

A Wireless Wizard—Five Stations for Western Australia

Under middle-age, clean shaven, pleasant-faced, pleasant-spoken, neither fat nor lardily but keen and business-like—that would fairly sum up a flashlight description of Mr. J. G. Balsillie, the man who bosses the Commonwealth wireless system, or the projected system.

He doesn't waste time or words.

Make an appointment, suggested the interviewer, if you are busy now.

"Go right ahead here," he said, as he was ambushed in the corridor upstairs at the P.O. "You've had it all, I think, in 'The Sunday Times,' but ask me any questions, and take a note."

With a subject of that sort, you have got to be primed full of interrogations.

Well, we should like to know something as to the whole Commonwealth scheme of wireless stations.

"That is very simple. We shall encircle the whole continent, and Papua and Tasmania, with a chain of stations that will be in continuous communication."

Have you fixed the site of each station?

"We have fixed the places. Say we begin at Port Moresby in Papua, the next station will be Thursday Island, then Cooktown, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Gabo Island, Hobart, Melbourne, Mt. Gambier, Adelaide, Esperance or Albany, Fremantle, Geraldton, Roebourne, Wyndham and Port Darwin—eighteen stations altogether."

All these stations will be for commercial purposes?

"Certainly. They will have a complete day and night service throughout the Commonwealth, and within 1000 miles of the Australian coast in all directions."

The latter will be for the benefit of shipping?

"Yes, and meteorology. We shall be able to receive weather reports from at least 1000 miles out at sea, and probably 1500 miles."

When will the other Westralian stations be begun?

"The apparatus and gear for three of these have already been shipped from Melbourne. Geraldton will be the first station erected. Then the southern at Albany or Esperance; we haven't decided which yet; and next will be Roebourne."

"Of course you know Port Darwin will connect with the Empire scheme either by way of Singapore or Colombo. At Port Darwin there will be two stations—a small one for com-



MR. J. G. BALSILLIE,
Director of the Commonwealth Wireless Department.

mercial purposes only and a high-power station for communication with the world."

The Fremantle station is one of the most powerful?

"Yes, it is exactly the same as the Sydney station, and will have a radius of 1250 miles by day, and 1500 to 2000 by night."

When do you take it over?

"As soon as we are satisfied that the technical conditions of the contract have been complied with. It must have a day radius of 1250 miles."

Will the tests be completed this week?

"Ah! we cannot say. They may take three months—even 12 months."

Then we may be without benefit of wireless?

"No, we shall make arrangements to start commercial operating at once. The station will be opened for public business without delay."

What are the rates?

"Fourpence per word for shipping and sixpence per word overland, plus the ordinary inland telegraph charges."

By the way, Mr. Balsillie, is the whole Commonwealth scheme to be on your own principle?

"Fremantle and Pennant Hills are both on the Telefunken principle; all the rest will be on mine."

Wireless ought to cheapen communication to the world.

"The rates from Port Darwin have not yet been fixed. The Postmaster-General will decide the matter."

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