

Wireless for Hospitals

Taumarunui Appeal

A LREADY very many hospitals in New Zealand are equipped with wireless installations, and a visit to any one of these institutions will convince one that such an installation is one of the finest tonics in that hospital. Not only can a wireless receiver while away many otherwise long and dreary hours, but it has been proved beyond a doubt that the material good arising from the music is considerable. There is no doubt that every hospital in New Zealand should have its own installation, yet we find in many cases that the public are not only apathetic towards this urgent need, but in some cases they are even opposed. This is a selfish view to take, for those who are in health do not stop to realise the amount of good a very little sacrifice on their part can do for those who are less fortunate.

Apropos this subject, we have received a communication from an Ohura listener who outlines the rather sad state of affairs in that district. It is desired to install wireless in the Taumarunui Hospital and each part of that district has been asked for help. The position is summarised by the secretary of the fund, Dr. E. Vivian, who writes: "Our aim is to collect a fund to supply a wireless set for the Taumarunui Hospital, and we would like to interest a few influential members of the district who would be able to interest their friends and perhaps form a local committee to assist us. It will require about £200. We wish to supply a pair of phones for each bed—loudspeakers cannot always be used in a hospital ward, the noise might disturb some seriously ill patients. There are at present 50 beds with 10 to be added shortly in an infectious disease block: 60 arphones at 12/6, £37/10/-; wiring at 20/- a pair, £90; 1 special set with amplifiers, £50; 3 loud speakers for verandahs. If funds permit, one gramophone pick-up to allow records to be played when wireless is not available. At present there is very little to amuse the patients in hospital, and such an installation would be a great asset, taking the patient's attention from his own trials and troubles and helping to pass the time.

"Unfortunately the Health Department looks on it as a luxury and we will have to find the whole of the fund—they will allow no subsidy. We have collected £80 in Taumarunui itself and if the rest of the hospital district helps

Outside Broadcasting

Some Interesting Situations

IN our outside broadcast work we, literally, reach the heights of broadcasting. Spectators of some of our more perilous ascents in search of suitable microphone positions (in the roofs of cathedrals and elsewhere) have asked how we manage to avoid accidents. Luck may have something to do with it; but, as a matter of fact, most of our O.B. engineers happen to have served at one time with the R.A.F., and are unaffected by dizzy heights. I have seen my engineering colleagues perform wire-walking feats which would have scared a music-hall audience.

MANY novel and exciting experiences are encountered by the engineers the world over when engaged in presenting "outside broadcasts" to the public. One has only to listen in to a football match to hear a "little Eric of Berhampore," or to a boxing match to be amused by the advice of a spectator who is, and knows it, obviously too near the microphone. These and a thousand other little incidents are included in the routine of the O.B. engineer.

As we should have no trouble in obtaining the sum we need. We have drawn up a rough estimate of what seems a fair donation from each part of the district based on the number of wireless sets in the district.

There are 200 sets in the whole hospital district—57 in Taumarunui, 49 in Ohura, 11 in Matiere. We have already written to all owners of sets in Ohura and Matiere, but though we got £80 in Taumarunui, we have only so far received 30/- from both Ohura and Matiere.

If you could use this letter to stimulate interest we would be much obliged. I will be pleased to supply any information required."

At the meeting of the council, where the letter was first read, it was decided to make a donation toward the fund.

The cause is a good one, and we can only hope that the necessary interest will be stimulated to secure the installation. It will certainly be a boon to any of the distressed who may have need to use the hospital.

The following story from the "Radio Times," tells of the human element in the outside broadcasts of the B.B.C.

Our work in relaying excerpts from the London theatres frequently brings us up against the "human element." The public largely believes that the actors and actresses whom it sees performing their parts, night after night, with such composure and certainty, are quite without "nerves"; and that it is only the amateurs who "get the dithers" when performing "The Man from Toronto" in the village institute. On the contrary, professional actors are practically always "on edge."

The introduction of such an unusual element as the microphone into a theatre has on occasions proved most disconcerting to those on the stage. Some time ago a famous revue actress created quite a scene within a scene at a theatre performance which we were broadcasting. A slight change had been made, with her consent, in the volume of the orchestral accompaniment to one of her songs, in order to preserve microphone "balance." But when the change was made she stopped dead in her singing and rushed from the stage in a flood of tears. This was not a case of "microphone nerves," but a common instance of what may happen in the theatre when any change or contretemps occurs in the course of the play.

LATTERLY—and maybe the success of the talkies has had something to do with it—the attitude of theatrical artists has swung over from indifference, and even distinct hauteur, to benevolent curiosity. When testing from a theatre on a "closed circuit" (and these relays require some testing!) we now use, instead of headphones, a loudspeaker installed in a room remote from the stage. During these tests we have always an interested, even excited, audience of actors who are not actually "on" at the time. We are only too pleased at this, because by listening they can pick up tips as to what is or is not "coming over," which help to improve the technical and artistic quality of the broadcast.

From the broadcasting point of view we divide the theatre-world into the sheep and the goats. Among the sheep

we unanimously include the musician who, when an over-energetic chorus lady kicked our microphone across the footlights and plumb on to his devoted head, continued to play with a smile and without a single imprecation.

The microphone takes its hard knocks. For the recent Thanksgiving Service for the recovery of His Majesty the King, at Westminster Abbey, we had one of the "key" microphones suspended, as we thought, well out of reach, above the chancel steps; but as the procession moved up to the altar the large cross at its head gave the microphone a violent bang—and that was nearly the end of that. An accident would have been tragic—for this important broadcast was going out to the Empire. As it happened, the engineer in charge foresaw the collision, and with great dexterity "faded out" that particular microphone temporarily, so that listeners were not aware that something untoward had happened.

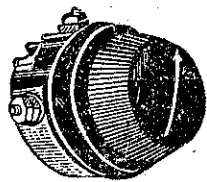
THE human element in an O.B. is not confined either to ourselves or to those definitely participating. There are also the spectators. You may be sure that there is always an interested crowd around the O.B. van or observation hut. During an England v. Wales Rugby international at Twickenham, one of the Welsh spectators climbed our stand and bore excitedly down upon the hut, demanding the use of the microphone. He wanted to inform his mother in Penarth that he had reached Twickenham safely! I offered to send a wire for him, but he did not consider the frigid impersonality of a telegram a suitable substitute, and we had some difficulty in persuading him to give up his project.

Many curious applications are received for such personal use of the microphone. Private messages have been broadcast without our agreement—notably from the Savoy Hotel ballroom in the interval of dance music. Here let me call attention to a striking fact—that, although the world is full, not only of cranks, but of thoughtless and hilarious people, there has in seven years of broadcasting been practically no instance of an awkward, unrehearsed "scene" in front of the microphone.

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