

NOT SO NAIVE!

*Upsy-Wupsy-Daisy Games
Have Gone From The
Children's Hour For
All Time*

by

Norman McLeod

IF you are one of those cheerful folk who believe that children of our modern Machine Age—or call it War Age—will be content for long with gurgling and goosing, then you are in for the same disappointment that recently hit the conductors of the old stereotyped children's radio sessions so hard. Sons and daughters to-day can't be bothered with "upsy-wupsy-daisy" games. They would rather hear of Franco's troops in Spain or the Austrian annexation. World news, intelligent commentary and well-produced novelty features are what to-day's youngest listeners want—and they want it so much they are getting it at last.

Importance Realised

SINCE the earliest days of New Zealand radio, the Children's Hour has had its place in the scheme of things. But it is doubtful whether its importance was ever fully realised, despite attempts now and then at originality, especially by B stations anxious for an important block of listeners.

First in the children's field were the YA stations, which adopted the pleasant practice of sending birthday greetings on a "look-behind-the-piano-and-see-what-the-fairies-have-sent-you" basis. Immediate success of this method caused its adoption by most B stations and undoubtedly brought about an extremely healthy—if expensive—revival of the good old English custom of giving birthday gifts to minors. It was also a very useful source of revenue for struggling B stations, which charged a small fee.

Much, of course, depended on the personality of the announcer. Some introduced a few novelties, such as singing and reciting by children actually present in the studios.

When 1ZB opened at Auckland, Neddo, with his battery of drums and gadgets, and Dorothy Wood, with her piano playing, singing and chatter, introduced an entirely new note. This was brought to 2ZB by the vivacious Dorothy in association with Benno, who was later partnered with Betty. Miss Wood, incidentally, has the distinction of pioneering the Children's Hour in all four ZB stations.

This quickened interest has led to further very interesting developments now going on at all the ZB stations.

FIRST definite breakaway from the 1ZB idea took place at 3ZB following the appointment of Miss Annas Gale, talented Christchurch singer, actress and pianist, fresh from Sydney's 2UW, with new ideas which were put into operation by Jill and Jacko, with Mr. Ken. Saunders as producer.

Previously, the Theas and Neddos, and the Bennos and Bettys, were left largely to their own devices. Their sessions consisted mostly of "cheerios," relieved with songs not always well chosen and with inconsequential dialogue.



MR. O. N. GILLESPIE

Gives an editorial talk that children needn't look down on . . .

—S. P. Andrew photo.

Then 3ZB led the commercial stations into a hitherto unexplored field. For some months now its children's session, conducted by Jacko and Gracie, has enjoyed great popularity with listeners, and is probably the first children's session in New Zealand to be "produced" in a regular way. The whole of the script for each day's session is written by Mr. Saunders, who actually "produces" the session from the technicians' room where he directs the playing of records and sees that the novel sound effects and so on work smoothly and realistically.

Many Devices

Many and curious are the devices employed to introduce the magic carpet or lamp which gives the excuse for an entertaining visit to a coal mine, or a trip over the South Island by air. Sometimes the young listeners are invited to come before the "mike" themselves.

Every session is carefully worked out by Mr. Saunders, who believes there must be some purpose behind all sessions for children. In his own words, "The amiable piffle which is frequently broadcast during so-called children's sessions is just as boring to children as it is to adults." Children like fun and adventure, and I have proved to my own complete satisfaction that they will listen with interest to a comparatively poor story so long as it is "dressed up" with sound effects and atmospheric music.

"Of course, the logical ending is complete dramatisation, and that is not so impossible as it seems. Some of the children's sessions at 3ZB come pretty close to complete dramatisation."

MUCH the same ideas are being carried out at 4ZB by Jill and Peter. One of the finest features is Jill's Children's Magazine, which mainly features news of the day with an occasional story. Variation is given by Peter's extremely funny character impersonations.

At 1ZB, too, the old order is changing. There the intention is to combine the best of the new features from the other three stations.

For some time executives of the (Cont. on page)