

NEW DEAL FOR CHILDREN

JEAN COMBS, newly-appointed NZBS Supervisor of Broadcasts to Schools and Children's Programmes (she was formerly Officer-in-Charge of Broadcasts to Schools), has been having a look at children's programmes during the past month or two. Until now no one had had overall control of these programmes, she explained to *The Listener*, when asked about her plans. A lot of good work had been done, but by advance planning it was hoped to give children better programmes in the future. That didn't mean that programmes would be imposed on local stations from headquarters. There should always be some local interest in programmes broadcast to children, and this quality would be retained.

"The reorganisation of the children's programmes will start with the four YZ stations," Miss Combs said. "Station 2YZ has already reorganised its programmes, and the same is being done at 3YZ. But 1YZ, for which a completely new scheme has been worked out, gives perhaps the best idea of the sort of thing we're aiming at."

In the past the *Children's Session* at 1YZ had been prepared by the station programme officer, but Janet Perry, a teacher at the Glenholm School, Rotorua, had now been appointed organiser. Associated with her were Miss Royal and Miss Warbrick, teachers at a Maori school near Rotorua, who would continue to conduct the Maori session which

had been running for the past few months.

"Each half-hour programme will be part recorded material and part studio broadcast," Miss Combs said. "Recordings will give a link with similar material being broadcast from other stations, and the studio broadcasts will provide local interest. The first half of each programme will be for juniors—children aged five to seven years—and the second half for children aged eight to 13 years. The broadcasts will be at 5.0 p.m., and on Monday, February 4, for example, the day the new programmes start, there will be recorded nursery rhymes for juniors followed by a studio presentation, *Fun with Poetry*. On the Tuesday the first of W. Sterndale Bennett's series, *Music with a Theme*, recently recorded for the NZBS (see story on page 11), will be broadcast. It will be followed by a studio story, *Snow White and Rose Red*. The recorded programme for juniors on Wednesday will be "Snake Postman," from the *Jamaican Folk Tales*, told by Amabel Williams-Ellis. Older children will hear from the studio a quiz and part of *Castaways of Disappointment Island*. There will be no broadcast on Thursday, and the week will end on Friday with the story of Clarence the Lift, read from the studio, and, for seniors, a BBC play about Shakespeare and his family, *Tyger's Hart*."

The programmes would follow a pattern much like this each week, said Miss Combs, but among new regular features to be heard in the second week were a

junior quiz, senior and junior choirs, and (on Friday, February 15) the first of the fortnightly Maori programmes (conducted by Miss Royal and Miss Warbrick) to be heard in the reorganised programmes. The Maori programme would include some recorded features, including a series of stories by Ruth Park.

"We also hope to develop between the *Children's Sessions* an exchange of locally recorded programmes," Miss Combs said. "One of this type which 1YZ will broadcast and record is *Ramblings in Rotorua*, which will introduce places of interest around Rotorua."

W. Sterndale Bennett's programmes, *Music with a Theme*, will start, playing from 3YZ also early this month; and among the new programmes from 2YZ is a dramatised serial, *The Three Penguins*, produced in the studio. Written by Bryan O'Brien, it is about the life of the penguins when the Byrd Expedition visited the Antarctic.

When we asked Miss Combs if she could tell us anything about changes



N.P.S. photograph

JEAN COMBS

"By advanced planning . . . better programmes"

that might be made in children's programmes from other stations, she said that the new scheme was being confined to the YZ stations at present. But she made it clear that lessons learned at these stations would later benefit others.

DINNER AT ANTOINE'S

THERE are two good reasons why people go to New Orleans (local pronunciation: Noo Orl'ns). One is the annual Mardi Gras festival and the other the French Quarter, an old section

of the city noted for its ancient French architecture, and particularly its iron filigree balcony decorations. The French Quarter has a reputation something like the Casbah and tourists flock there to enjoy historic French settings and the latest Franco-American versions of

night-life. Between these two extremes stands Antoine's, a restaurant with a history and a reputation for modern cuisine. It is the sort of place where they turn out the lights before bringing in a flaming crepe suzette.

From State Street, the "Broadway" of New Orleans, down a narrow alley running parallel to the tracks of a street-car with destination "Desire" written on it, one travels a little distance through the French Quarter to an old building far less imposing than others about it. The name is fading from the boards under the eaves and inside are dim lights in numerous small rooms. This is Antoine's. Its visitors' book contains the names of more famous people than ever visited New Zealand. Add to all this the fact that Antoine's was made the scene of one of the States' best-selling novels—*Dinner at Antoine's*, by Frances Parkinson Keyes.

This novel is the basis of a new serial to be heard by New Zealand audiences shortly. The Grace Gibson production will first be heard at 3.45 p.m. on Monday, February 4, from 1YZ, and later from all YA and YZ stations. The Australian cast includes Kevin Brennan, Rosemary Millar, Bruce Stewart, Betty McDowell, Margo Lee, Alfred Bristowe, Reginald Goldworthy and Queenie Ashton. *Dinner at Antoine's* is, principally, a story supported on that ever-sure plot of murder. Several romances among the guests who attend the opening banquet at Antoine's, secure the structure and assure listeners of the usual standard of entertainment Miss Keyes is renowned

for. The scene she sets is New Orleans caught up in the spectacular festivities of Mardi Gras, and Orson Foxworth, shipping tycoon, seating his guests in the restaurant's famed "1840 Room."

According to the book's dust-jacket blurb—"This dinner is ostensibly planned to present his (Foxworth's charming niece, Ruth Avery, who has come from Washington for the Carnival festivities, to his friends in Louisiana, and to assure for her the romance which has hitherto eluded her; but it also serves as a springboard from which to renew Foxworth's own courtship of the beautiful widow Amélie Lalande. At the dinner Amélie's daughter, Odile, spills a glass of red wine down the front of her white dress, and though the incident is passed off lightly, it is tragically recalled thirty hours later when Odile is found dead. . . ." Such is the plot of this serialised drama. The outcome is that . . .

Suffice to say that justice is done and all romantic problems solved. Through this high drama move many men and women of contrasting character—with a benevolent Secretary of State to provide a *deus ex machina* ending. Behind the foreground occupied by the principal characters move the inevitable and implacable police, and throughout the drama there is the atmosphere of New Orleans. Detailed settings recreated from Miss Keyes's own experiences in New Orleans provide a colourful locale for this story of semi-thriller proportions. As a radio play it should prove a dish equal to any *Dinner at Antoine's*.



ROSEMARY MILLAR and BRUCE STEWART