

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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Work For Women

IN the course of a speech last week at the opening of a social room for the troops, the Minister of Defence said that such places would give women the opportunity so many of them were asking for to do some active war work. For this, hundreds of women will be grateful.

But it is to be hoped that they will not misunderstand the position. The fact that they wish to play more than a passive part in the struggle is natural and reasonable. Apart from anything else, they have never before been so free to help. Families are smaller than they were twenty-five years ago, and houses very much more convenient. The woman who could give an hour a day to war work in 1914 can to-day give two or three hours. In addition, women feel to-day as they have not felt before that methods of war which threaten all make combatants of all.

But in spite of all this the *kind* of work that women can most usefully do is the same as it has always been. If the war drags on indefinitely some of the work now done by men will be done by women; but at present the men are here. It has to be remembered, too, that fifty men in the front line to-day are as effective as seventy-five men in 1918. The Empire is not short of men anywhere. It is short—as all peaceful nations must be when war begins—of the training and organisation that give those men their maximum fighting efficiency. The task of women is to supply the comforts that soften the hardships of camps and trenches and the cheerfulness that eases mental anxiety.

They are not asked merely to "stand and wait." There is definite work to be done which no one but women can do. But at this stage it does not mean farming and working in factories. It does not mean driving trams or drilling or getting into uniforms. It means simply being mothers and sisters with busy hands and thoughtful but not worrying minds.

ITCH OR IRRITANT?

Opinions on Enduring Popularity of Swing

"SWING," says Turntable, compère of the Dominion station's weekly new-record release session, "is an itch."

He had been telling *The Listener* about "Rhythm on Record" and its unbroken run of nearly three years from 2YA on Friday nights.

For one hour a week over all that time Turntable has been unleashing the latest in dance band music on a receptive public.

Just how receptive his fans are is proved by the mail that swamps him every week.

Nauru Island reports reception poor on an old set, but enthusiasm running high. Auckland sends a telegram bemoaning the "sad loss to swing world of leader Art Shaw to-day." Sydney types a rapturous page about Blue Lou and The Blues. Cheltenham sends high praise and asks for the serial numbers of 40 records in one letter and 25 in another. He got them. Bullamon Plains (Queensland) was "starved for good jazz," and "your presentation was a welcome change." New South Wales asks a favour and hopes to hear "a lot more of your programmes." Sydney produces "Just another of those guys who's a swing-crazy jitterbug." Canton Island looks to New Zealand for its weekly musical warm-up.

Always Something New

One secret of the session's success is the speed with which records, from the Old World as well as the New, reach New Zealand, and are prepared for broadcast.

Most of the ships come home with something new for the broadcasting services, and one or two assistants usually help Turntable to delve through the collection, make a selection, and gather in from a few hundred sources enough material for the brief but pithy notes the compère gives with his programme.

It is no easy job. Often they work late of nights getting everything ready.

No request records are played. Each record that goes on the air really is a new release. Many letters reflect the exasperation of listeners unable to buy the records for themselves from resources not in touch with the same purchasing systems as the services use.

Three Veteran Records

Notable in a session which has had one of the longest runs of any broadcast in New Zealand is the signature tune: "Woman On My Weary Mind." Bob Crosby's band plays it. Gil Rodin, a member of the band, composed it. There were four records of it in New Zealand when the session started using it.

It proved so popular all four were called into Wellington for Turntable's use. One has been broken. The other three have carried on their weekly job without interruption. They are not worn yet. They are, in fact, still featuring prominently in the fan mail.

The Listener asked Turntable to define this swing that had kept so many sets tuned into one transmitter for fifty-two hours a year for three years.

"It's an itch," he said. "That's the only way to define it. That's what it does to you."

The true connoisseur of swing does not get the right itch from any and every piece of dance music. He can get it from classical music—Turntable says that there's a good deal of true swing in the classics—as easily as from dance music. But it takes the very finest grade of swing to tickle his hypersensitive musical appreciation. Swing amateurs may get "swing-jitters" out of comparatively simple pieces of music. But the epicure won't even blink. It takes the real stuff to get to him and he takes it in like a purring cat stroked beside a bright wood fire.

Music like "Boomp-a-Daisy" is simply ignored by him. "Trash," he says to this and other much-advertised song-and-dance hits.

He is quite as single minded as the classical musician.

On the Other Side

"It's all the same poison to me," said a classicist when *The Listener* asked him for his definition of swing. "I don't know what it means. I can't listen to it. It offends my ear."

He confessed to intolerance. "It's a matter of taste—or fancy." He admitted technical virtuosity in interpretation, composition, execution. "Mind you, there's a good deal of very clever work goes into swing." He admired the people who listened to it with such enthusiasm. "Have you ever seen them; heads almost buried in their loud-speakers, taking it all in?"

But as far as he was concerned the attraction of swing was inexplicable as the traditional attraction of an ugly man for a pretty woman.

Far more men follow swing music than women.

The classicist explained this for us: "It's too subtle for women. They want a tune to listen to. They like such things as 'Boomp-a-Daisy.' It's simple, it's catchy, you can sing it."

"But swing!—it's an unnecessary waste of money!"