

Notes and Comments

By "Switch"

A WELLINGTONIAN who is on a visit to Sydney writes: "Stations 2FC and 2BL have not the children's sessions of 2YA, Wellington. They have practically no system of organisation for the children, but are bright and impart a great deal of little banter into the kiddies' sessions. 2GB's are the best children's sessions in Sydney." The last-mentioned are conducted by George Saunders, who for years was familiar to New Zealand listeners as announcer and "Uncle George" at 2BL, Sydney. "Switch" has always maintained that the children's sessions at 2YA, Wellington, are not equalled by any station on this side or the other side of the Tasman.

A NEUTRODYNE enthusiast was telling the writer the other day that he has always had a set with that type of circuit since he first obtained the circuit diagram and constructional data about five years ago, when Professor Louis A. Hazeltine, of New York City, first published his circuit. The said neutrodyne enthusiast said that, despite anything that has been said to the contrary, he has found that an aerial of 90 feet, including the lead-in, gives the best results with a neutrodyne. He has also employed a 3-foot loop aerial with great success, although he has always used an earth with the loop and a .0005 variable condenser across the leads of the loop.

"SWITCH" has often to explain to beginners that residents within a mile or a mile and a half of the centre of Wellington, unless perched upon some hill-top, are unable to obtain anything like the strength of reception from long-distance stations accomplished by listeners just outside the city and up-country. The skipper of a coastal steamer, which runs in and out of Wellington regularly, informed "Switch" that as soon as his vessel gets outside the Wellington heads reception of the Australian broadcast stations increases almost three times in volume. He finds reception in the Taranaki Bight simply wonderful. The basin-like effect of the hills surrounding Wellington screens local aeri-als more or less.

2BL, Sydney, recently put on a novel innovation in announcing. A rather humorous gentleman introduced each performer and mentioned the various items, following with an amusing description of each artist. For instance, he said, "Mr. — will now sing —." He is a sad-eyed gentleman who looks as though he would cry if he won £20,000." Then later he said, "Miss — will now go and change

her dress for her next song. You know how much the ladies wear nowadays, so you will realise how long she will take to change her dress." It is questionable if this style of announcing would conform to the dignity of some of our New Zealand officials!

SEVERAL Wellington listeners have informed "Switch" that they heard a foreign broadcast station transmitting on top of the Japanese station, JOHK, one evening last week. "Switch" also heard the strange station, and, although the language used was foreign, it was apparently European. Possibly it was one of the Antarctic whaling vessels working on 'phone. No music was heard by the writer, but a heavy guttural voice kept up an unbroken sequence of sentences for about ten minutes.

A YOUNG married Wellingtonian informs "Switch" that he has discovered a sovereign method of appeasing the anguish of his five-months-old offspring. When the youngster howls, as only the human infant knows how, if 2YA is on the air, he places the headphones on the baby's head. Almost immediately, the youngster ceases wailing, and listens attentively to the music, speech, or whatever happens to be saturating the ether. This is not a new idea; "Switch" saw it work three years ago, on a particularly blatant infant, which, on that occasion, fell asleep listening to a report of the wool sales!

THE recent large-sized freckle on the face of Old Sol played the very dickens with reception of the Australian stations; at least, the appearance of the sunspot coincided with a period of exceedingly poor signals from Australia. Anyhow, scientists have found that sunspots are frequently associated with terrestrial magnetic storms, and we all know that these affairs not only disorganise submarine cable services, but also affect radio more or less. Lately, however, things have greatly improved, and the Aussies are trooping in again with very fair volume.

NO tears were shed by Wellington listeners when H.M.S. Dunedin left port last week. Several times during New Zealand broadcasting hours the cruiser's morse transmitter shattered reception from "outside" stations. It had the habit of emitting crashing "harmonics" or re-radiations on certain points of the dials, while missing 2YA's wave-lengths, but on occasions it

thundered also on top of 2YA. One Wellington sufferer remarked to "Switch": "Allah be praised for not making Wellington a naval base," and so say several of us.

ONE cannot but help admiring the persistence of some of the Japanese entertainers at the Japanese broadcast stations. The other evening a seemingly lyric tenor, singing falsetto, and accompanied by a guitar-like instrument, commenced a whining song at 10 minutes to 11, and kept at it until 11.15 p.m. Possibly it was an aria from a Japanese opera, but at any rate it was a test of endurance for European listeners, if not for the vocalist himself.

THIS reminds "Switch" of an impromptu entertainment provided for him by two Japanese sub-lieutenants on the occasion of his visit to one of the Japanese warships while they were at Wellington a few months ago. The two officers played a duet on Japanese flutes, which occupied twenty minutes, and there was scarcely a dull moment in the entire performance. The Japs. ambled along, not always together, up and down chromatic scales, performed "turns," tremolos, and tonal somersaults ad lib., until finally the "music" died away in a quivering D flat, away up in the fourth octave above the clef. "Switch" suggested that they should broadcast from 2YA, but they pleaded lack of practice to do themselves justice.

WELLINGTON dwellers are as a rule up against a difficulty in placing their masts sufficiently far apart to obtain a respectable length of aerial, owing to the smallness of the average section. The way out is to obtain the permission of a neighbour to erect a mast in his section. "Switch" has heard of only one such request being refused, but later when the ill-humoured neighbour took up radio the request was then granted. "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," and folk soon realise the difficulty of others when they are placed in a similar position.

For the writer's part he found no objection to planting a hefty Oregon mast in the section of a neighbour three doors away, and the owners of the intervening sections cordially granted permission to erect the aerial over their yards. The said mast is now a sort of community mast, for no fewer than three other aeri-als are attached to it. In erecting a new mast in his own section "Switch" ran up a spare block and halyards for use by any neighbour who desires to erect an aerial. Additional aeri-als generally help to stay a mast against Wellington's violent gales, and the assistance lent to neighbours fosters the friendly relations which should subsist among all listeners.

SOME of the Wellington yachtsmen who are planning to spend their Christmas holidays cruising in the Marlborough Sounds are contemplating taking broadcast receivers with them. A yachtsman informed "Switch" that last Christmas he had a receiving set with him in the Sounds, and much

pleasure was derived from listening to 2YA during the long evenings. Some portions of the Sounds were found to be somewhat screened from 2YA, while at other places first-class reception was available every evening.

PECULIARLY enough there are beginners who persist in using a gas pipe for an "earth." A neighbour proudly showed "Switch" what a good job he had made of his "earth"—it was soldered to a gas pipe! The principal objection to the use of a gas pipe as an "earth" is the fact that the joints are "red-leaded," which reduces the conductivity. There is another, but more serious objection to a gas-pipe earth, and that is the risk of fire. A heavy static discharge may occur in the aerial, and running to earth it may cause sparks at bad joints in the gas pipe. The water pipe is far better for reception and safety.

ON Thursday night (November 29) Wellington listeners who chanced to tune down below 3YA Christchurch, received a surprise. A station was coming in with a powerful punch, broadcasting music by an excellent picture orchestra. True, every four or five minutes the station faded to inaudibility, but these fades were of only 20 seconds' duration. At seven minutes to nine, finally, the announcer said it was 2ZM Gisborne, broadcasting music by the orchestra at the Palace Picture Theatre. This was the best transmission yet heard by "Switch" from Gisborne.

WELLINGTON owners of valve sets are looking forward to the ushering-in of the New Year by the New Zealand broadcast stations. Last year the New Zealand stations gave us plenty of entertainment, and the Australian stations were subsequently heard celebrating the birth of the New Year. On one occasion, "Switch" heard the arrival of the New Year celebrated in New Zealand, and an hour and a half later at Sydney and Melbourne, and half an hour later, in Adelaide.

THOSE who are novices with regard to a.c. sets, were warned by Mr. Billing in his lecture at the last meeting of the Wellington Radio Society, not to place their hands inside the sets while the current is switched on, owing to the risk of a painful shock. "Familiarity breeds contempt," and even the lecturer confessed to having been caught in a thoughtless moment, and was punished by a nasty burn on one of his hands. Electrical burns, however, are peculiarly unlike other burns, as they heal very quickly, and are painful for a brief while only.

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