

THE HIGH LIFE

*Seven Hundred Feet Is
Well Above Worry Level
for Human Flies on the
Radio Tower*

A "Record" Special

by

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HOW would YOU like to have a job that often required you to climb spidery steel ladders to a height of 700 feet in a high wind?

How would you like to work strapped to an iron girder above the clouds with the tower bending and whipping before the gale?

It makes the old-time sailor clewing up the foretopgallant sail sound like a sissy . . . but it's the everyday, bread-and-butter occupation of the men who build and repair the great aerial towers that broadcast cheerful music to you these stormy winter nights when you're sitting by the fireside. . . They see nothing particularly perilous in their occupation. They are used to looking down at the ground swimming dizzily under a curtain of low cloud and mist; used to feeling the tearing fingers of the wind and the icy coldness of steel against their hands and bodies.

TO have spent much of his working life in the last five years experiencing those very things has been the lot of Mr. C. A. Prince, construction engineer in charge of the erection at Dacre, Southland, of the 385ft. radio masts for station 4YZ, Invercargill. Mr. Prince has brought with him from Australia three men who have worked in the air for almost as long as he has.

These four men know no "worry level." At heights of 700 feet, even with a strong wind blowing, they are as unconcerned as if their work were on terra firma. There are times when they have laboured for a day above the clouds that blotted out the earth beneath them. Such was the case many times during the construction of the mast at Titahi Bay, Wellington, for station 2YA.

A CHAIN of masts in New Zealand and Australia testify to the engineering skill of Mr. Prince, whose firm is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere specialising in this class of construction work.

The first mast in New Zealand to rear its head under the direction of Mr. Prince was the 500ft. steel tower for 4YA, Dunedin, built about three years ago. The quietly-spoken engineering steeplejack then crossed to Queensland to build masts of a height equal to those in Dunedin. Two more 650ft. towers—one in Victoria and one in New South Wales—were erected by Mr. Prince before he again crossed the Tasman.

The highest mast in New Zealand was then built by Mr. Prince, who sampled much of the ozone in the upper

air above Titahi Bay during the erection of the 710ft. mast for station 2YA. The base of that tower is 600 feet above sea-level, so at 1300 feet above the sea he had a fairly good view, except when clouds obscured everything but a few yards of steelwork immediately beneath him.

The eighty tons of steel in the Wellington tower rest on a special steel pin about three inches in diameter and the weight on this pin, less than an inch thick, is increased to about 150 tons by the downward pull of

the guys in counteracting any swaying of the tower. The guys which run to near the top of the mast each weigh 2½ tons, and are attached to the ground by concrete anchor blocks with a surface measurement of 12ft. by 10ft., and sunk into the ground to their depth of 14ft.

Another trip across the Tasman was a prelude to Mr. Prince's return to New Zealand, this time to put steel in the upper air of Southland. On completion of the Dacre job he will erect a 290ft. mast at Napier, and then go on to Canberra to build a 620ft. tower in the Australian Federal capital.

The umbrella type of mast seen in Victoria and New South Wales is, according to Mr. Prince, going out of fashion. This type of aerial requires only one mast, at the top of which is balanced a platform 60 feet in diameter, which acts as a radiator and becomes the aerial. The more modern type of aerial requires two towers. It's a job for steely nerves and steady head, this flywalking on a spiderweb of girders in the sky—but it is also a job for calculating brains and skilful hands. Don't grudge the part of your ficepce money that goes to pay the men who do it!

Above the Clouds