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RUR
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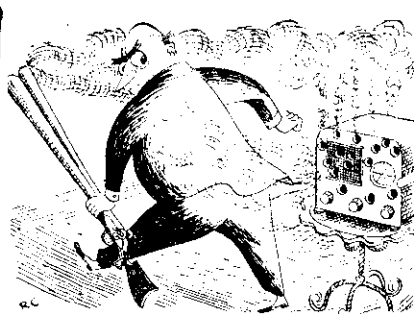
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"BAXTERS"
AND YOU GIVE
THEM RELIEF
FROM COUGHS,
COLDS AND SORE
THROATS**

**BAXTERS
LUNG PRESERVER**



"We are not satisfied with the programmes, and we flaunt our disapproval"

"TOO OFTEN AND TOO LONG"

A Plea for Selective Listening

(Written for "The Listener" by
ROBERT ALLENDER)

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WE are an indignant people; we like to protest noisily.

Our opinions are often formed intuitively or by acceptance of half-truths, half understood. So we criticise our radio programmes. We are not satisfied with the programmes and we flaunt our disapproval. With some justification we decry our broadcasting service, but it has not occurred to us that we, the listeners, may be as much at fault as the programme organisers. Do we know how to listen? If our radio programmes are the best in the world, they will not satisfy us if we do not know how to listen to them. Admittedly, New Zealand radio programmes have faults. More need then for intelligent, discriminative listening. Upon our ability to discipline ourselves depends the future of broadcasting, for an alert, intelligent audience will demand and receive good programmes, and, conversely, the best programmes will not save our all-wave noise-boxes from the junk heap unless we listen intelligently.

Careless listening is not our worst habit—too often we do not listen at all. Although the radio is switched on and there are sounds coming out of it, we do not hear them. We are reading our novels, playing bridge, or picking the next All Black team, and there is the radio blaring so that it can be heard in the house next door; yet we who are sitting within three feet of it do not hear a sound. We have trained our minds to shut out the sounds we do not want to hear.

Self-imposed deafness has been practised for centuries. Since earliest times man has been able to exclude unpleasant or unwanted sounds from his conscious mind. If we move to the city after living in the country we are disturbed by the noise of the traffic until, sub-consciously, we train ourselves to exclude the harsh sounds from our conscious minds. Similarly, after a little practice we learn to shut out the noises of the radio from our consciousness. But without ear-plugs we cannot entirely exclude noises from our minds, and although we may think we are not listening to the radio, in reality we are.

Half-Listening

The dangers in half-listening are numerous: the most serious is the effect upon the half-listener (the lazy listener) himself. He slowly loses his ability to listen consciously and keenly and, in time, he becomes so accustomed to music and

speech in the background that when he tries to listen fully he cannot. He may still be able to distinguish between C sharp and E flat but it is difficult for him to settle to listening alone. A Bach fugue is no longer enough. He must have books to read, people to talk to, while he is listening, and soon he finds good music and bad equally satisfying.

Long before wireless broadcasting was discovered, background music was common. In Victorian tea rooms and bar rooms trivial jingles mingled with the conversation, adding to the gaiety. As it was then, background music did not weaken the listeners' powers of appreciation, for the music which was played in the background was music which would not withstand critical listening. It was light-hearted nonsense, and so it was accepted. To-day's radio background music is not limited to pretty waltzes and gay little polkas. Careless radio listeners take Beethoven sonatas with the evening news and enjoy grand opera at breakfast. Naturally, Beethoven and Verdi are now treated as casually as the bacon and eggs and card games which they frequently accompany. Instead of stimulating appreciation of music, misused radios tend to discount all music which demands careful audition because they enable us to listen to music without "hearing" it.

In a concert hall we dare not talk while an item is in progress; at home, no one cares. Because of its simplicity, inconsequent music makes the best background. The "Beer Barrel Polka" can be enjoyed when it is heard behind the conversation of a roomful of people, whereas more serious compositions are either dull or disturbing unless listened to with complete attention. Lush, simple melodies adapted from major compositions by Tchaikovski and Chopin are phenomenally popular to-day because they are arresting and easily appreciated.

Loss of ability to appreciate and to discriminate are the most obvious results of careless listening, but it is not only our critical senses which are threatened by the ever-playing radio. In homes where children learn their lessons and parents read books and converse with their friends to the tune of sonatas and serials, every activity is adversely affected by the radio. Lessons cannot be learnt properly, books cannot be carefully read, and discussion of any but the most trifling matters cannot be held while the radio is playing. The lessons can be learnt after a fashion, the books can be read hurriedly, and the conversation can be pushed along, but there is neither pleasure nor profit in learning or reading after a fashion. Educationists could produce interesting statistics if they selected two comparable groups of secondary school pupils and set one group to work for a week with a background of radio music and

