

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, December 2, 1932.

AT last the long-hoped-for Empire broadcasting station is a reality, and Britain has come into line with the other principal Empires, and will provide a service for her Dominions. Britain for some time has recognised the desirability of such a station and to no one more than the B.B.C. has the idea of exchanging programmes with the Dominions appealed with greater force. But it has been felt that if the project was to be undertaken it must be one in which some reliance could be placed. With a view to obtaining this reliability, exhaustive experiments were made, the most outstanding of which was the establishment, in 1927, of G5SW, the experimental transmitter at Chelmsford. It was primarily intended for two-way work with America, the programme material being taken as a rule from the Daventry programme with the important limitation that no news bulletins were permitted. Tests were carried out with American short-wave stations, and listeners everywhere were invited to send in reports.

BY 1929 the B.B.C. had amassed an immense amount of material consisting of data and reports from thousands of appreciative correspondents—not only expert short-wave enthusiasts, but ordinary listeners—and there was a widespread hope entertained that a regular service would be undertaken. As was, perhaps, natural, the interest was greatest in those colonies which had no local broadcasting service, or only a rudimentary service. The Dominions, with their own broadcasting arrangements, were more interested in special transmissions of outstanding events, such as the Armistice Day ceremony, the Boat Race, and the Derby.

ON the basis of these reports the B.B.C. submitted a scheme to the Colonial Office for consideration. The main points were:

(1) The provision of a short-wave station capable of transmitting normally the same programme on two wavelengths in order to reach all parts of the Empire in various conditions of light and darkness.

(2) The provision of a pro-

gramme and news service suitable in point of time and content to all parts of the Empire.

This scheme, with two variants of it, was considered by the Imperial Conference of 1930, but owing to technical and financial difficulties it received only modified support. A special plan for the Colonies was devised, and received the warm approval of the Colonial Conference. This restricted scheme, however acceptable to the Colonies, could not meet the needs of the Dominions, particularly of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, which would require their programmes before noon and after midnight for their evening transmissions. But the supreme difficulty in the way of Empire Broadcasting was the financial crisis, which put an end to all expectations that Imperial funds would be available for the service.

THE B.B.C. had now to take stock of the situation, which was unsatisfactory. G5SW, by virtue of its intrinsic limitations, could never provide an adequate Empire service. At the same time, the expenditure on its maintenance, for which there was no return, was considerable. There were three courses open to the Corporation: to abandon the scheme entirely; to allow certain schemes for outside broadcasting to develop; to assume the responsibility for an Empire service. Whatever difficulties there were in the way of the financial co-operation of the broadcasting authorities throughout the Empire, there was no gainsaying the fact that in all parts of the Empire there was a widespread and deep-seated desire for the service. Further, if the short-wave project were abandoned, Britain would be without a world voice, and would be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with those countries which, because of their short-wave equipment, were able to put their point of view before the whole world.

IN view of all the circumstances the B.B.C. felt that, having put its hand to the plough, it must not turn back, and accordingly, in November last, announced its intention of proceeding immediately with the plans for the erection of a short-wave Empire broadcasting station: "The object will be to give as many

listeners as possible in all parts of the Empire a programme from the home country at hours when it is most convenient for them to listen."

This announcement was received with immense satisfaction throughout the Empire, and the Press at Home was most generous in its references to the project. It was decided to replace the old experimental G5SW—which has been rented from the Marconi Company for some years—by the most modern station and equipment available, with two transmitters, eight wavelengths and several aerials. It is not an exaggeration to say that the new B.B.C. shortwave station will be the finest in the world.

ALTHOUGH the first appeal of the station will be to the direct listener, there will be special programmes which the main broadcasting stations within the Empire will receive and rebroadcast. This will not be an easy matter because the Empire involves twenty hours of time difference from Greenwich, which means that it would not be possible to broadcast an evening programme simultaneously to South Africa and New Zealand. Nevertheless, the zoning scheme will to a certain extent help to overcome the difficulty, whilst the recording system referred to previously in these columns will simplify matters still more.

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

AFTER having had a sample of advertising and amusement sandwiched into the local programmes for the last week, I am confident that the British system is miles better than the American.

WE hear that a resident of Rotorua has had his wireless masts and aerial stolen under the cover of darkness. Moonlight meanderings of master marauder, masters mast while master sleeps.

I DON'T like the way the announcement of the children's sessions are curtailed in the weekly programmes these days.

QUADRANT—I won't call you dear because I don't like you—I don't say refined, nor do I use "dog." See if you can say "going down town" without apparent affectation and let me know how you get on. I can't, but don't you judge me by one phrase.—Auntie.

THERE was too much static on Saturday night to get Christchurch satisfactorily, so I turned off my radio.

THE announcer in charge of 2ZW's microphone on Tuesday successfully put across in approved Hollywood style one of the best commentaries of its kind I have heard. I thought this little interlude funny: "Here comes a big businessman from the Grand Hotel—I know he is a businessman because he has a pencil in one pocket and a pen in the other. Come on, sir, speak a few words to the people." Then, "G'night folks, hic, s'great night." "Gee, I wish I was like him. . . . Well, here comes Mrs. . . ."

THE relay of the unveiling of the memorial at Port Said was fairly successful. I think 3YA's version was the best, but only one announcer used uncommon sense and played the National Anthem instead of the good-night melody. Somehow the solemnity of the ceremony and the cooing of the melodies did not mix.

I SAW an automobile receiver for the first time last week. It was in two parts, the tuning gadgets just by the wheel and the rest of the business on the floor. It is equipped with automatic volume control, so that irrespective of the distance from the station the volume, up to a certain point, is the same. I believe that in Sydney they are very popular, and you can go down Pitt Street and hear half a dozen different stations at one time. It would be a bit of a paradox if a motorist was pulled out for speeding and his radio burst out with "Oh, I am so Happy, so Happy."

"A REPRESENTATIVE of the Department of Health," as Mr. 2YA says, was giving his interesting, instructive, and weekly lecturette, Health Hints. The hints, this time, were on what we should do and what we should not do if we wished to be healthy during the hot weather. Seriously and solemnly he dealt with the necessity for adequate ventilation. Seriously and solemnly he went to deal with the desirability of suitable clothing. "In the matter of clothes," said he, "women have far outstripped the men." True, oh King! But is "striped" quite the most kind, courteous, charming and gallant way of putting it?—G.G.

DEAR Quadrant: Tell 2ZW's American announcer to go to Napier and jump over the Bluff.—Yours, ready to mourn, Sympathetic.

DEAR Quad.—There is a story that a woman, in appreciation of summer time, wrote to say that the tomatoes had come on so much better since they had had the extra half-hour's sunshine. Our Patricia seems to be another. In a recent issue she remarks: "Although the garden benefits by the daylight saving. . . ." In the same issue it is hinted to the housewife that fish requiring par-bolling should be steamed! Come, come, Patricia.—Yours, Interested Female. Now that accounts for the peculiar taste of the fish my wife brought back from Day's Bay. She is always trying these new-fangled radio ideas.