

WHERE APRIL THE FIRST IS NEW YEAR'S DAY

Broadcasts-To-Schools Department of the NBS

THE other day *The Listener* called upon Miss Jean Combs, officer-in-charge of Broadcasts to Schools, and in a flurry of booklets and wrappers, she told us all about it. This was a real rush time, for by the beginning of March, 3000 general booklets, 3000 song booklets and 5000 French booklets have to be sent out to schools all over New Zealand. But that is only part of the story. When the last booklet has gone, Miss Combs takes her annual leave and her typist finds time to breathe for a few weeks. Then in April the whole process begins again, for so great is the work involved in putting these daily school broadcasts on the air that Miss Combs must start work for the following year nine months before it starts. April 1 is New Year's Day for this department.

In April Miss Combs starts to map out the programme for the following year. She does this with the help of the school syllabuses and teachers' schemes of work, since the broadcasts must synchronise with the actual work done in the schools. She has also the collaboration of a committee consisting of Professor Shelley and members of the Education Department. This co-operation is one of the outstanding features of the broadcasts, for the various branches of the Education Department and the Broadcasting Service work together easily, each making a contribution to the usefulness of the project. The School Journal prints stories and articles relevant to the broadcasts, the Visual Aid section distributes film strips to the schools with a further bearing on the broadcasts. The NBS script-writers prepare the serials and dramatised stories, which in turn are produced in the NBS studios.

Then, when the outline for the year is complete, Miss Combs calls upon experts in the various subjects to prepare and present the programmes. And very high in the scheme of things are the teachers themselves, without whose aid the broadcasts to schools could never succeed.

As Miss Combs insisted, these broadcasts are not intended in any way to replace the teacher in her classroom. They are designed to supplement the curriculum and to stimulate pupils to reach out to further knowledge.

Follow-up Work

This follow-up work is most important. The children re-act the stories; they borrow suggested books from the library and delve further into interesting subjects. Often they illustrate what they have heard, and write their own versions. In fact, there are endless ways of building on to these broadcasts. All these activities help the children to pull together the threads of a programme and weave them into their regular work. Follow-ups may be so natural and spontaneous that a formal lesson is unnecessary. But where the children listen to a particular programme to gather specific information, the teacher must

consolidate the information they have gained.

One of the biggest difficulties in arranging the yearly programme is to give consideration to the listening groups. A large percentage of the schools that listen-in are Sole Charge Schools, where one teacher commands all the classes from the Primers to Form 2. Many more are two-and-three-teacher schools, where several classes are grouped under the control of one teacher. The programmes, therefore, must be suitable for a wide range of age and attainment.

Link Between School and Home

"And what about the children," we asked Miss Combs, "how do they react to the broadcasts?"

"They enjoy them exceedingly. I believe they look forward to them all through the day. The teachers say their interest grows as the broadcasts proceed, and that they become most excited with the serials."

There are, we gathered, a good many sides to this topic. In many homes the radio is just a background. The broadcasts in school teach the children to listen seriously. In many homes parents have felt that they were detached from the school life of their children. "Lessons were so different in my day," they say. "I feel I'm no help to John and Mary, because they do things differently now." But with the school broadcasts the parents, too, can listen and very many adults do. They are able to follow the trend of education, to take part in the child's life at school and to help the child to discuss the broadcasts at home.

"Once upon a time, school was like a box where children were imprisoned. When the bell rang to go home, they were free to forget school as soon as they could. And they did, for school life had no connection with home life," Miss Combs explained. "To-day the child's life is kept as a whole. School interests are full-time interests, for the occupations of home life are bound up with the occupations of school life."

As for the children's reactions, the best way to find them out is to read their letters. There are hundreds of these on the file in Miss Combs' office. Here are just two.

June Grant, Age 7.
29/3/44.

"Susie in Storyland."

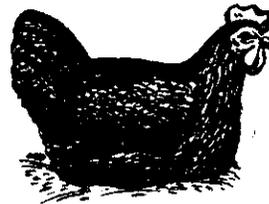
"I like the programme of The Emperor's Night ingales. The reason I like it is because I like the night ingales whistles. The music was very nice indeed. I would not like it changed or I think it would spoil it. The other ones were very good too. I think is all."

Glen Massey,
via Ngaruawahia.

Dear Mr. McQueen,

Re the shearing record for machines, Sonny White, a Maori we know, has shorn 426 sheep in one day. To-day we understood you to say that a hank was 560 yards long and that 1lb. of tops made 50 hanks. As a fleece is about 8lb., this would mean that 127 miles of wool could be spun from one fleece. Would this be possible or nearly possible? We know all a fleece is not tops—but some fleeces are heavier than 8lb. We are coalminers, but interested in our wool. We have watched shearing, but have never been to a woolen mill. We are interested in your talks.

Yours Faithfully,
BETTY BATTEN (for Glen Massey Schoolchildren),



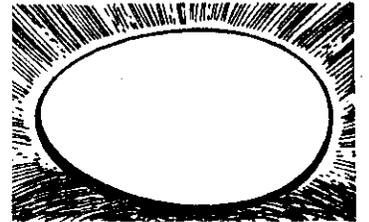
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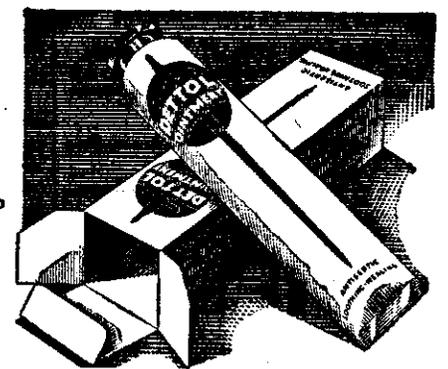
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