

Notes and Comments

By
"SWITCH"

SAT out an evening recently at a friend's house listening-in. Father wanted the operatic items, Mother was complacently satisfied with anything so long as there was no static. The eighteen-year-old daughter wanted love songs. The fifteen-year-old son demanded comic songs. As a result of this medley of musical tastes the dials were on the move all the night. Father would tune in something, and before he could enjoy the whole item round went the dials. While the daughter sat in ecstasies listening to something which appealed to her, the brother switched off on to another station. It was wicked, but the set was a recent purchase.

AN American broadcast technician has recorded a fine collection of amusing incidents in connection with his experiences at various broadcast stations. New Zealand broadcasting is not without its humorous episodes. One of these was associated with the flight of the "Southern Cross" from Australia to New Zealand. Station, 3YA, Christchurch, was putting across a perfect re-broadcast of 2YA, Wellington, when the announcer at Wellington said, "We will now change over to 3YA, Christchurch." As 3YA was at the moment hanging on to 2YA, an embarrassing silence followed the announcement from 2YA.

A HATAITAI listener discovered that a large tree to which he attached his aerial, a well-insulated one at that, was seriously interfering with reception. It was not until he changed his aerial to a 40ft. mast that he discovered that the tree had been a disadvantage. The sap in the tree, running as it does right down to the ground, makes the tree a very good "earth" with all its screening effects too. A picnicer informed "Switch" that the best "earth" he could find when he was out for the day was a large nail with the earth wire brazed to it, and driven into the trunk of a tree close handy.

ALMOST all Wellington listeners agree that 2BL, Sydney, is now the loudest station heard from Australia, and lately there has been a steady increase in the volume of all trans-Tasman stations. By the way, somebody forwarded 2BL, Sydney, 3s. recently, to give to "some church in Sydney." The names of the various churches which are broadcast by 2BL were played in a hat, and one was drawn, the winner being the Newtown Congregational Church. The various churches were unconsciously engaged in a gamble for the 3s.

A PUZZLED Wellington suburban listener lately asked "Switch" to look over his set as it had developed an annoying shrill whistle. The trouble was traced to the corrosion on a terminal of one of the dry "B" batteries. This terminal formed a connection with another "B" battery, and this created resistance between the batteries. The corrosion was easily removed with a piece of rag dipped in liquid household ammonia. There was some vaseline on the terminal to prevent cor-

rosion, but it had not been placed just where it was most needed.

SOME exceptionally attractive programmes have been put on the air by the YA stations lately. A Melbourne man who listened in as a guest of "Switch" expressed the conviction that the New Zealand programmes are a wonderful compromise with the varied musical tastes of the average antipodean community. The Wellington listener, he considered, had an ample variety to select from judging by what he had heard. In Australia, the visitor said, there was a general desire for band music, but jazz was rather overdone.

SOMEONE has written to the Press alleging that the Broadcasting Company take money under false pretences when they charge a country listener 30s. for a license to use a crystal set, whereas such a type of set is outside the range of the YA stations. This is the sort of "logic" which stands self-condemned. One may just as well contend that it is false pretences to receive a motor-car license fee from the owner of a car which cannot climb a steep street in which he resides.

MR. CLAUDE GREY, the well-known Shannon long-distance enthusiast, is picking up KNX, Hollywood, California, on three or four nights a week with such volume that his loudspeaker can scarcely stand up to it. KNX now closes down at 9.45 p.m., New Zealand time. On a recent night Mr. Grey heard a Japanese station broadcasting fairy stories in English.

WELLINGTON listeners have found long-distance reception improving steadily during the past fortnight. Although the Japanese stations are increasing in volume, they are still a long way from their winter strength. Some of the outer suburban listeners are getting the American stations on odd nights, but they are the exception. There seems to be strong conviction among the old-time listeners that the American stations do not come in like they did about five or six years ago.

SPEAKING at a gathering of scientists in New York a few weeks ago, Harlan T. Stetson and Greenleaf W. Pickard, of Harvard University, reported that radio reception conditions were better when radio was new. They said "sunspots since 1922 and 1923 caused poor radio reception. When radio was swinging into its stride five or six years ago, there were fewer sunspots than at present." This appears to endorse the experience of New Zealand listeners.

SUNSPOT activity of exceptional intensity has been observed to synchronise with magnetic storms on our globe, and these storms not only disorganise submarine cables, but also seriously affect long-distance radio reception. Possibly before long a worldwide scheme will be put into operation to collect data in hundreds of

localities regarding the effect of sunspot activity upon long-distance reception. The data when collated may reveal important results for radio.

A PROMINENT Wellington radio technician recently expressed the opinion to the writer that in the near future Morse code would be entirely superseded at the big land stations by facsimile radio picture transmission. At the Institute of Radio Engineers' meeting in New York early last month, Mr. V. Zworykin, of the research laboratory of a big electrical company, described a new system of facsimile radio picture transmission. This must not be confused with television or radio-vision.

MR. ZWORYKIN explained the design of a new system of what he terms "rugged apparatus for practical use, which does not require the attention of a skilled radio operator." Further, the system does not require a special preparation of the original picture, because the receiver records the copy direct on photographic paper." It was pointed out by a representative of the institute that Mr. Zworykin has simplified the delicate problem of the photoelectric cell to such an extent that fewer stages of amplification are required. This has been accomplished by the development of a very efficient optical system, which supplies the "electric eye" at the receiver enough light reflected from the picture even though only a small incandescent lamp is utilised for the illumination.

WELLINGTON listeners regretted the absence of a small radio transmitter on the launch which accompanied Miss Copplestone on her attempt to swim Cook Strait. It would have been a first-class "stunt" for 2YA, Wellington, to have kept on the air that night to give progress reports of the big swim. Naturally, without a small transmitting set on the launch nothing could be done by 2YA.

ALFRED O'SHEA, with whom New Zealand listeners are familiar through his studio numbers from the Sydney stations and per medium of gramophone records from New Zealand stations, is shortly proceeding to New York to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company. He says: "With wireless the necessity for clear enunciation and diction is obvious. The audience must hear what you are singing about. Finally, there must be no forcing of the voice. Personally, I never use more than 75 per cent. of voice at any time."

THE topical chorus which 2BL, Sydney, has opened its evening session for years was deleted recently for a while to ascertain the opinion of listeners as to its popularity. There was a clamour for its reinstatement, and so the management has revived the custom.

PARTICULARS are given in an Australian exchange regarding the construction of an aluminium radio cabinet to make a light-weight receiver

ing set. The average radio set itself is not a heavy affair, and one does not lug it about from place to place. In the case of actual portable sets it is the weight of the batteries that has to be contended with.

MR RAY ALLSOP, a well-known Australian broadcast technician, is urging that the Commonwealth Government should erect 50,000 watt aerial-power broadcast stations in country areas to reach a wide radius of country listeners. He advocates these super-power stations in preference to numerous country relay stations.

MR ALLSOP suggests that a 50,000 watt station should be erected at once for experimental purposes. Various wavelengths should be tried to obtain the best results. He says stations of a few thousand watts would be sufficiently powerful in the cities of each State to supply the demands of the city and suburban listener. Experimental transmissions should be carried out on the shorter wavebands with a view to providing for the dwellers of the Northern Territory and other remote corners of Australia a possible service.

EXPERIMENTS have recently been conducted in America with underwater aerials, and the results obtained have justified the tests for various reasons. When a wire is placed in fresh water, it has been found that it can be submerged as deep as 60 feet without any appreciable decrease in signal strength. Yet in salt water, the signal strength drops off rapidly when the wire is submerged to any great depth. The underwater aerial is quite satisfactory for portable use, as camps are usually located near a lake or water supply. It is important, with the underground aerial, that the end of the wire is made watertight, since if water enters through the insulation, the wire will be earthed and the results obtained will be very poor.

A TOWNSVILLE (Queensland) listener is complaining to the Sydney radio press that 4QG, Brisbane, is being seriously interfered with by a heterodyne note from a Japanese broadcast station. In fact, he states, the Jap station completely smothered 4QG. He also reported that sometimes another Jap station heterodynes fiercely with 3LO, Melbourne. Other Townsville listeners have a similar experience. In the winter months some of us New Zealanders notice the whistle on top of 3LO, and it is sometimes sufficiently loud to spoil reception from the Melbourne station.

A LISTENER in Gunnedah (N.S.W.) reports that the underground aerial system he has installed is his salvation, as during the summer it is only possible to hear about 10 per cent. of even the programmes from 2FC and 2BL on the usual outdoor aerial. Two New Zealand listeners who have thoroughly tested an underground aerial made by an American Company found it a failure as it tremendously reduced signal strength.