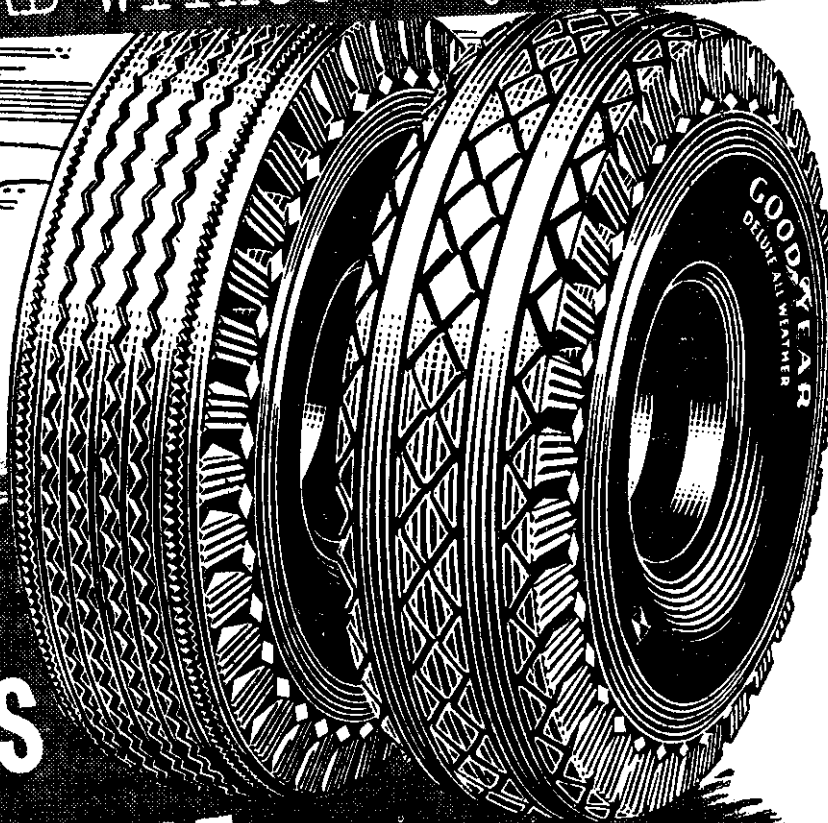


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DEMOCRACY AND CULTURE

EDUCATOR

PRIESTLEY believes that the majority of adult citizens in a democracy should decide what kind of government they should have, but not what kinds of literature, music or other forms of art should be made available to them from public or private sources.

The people in a democracy could, of course, regulate these matters so that the views of the majority would prevail. The fact that they do not do so is significant. They are content, for example, to leave the education of their children to experts. The advances made in the appreciation of music and of other forms of art in the schools, since my day, are amazing. In another 40 years, the general standard of public taste should be better than it is to-day and better literature, films and broadcasts should follow. There are, however, always the parents and other adults. They bear the burdens of the world, pay for everything, and, having attained 21, have, in New Zealand, a further expectation of life of about 50 years. They do not seek to control programmes but they are entitled, as they tread the pavements of time, to have their wishes considered as part of their welfare. The forcible imposition upon them of only that which is considered good for them by experts is at variance with our conception of the freedom and dignity of the individual. Nevertheless, having searched in vain at times for a programme to suit myself, and having found on the radio only vaudeville or the like, swing or the like, or certain kinds of talk, and on the films only unacceptable Hollywood, I have naturally thought that too much attention is paid to what is thought to be the preference of the majority. I would remedy this partly by encouraging the lifting of the standard within the limits imposed by protests or by the box-office but mainly by enabling public authorities to set a standard without being required to make a profit. They could do this, not only as they have been able to do in the past by public art galleries and are now doing by a National Symphony Orchestra, but by establishing a National Theatre (which would consummate the work of our admirable Repertory Societies), municipal picture houses, and a musical programme on the radio to which one could turn at any time, ranging (say) from Gilbert and Sullivan to Bach. I think we need not attribute a shortage of good books, or of fresh editions of good books, to the public taste. When the paper shortage is overcome, these will be available, at a price.

—D. S. Smith

(Chancellor of the University).

GENERAL

SINCE reading J. B. Priestley's article, I have been wondering if it would not be helpful to the discussion to examine first of all the term we are talking about. The article is on art. What do people expect from art and from the

(continued on next page)

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