

A HANDY LITTLE GADGET
by Tim O'Hare

Like most people who have been in the radio hobby for several years, I have accumulated several more antennas than the original one I started with.

I tried using knife switches but there you are limited to two antennas, besides being messy. Then I tried using a patch box with all the antennas and receivers run into a common metal box and selected by use of a patch cord. This proved to be very slow to change from one to another and again not very neat.

What I needed was a device to combine the speed of switching of a knife switch and also the capacity of a patch box.

I bought a 6Dx8Wx3H (15x20x7.6 cm) metal box. I found one painted with an attractive wrinkle finish and rubber feet on the bottom - just what I had in mind! I bought two 12-position rotary switches and also eight SO-239 coax connectors. Now I was ready to begin construction. I plotted where I wanted my rotary switches on the 8x3 front panel; drilled the holes and mounted the switches. Then I cut the shafts off to the proper length for attaching the knobs.

Next I laid out the rear panel for the eight SO-239 connectors. These holes were drilled and the connectors attached. All that is required now is to connect the common lug on the rotary switches together and run a wire to each individual lug on the switch from the coax connectors. Solder all the wires and you are ready to go. At this point I purchased some label transfers at a radio store. These enabled me to tag the rotary switch and corresponding coax connector at the back panel. This completed the "initial" construction. The unit was assembled and everything worked A-OK. For me personally though, there was something lacking. One of my receivers is a Hammarlund SP-600-JX and does not have an antenna trimmer built in.

So I began thinking about building an antenna tuner into my already handy little box. At this time I saw an ad in a magazine for a tuner sold by an outfit called "SWL Guide." I wrote for the specs on their tuner and when I received them I found them to be exactly what I wanted. It has a toroid inductor and phasing capacitor. The price was \$23.00, about what it would cost to build a comparable one. So, I ordered one and when it came I built it into my gadget between the rotary switches. I now have a box that will take four antennas and four receivers, all wires brought in the back. I can instantly select an antenna or receiver and also peak the signal from 540 khz to 30 Mhz. Also the tuner can be switched out of the circuit when not needed. I think my total investment is somewhat close to \$50.00, but the convenience is well worth it. I have made my operating position look much neater. Also the box itself is grounded. All receivers are fed with coax cable to cut down noise and also are grounded through the braid of the cable.

