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# PENALISING WIRELESS EXPERIMENTERS.

## South Australian Protest.

The whole future of wireless development and experiment in Australia is jeopardised by the proposed new radio regulations, according to leading amateurs in this State.

The proposed amendments to the Commonwealth Wireless Regulations put forward as a result of the recent Sydney conference were severely criticised by Professor Kerr Grant on Wednesday. He is the chairman of a committee representing the wireless amateurs of this State, and in that capacity recently saw the Postmaster-General (Mr. Gibson) and found that he was alive to the importance of the whole question of wireless, whether with regard to fees, licenses, or broadcasting. The South Australian committee, which consisted of Professor Kerr Grant and Messrs. A. S. Caldwell, H. Lloyd, P. McAteer, and F. L. Williamson, recommended, among other things, that the proposed penalty of £50 for housing a set without a license should either be abolished with the abolition of licenses or replaced by a maximum penalty of 5/.

Too much stress is laid on entertainment in connection with wireless broadcasting, according to Professor Kerr Grant, who looks forward to the time when every outback farm and station will have its own radio equipment. "That will never be accomplished under the present conditions," he said, "and the proposed regulations laid before the Postmaster-General by the recent Sydney Conference would have the effect of retarding the development of wireless throughout Australia for years to come. The sealed set, which was

selfes, who by insisting on such a thing would really rob the firms they represent of their prospective audiences." Professor Kerr Grant believes that the utility and advertising values of broadcasting have been overlooked in this country to a large extent.

"The unfortunate attitude adopted by a certain section of the press, which seems to have feared competition, is largely responsible for this," he remarked. "Personally, I regard wireless as the greatest adjunct any modern newspaper can have. In glancing through the list of broadcasting stations registered in the United States I have noticed an increasingly large number of important newspapers utilising radio as part of their daily routine. What this would mean to our isolated settlers outback who are sometimes cut off from the world for days and weeks can only be imagined. At one stroke it would kill that terrible and oppressive sense of isolation. I should think it would pay a newspaper to broadcast its news in this way without asking for any payment or tax from the receiver, because advertisements would be broadcast with it and the necessary revenue would be derived from this section of the work."

As a matter of fact, Professor Kerr Grant believes that the possibilities of legitimate advertising by medium of wireless are practically limitless, and it is to this that he would have the broadcasting companies look when they seek to recoup themselves. "Apart from this, however," he pointed out, "there is the aspect of service to the public. I believe the press will be one of the first to realise its responsibilities in this matter, and to avail itself of the opportunity to fulfil them, for the dissemination of news is undoubtedly the most important radio attainment of to-day. There is also the educational aspect to be considered. A few months ago the Adelaide University decided to investigate this, and a committee was formed, which wrote to a number of American universities on the subject. We found that about 50 universities had taken up this work in the United States, and the replies of most of them are encouraging with regard to its value; some of them are enthusiastic. The University of Arizona, which broadcasts lectures on various subjects and music of high quality, reported that the experiment had proved well worth while. The University of Colorado sends out orchestral music and band selections, and college quartets, as well as lectures on engineering and other subjects. Short talks on agriculture, not only from the State Government departments, but various universities, have proved of benefit to the farmers. The agricultural bureau or department in each State also utilises radio for conveying a warning to the farmers or pastoralists concerning the weather, and owing to this, means can sometimes be adopted to combat a heavy frost which is expected. Much property and no doubt many valuable lives have been saved as a result of the warnings issued with regard to floods or forest fires. There is plenty of room for this work in Australia."

Before broadcasting can be general, however, it will be necessary to have a large and enthusiastic population of confirmed "listeners-in." This is what led Professor Kerr Grant to put forward a plea for the "kid experimenter," whose wings it is proposed to clip by limiting the number of experimenters' licenses to be issued. The proportion allowed to South Australia under this regulation, which provides only for "expert experimenters' licenses," would be 100. "Thousands of Australian youngsters are making a hobby of wireless to-day," said their champion, "and even though they may not contribute anything startling to the annals of wireless, many of them will continue their experiments when they grow up, and they will be part of the great public of listeners-in, without whose support and interest broadcasting must fail. Some of the youngsters are exceedingly keen on wireless work, and, judging by the questions they ask, are determined to learn all they can about it. With regard to serious experimenters of more mature age, amateurs, who are at present doing practically everything in this State, would do far more if the present restrictions on wave length and power were removed. It is realised that the Postmaster-General must certainly have the power to control wave length and to avoid chaos. Amateurs, however, who have up to the present done practically all that has been accomplished with regard to wireless in South Australia, would do far more if the present restrictions were removed. A certain amount of regulation is necessary, but hampering restrictions should be abolished."



Professor Kerr Grant.

the outcome of regulations framed by those interested in the trade, is already doomed." What chance it ever had of success in Australia may be gauged from the professor's discovery that following on an attempt to introduce the regulation into Germany, with its population of 50 millions, only 2,000 sets were sold in a year. "This was in a country where the people are admittedly more interested in the development of wireless and where there are many experts operating," said the professor. "In America, where there are 600 stations broadcasting, the chief charm of the whole thing is that the 'listener-in' has a choice of many programmes. The business man can get his news, the farmer the weather prediction, the student his lecture, and the flapper her beloved jazz if she wants it."

The proposal to enforce a license fee of £2 5/ per annum is also strongly resented by the South Australian committee, and Professor Kerr Grant said it would undoubtedly have the effect of cutting out nine-tenths of the possible number of wireless amateurs in this State, at any rate. In the United States the provisions in the latest Radio Bill set out that no license would be required for receiving sets, and, further, that no control over such sets would be attempted by the Bill. "As it is," the professor pointed out, "there is a heavy duty on nearly every thing in connection with wireless. For instance, in purchasing a complete valve receiving set there is a royalty of twelve shillings and sixpence on every socket valve. The amateur must be encouraged if wireless is to progress. If a license fee for receiving sets must be enforced it should not exceed £1 per annum. A heavy tax, by limiting the demand for sets, would reduce competition and this would have the effect of keeping up the prices of apparatus. Moreover, it would defeat the objects of the broadcasters themselves."

### FREDERIC CHAPPLE MEMORIAL.

The following appeal has been issued by the President of the Methodist Conference (Rev. W. A. Langford), the secretary to the college (Mr. J. H. Chinner), and the President of the Prince Alfred Old Collegians' Association (Mr. H. H. Cowell):—The committees of Prince Alfred College and Prince Alfred Old Collegians' Association have had under consideration the establishment of a fitting memorial to the memory of the revered late headmaster, Frederic Chapple, C.M.G., B.A., B.Sc., who, for a great number of years, did such fine work for the college and the community generally. Remembering that the teaching and study of natural science had a strong attraction for the late Mr. Chapple, it has been decided to equip at the new memorial buildings a physical laboratory, which will be designated the "Frederic Chapple Laboratory." To do this, £1,000 will be required, which will be funded as a permanent endowment and the interest devoted to the equipment and maintenance of the laboratory. With confidence we appeal, not only to members of the Methodist community, Conference, the college committee, and old collegians, but also to citizens who were brought into close contact with Mr. Chapple in his various activities outside his immediate scholastic sphere. Contributions may be sent to the college secretary, or to Mr. H. W. A. Miller (A.M.P. Society), or Mr. L. B. Shuttleworth (King William street), joint secretaries of the Old Collegians' Association.

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### WIRELESS EXPERIMENTERS.

From S. C. CUSACK, chief engineer South Australian Radio Company:—In reply to Professor Kerr Grant's statement in "The Advertiser" of the 29th inst. I would like to point out that the recommendations of the conference in Sydney were not put forward as proposed regulations, but with a view to a solution of the problem of eliminating the sealed wave receivers, and at the same time to guarantee the broadcasting companies some return for the very expensive matter of broadcasting music, stock and market reports, etc. It may interest Professor Kerr Grant to know that the total expenditure of one-power broadcast station in Australia to date, is approximately £72,000. Is there any form of entertainment combining educational facilities and news items, etc., to which the public are admitted free of charge? Is there any member of the general public, that would greatly enjoy and appreciate listening to a broadcast station advertising a firm's silk hosiery, a particular brand of perfume, or having a brand of soap forced down one's throat, which would leave a nasty taste in the mouth? It may also interest Professor Kerr Grant to know that the question of advertising was given the very fullest consideration at the conference, and it was in virtue of the fact that the general public would not appreciate advertising through the ether, that the clause relating to the prevention of advertising was inserted in the recommendations. The writer has been an ardent experimenter for quite a number of years, and introduced the valve receiver into Australia, was president of the Hawthorn and District section of the Wireless Institute of Australia, before coming to Adelaide, and is fully aware of the number of serious and genuine experimenters, who have done such good work in Australia. On the other hand, he has had the unfortunate experience of seeing shoals of applications made for experimental licenses merely with a view to "listening-in" to broadcast music. It is the genuine experimenter that requires protection from the type just mentioned, hence the object of the conference in making its recommendations. If Professor Kerr Grant would be inclined to give the whole subject a little thought from a commercial viewpoint, and could put forward a suggestion that would enable the broadcasting companies to carry on a first-class service, costing from £250 to £300 per week, without monetary loss, I am quite sure they would very much appreciate it. Professor Kerr Grant can rest well assured that the advertising value of broadcasting has not been lost sight of, but the tastes of the general public have been considered and have been given preference, and I feel sure that from the applications that have been received for broadcast licenses the general public are not averse from paying a moderate fee for a first-class etherical entertainment.

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### SCIENCE IN INDUSTRY.

Unfortunately it is not possible to contradict the statement of Professor Goddard, of the Queensland University, last week that a neglect of science is still among the ills which afflict the primary producer in Australia. "A laissez faire attitude towards our primary industries," he told the Brisbane Council of Agriculture last week, "is more than ever disastrous at the present time." There is much to be done in various ways before the producers' lot is made what it should be. With unsatisfactory prices and precarious and scanty markets they are holding their own in many places against desperate odds, but it may be doubted whether among their troubles they have any to contend with so serious as that involved in the slow, persistent, and often disastrous siege laid to their crops by the multitudinous pests that affect them. The annual loss to the Commonwealth from the plagues which play havoc with its fruit industry is prodigious. Professor Goddard says a banana industry worth practically £1,000,000 a year to Queensland is "fast passing out" in the south-eastern part of that State, where a good fraction of the yield is produced, and matters are not much better in New South Wales, where the annual crop is worth in good seasons £500,000.

Taking Queensland as a whole it has a larger share than most of the States of injurious insects and vegetable pests thanks to geographical situation and climate. By the sheep fly Queensland never loses less than £5,000,000 a year, and if the ubiquitous mosquito is troublesome everywhere in Queensland it is a national disaster, for, as Professor Goddard reminds us, even in Brisbane with its army of doctors and every medical and other appliance for combating its ravages the sufferers from filariasis represent never less than 6 per cent. of the population. When Professor Goddard says that worse than any horticultural or other pest is the popular inertia in the face of national ills he is on familiar ground. The dearth of public spirit, answerable perhaps for three-fourths the wrongs of the world, and it is surprising to find Professor Goddard

putting to it the backwardness of Queensland in the matter of research organisation and determined legislation for the extirpation of fruit and other pests. To the same cause may be assigned the long delay in devising measures to combat "bunchy top" even when funds had been supplied for the purpose; for if the public and the industrialists concerned were awake to their interests there would not have been the unnecessary delay which appears to have occurred in setting the experts at work. A lack of co-ordination between the Federal Institute of Science and Industry and the State agricultural authorities has delayed an investigation the cost of which was subscribed by the Federal and the Queensland and New South Wales Governments ten months ago. All that time bunchy top has had the run of the plantations, with the result that bananas have become so scarce and dear as to raise in some of the States, especially Western Australia, a clamour for lowering or abolishing the duty on the Fiji bananas. The movement is resisted because the Australian growers are looking to the high price created by the tariff to compensate them for the diminished yield; and, indeed, it is alleged by the Queenslanders that it is only the high price that keeps the industry going at all. Throw the ports open to Fiji and the Queenslanders would abandon the struggle in despair. Their case is one for sympathy, but a solution that involves keeping bananas out of many hungry mouths is not at best a satisfactory one, and it is open to the further objection that it does nothing whatever to cure bunchy top or set bounds to its growing depredations.