

Notes and Comments

By
"SWITCH"

THE English Press is full of letters suggesting that the shortwave broadcasting station 5SW, Chelmsford, which costs £10,000 per annum, and is seldom heard in Wellington, excepting at ungodly hours, should be paid for by the "colonies." 5SW, however, is still called an "experimental" station by the British Broadcasting Corporation. What we desire to know is when will 5SW be something more than an "experimental" station. And then if we have to contribute to the support of that station we would certainly desire to dictate times of transmission, wavelength and power.

"MY idea of a really good radio talk is when it appears to be a talk, and not something which is read," said a hard-boiled old-time listener to the writer a couple of days ago. "Switch" has listened to many talks from 2YA which carried the effect of being carefully considered talks, but there have been others which were too palpably mere readings. The effect of a reading is much enhanced if the speaker can lend a little conversational colour to his method of delivery. The tedium of listening to a reading can thus be prevented by the speaker's technique.

SOMETIMES the Yankee broadcasting companies refer to the listeners as "dialers," or, as we would spell it, "diallers." Another term, applied facetiously, is "broadcasters" as a distinction from "broadcasters." In Australia when radio was in the wooden age listeners were called "experimenters" for the sets in general use in those days were home-built, and, as there was very little to listen to, they had ample time to experiment with various hook-ups which were published at the time. Various endeavours have been made to coin a suitable word, but "listener" seems to be the most accepted in this part of the world.

WELLINGTON listeners who chanced to be tuned in to 2BL, Sydney, the other night when Alfred O'Shea sang nine items in succession enjoyed a musical treat. If anything, Mr. O'Shea

broadcasts better than singing in a hall or theatre before an audience. The writer heard him sing in the Wellington Town Hall last year, and confesses he enjoys O'Shea better on the radio. By the way, he told us from 2BL the other night that he is about to visit New Zealand prior to going to the United States. This is the second time this has been announced.

MR. J. H. OWEN, ex-president of the Wellington Radio Society, writing from London to "Switch," says that he was just about to leave for Brussels, Paris, Lyons, Monte Carlo, Cannes, and Nice. He stated he expected to be on the Continent for five weeks. Mr. Owen, his wife and infant son will leave Home for Wellington on February 15 by the new liner Rangitiki, 17,500 tons, on her maiden voyage. Mr. Owen remarks: "The bands, orchestras, and music generally, in London, in concert halls, cinemas, and on the radio are a treat."

MR. J. H. OWEN forwards a copy of certain remarks made by Captain Ian Fraser, M.P., when speaking at the annual dinner of the Radio Manufacturers' Association, held recently in London. Captain Fraser suggested that talks on the wireless, to be effective, must not merely be well spoken, but must be properly listened to. There was technique both in talking and in listening. He recommended that people should use more headphones, or that they should listen to loudspeakers in a quiet room. Unless they did that they could not judge whether a talk was of value or not. Well, as far as "Switch's" experience goes, it is difficult to listen to a broadcast talk when a number of guests are present in one's house. Lady visitors, in particular, show a disinclination to listen attentively. They appear to think it an excellent opportunity to chatter.

THE writer has always enjoyed Mr. Johannes Andersen's talks on New Zealand birds, from 2YA, Wellington, but on one specific occasion Mr. Ander-

sen's talk could be followed only with the greatest difficulty owing to the ceaseless gossip of a party of visitors, male and female. If it had not been considered bad form, "Switch" would have connected up a pair of headphones in series with the loudspeaker, and ensured reasonable audibility despite the chatter of his guests. This sort of thing, however, isn't done, and the annoying babble had to be endured.

MR. OWEN also forwarded the text of the statement of the chairman of the Radio Manufacturers' Association in proposing the toast of "The British Broadcasting Corporation." He said that the rate of increase in the number of wireless receiving licenses in Great Britain had accelerated. During October last 21,561 new licenses were taken out, as against 5071 in October the previous year. The total number of wireless receiving licenses in force on October 31 last was 2,542,958, which represented an increase of 194,100 in twelve months. He was given to understand that the figures for November would reveal an even more substantial and satisfactory increase. Over two and a half million broadcast listeners is certainly an outstanding total, and it goes to show what amazing progress has been made at Home.

AN experienced listener suggests that a warning should be published that "C" batteries should be tested after a few months' use. It is true, he said, that there is no actual drain of current from a C battery, but they deteriorate even if they stand on a shelf unused. Old C batteries sometimes develop an internal open circuit causing an excessive flow of current in the plate circuit, and overheating in the filament circuit. These conditions soon damage a valve. The grid circuit, he urged, should never be broken when the filaments are switched on, otherwise a damaging effect will be created in the valves. "Switch" has not previously seen this warning in print.

HATS off to the gentleman who performed the ring-side description of the wrestling match between the Greek, Kilonis, and the Indian, Sunni, broadcast by 1YA, Auckland, last week. "Switch" never hesitates to condemn, and is ever eager to praise, whichever the case demands. He has heard many wrestling matches described from 3LO, Melbourne, and 2BL, Sydney, but the Australian ring-side describers couldn't hold a candle to the Aucklanders. He rattled off a "verbatim" description of the contest in a most astonishing way, never letting up for a moment, until one could almost visualise what was happening in the ring all the while.

THE Aucklanders knew the wrestling holds, and he fired them at us in an incessant stream of words, almost breathlessly at times. He also avoided the cheap "bunk" put across by the 3LO, Melbourne, man, who customarily shouted himself hoarse with such phrases as "He's got him!" followed invariably by "No, he hasn't! Smith-

kins has wriggled out of it!" This simulated excitement on the part of the Melbourne man was evidently mere showmanship to induce listeners to come and see these "marvellous" contests.

THE test of the Auckland man's description of the Kilonis-Sunni wrestling match was provided by some lady guests who happened to be listening-in at "Switch's" domicile. Station 1YA, Auckland, was switched on, and, despite the ladies' enthusiasm for the music which was coming in from other stations, they begged "Switch" to hold 1YA right through the wrestling match. Before long they became excitedly partisan, and their sympathies were extended to the Indian, he being a British subject. If the Auckland describer of the contest chances to read this it may afford him some satisfaction to know that his description kept a party of a half a dozen people in one home on the tip-toes of excitement right to the finish.

WE listeners are as a body a rather phlegmatic, irresponsible community. Even when anything specially meritorious is put on the air we are generally inclined to leave it to someone else to write an appreciative letter to the station from which it emanates. How different is a theatre audience, which applauds frantically when it hears or sees something extra meritorious. The cynic will say, "It's easier to clap one's hands than to sit down and pen a letter." Nevertheless, if listeners realised the encouragement and pleasure a brief note of appreciation brought to a station director, they would not begrudge the little trouble involved in dropping two or three lines to the man who is doing his utmost to serve the listeners.

A WELLINGTON listener has informed "Switch" that through attaching his aerial to his chimney he damaged the latter. During a strong blow—one of Wellington's pet north-westerlies—the strain of the aerial pulled the top off the chimney. This should act as a warning to listeners not to fasten their aerials to chimneys unless they are sure the latter are in good condition. This reminds "Switch" of a Wellington youth who, contrary to the war regulations, used to hoist up his aerial at night-time during the Great War. His father took strong exception to this, and one night he found the aerial just low enough for him to reach. The pater gave the aerial a wrathful jerk, and brought half the chimney almost on top of him!

THE New Jersey shortwave transmitter for trans-Atlantic communication is subject to crystal control. The crystal encased in a constant temperature cabinet, governs the transmitting frequency or wavelength with a remarkable precision. Another wavelength can be adopted in about 10 minutes. The change merely means the change of the slab of crystal with another of different dimensions.

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