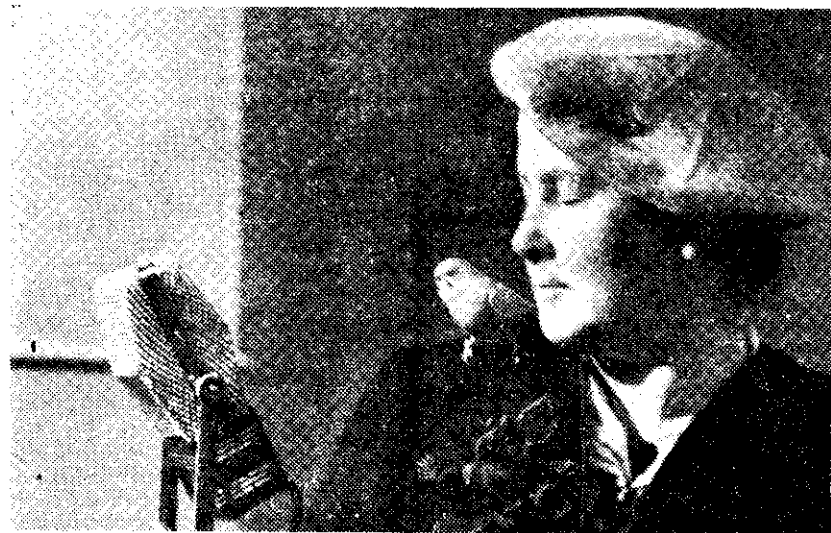


The Budgie Wouldn't Budge

NIGHTINGALES in Berkeley Square may sing their heads off (according to people who "know because they were there"), but Bill the Budgie wouldn't budge. A studio at 2YA was set aside for him at 8.30 the other morning, but he had chosen that day to be temperamental. He kissed his owner, Areta Wharton, of 9 Picton Avenue, Wellington, he kissed himself in the mirror hanging in his cage; he even kissed the microphone. But otherwise he was about as communicative as

and he's probably peeved at the change in his routine. It may take him a while to settle down again, and I suppose that when I get him home it will be impossible to stop him talking. Just like children, you know."

Though Bill declined to say anything for publication, or the record, he posed readily for *The Listener's* photographer. Then, as the next best thing to listening to Bill, we asked Miss Wharton about him. He is four years old, and he started to talk at the age of two months. "His favourite words contain b's and p's," we were told. "He goes right through 'Little



"BILL declined to say anything for publication but he posed readily for his photograph"

Gandhi on one of his more than usually silent days.

Bill was heard last in the *Variety Magazine* from 2YA on February 9, when he gave a remarkable display of rhetoric. The station received many requests for another recording containing his latest remarks, so, for two hours, technicians in earphones and with a blank disc ready for cutting hung on his every chirp. Miss Wharton cajoled, ran through some of his dialogue, used every artifice. Bill said something deep down in his chest. It sounded like . . . but then we might have been mistaken. At any rate the microphone did not pick it up.

Just Like a Child

For Bill's first radio appearance, the recording was made in the familiar surroundings of his home. He chatted away, recited nursery rhymes, ran through the alphabet, and showed off his paces admirably. It was the first time the NBS had broadcast the voice of a New Zealand budgerigar.

When it came to 10 a.m. the other day, Bill had to make way for a string quartet waiting to practise in the studio, so he was transferred to 2YC, where he perched before the microphone again, still strong and silent.

"You see," Miss Wharton told us, "I had to bring him down in the tram, with his cage wrapped in brown paper,

Boy Blue,' and the strange thing is that when he is learning a piece he picks out the larger words first. It generally takes him a fortnight to learn a whole new sentence."

One of his latest sayings is: "Did you hear my record from 2YA? Wasn't it a classic?" He counts—"One, two, three, four, six; dash it, I forgot five."

Bill is a bit of a snob. With some emphasis he will tell you, "I do not associate with sparrows." At home he is full of enquiries: "Olive, is there any basketball to-day?" he asks, and follows this with, "Rita, is there a cup of tea?" A Kiwi, home from Italy, nearly jumped out of his battledress when Bill remarked warmly, "Hello, soldier, glad to see you back!"

According to Miss Wharton, Bill's vocabulary is about 600 words, and she was naturally disappointed when he was overcome by shyness. Even before his first broadcast, Bill had attracted attention in various parts of New Zealand, and many people have called at his home to hear him. He can expect to live until he is nine or ten years of age, so at the moment he is just in his prime and has a long time ahead of him in which to extend his wordage.

But the other morning he was just dumb!

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