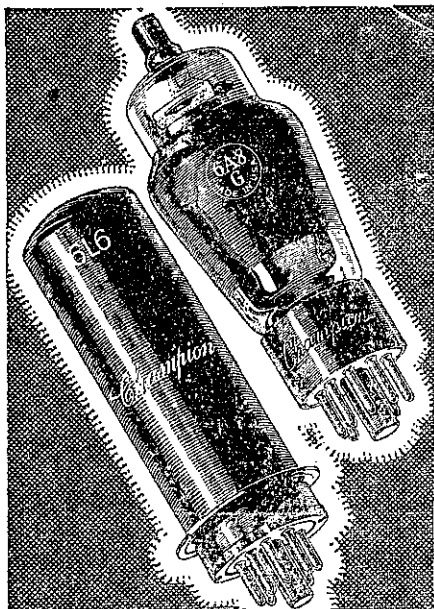




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Microphone Spreads Terror Among Pioneers

THE present and the past did not mingle any too happily in Dunedin last week during proceedings on the second day of celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of Otago province's foundation.

The afternoon was devoted to a concert, but there was no programme drawn up beforehand. So the chairman (Mr. W. J. Strong) resorted to a little custom of the past and called for volunteers to give items.

Many came forward, and everything went swimmingly until 4YA introduced an alien note by placing a microphone centre stage.

The first to perform under the new conditions was Mrs. H. F. White, 94-year-old pioneer who arrived on the good ship Jura. She did so well that Mr. Strong remembered the applause that had previously greeted a song by a "youngster" named Mr. William Williamson, of Waitati.

But Mr. Williamson wasn't having any. He had no idea how many might be listening in, or who might be included in that unseen audience; it was "all six" to him. The chairman pleaded, the singer refused, and the audience grinned. The time allotted for broadcasting was short, and it wasn't standing still. The argument continued—before the microphone—although the chairman placed a hand over it in the vain hope of preventing any hint of disagreement reaching places it should not.

Mr. Williamson did not like "new-fangled things" such as the microphone—and he spoke into it, telling it so. He said he hoped to be able to sing for many years to come, even though he was now in his eighty-fifth year. But he intended to protect his voice, and he wasn't going to sing into "that thing." Desperate, because time was fleeting, Mr. Strong gallantly seized a song script and burst into the rousing strains of "Off to Philadelphia." It was a success, and the audience wanted more. But the chairman by now had become infected with "mike fright," and he eyed the instrument with undisguised horror. He backed away, and at the end of the stage started to tell the audience what he thought of the "mike." He did not realise the announcer had turned the "mike" in his direction.

Taking the bull by the horns, as it were, Mr. Strong rushed up, and before he could change his mind plunged into "Father O'Flynn." His delight at surviving the ordeal was obvious, and there really seemed a suggestion of good-natured malice when he called for another volunteer. No one seemed eager, so the chairman shook an indignant fist at the instrument. "Are we off the air yet?" he asked. Then, "Thank heavens!" he breathed.

With the frightening spectre removed, the proceedings returned to normal—and only listeners-in were sorry.