

"Please thank her too."

"There's a duck in there now with 12 young ones. Perhaps you saw them."

I hadn't seen them, nor have I seen them yet, though I went back to look for them when we said good-bye. Raupo grew all round the edges and grey duck are quick to detect strangers. But I felt better after that encounter and for the rest of the day scrutinised every dam within reasonable view of the road.

My second romantic kept a small dairy farm near Pahiatua. I went to buy some milk, and stayed for an hour looking at pet lambs (one as black as a dog), calves, ducks, turkeys, bantams, and goldfish.

"Is this a farm," I asked, "or a home for pets?"

"Both. The more you pet them the better they serve you. And there are pets up the trees, too—pigeons."

"What about that dog?"

"Yes, he's a pet too. I refused £30 for him, and I would refuse £100. He's worth far more to me than a man."

"He knows we are talking about him."

"He knows everything. I never trained him. He just happened to be a right one."

"He brings in the cows?"

"Brings them in and takes them away again. I don't have to speak to him. I just undo his chain."

The black lamb came up to inspect me, and I said something about his colour.

"Yes, there are not many as black as that fellow. I gave ten bob for him the day he was born."

I found out afterwards that he had bought the lamb to distract the mind of a daughter who had just lost her husband.

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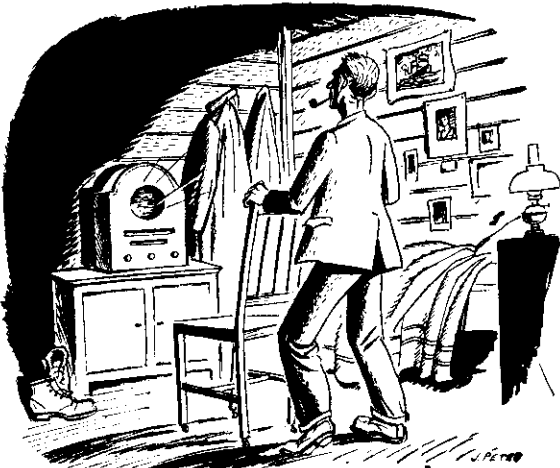
IF it is not true that old soldiers never die, it is true that many of them never say die. I met one in Eketahuna who went to the Boer War at 36, to Gallipoli at 52, and as far

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as the recruiting office again at 76. And he still thinks they should have taken him.

After three days as his guest I almost think so myself.

Here is the story I dragged out of him. When his namesake Frederick Roberts captured Pretoria it was Trooper Arthur Roberts who ran the flag up in the Boer capital. When war came again in 1914 he knocked 20 years off his age and landed at Gallipoli, where he left two brothers and most of his own lower jaw. When the doctors gave him up on his return to New Zealand he commuted his pension for a journey to London, pulled through at a cost of £2,000, and returned to Christchurch with a new face.



THE WRITTEN IS NOT THE SPOKEN WORD

An Open Letter to the Talks Supervisor

(By ORMOND WILSON, a former talks producer in the Pacific Service of the BBC)

DEAR MR. HALL,—May I join with the others who will have expressed their pleasure at the news of your appointment? I congratulate the NZBS on having secured your services.

As a journalist you know the difference between jargon and clear writing. From experience, you know that the art of editing is not to instruct others what to write, but to inspire them to express what they believe. You have also worked in the field of publicity, and know how much more effective a weapon suggestion may be than open propaganda—and how much more powerful than either is frank and open discussion.

These lessons, you will find, are of even greater importance in radio.

Jargon is bad journalism, but it is worse radio. A long-winded editorial may be read by a few, but no one can listen to a long-winded broadcaster.

Again, an editor may instruct his contributors not only what they are to write about, but what they are to write about it. Such an editor will not get his best from his contributors, but he may still produce a readable journal. In radio, on the other hand, the speaker who simply repeats what he has been told to say can be detected at once, and an editor must beware of the degree of authority he exercises: he may be able to persuade his speakers to say what he wants them to say, but he cannot expect listeners then to listen.

And finally, if it's a question of propaganda: in radio more than anywhere

He was then 55, but instead of calling it a day and waiting for an old-age pension he went to Australia and bought himself a farm. That fight went on for 17 years, and he still regrets having given it up. But it is only the sun and the battle that he misses. He is living comfortably on his age benefit paying for everything and accepting orders from no one, alone but for his radio, and taking an obstinate delight in serving the public for nothing as custodian of the motor-camp. "I have stood for 83 years on my own feet," he told me, "and I am not going to lean on anyone now. I accept my pension, but I think I have paid for that." As he has had it for only four years, and went to work at 12, he has paid for it twice over.

But I have not finished yet. He not only listens to his radio, he dances to it. I have seen him, and I have heard him, and his timing is remarkable. "It keeps me warm," he said, "and the old chair that is my partner never gets jealous."



BBC photograph

ORMOND WILSON: A photograph taken when he was on the staff of the BBC

else you must realise the limits of propaganda—realise, indeed, that open propaganda creates only scepticism and not conviction, while concealed propaganda is more easily detected, and therefore discounted, in radio than in journalism. On the other hand, conviction, honesty, frankness and truthfulness are also more obvious, and carry correspondingly more weight.

In English, the spoken and written languages are separate and distinct. But broadcasts of the spoken word (unless the broadcaster is very experienced and expert) have to be written down and spoken from a script. Because of this simple fact, roughly 75 per cent. of the talks broadcast by the NZBS can be listened to only with difficulty. They were written as the speaker would write, not as he would speak. They might read all right, but they do not sound right.

Your predecessor gave an interview to *The Listener* recently, in which he stated a number of sensible rules for the preparation of a good radio talk. They were rules distinguishing the spoken broadcast from the written article. If you are able to put these precepts into practice, then the talks broadcast by the NZBS will be listened to with much greater ease.

But these technical differences between journalism and radio are unimportant compared with the fundamental difference in function.

Ultimately, the function of all journalism is to disseminate ideas. Some people prefer to call it the reporting of facts. But the facts must first be seen by observers, and it is their ideas of them, not the facts themselves, that are disseminated. And how many versions and ideas there may be of one simple event or fact!

Radio also broadcasts ideas, and reports on events. But only incidentally. The interest in the spoken word on the radio, as distinct from a newspaper article, lies not in what is said, but in

the man who says it. It is the personality of the speaker that counts, not his erudition or cleverness, nor, as a rule, the story he has to tell. If we listen to a broadcaster it is because we are in contact with a human personality, alive and present. If the radio merely gives us a neutral and disembodied voice, we do not listen.

This is the root of the vexed questions of radio personalities, of controversial discussions, of the whole policy behind the broadcasting of the spoken word. And this broadcasting of the spoken word is the very core of radio. Radio, of course, can bring us music, drama, news, advice, education, church services, and much else. It saves us going out to the concert hall or the church, the sports ground or the lecture hall. That is a convenience, and for the sake of that convenience we accept the fact that the music would have been heard better in the concert hall, that the race would have been more exciting from the grandstand, that the devotional atmosphere would have been more real in the church.

Important, then, though these uses of radio are, they are not its special function. They are not fields in which it has any significance beyond the utilitarian one. There are, however, special fields in which radio is distinctive and unique. One of these fields is your province of talks.

The radio talk is not a broadcast lecture, nor yet a private conversation. It is both, and yet more. Its success depends on the speaker being able to use the medium of radio to express his convictions and allow his personality to shine through. That is ultimately all that matters.

Radio is still in its youth, and the art of broadcasting at an elementary stage. I look forward with keen interest to your experiments in the broadcasting of the spoken word.

Yours sincerely,

—Ormond Wilson.