

# Fighting to be Heard

## The NZ Music Quota

**If you're interested in the future of New Zealand music, then this month it's time to turn your radio on: to Parliament. A bill proposing a quota for New Zealand music on our radio stations is finally before the House. Lobbying both for and against the quota bill is likely to be fierce — so it is time to get involved.**

Introducing the "Broadcasting (New Zealand Music Quota) Act 1989" is Graham Kelly, Labour MP for Porirua. Kelly is a musician himself

—as a pianist he had his own danceband for nearly 25 years — and former president of the New Zealand Musicians Union. In that capacity, about a decade ago he was involved in the "Keep Music Live" campaign that was aimed at keeping musicians in work, as their jobs were threatened by discos and drum machines.

When he entered Parliament in 1987, Kelly referred in his maiden speech to the need for a quota. "I said that in New Zealand we haven't discussed what it is to have a national identity. I was referring to television and radio. We don't need an army

from America to invade New Zealand and culturally subvert us — that's already happened. And if we weren't very careful, we'd not only have cultural subversion, but economic subversion. We see countries owned hook, line and sinker by American interests, and now Japanese interests. What we needed was a public discussion on those issues, and we needed some form of legislation to ensure that we protected our culture and identity."

### Private Member

The quota is being introduced not as Government policy but as a private member's bill, which is far more difficult to get through the House. Kelly says it was only at last year's Labour Party Conference that a remit for a quota was successfully passed, "although there have been general policies in the past." But because it wasn't in Labour's 1987



Graham Kelly

election manifesto, it wasn't put forward for legislation. "I encouraged the Minister of Broadcasting and cabinet to adopt it as a Government measure, and while they weren't hostile about it at all, in their wisdom they decided that, given my background and interest in the issue, a private member's bill had merit." In every Parliament, says Kelly, there are likely to be one or two private member's bills that get passed.

"If a private member introduces it there are some risks. If it's a Government measure authorised by cabinet, it's generally going to go through. The risks are that the weight of evidence in the select committee is going to determine the issue. So submissions are vital."

The bill's introduction to the House late last year was interrupted by the summer recess. So the introductory debate will be concluded when the first session for private member's bills

occurs in this year's Parliament (either the last Wednesday in February, or the first Wednesday in March). In the interrupted introductory debate, there were two speakers: Kelly and National's Warren Cooper, who is "violently opposed to it."

The introductory debate will only last a day, says Kelly. Then he will move that the bill goes before a select committee for public submissions. In the committee's first session, it will set a closing date for submissions. Usually they allow about six to eight weeks, so the closing date is likely to be in the middle of May.

The public can do two things, says Kelly. They can write a submission for the benefit of the committee supporting the bill ("or opposing it, if you're a private radio station"), and they can ask to appear before the committee. "And that is very important, so that informally the committee can talk to people about the merits of the case. So submissions don't have to be long — better to be a couple of pages and to the point." If requested, a date to appear before the committee will be given.

Once the committee has considered the bill, it then declares whether to support its re-introduction to the House, with recommendations or amendments. "If it doesn't get that support, it will just sit in the select committee forever," says Kelly. The committee will also be guided by MPs on both sides of the House who may have an opinion about it.

"But a lot of them haven't got a view about it. So it's important that they be educated. And the best way of doing that is for constituents in their own electorate to let them know their views. That is absolutely vital."

Already, says Kelly, one MP has changed his mind on the bill because a member of his electorate visited him to discuss the advantages of the quota. "Now he's a strong supporter. So that's the way the system works. People may not like it but that's the key to this issue getting adopted."

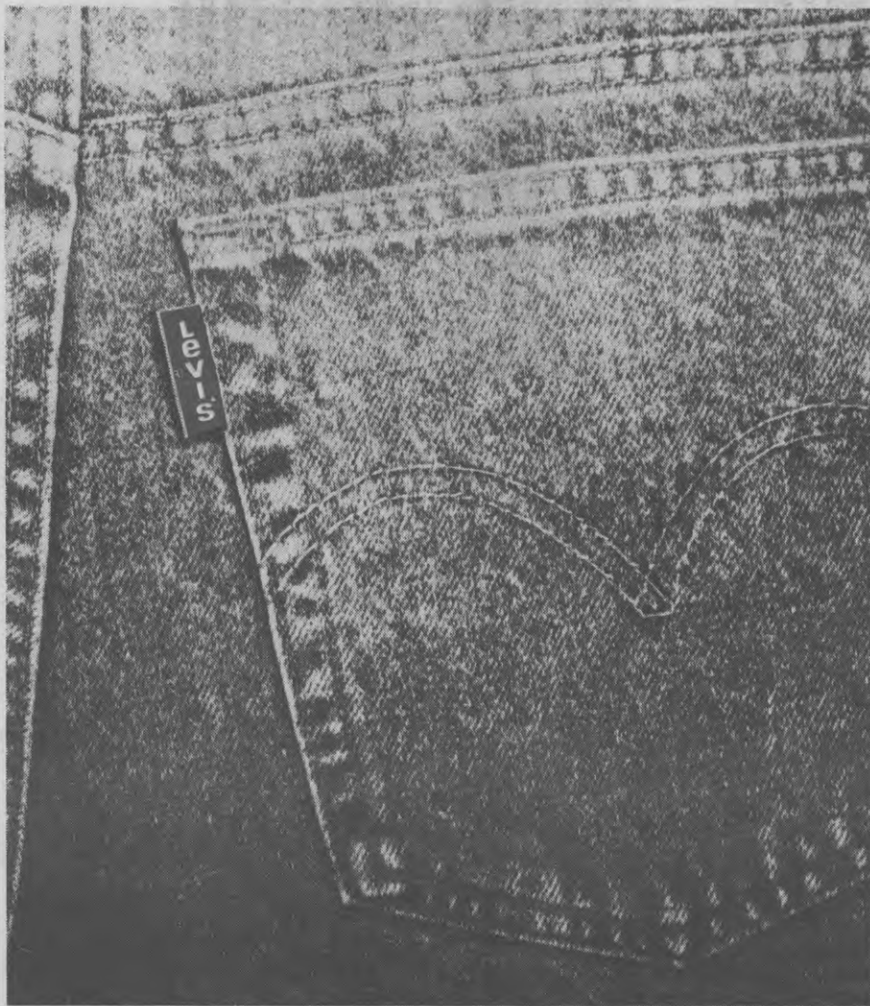
### Free Market

Mike Moore, Jonathan Hunt, Helen Clark, "even Richard Prebble and David Lange" have all made speeches over the years supporting the quota, says Kelly. But a stumbling block is that imposing a quota — a cultural form of protectionism — goes against the free-market philosophy so beloved by this Labour Government. "Absolutely!" says Kelly. "And thank God we've got something going against it! A lot of the free marketeers who support the deregulation of the New Zealand economy are not going to support this bill — so that's why it's important that people don't sit back. This issue has one chance: now. It won't happen in the future."

The self-analysis and flag-waving of 1990 may help the quota, but other factors give the bill a "now or never" urgency. If there is a change of government this year, it is very unlikely a National government would support a quota: they have already opposed it in the House, and have said they will remove the legislation if it gets passed.

Also, says Kelly, the recent legislation deregulating Broadcasting will, once it starts to have an effect, make it very difficult to have a quota imposed. "We need to cement in, even in a deregulated society, some ground rules. It's easier to do it in a controlled environment than in a free market. And now we've opened up Broadcasting to the free market, by selling off the spectrum, we're going to have a lot more radio and television stations. That's why I think it's going to be harder later on."

But Kelly has several reasons for believing the bill will be successful. "Left to the free market, New Zealand won't have a cultural identity. It can't work. But most New Zealanders are experts about television, and likewise about education. They've all been educated so they've all got strong views. Equally with culture. They may ▶



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