

(continued from previous page)

"It has made them ask what happens to the free mind under totalitarian regimes. There can be socialism without totalitarianism, but so far we have not seen it on a big scale."

"You don't suggest that your students have abandoned their radicalism?"

"By no means. They have merely begun to ask questions. They are still to the Left of the generation who were students 20 years ago. They get branded as Communists of course. Personally I don't like the American Communist Party at all, but if a man gets called a Communist in print in America, that's a pretty sure sign that he isn't one. And the Hollywood idea of a Communist is just a man who doesn't get 75,000 dollars a year."

The Hollywood Idea

Dr. Canby had one or two other comments to make on Hollywood: the Hollywood idea of a house for instance, which was something he had never seen anywhere in real life, and something that no really intelligent rich man would live in. There is something rotten, he thinks, at the core of many American films, something a bit vulgar; but then occasionally Hollywood makes a really exceptional film, such as *Wilson*.

Of radio, he says: "I don't think it makes people read less. People who don't

read because they listen to the radio never did read anyway." He mentioned the "soap opera," the serial story of one family's existence and adventures, so called because it is usually sponsored by a soap manufacturer, and though he never listens himself, "Perhaps they've got something there," a little more even than just a new technique.

"Can you put first-class literature straight over the air?" we asked him.

"Not straight over. Stories, for example, need a good deal of adapting. But there's one thing that can be done—poetry is being read over the air quite a lot, sometimes in the way it *should* be done, almost chanted. Some if it is very good, some of course very bad."

We happened to mention the *New Yorker*. Dr. Canby called it "a very influential paper." For some years now some very powerful editorial writing, a good deal of it by E. B. White, had appeared among the first few paragraphs of the *New Yorker's* "Talk of the Town," humorous and entertaining reading, but deadly serious underneath.

As he put his hat on, we expressed the hope that this would not be the last visit from an American man of letters.

"Before I left," he said, "I was at them to send Archibald McLeish over here. I think that would be a great thing. I'll get right on to that when I get back."

Advice on Health (No. 234)

OUR BIRTH RATE

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT,
Director of the Division of School Hygiene)

SINCE this World War began there has been a flood of marriages. We needed this flood, for our birth-rate was draining away fast previously. In 1935 at 16.17 per 1000 we touched the lowest level for the previous 20 years. In 1941 the rate of 22.81 reached a record height for two decades. The tentative figure for 1944 is 21.59 still well up on pre-war years. War marriages have brought war babies and our birth-rate is up; will it stay up after the war? Not unless there is some long-term planning by ourselves, individually, and collectively as the State.

The future of our land depends on the personal and individual decision of each woman as to whether she is going to have any babies at all, or limit her family, or have sufficient children to keep the birth-rate rising. Marriages will not lessen, but contraceptives and abortions are being used more and more to prevent or limit the family. The number of married women without children is increasing in our country.

Some Can't Help It

Some childless couples, of course, cannot help it. They want a family, but are apparently sterile. To accept this situation as unalterable would be unwise unless it had been medically investigated. It is of little use having treatment by Vitamin E or glandular extracts and injections so long as the causes behind sterility remain unravelled. Such treatments are gambles without clinical examination of both partners. The husband alone is responsible, according to one sterility expert, for 10 per cent. of barrenness, and in conjunction with the wife

he is concerned with a further 30 per cent. The prevailing custom is to blame the wife for sterility. The determination of the causes of sterility calls for quite skilled diagnostic work, using laboratory and other modern aids. A doctor accustomed and interested in this work will soon determine the fertility or otherwise of both partners and suggest treatment where there is need.

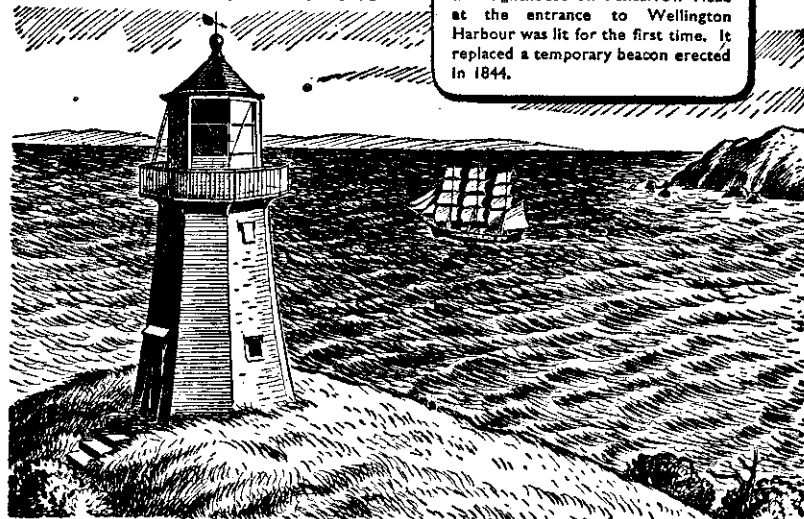
We must be realists. More and more married couples are planning the size of their family, and the number of children is being reduced by this planning. The reasons may not be selfish—a limited income will do more for one or two children than for more, and give the few a better start in life. Two world wars in our time have made women doubt the advisability of a family. Conveniently, contraceptive knowledge has become available to all, and research has improved its reliability. Where bad advice has been followed, abortions are being sought to rectify mistakes.

Society should step in to try to tip the scales in favour of a family. The cost of rearing children should be offset and this without any means test. A family must have a home, not a flat, and the larger the family the bigger the home needed. Some method of cheapening the family man's rent would help. At, and after delivery-time, and when the family grows in size, mother needs help in the home. She also needs better antenatal and maternity hospital service, and child welfare knowledge, to lessen fears of child-bearing and rearing.

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