

Radio man offers to miss hearing

By BEN HILLS

A member of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board will offer to stay out of a hearing on a new commercial radio licence for Sydney.

The member, Mr. W. L. C. (Bill) Davies, is a former director of Mr. Rupert Murdoch's News Limited group, which has a significant indirect shareholding in one of the companies applying for the licence.

The hearing is to decide who gets the licence for a new station to be based in Sydney's north-west suburbs. Five companies have applied, and the hearing opens in Sydney on Monday.

One of the companies is Prospect Broadcasters Pty. Ltd. and 30,000 of its 204,000 shares are held by Cumberland Newspapers Pty. Ltd., part of the News Limited group. Cumberland Newspapers also has a director on the board, Mr. Lloyd Bond.

Mr. Davies, who was appointed to the ABCB last year, is a former director of News Limited, and his wife holds some shares in the company.

Mr. Davies said yesterday that there was no secret about his former ties with News Limited — "I wrote to the board a month ago pointing out my position."

He said that, at a recent hearing to license a new commercial radio station for Adelaide, he had announced that he knew most of the directors and shareholders in the applicant companies.

"I said that I would withdraw if any of the applicants wanted this. Their counsel went into a huddle, and then came back and said no, they were quite happy."

He said that he would

make the same offer at the Sydney hearing — and take no part in the hearing if any of the applicants objected to his former association with News Limited.

Mr. Davies dismissed suggestions that the licence had been "set up" to go to Prospect Broadcasters because the company included a number of Labor supporters.

A director of Prospect Broadcasters is Mr. Evasio Costanzo, editor of the Sydney Italian newspaper *La Fiamma* — a strong A.L.P. supporter, and a Labor appointment to the Australia Council.

Its shareholders include Mr. Colin Jacobsen (the singer Col Joye) who campaigned for Labor at the 1972 Federal elections, and

Mr. Giacomo (Jim) Bayutti, a Labor appointment to the Qantas board.

Mr. Davies said similar suggestions had been made about one of the applicants for the new Canberra commercial licence, which was backed by the Brisbane Labor radio station 4KQ.

"Everyone said it was going to be a set-up, but of course it wasn't. The application didn't win, and the reason it didn't was because its application wasn't good enough," he said.

"I don't care whether the applicants are Roman Catholics, Calathumpians, Liberals or the Australia Party, the board is going to recommend the licence to the applicant who puts up the best case for the best service to the area."

POWER STRIKE

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