

Interview with Visitor from BBC

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point rather than the more formal approach which starts with what people think the public ought to know."

To be aware of what people were concerned with at any time it was necessary to get out and talk with different groups of the community. For this work the BBC already had a research department and new developments would not require additional staff, but merely directing the efforts of the researchers into different channels. Broadcasting to schools had been developed on the basis of continuing research at the listening end by special educational observers, but such work presented much greater difficulties with regard to adult audiences, though it, too, was being carried out. Miss Somerville considered the indirect approach, with informal meetings with listeners, the better method, and she expressed a hope that she would not spend all her time in an office planning programmes but would have opportunity to develop ideas from direct contacts with listeners.

Already the BBC provided plenty of adult education material in drama and literature, in feature programmes dealing with new discoveries in the sciences, and in presenting a picture of life in other countries, Miss Somerville stated. She was particularly interested in helping parents with the problems they faced in bringing up their children, and in general she considered the function of radio in adult education was to take current problems and help people to obtain a better understanding.

A development with regard to talks and discussions mentioned by Miss Somerville was the broader outlook taken by the BBC, not only in the Third Programme but in the Home Service, on controversial subjects. This did not mean that much time was devoted to arguments pro and con, but that matters hitherto banned as being controversial were now permitted to be discussed over the radio.

Discussing school broadcasts, Miss Somerville emphasised that school radio was an extension of, not a substitute for, classroom lectures.

Radio dramatization, she went on, may be a more potent stimulus to the imagination than the play or the film, for in the latter the actors and scenery came between the audience and its identification of itself with the people dramatized.

The BBC provided seven 20-minute programmes for schools every day and sometimes more, and the main idea was to give the schools something better than they could provide for themselves. Clever children were well provided for in Britain, but the cultural resources of schools for ordinary children had been very meagre, and it had been the aim of school broadcasting to help meet this lack. Dramatisations of great novels, for instance, had been used to stimulate interest in literature, and as the best acting talent was used for such programmes the children therefore also had the opportunity of hearing good English well spoken. One of the things which had developed from experience in school broadcasting was "more sifting out of literature and music," as a result of a greater appreciation of the fact that some literature, some music (and even some instruments) evoked greater interest and response in children than did other works, though both groups may come within the definition of "classics."

Miss Somerville was disinclined to generalise on her impressions of school broadcasting in Australia, but she mentioned she was impressed by their "Kindergarten of the Air," a session broadcast to pre-school-age children listening in with their parents, the programmes being directed both to the children and to the mothers, who were given ideas for stories, games and other activities of an educational nature. Begun in Australia, the programme had now been adopted by Canada and Norway.

Miss Somerville was invited to Australia by the ABC to report on their school broadcasts and during the last two and a-half months she has travelled all over Australia.

Having come so far, it was natural that Miss Somerville should not miss an opportunity to visit her birthplace.

RUGBY LEAGUE TOUR

AS we go to press arrangements have been made with the BBC for a special half-hour commentary on the second Rugby League Test—New Zealand versus England—to be played at Swinton on November 8. This commentary will be broadcast by 1YA, 2YA, 3YA, and 3ZR at 10.30 p.m. on November 9. Matches to be played by the tourists during the coming week are those against Oldham (October 25), Leeds (October 29), and Hull (November 1). Because New Zealand time is 12 hours ahead of G.M.T., results are not received here until the day after play, but scores are broadcast by all National stations as soon as they are received from the BBC (usually at about 7.15 a.m.) They are repeated in the National links at 8.10 a.m., 12.30, and 6.40 p.m. Nine-minute summaries of play, rebroadcast direct from London, are on the air here at 9.0 a.m. on the day after play and are repeated at 6.45 p.m.

Lake Waiholo, near Dunedin, which she left at the age of two for Scotland. She has vivid recollections of her first home, where her father, J. A. Somerville, was minister of a country parish—incidentally, he was a champion golfer—and she has come to see whether those memories are real or are impressions gained through her mother. She has no relatives in New Zealand, but she will visit her old nurse who is living at Palmerston.

When her parents left New Zealand, they intended to return after a holiday, but this plan did not eventuate. Miss Somerville went straight to the BBC after graduation from Oxford and was with the School Broadcasting Department of the Talks Division from its inception until she retired from the post of Director of School Broadcasts at the end of March. In her new office of Assistant Controller of Talks she will be concerned with general education, religious programmes and public services (other than news broadcasts) in addition to the school sessions.

Although Miss Somerville originally intended her visit to New Zealand to be an unofficial one, an invitation was extended to her by the NZBS to report on the school broadcasts here and this she is doing, though, she explained, "not on the same formal basis as in the case of Australia."



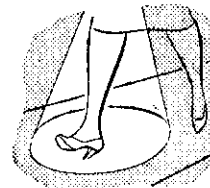
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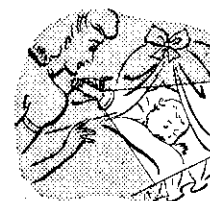
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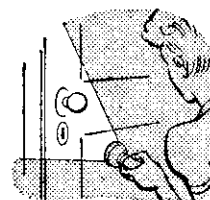
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