

Notes and Comments

BY
"SWITCH"

THE unsettled condition of the atmosphere of late has apparently been responsible for most peculiar vagaries in long-distance reception. "Switch" has observed that on some evenings the Australian stations have been louder at, say, 8 p.m., New Zealand time, than at 11 p.m. This is contrary to results obtained under normal conditions.

WELLINGTON listeners have read with interest of the nightly reception of 2YA, Wellington, by the Byrd Expedition men down in the frozen Antarctic. The big station continues to perform magnificently, and not a few Wellingtonians obtain fair loudspeaker reception from crystal sets without any valve amplification. The writer heard reception from such a combination recently, and 2YA was audible forty feet away from the loudspeaker in another room with the doors closed. The receiving aerial was about half a mile from 2YA's transmitting aerial.

AN inquirer call on "Switch" recently for advice regarding loudspeaker reception from 2YA, using only a crystal set. The type of loudspeaker recommended was one with a thumbscrew for delicately adjusting its diaphragm. There are, however, some fairly sensitive loudspeakers which do not have an adjustable diaphragm. These should be tried out first to ascertain their capabilities. The crystal set should have a first-class detecting medium—either a catwhisker combination or a very sensitive semi-permanent crystal. If a copper catwhisker is employed the contacting tip should be kept fairly bright with an occasional rub with a piece of fine glass paper. The earth wire must be soldered to the water-pipe or whatever type of "earth" used. The aerial should be as high as possible.

WHILE on the subject of crystal set-loudspeaker reception of 2YA Wellington, the best performance of its kind reported to "Switch" is that of the equipment of Mr. J. King, Lower Hutt. Mr. King's residence is about eight miles from the 2YA transmitting station, yet he obtains fair loudspeaker reception of 2YA with his crystal set, without any form of amplification. He uses a loudspeaker with an adjustable diaphragm, which can be heard in the room adjoining that in which the speaker is located. "Switch" would like to hear of a better performance than the above if anyone knows of one.

AS a Maori concert is to be broadcast from 2YA Wellington within a few weeks, the suggestion has been made that one or two of the older generation of Maoris be induced to sing a real Maori song before the microphone. Thanks to the art of a few New Zealand composers some beautiful Maori songs have been brought out, and are a delight to listeners, but they are merely the pakeha's conception of Maori music. As the years creep past there is a very real danger of the traditional Maori songs passing into oblivion.

ON the occasion of a big Maori concert at the studios of 2YA Wellington, a couple of years ago, a stalwart old Maori man was persuaded by the writer to sing one of the old-time songs of his race while the Maoris were having supper. The station had closed down, but the song was sung before the gathering in the supper room. It proved a revelation to the younger Maoris and the pakehas present. The only "fly in the ointment" was the length of the song, which assumed the dimensions of a serial cinema picture. However, the vocalist eventually concluded, and received a hearty round of applause.

THE old cylindrical type of gramophone by which any amateur is able to take a record is still obtainable. Some months ago the writer watched a friend taking a record of an item transmitted by 2YA, Wellington. The record was subsequently run through, and proved extraordinarily successful when an electric pick-up was utilised for reproduction. Not so long ago a singer at 3YA was heard direct and through a gramophone record. Listeners in Wellington had difficulty in deciding which was the singer or the record.

THE attitude of an experienced listener on the subject of whether the Wellington Radio Society should recommend the Broadcasting Company to substitute music for football relays is as follows: (1) The Wellington Radio Society's membership may be likened to a drop of water in a bucket in proportion to the numbers who listen to 2YA. Therefore, the society is not in a position to assume the status it should possess before urging such a radical change in the broadcasting service which may affect the pleasure of so many. (2) The only means of obtaining a knowledge of the wishes of the majority is by a plebiscite. (3) The Broadcasting Company has more to lose or gain than the Radio Society in directing its own policy, on the subject of pleasing the majority of listeners. (4) One afternoon in a week, devoted to New Zealand's national sport, is not a serious encroachment on the number of afternoon sessions per week, and must appeal to a large number of listeners.

SEVERAL thousands of New Zealand listeners are interested in the news that the contract for all Australian "A" class stations' programmes has been let to a newly-formed Australian Broadcasting Company embodying Messrs. Fuller, Union Pictures, and Albert and Co., Sydney. The Sydney "Wireless Weekly" says: "Listeners-in are promised the benefit of the Fuller Company's various theatrical presentations. Artists under their control who are suitable for broadcasting will be readily available. Sir Benjamin Fuller has no intention of pushing his own artists down the throats of listeners-in, as he puts it. He wishes to serve the public from the sense of national responsibility, and will tolerate nothing in the Broadcasting Company's activities which will not elevate the standard of broadcasting services. Sir Benjamin Fuller's great interest in educational matters is well known. He has endowed a bursary in perpetuity, and is ever taking an active part in the educational affairs of the community."

WITH Messrs. Fullers' venture into the higher forms of entertainment than vaudeville during recent years they have now been placed in a position to cater for all classes of tastes from those who relish grand opera down to those who prefer red-nosed comedians. The operations of the new Australian Broadcasting Company commence within a few weeks, and New Zealand listeners may be said to be awaiting developments with eagerness.

MR. ROSS A. HULL, formerly Federal secretary of the Wireless Institute of Australia, has returned to Sydney after an absence of three years spent in America. He states that Australia is a veritable paradise so far as atmospheric conditions are concerned, static being consistently fierce in the United States, especially on the Atlantic side, and fading and distortion is rampant. Mr. Hull asserts that the giant broadcast station WEAU New York, using 50,000 watts power, at 90 miles distance sounds as

though it were 3000 miles away. Taking this into consideration, New Zealand listeners will appreciate the wide radius swept by the YA stations.

MR. ROSS HULL has a gentle tilt at the quality of transmission by the much-vaunted Australian stations, and the incapability of many receiving sets in Australia to reproduce with good tone. He remarks: "It must be established, by some means or other, that broadcasting at its best actually has an entertainment value quite unequalled in any field, and that our present transmissions (in Australia), and particularly our present reception, are so far removed from broadcasting at its best as to be acclaimed as passable only by those who have heard no other." One may remark, "distance lends enchantment," and those New Zealanders who are given to going into ecstasies over the tonal qualities of the Australians may pause, now, and think a while.

NEW Zealand broadcasting though compelled to work on a much smaller population than that of Australia, the ratio being about one-sixth, has to maintain four broadcast stations to Australia's eight. Yet the percentage of listeners per ratio of 100 of population in New Zealand (about 3.05) compares very favourably with that of Australia (4.73).

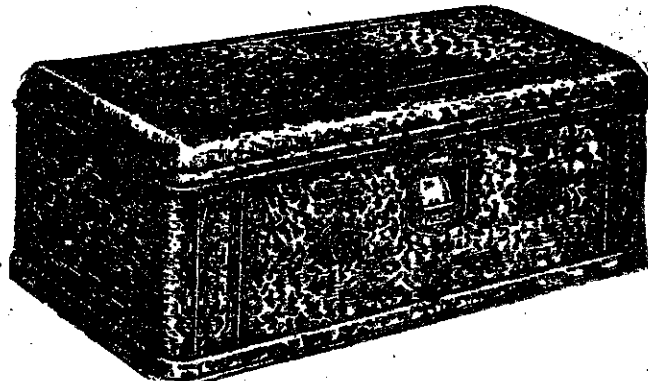
It must be remembered, also, that a definite broadcasting service commenced in Australia quite three years before the New Zealand service. Even with a start of three years the Commonwealth has not gained much of a lead over the Dominion.

THOSE listeners in New Zealand who complain that 2YA Wellington is distorted at distances of upwards of a hundred miles away, in some places, will find interest in the fact that listeners round about Newcastle, only seventy miles from Sydney, cannot get good reception of the big stations in Sydney owing to severe distortion. The problem has become so serious that with the taking over of the broadcasting in Australia the Commonwealth Government proposes to endeavour to overcome the disability experienced by Newcastle listeners.

THE theory that sunspots have a marked effect upon long-distance radio reception has a strong supporter in Professor Stetson, of the astronomical laboratory of the Harvard University, U.S.A. New Zealand listeners may look forward to poor reception about the end of this year owing to great sunspot activity, according to Professor Stetson.

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