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Zealand's NBS, and its excursions towards more abandoned music and "soap operas" are held under tight rein. For this reason, no camp or station I have yet inhabited in England has ever been caught in the act of listening to the Home Service.

The "Bright" Programmes

The General Forces Service is meant to be the bright programme. It carries the personalities, as do American programmes, but with the difference that, while the multitude of Kraft Cheese-eaters pay for Bing Crosby's programme, the BBC has to pay its stars from the shallower coffers of the Treasury. Because of this, it cannot afford frequent appearances by stars whose charges are based on their £800 a week West End stage earnings. Flanagan and Allen are cases in point.

This is not to say there are no regular radio programmes by stage stars. Tommy Handley's radio reputation is as good as his stage one, and his show has been running a long time for a non-sponsored programme. And English dance bands record half-hour sessions for broadcasting, the best, Geraldo, being as good as many American outfits appearing on "Spotlight Band." BBC request sessions on the General Forces programme are popular, just as they are in New Zealand. Bing Crosby and Dinah Shore, "Chu Chu Baby" and "My Heart Tells Me" are sitting firmly on top, and the "slush" committee, which is reported to have condemned "Paper Doll" as too unmanly for the BBC till it hit the top anyway, must take a nap as the request programmes are being made up.

The American Trend

Some of the sessions are requests from the boys overseas for themselves, some are requests by people at home for those boys. And as with these sessions, the whole trend of the General Forces programme is towards the American fashion in music, though the programmes are blessedly shorn of the applause ration which American audiences are so liberally allowed. This trend nurtures the conviction that the Americans have popular radio entertainment better taped than has the BBC. In fact, that she has the bulk of the English-speaking world's entertainment talent. Songs sung around the barracks in England, New Zealand, and America are for much the greater part American-composed.

In this connection, the BBC man said: At the outbreak swing had not reached England to any extent. There was no demand for it, and the BBC did not play it. But five years have passed since then, and American stylings have by now won a considerable following in Britain, and the BBC will take full regard of them after the war.

So you see the entertainment section of the BBC is not so reactionary as cabled comments over the past few years have led New Zealanders to believe. It sets out with the admirable object of catering for everyone, and presents some quite bright programmes.

Every hut in permanent camps in England has a radio, presented by Lord Nuffield. The chances are as certain as Kindergarten in a weight-for-age race that if you walk into a hut full of New Zealand airmen the radio will be tuned in to the American station in England.



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