

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, April 1, 1932

THE announcement that broadcasting to schools is to be resumed from 2YA on the first Tuesday in April is interesting. This service was initiated last year, but over the holiday period it was suspended. For the present only one hour a week is to be given, but the subject has such possibilities that it is believed the time will speedily come when longer time will be necessary. The experience of Australia and Britain endorses this view. In Australia, station 3AR for the second year in succession is giving a special programme consisting of half an hour each afternoon from 3 to 3.30 on various subjects. This work is under the care of a Committee on Educational Broadcasting. It was formed in 1931 by order of the Director of Education, Mr. M. P. Hansen, to act in conjunction with the Australian Broadcasting Company. The committee consists of a number of representative teachers and others engaged in educational work. In 1931 they conducted a special programme throughout three school terms, and according to an interim report submitted, valuable work was done. To secure fuller investigation it was asked that the experiment be continued throughout 1932. For the information of teachers and all interested in co-operating with this service, a special booklet is issued. This sets out that the subjects being treated are: (1) Australian Geography, with special relation to the Character of the Continent; (2) English Literature; (3) French; (4) Physical Science; and (5) History. Each of these subjects is under the care of either one or two authorities. The booklet sets out in detail the special phases of the subject that will be treated each day throughout the series, and is enriched with a specially fine selection of photographs. These cannot but be highly educative to the children listening to the broadcasts.

WHAT is being attempted is obviously modelled on what has been attained by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Very early in broadcasting its value for educational purposes was appreciated, and there was formed a Central Council for School Broadcasting, to which in 1929 the B.B.C. entirely entrusted the supervision of this branch of service. This Council embodies a large proportion of teachers, who use the broadcast lessons, and co-operates heartily with teachers, local educational authorities and training

colleges in arranging meetings and demonstrations, at which special attention is called to the important problems which arise in the use of broadcasting in schools. These problems relate, first, to the efficiency of the receiving apparatus and its suitability for school use; and, secondly, to the place that broadcast lessons take in the activities of the school. On the first point a Technical Sub-Committee has been appointed to ensure that schools seeking to take advantage of the broadcast lessons shall have the most suitable type of receiver installed. Obviously there is little use in aiming to use radio unless reception is so clear as to impose no strain upon the pupil. The extent to which the school service has grown may be gauged from the fact that no fewer than seven hours a week are now devoted by the whole of the B.B.C. stations to broadcasting lessons for schools. Thousands of schools throughout the country regularly listen-in to these services, using it as a supplement to their own educational syllabus. According to the Central Council, "There is no desire to make broadcast lessons compulsory or to suggest that they can be used to replace personal instruction by competent teachers. But after careful inquiry we are convinced that broadcasting may be brought in to furnish forms of stimulus and first-hand information such as are beyond the resources of any school." It is admitted that school broadcasting is in the stage of experiment and inquiry, and that before any valid conclusions can be drawn as to scope and methods in broadcast lessons, it will be necessary to enlist the co-operation of many teachers and to gather the experience of many schools and authorities. Efforts are afoot to collect the data and formulate and consider a policy for future conduct. In the meantime sufficient experience has been gained to enable considered advice to be given teachers for securing the best from the service. These points, embodying the common-sense of broadcast listening, are duly set out in the special booklet issued by the Central Council.

THE subjects set down for treatment in the spring term of 1932 are most interesting. They are

divided into two classes: one suitable for pupils from 10 to 12, and the other for pupils from 12 to 14 years of age. It will be interesting to record the matter covered. Miss Winifred Knox and Miss Rhoda Power give a most interesting series of talks upon Empires, Movements and Nations. Sir Walford Davies conducts probably one of the most important series in "The School Music Manual," this taking up one hour a week. Early stages in French are covered by a competent teacher. Professor Winifred Cullis gives physical instruction under the title, "Your Body Every Day." Stephen King-Hall and C. H. K. Marten give historical instruction by "Tracing History Backwards," in explaining how existing institutions have evolved. The "King's English" is dealt with by A. Lloyd James. Rural science, with the sub-headings of "The School Garden" and "The Conquest of the Soil," is treated by C. E. Hudson and Sir John Russell, the well-known director of the Rothamsted Experimental Station. Current life in Britain is dealt with by a series, "Life and Work in the British Isles," presented by James Fairgrieve and Ernest Young, while talks for older pupils present readings and dialogues in French and German, and "Unfinished Debates," by Gerald Heard are also included. Geography and Friday Afternoon Stories and Talks, not forgetting concerts and gramophone recitals to wind up the end of the week, conclude a list of subjects entrancing in its scope.

RECOGNISING that the talks in themselves would be of but little value without supplementary text-books, the B.B.C. has issued a series of penny pamphlets, which are available in bulk to schools utilising the broadcast service. These pamphlets are extraordinarily interesting. They are printed on good paper, and are illustrated with a wonderfully fine collection of high-class photographs dealing with the various subjects being discussed. History learned by this combination of visual and oral instruction cannot but be avidly enjoyed by the pupils. For instance, it is impossible for anyone to glance through the synopsis of lectures on "Empires, Movements and Nations" without getting

a clear-cut mental vision of the surging tide of peoples which has moulded history. This paragraph by Winifred Knox illustrates the point: "The importance of these talks lies, not so much in the names of tribes and battles, or in historic events and dates, as in a clear grasp of the fact that all through the Dark Ages and early Middle Ages, the people of Europe were moving, developing in new environments, and settling down in the borders which remain, to some extent, in modern history. We can only illustrate in passing the constitutional developments of Europe; our primary aim is to show the gradual emergence of nationalities and the passion for adventure which led to the great intellectual and physical discoveries of the Renaissance. The first talk deals, therefore, with the movement of the Germanic tribes upon the Empire, the second with the great religious movement of the East carried by Mohammed's cavalry over Asia and Northern Africa, in contrast with the slow campaigns of the Missionary monks in the West. The third talk shows the Northmen sweeping over Europe; in the fourth, Europe attacks and defends its own borders against the Mohammedans. Lastly we see the merchants set out on their lawful adventures; in their cities we catch a glimpse of the beauty of the Middle Ages." To illustrate the points covered, pictures of outstanding phases carry to the pupil's mind glimpses of the past, necessarily leaving a vivid impression.

EQUALLY interesting and gripping in their skilful presentation are the courses on Rural Science and Life and Work in the British Isles. Clearly the science of teaching is seeking to adapt itself wonderfully to the new means of instruction, and pupils passing through the school under this system have an immeasurable advantage over those of a generation ago. In the case of music, a marvellously complete handbook is issued, setting out the principles of instruction and words and music of songs to be covered. Altogether, perusal of the pamphlets issued by the B.B.C. and an appreciation of the course provided by them for the use of schools, shows what a wonderful force radio is for conveying instruction if adequately used and appreciated. New Zealand necessarily must exercise care in entering this field. It is plain, however, that the opportunity is presented here for effecting co-