

Should you stay up all night—to listen in?

MOST of the dreams we weaved ten years ago have become commonplace facts. The magic bottle, variously known as the vacuum tube, the valve, et cetera, which came into the country a few years ago has changed erstwhile visions of possible effects to everyday, matter-of-fact circumstances.

Nowadays one is inclined to peer inside the cabinet of a friend's new radio set, observe the number of valves and descant upon the prospects of hearing a broadcast from Siam or Zanzibar. But less than 10 years ago, when circuits and sets were not so foolproof and banks of transmitting valves as big as footballs could not successfully span the earth, listeners were not so blase.

About eight years ago there was a fine frenzy for transmission on twenty or thirty thousand metres, when commercial radio engineers were inclined to be derisive of dogged experimenting by amateur "hams" with their junk piles of wire, loose-couplers and ever-changing circuits. But the scoffers were wrong.

Since then one has seen abundant proof that amateur experimenters were responsible for many of the major advances, the results of their patient vigils till four and five o'clock in the morning giving the impetus to scientists in the research laboratories of radio and electrical syndicates the world over.

Engineers of commercial enterprises thought that distance was in direct proportion to wavelength (or so it would appear from their attitude at that time) and were only too ready to suggest that amateurs could adhere to shorter wavelengths without very much harm rebounding to themselves, or help to the industry.

THE achievements of New Zealand amateurs were gazetted in newspapers throughout the world, in particular: Mr. W. M. Dawson, one-time instructor in mechanical and electrical engineering to Ashburton Technical College, but now technical engineer with the New Zealand division of a prominent firm; Mr. Ralph Slade, technical associate in the same company, but at one time the highly successful owner of transmitter 4AG, in Dunedin; Professor "Bobby" Jack (Dunedin), Messrs. Frank Bell (Shag Valley), Jack Orbell (Christchurch), and Ivan O'Meara (Gisborne), who rank among those whose enterprise and practical vision earned them world-wide approbation and encouragement.

A few days ago the "Record" had a short talk with Mr. Dawson, reverting his memory to the days (but particularly the



MR. W. M. DAWSON,

Technical Engineer of one of the leading N.Z. radio firms.

This article concerns some who did—and why!

early mornings) when he and Mrs. Dawson collaborated in attempts to place radio transmission at the head of new pathways.

Mr. Dawson smiled quizzically in retrospect. "Life was full of real thrills then . . . it was a red letter day when we worked two foreign stations, but when we had registered four or five—!

"I'll never forget those times. Working Australians till they went to bed, and then the Americans. Going to bed at seven o'clock in the morning. And the first time I got into touch with an English amateur! That was a thrill, but it was a coincidence, too! One afternoon I received the card of 2LZ, giving his wavelength and power, so I thought I'd try to reach him

with my own home-made little transmitter.

"Well, it worked, with a power input of only 2.5 watts! Nowadays it is nothing for amateurs to work four or five countries every afternoon.

"I believe the work of amateur transmitters will eventually be a potent factor in the settlement of world peace.

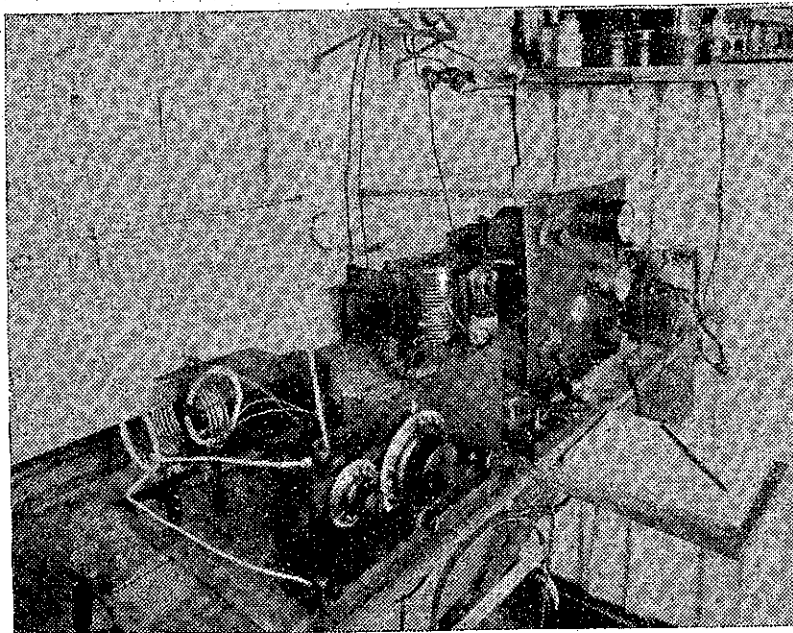
"I really became interested in radio about nine years ago. For some time before the first valve came into the country

I had worked with crystals. After experimenting with works-manufactured valves I thought I'd like to make one of my own, so I blew my own glass shape, inserted the filament of an ordinary electric lamp, evacuated then sealed it. The life of these valves wasn't very long, you may be sure, but they worked.

THE chief urge was, of course, to evolve new circuits. Once that branch of the hobby had been developed the question of promoting better efficiency arose, and with that the reaching over greater and still greater distances. It was a case of thrill upon thrill in those early days, and yet they're not so far away after all, are they?

"Then there's that afternoon I got into touch with a French amateur. I'll never forget that. For some time I had attempted and hoped to

reach him, and on this particular afternoon I tried and tried, but without any audible result. I was about to close down, disgusted with radio in general and French amateurs in particular, when through the telephones came my own call-sign, 3AL, followed by the station sign of the man whom I had so often tried to get. I was so excited when he had finished calling that my telegraph key developed a stutter, and it was some few seconds before I was able to straighten out (Continued on page 40.)



You wouldn't think anyone could get a thrill out of this set, would you? Yet, it once was a record-breaker, and when foreign "hams" heard 3AL's call it provided its owner with thrills in plenty.