Television in New Zeal

MCH, 2014n

Page 2 – TV emerges in New Zealar

New Zealand's first non-experimental television transmission was made on 1 June 1960. But this wasn't the country's first foray into television. A New Zealander, Robert Jack, successfully experimented with TV in the 1920s. Many more had their first taste of it as the government debated what path to take in the 1950s.

Demonstrations of closed-circuit TV were made throughout the country by amateurs, private companies and the New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS). By 1959 two channels were broadcasting experimental transmissions in Auckland. Channel one was operated by a private company, Bell Radio-Television Corporation Ltd, and channel two was operated by the NZBS.

1924

- Professor Robert Jack, professor of physics at the University of Otago, starts experimenting with TV. Four years later he can transmit pictures within his laboratory.

1949

- In July the Labour government sets up an interdepartmental committee to investigate introducing television. It is made up of representatives from the New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS) and the Post and Telegraph Department.
- National wins the November election and the committee becomes inactive until 1958, after Labour returns to power.

1950

- The first public display of television is given by the Institute of Electronics.

1951

- In March the NZBS gives closed-circuit TV demonstrations in its Auckland and Wellington studios. Each centre's demonstrations run over 10 days and attract around 3000 people.
- The 1951 waterfront dispute prevents similar demonstrations from occurring in Christchurch and Dunedin.
- NZBS engineers Noel Palmer and S.W. McDonald visit the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom to investigate technical standards. Unimpressed by what they see, they report back accordingly.
- Seddon Memorial Technical College establishes a two-year night

Related content

We have **2 biographies, 6 articles,** related to Television in New Zealand.

Timeline 1
1960
P152

Updated 3rd edition reference

school class to train TV servicemen.

- Senior lecturer in engineering at Canterbury University College Bernard Withers and his students run closed-circuit TV transmissions.
- The 'inactive' interdepartmental committee submits a preliminary report to the Minister of Broadcasting.

1952

- An experimental station, ZL3XT, set up by Withers and his students at Canterbury University College, broadcasts New Zealand's first experimental TV transmissions over a radius of a few kilometres in Christchurch. The pictures are 'disappointingly fuzzy and barely legible'.
- An amateur husband and wife team, Roy and Pat Kennard, receive an experimental licence.

1953

- The Kennards run closed-circuit TV demonstrations around the country, starting at the Invercargill Centennial Exhibition.
- In September Palmer and McDonald's report into technical standards is released. It suggests New Zealand adopt the British 405-line standard. Their 'real advice to their superiors was to do nothing and accept the government's wait and see approach'.

1954

- Company PYE (NZ) Ltd broadcasts over a 50-watt TV transmitter at shows around the country.
- PYE is responsible for a number of New Zealand broadcasting firsts. In July 1954 it is the first to broadcast a rugby game - Barbarians vs Waihi in the Bay of Plenty town.

1955

- Another experimental TV station, ZL1XXR, at Seddon Memorial Technical College in Auckland, starts broadcasting from 6 to 6.30 p.m. each Wednesday.

1957

- Auckland company Bell Radio-Television Corporation Ltd runs closed-circuit TV demonstrations around the country, starting at the Auckland birthday carnival at Western Springs.
- Bell obtains an experimental licence for Station ZL1XQ. It begins broadcasting on Channel One over a 200-watt transmitter in May. Soon it is transmitting from 7 to 10 p.m. on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays.
- The experimental licences restrict stations to programmes 'of an educational nature'. Al Bell gets around this by claiming that even entertainment programmes are educational because he is training technicians.
- The National government sets up a committee to prepare a report on

TV.

- In November Labour is re-elected and re-establishes the interdepartmental committee.

1958

- In July the interdepartmental committee releases a plan for 'nationwide' TV coverage. It recommends that New Zealand adopt the higher-quality 625-line standard.
- In August the government announces that New Zealand will adopt the 625-line standard.
- In October the government approves expenditure on equipment for experimental TV transmissions in Auckland.
- In November a lobby group, the New Zealand Television Society, is formed to campaign for the introduction of TV. It organises a petition to Parliament.

1959

- In January TV equipment arrives for the NZBS. A 500-watt transmitter is mounted on a small tower on the roof of the 1YA studio in Shortland Street, Auckland.
- In February the Minister of Broadcasting, Raymond Boord, invites submissions from interested parties on how TV should be run.
- Representatives from Treasury and the Department of Industries and Commerce are added to the interdepartmental committee which will consider the submissions.
- More than 40 submissions are received. Submitters include the Visual Investigation Syndicate (representing several major newspapers) and the New Zealand Motion Picture Exhibitors' Association.
- On 23 February the NZBS broadcasts its first experimental transmissions on Channel two (Bell is still transmitting on Channel one). Boord is concerned that these are generating too much public interest and stops them in their second week.
- On 18 May the NZBS's experimental transmissions resume for two hours each Monday evening.
- On 28 July the Department of Industries and Commerce publishes a booklet, *The Economics of Television*. In it the department's secretary, Dr William Sutch, advocates government control of TV. He also proposes the establishment of four 'two channel' stations in the main centres and six single-channel sessions in regional centres.
- In August Parliament's Public Petitions Committee makes 'no recommendation' on the New Zealand Television Society's petition.
- In November Prime Minister Walter Nash visits London. Interviewed on the BBC programme *Press Conference*, he suggests that TV will be introduced to New Zealand within 12 months.

1960

- On 28 January the government announces that the state will operate the country's TV service. It will be gradually introduced in the four main centres, with Auckland first.

- Experimental transmissions continue on Bell's Channel one and NZBS's Channel two.
- On Wednesday 1 June the NZBS broadcasts the country's first regular (non-experimental) TV transmission on Channel two.
- Experimental NZBS transmissions continue on Channel two on Monday nights, alongside regular transmissions on Wednesdays.
- On 11 July the Monday night transmission ceases to be experimental. Within a month regular transmissions are being made on Channel two on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. By January 1961 regular transmissions are being made seven days a week.
- On 1 September Bell broadcasts its final experimental transmissions.

Further information

- Timeline of the introduction of television in countries (Wikipedia)

Share this item

HOW TO CITE THIS PAGE

'TV emerges in New Zealand timeline', URL: https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/tv-history/emerges, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 21-May-2014