

# Notes and Comments

By  
"SWITCH"

ON two or three nights recently Wellington listeners received a pleasant surprise at the improvement in reception of the Australian stations, but their joy was short-lived, as conditions lapsed into weak audibility again. The consensus of opinion locally is that reception from Australia this summer is easily the worst for five years past.

**ATMOSPHERIC** conditions have been very uncertain for some weeks, and in Wellington even 1YA, Auckland has on frequent nights been only about a third as loud as is normal. Yet 3YA, Christchurch, remains a faithful servitor of the Wellington listeners when all the other "outside" stations are weak. Most of us get 3YA with really excellent loudspeaker volume in the afternoons, and without a trace of fading.

**A PLEA** for the repetition occasionally of Cattelby's composition, "Bells Across the Meadow," per gramophone record from 2YA, Wellington, has reached "Switch." The listener urged his plea with the remark, "I believe the majority of music-lovers will agree with me that Cattelby possesses the rarest gift of descriptive effect in his melody and harmony, and 'Bells Across the Meadow' with its haunting effect is more wonderful than even his enchanting 'Voice of the Bells,' which is a veritable masterpiece acclaimed the world over."

**IT** was reported recently that Mr. Ken Martin, of Hataitai, a Wellington nearby suburb, had KFON, Long Beach, California, on his loudspeaker from 9 p.m. till 9.30 p.m., when he switched across to hear other stations. The writer questioned Mr. Martin about the report, which he verified. This is a notable feat for a Wellington listener at this time of the year. It may be stressed, however, that Mr. Martin resides just outside the "bowl" of hills encircling the city, which rather shuts out reception of the Yanks. This is a facsimile of Mr. Claude Grey's. It is an American five-valve (dull-emitter) with two stages of tuned radio frequency—a set with a reputation.

**JUST** why some dull-emitter valve sets have a penchant for reaching out to prodigious distances has puzzled some listeners, and various theories have been suggested. Apart from the

high-grade quality and efficient circuits of some of these sets, their long-distance efficiency is contributed in no small degree to the characteristics of the dull-emitter valves, which are particularly effective in the radio frequency stages. The writer remembers when the Browning-Drake people strongly advocated the use of a low-temperature valve for the only radio frequency valve used in their famous circuit.

**FOLLOWING** the advice of the Browning-Drake people the writer inserted a four-volt valve for a five-volt valve in the radio-frequency stage of his Browning-Drake circuit, and found long-distance audibility increase about three-fold. Stations which previously yielded faint loudspeaker audibility promptly came in with great volume. Reception was of such a nature that a leading official of the Amateur Radio Society of Wellington, who heard the set perform, was almost incredulous until he heard the call-signs of the various stations.

**MUCH** depends on the valves that are used in a set, and many listeners are apt to give little consideration to this aspect of broadcast listening, although long-distance reception is more sought after in New Zealand than probably any country in the world. It is trite to say that no purchaser of a multi-valve set in New Zealand is satisfied unless it can efficiently span the 1200 or 1300 miles to Australia. One Wellington professional builder makes a point of testing several valves in various positions in each set before delivering to the purchasers.

**THE** New South Wales Broadcasting Company have just commenced a new idea in which on every Wednesday night 2FC will devote the whole of its programme to classical music and on the same night only "popular" music will be put on the air by 2BL. In Wellington households one can imagine the dials being shifted backwards and forwards from 2BL to 2FC and vice versa so that the particular taste of each member of the family will be catered for.

**A LETTER**, signed "F. P. Fitzmaurice, Warrawee," published in the Sydney "Wireless Weekly," shows the attitude of many listeners:—"I know

the stations have to cater to all tastes; but I just want to say what I think a lot of people are thinking—that is, that there are too many interruptions to good programmes. They give us good jazz songs and comedians now and then, but they are always pushing in some pianist or singer in the middle of the things we understand. To anyone whose tastes are to my way of thinking this is most annoying, and I cannot remember one night lately when I have not had to chop and change among the programmes to find something really good. It doesn't say much for the stations' organisation." Of course, what "something really good" is depends on the taste of the listener. The above gentleman inclines to jazz songs. We have the same difficulty in New Zealand.

**MR. LEN. MAURICE**, who has entertained many of us Wellington listeners from Australia with his deft piano-playing of jazz with vocal lines, has done a lot of gramophone recording across the Tasman. His gramophone recording of "My Blue Heaven" has been sold to the extent of 100,000 discs!

**AN** unusual query was put to "Switch" a couple of days ago by a beginner. Strange how novices concentrate on unthought-of details which, not infrequently, are important. He queried, "Should I disconnect my 'A' battery without first turning down the filaments with my rheostats?" Various authorities on valves were sought, and at last "Switch" found a definite warning that suddenly disconnecting the "A" battery without first dulling or extinguishing the light of the filaments considerably shortens the life of the valves.

**MR. FRANK JOHNSTONE**, the 'cellist who was formerly in Wellington, has been performing in solo work recently at 3LO, Melbourne. One of his items was Popper's "Hungarian Rhapsody."

**ANOTHER** query which was shot at "Switch" recently came from a friend who had just extinguished for ever and ever five beautiful valves through accidentally sending the "B" battery current through the filaments of his valves. It was a painful episode for him, as he said he gone to much trouble to have each valve tested for each socket of his set. He wanted to know what was the cheapest and easiest method of preventing such a disaster again. A tiny pocket torch bulb connected in series with his "B" battery lead would prevent a repetition of his valve massacre.

**"WHERE** do all the dead valves go?" asked a Wellington radio fan, talking to a well-known dealer a few days ago. The dealer showed him a couple of petrol cases full of "dead bottles." He explained that the bases of old valves sometimes came in handy for making plugs for coils, and as plugs for detector-valve sockets in making electric gramophone pick-ups. He had also seen one used as a plug for connecting the "A" bat-

tery to a set. Each couple of prongs had been connected together, and when the base was pushed into a socket a complete circuit was made.

**AT** a meeting of the Amateur Radio Society of Wellington a few weeks ago the question as to the best time for dinner music for country listeners was discussed. A New South Wales farmer recently wrote to the Press that the best time for early evening transmission for the workers on the land was from 7.15 till 8.30 "as during the summer months people in the country work late." The time mentioned is equal to 7.45 till 9 p.m. New Zealand summer time. It is an interesting statement.

**ANOTHER** broadcast listening circuit has been added to the equipment at the Wellington General Hospital. The system has been extended to the big block of new buildings and some scores of more patients are now able to enjoy radio. By degrees it is hoped to obtain sufficient funds to equip the whole hospital. The medical superintendent and nurses are enthusiastic over the benefit the patients are obtaining from the diversion created by broadcast listening. Among the male patients the sporting news is particularly popular.

**A FRIEND** who is visiting Wellington asked "Switch" to give publicity to his experience in visiting the studios of 2YA, Wellington. "Although a complete stranger," he says, "I was most cordially received by Mr. J. Davies, the studio director. I was extremely curious to see how things were worked in the station which we have listened to for many months out in the way-back. Mr. Davies showed me every interesting particular of the studio, and I will have a lot to tell my family and friends on my return home."

**THE** American papers occasionally make reference to complaints from "old-timers" that long-distance reception is not what it used to be. Some Yankee listeners have endorsed this in letters to the radio press; but a few have suggested that they had been spoilt by the excellent winter reception, and when summer came along they were disappointed because things had gone off a deal. This statement was challenged by other correspondents, who quoted their logs of previous summers to prove definitely that reception was much inferior to previous summers.

**THE** burlesques of broadcasting put on at 2YA, Wellington, have made a distinct hit. Several listeners have told the writer that they have been much amused with the burlesque of a broadcast from 3LO, Melbourne, and would like to hear some more. They regarded the humour as very apt, and there was a touch of sound reason in making fun of some of the stuff which one hears on the air occasionally. It is not so long so long since a missing cow was sought for by a broadcast announcement from a certain Australian station! And it certainly caused the cow to be found shortly afterwards.



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