepting the Government's offer the committee recounted the club's pioneering role in introducing radio to the Manawatu and paid tribute to the assistance which they had received from the Post and Telegraph Department, the Radio Broadcasting Company, the Broadcasting Board and the National Broadcasting Service. Having played a vital role in laying the foundations for the tremendous popularity which radio enjoyed in the 1930s, the club was resigned to its fate, a fate which it had appeared to have been willing to accept in 1935. Speaking at the celebration of the completion of the station's eleventh year of broadcasting club president W.A. Waters had observed that "Broadcasting is now progressing rapidly and when the Broadcasting Board gets its 60 k.d. station going in Wellington, it might mean that 2ZF will have served its purpose. That is, as a stepping-stone while the bigger developments were coming".<sup>120</sup> When 2ZF 'signed off' on the evening of August 8 the move occasioned little reaction from local listeners and scant prominence in the usually supportive press. Just as the club's management committee had acknowledged that the station had been relatively deserted by listeners due to the popularity of the national stations, so there was a touch of pathos in W.A. Waters' observation, which retelling the club's history, that "At one time the club had a large orchestra".<sup>121</sup>

If 2ZF was prepared to go quietly, 2Z0 was not. As his dispute with Hodgens had indicated, J.V. Kyle was determined to carry on broadcasting. Kyle's increasing bitterness about what he saw as the

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120 MDT, July 20, 1935, p.5. The club dated, with questionable accuracy, its first transmissions from July 1924. For 2ZF's character, see above, pp. 22-4.

121 MDT, August 10, 1937, p.10.

Government's failure to honour its election pledge to the B stations was motivated by the important role which radio played in his life. This role was, perhaps, best exemplified by the fact that his two great passions, 2ZC and ZL2AX, were combined to form the name of another of his passions, his boat, 'Zolax'. Support for Kyle's stand suggested, however, that although the controversy surrounding the closing of the station owed much to his own personal character, it also owed much to the widespread popularity enjoyed by the station. By 1937 membership of the 2ZC Radio Club totalled approximately two thousand and A.R. Harris suggests that the station was "the most popular station in the southern half of the North Island".<sup>122</sup> The Mayor, A.E. Mansford, inspired, no doubt, by the situation in other cities where the fate of B class broadcasting led to petitions and fiery protest meetings, led the call for Government recognition of the B class stations and for protection from the gramophone companies. His call was readily taken up by the local Chamber of Commerce, to whose members any desire to preserve 2ZC happily coincided with their political beliefs. "Plain speaking", the Kanawatu Daily Times stated, "was indulged in by Mr. F.G. Cpie, who declared that state control of anything was bad enough but state control of radio should be very strenuously opposed". J.A. Nash insisted that the Labour Government was already using radio to disseminate propaganda.<sup>123</sup>

The West End Progressive Association and the Foxton Chamber of Commerce were also to pass motions in support of 2ZC but these moves came late in September. By this time Mr Kyle had recognized that he was in a position where he had little choice but to accept purchase by the Government.<sup>124</sup> If local organizations were a little tardy in mobilizing opposition to the Government's broadcasting policy, a steady stream of

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122 Harris, A.R. p.49. The total for membership of the 2ZC Radio Club is from NZH, September 27, 1937, p.13 c.f. claim in Mancer that the club had 4028 members by the end of 1937.

123 MDT, June 2, 1937, p.4.

124 See p. 53.

letters to the editor which began in May as Government plans for purchase attracted press attention, suggested the depth of popular support for 2Z0. Letter writers frequently stated their opposition to the Government deciding what local listeners should hear, an attitude which had been manifest in August 1932 and on frequent occasions since, when 2Z0 had fallen foul of the authorities. Writers also paid tribute to the good works done by the station, like its Christmas treats at the Hospital and its support of local fund raising efforts. These works meant that local people closely identified with 2Z0 as "a very good and valuable friend".<sup>125</sup>

As the home of one of the approximately half-dozen B stations which resisted Government purchase Palmerston North inhabitants were treated to extensive press coverage of events surrounding the Government takeover of B stations throughout the country.<sup>126</sup> The Government's determination not to allow the B stations to be used for criticism of its broadcasting policy, using the provision in the Broadcasting Act of 1936 for the Minister of Broadcasting to supervise the programme content of all private broadcasting stations, was the subject of much criticism. This included an editorial in the Manawatu Daily Times, which also questioned the Government's motives in taking over the B stations. "Does the desire spring from an irresistible urge to 'take over everything in sight?'" the paper asked. "Or again does it spring from an ulterior motive — the desire to free itself from a possible radio competitor?"<sup>127</sup> Palmerstonians were also invited to become part of the effort to preserve the Dominion's B class stations by contributing to a "Save the B Stations" campaign. This campaign was organized in late June and portrayed the B stations as the "people's stations".<sup>128</sup> Subscribers to the campaign, whose support was solicited by newspaper advertisements since B stations were forbidden from appealing for funds over the air, were invited to allocate their contributions to support one or more of four stations : 1ZM Manurewa, 1ZJ Auckland, 2ZM Gisborne and 2Z0 Palmerston North.

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125 MDT, October 6, 1937, p.4 (Letter to the Editor).

126 In July the Postmaster-General, F. Jones, revealed that 2Z0 was one of five B stations believed to be disputing the sum offered by the Government while two other stations were, he claimed, firm in their opposition to Government purchase. See MDT, July 16, 1937, p.13.

127 MDT, June 9, 1937, p.4.

128 MDT, June 29, 1937, p.8 (Advertisement).

# Save The "B" Stations!

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B STATION owners have been given until SATURDAY, 3rd JULY, to accept the Government's offer to buy their stations.

You will lose them unless you send your money forthwith to preserve them as the "people's stations."

The Honourable Mr. Jones has refused to allow our appeal for funds to be broadcast.

**THERE IS NO TIME TO ARGUE ABOUT THE RIGHTS OR WRONGS OF IT.**

Send your money to one of the following trustees:-

- E. C. CUTTEN,  
Retired Stipendiary Magistrate, P.O. Box 280, Auckland.
- A. A. ROSS,  
Chairman of Directors, Farmers' Trading Co., Ltd., Auckland,  
P.O. Box 380, Auckland.
- W. W. RODGERS,  
Station 12M, P.O. Box 280, Auckland.
- DR. KENRICK DEAN,  
151 Broadway, Palmerston North.

Allocate your contributions to one or more of the following stations:-

- 12M Manurewa.
- 12J Auckland.
- 22M Gisborne.
- 22O Palmerston North.

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Death of Hon. G. W. Russell

THE LEGAL POSITION  
EXPLAINED

FORMER MINISTER OF  
THE CROWN

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The controversy surrounding Mr. Kyle's reluctance to sell 2ZC attracted national attention in the form of an article in the New Zealand Herald of September 27 in which he set forth the awkwardness of his position. "I put up strenuous opposition", he told the paper,

but I have no alternative but to close down. I have had no desire to close the station, and I appealed to the Prime Minister to allow me to carry on as in the past, with a guarantee that I would receive copyright protection. I also asked for an increase in hours and power. He refused to increase hours or power, and stated that a specific arrangement would have to be made for every record broadcast. He refused to discuss the matter of a subsidy until I had made a decision on the Government's offer. I was left with no alternative.<sup>129</sup>

This article led the Member of Parliament for Franklin, Mr. A.C.A. Sexton, to ask an urgent question of the Prime Minister in the House two days later. Drawing the Prime Minister's attention to the article, he asked if it was correct and, if so, how it could be reconciled with the Government's earlier support for B class broadcasting. In his response to this query the Prime Minister adopted the stance of J. Hodgens several months earlier : that Mr Kyle was a member of a deputation from the New Zealand Federation of B Station Owners, which waited upon the Acting-Minister of Broadcasting on the 21st of April. This deputation indicated that they were unanimous in their willingness to sell their stations, a stance from which, it was claimed, Mr Kyle did not dissent.<sup>130</sup>

As the article in the New Zealand Herald made clear, in the absence of any firm assurances of Government assistance or of protection from the gramophone companies, J.V. Kyle had decided by late September that he had no alternative but to sell the station. Consequently, local listeners were invited to the city's Opera House on the evening of September 28 for 2ZC's 'Final Grand Radio Concert', to which admission was free. If the local response to Government purchase of its B stations had been tempered by a realism which meant that there were no large protest meetings on the subject, emotion was evident during 2ZC's farewell on September 30 when it broke into the ether for the final time after nearly seven years of broadcasting. This emotion was best expressed in the heading under which the Manawatu Daily Times ran its lengthy coverage of the closedown :

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129 NZH, September 27, 1937, p.13.

130 See NZPD, vol.248, p.447. (September 29, 1937).



"A Revolver in Small of Back : Mayor's comment at closing of 2ZC". Speaking first, the Mayor A.E. Mansford, attacked the Government for its action in effectively forcing the station off the air, directly defying an official request that the farewell exclude controversial matter. Referring to this request, Mansford read out a communication to the station from the Director of Broadcasting which sought an assurance that the station's farewell function would "contain nothing of a controversial nature and that no attack will be made on any person or body".<sup>131</sup> That J.V. Kyle had not lost his fighting spirit by this stage in the proceedings was revealed in the reply sent to the Director's request : "Everything broadcast is controversial; only facts will be broadcast."<sup>132</sup>

After having paid tribute to the valuable role played by the station in community affairs, the microphone was handed over to E.A. Shackleton, the Chairman of the 2ZC Radio Club, who thanked the various businesses and organizations which had assisted the club over the years. Kyle then began his farewell speech, expressing his desire to avoid making any personal attacks. "Station 2ZC came on the air honourably", he observed, "and I hope it will go off the air also with honour".<sup>133</sup> A touch of bitterness was, however, revealed in the intensity with which he denied rumours that he had profited nicely from 2ZC and with which he observed the irony of the present situation. So that this irony should escape no one, he read out an extract from Hansard in which Savage had expressed his commitment to preserve the Dominion's B stations.<sup>134</sup> After two other men closely identified with the operation of the station, Messrs Houston and Carruthers, had spoken, the station left the air to the strains of the 'Goodbye Song' from 'White Horse Inn'. So upset were some Palmerstonians by the loss of the city's two B stations that controversy over the move continued for some time. The Chairman of the 2ZC Radio Club, E.A. Shackleton, was forced to enter print to deny rumours about the absence of J. Hodgens from the station's farewell function.

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131 Cited MDT, October 2, 1937, p.3.

132 'ibid'., p.3.

133 'ibid'., p.3.

134 See NZPD, vol.242, p.639 (September 25, 1935).

'Disgusted', writing to the Manawatu Daily Times, asked "Is Mr. Hodgens proud to think that it is his own party that has taken from the city he professes to represent its two only radio stations?"<sup>135</sup> Although Shackleton offered an elaborate explanation why Hodgens had not received his invitation, there were, perhaps, many, like 'Disgusted', who felt that the absence was due to Hodgen's own feelings of guilt.

Despite the controversy aroused by the closing of 2Z0, the end of B class broadcasting in Palmerston North leaves a feeling of anti-climax. This experience appears to have been a national phenomenon.<sup>136</sup> Although one cannot be dogmatic about such statements until local studies of the Dominion's other B class stations are available, contemporary newspaper reports suggest that opposition to Government purchase in some other centres was more organized than in Palmerston North. While it is difficult to generalize on the reaction of Palmerstonians to the closing of their B stations, one can suggest factors which might help to explain this local reaction. It must be realized that improvements to the national stations, in terms of both coverage and content, were attracting an increasing number of listeners to these stations. It must also be recognized that Palmerston North's B stations had a very limited broadcasting schedule. In 1934, for example, 2Z0 was broadcasting for six hours a week while 2ZF was broadcasting for eight and one quarter hours a week, excluding relays of 2YA. So restricted were these hours of transmission that the stations did not rate a mention in the programme directory of the New Zealand Radio Record. Consequently, those who sought either variety or more extensive hours of listening may have been inclined to listen to other stations, thus encouraging a non-exclusive attitude to broadcasting. Such an attitude may also have been encouraged by 2ZF's relays of 2YA and by that station's harmonious relations with the broadcasting authorities.<sup>137</sup>

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135 MDT, October 8, 1937, p.8.

136 See MacKay, p.73. Although MacKay captures the helplessness of B station owners in the face of a Government evasive about the assistance that it would give to stations which wished to continue broadcasting, the controversy surrounding the closing of 2Z0 gives the lie to his generalized claim that the B stations "meekly surrendered and handed in their chips" (p.73).

137 Authorities are not unanimous on the question of how many private stations survived beyond 1937. MacKay claims (p.73) that only two stations did not sell to the Government while the annual report of the Post and Telegraph Department for 1939 asserts that six private broadcasting stations were still in operation. See Burdon p.302, AJHR, 1939, F-1, p.31.

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# Radio broadcasting in Palmerston North, 1924-1937 : a research exercise... Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History at Massey University

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1980

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