

# Radio and TV: Sunspots in High Gear

## Short-Wave Reception Here Extraordinary

By JACK GOULD

THE unpredictable short waves went on a jag yesterday, thanks to the peak of sunspot activity that in part prompted scientists to choose this period for the International Geophysical Year. Extraordinary reception conditions prevailed in almost all parts of the radio spectrum.

The sound portion of television programs in Britain were picked up twice by this listener on a four-tube radio using a twenty-foot wire hastily strung in the attic; each time the programs were audible for about thirty minutes. The announcer's description of the pictures used in the British Broadcasting Corporation's evening newscast from Crystal Palace, London, were heard with ample volume. Next came the audio part of an installment of "I Married Joan," featuring Joan Davis, whom the B. B. C. described as "America's queen of comedy."

Signals from all points of the globe fairly boomed into the New York area. The Moscow radio, savoring its sputniks and the anniversary of the Communist Revolution, could be heard in its English-language service with room-shattering volume. The Voice of America dutifully reported America's intention to have some serious meetings on missile progress and also, in one program, came up with a commercial gimmick borrowed directly from the TV quiz show promoters.

A New Jersey amateur employing a ten-watt station on a frequency of 50 megacycles—a technical set-up normally suited to a conversation with Brooklyn—chatted with an amateur in Ireland. Radio police cars in New Mexico were heard distinctly in this city; so, too, were construction crews in Central America.

Unusual if extremely erratic long-distance reception had been anticipated many months ago because of the cyclic variations in the ionosphere stemming from changes in the sun's radiation. The effect of the peak of sunspot activity is to raise the maximum frequency on which signals may travel exceptionally long distances. Whereas normally trans-Atlantic transmissions are limited to a frequency of about 30 megacycles, yesterday they were going up to at least 56 megacycles and probably even higher. In these higher frequencies lie overseas television stations.

Last week the first confirmation of the liveliness of the short waves came from Press Wireless, Inc., which picked up not only the sound portion of B. B. C. programs but also the picture itself.

Anthony Hilferty, manager of the Press Wireless station at Baldwin, L. I., picked up additional discernible video images yesterday afternoon.

But whereas Press Wireless and other communications concerns use modern professional receiving equipment with elaborate antenna arrays, the tinkering layman is hardly so fortunate. Yet such has been the strength of the sound signals from the B. B. C. that a twenty-year-old receiver and a "clothesline" for an aerial could eavesdrop on British television thousands of miles away.

At noon New York time, or 5 P. M. London time, the B. B. C. "Children's Hour" was heard via the transmitter at Holme Moss, in the north of England, on a frequency of 48.25 megacycles, which the English identify as Channel 2. The commentator described pictures of underwater scenes in the Fiji Islands. Press Wireless also received the transmission, and the New York office of the B. B. C. said the program checked with the corporation's advance TV schedule.

At 2 o'clock, or 7 P. M. London time, came the B. B. C. news on the British Channel 1, or a frequency of 41.5 megacycles. The commentator identified pictures of the yeomen of the Guard, scenes of the gales and floods that have been plaguing Britain and a picture of a fortunate widow who in a football soccer pool had won £205,235 (\$574,638) for an investment of 2 pence (about 2 1-3 cents).

The New York office of the B. B. C. confirmed that the next scheduled attraction was Miss Davis. As heard from London the show was all about two pet dogs; in New York the B. B. C. said that the film's title was "Two St. Bernards." After Miss Davis the B. B. C. sound signal faded out.

International signals on somewhat higher waves—and lower frequencies—have enjoyed remarkable volume and stability for the last several days. A listener, with relatively little tuning difficulty, can hear the entire world arguing a point of view or presenting entertainment.

Radio Moscow—heard in the 9, 11 and 15-megacycle bands—understandably has been a major attraction; it gives interesting if repetitious detail on the satellites and the dog, classical music and, night before last, interviews with visiting American agricultural experts, all of whom were impressed by Soviet progress in their field.

Radio Denmark had a

## Sound of B.B.C. Video Fills U. S. Homes

strong critique of the instability of the French Government. The B. B. C. discussed the value of the monarchy. Radio Australia breathlessly reported racing results. Radio Stockholm interviewed some American youngsters who are on an exchange visit to Sweden. "The Voice of Zion" in Jerusalem last night had the strength of a local station. A little searching on the dial produces reports from airline pilots giving their latitude and longitude while en route over the Atlantic.

It is in connection with the business of flying that the Voice of America showed its awareness of the methods of Madison Avenue. At 2:40 P. M. yesterday—over Station WLWO in the 21-megacycle band—the Voice invited its listeners to participate in an essay contest entitled "What to the United States on a World Brotherhood Means to Me." The prize? Free passage to the United States on an air liner of Pan American World Airways, said the Voice of America.

Must there be commercial credits when the United States Government speaks, as it said it did yesterday, to people "everywhere all over the world"?

With sunspots and the sputniks, short-wave radio can afford some intriguing and informative hours these days.

## Hour of Jerry Lewis

THE National Broadcasting Company gave Jerry Lewis an hour of network television to play with last night. It was one of the most daring ventures since the invention of gunpowder, but the results were not as catastrophic as they might have been.

In fact, in one of his rowdy comedy routines, Mr. Lewis, turned loose in a fantastic home workshop, was outrageously and unqualifiedly funny. In most of his other efforts on the show, however, he gave testimony to the principle that loud horseplay is not necessarily entertaining.

There were a few guests during the hour but Mr. Lewis seemed to be on camera incessantly. Near the end of the show he became a serious singer as he offered a number called "The Lord Loves a Laughin' Man." Here heavenly tolerance was being put to a severe test, indeed. J. P. S.