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piled apple boxes extravagantly, camouflaged them with the grass and went to war. Four or five boys were to hold the fort and as many to attack it. The camera moved in and the battle raged. Suddenly a youngster arrived brandishing a five-foot crayfish spear and an uninvited guest produced a tomahawk. "Cut!" called the Producer before such lethal devices over-emphasised the realism. A dozen disappointed heroes watched those borrowed apple boxes being returned to the local grocer.

Resting uneasily the next morning Mrs. Findlay woke at 5.30 to find half the cast pudding round with shovels of clay and buckets of water getting ready for the model village. As is usual with children who sense that something is expected of them, they laid it out with symmetrical hills and a conspicuous absence of originality. The cameraman and the bystanders thought it a waste of film, but patched up with match-box houses and debris the village provided an extraordinarily good sequence.

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SO it was all the way through. Whatever was intended to be a sensation failed sadly. The unrehearsed filled the reels. Dressing-up and make-believe belong particularly to children, to their own imaginings. Those whose mothers sent them along with a Sunday-school freshness and fancy-dress finery found themselves ignored. Under the eye of the camera surrounded by maternal pride these children were torn also between their natural dramatic sense and the persuasions of the producer. But they performed better than their mothers, whose laughter and applause dried up whenever the camera moved in their direction.

The outdoor shots were completed. They played shops, modelled in clay from the garden bank. Then in the middle of a hot afternoon the stars moved indoors under the concentrated gaze of a dozen children who flattened their noses against the bay windows. There in the heat of the floodlights and spots, with the camera turned on them as relentlessly as the producer urged their attention to the funny man over in the corner, those remarkable children made Christmas cards, did their paste graining, made their masks and clowned in them.

Starring roles are hard work. Housing 17 or 18 children, six or seven adults, the paraphernalia and personnel of the Film Unit, was hard work too. Mrs. Findlay had thoroughly enjoyed the experience, but once was enough for her lifetime.

"And the children," I said, "did they enjoy it?"

"They enjoyed seeing themselves later," she told me. "They all went down, scrubbed and beribboned, to a preview at the Studio. It was hard to recognise them as the same little hooligans on the screen. All the way home they talked it over, and criticised each other's performance, very seriously. We'll see what Robin has to say about it."

In he came, followed by the discreet whispers of the others. "Me too? Me too?"



Above: One of the opening speakers in a 2ZB Forum Session warms to his subject—behind the other microphone sits the chairman, Professor Ian Gordon. Right: P. Martin-Smith, who presides at the Auckland Sessions in the 1ZB Radio Theatre

## CITIZENS' FORUM

**F**OLLOWING the lead established by 3ZB, Stations 1ZB and 2ZB have introduced controversial broadcasts of the "forum" type which are being heard from both stations at 6.0 p.m. on Sundays. In its latest form *Citizens' Forum* introduces listeners to something of the atmosphere of a political meeting, with selected speakers putting the pros and cons of their subject before an audience of ordinary citizens, who are allowed to interject, argue the point, and generally thrash the subject out in a thoroughly democratic manner.

Several sessions have already been broadcast, on subjects like "Should Wellington Run Express Trams to the Suburbs?", "Should the 40-hour Week be Staggered?" and Immigration. In Wellington, *Citizens' Forum* actually takes place every Wednesday at 7.45 p.m. in the R.S.A. Hall (shortly to be changed to the Savage Hall in Kent Terrace), and is of course open to the public. The evening's proceedings are recorded, and a polished-up version (with awkward pauses and so forth eliminated) is broadcast at 6.0 p.m. on the following

"Did you have fun?" I asked him. He hesitated and offered me a paper lolly.

"Did you enjoy it, Robin?" asked his mother.

Most seriously, his eyes full of the apple boxes that had to be returned, the crayfish spear that was too dangerous, with the memory of the enthusiastic adult intrusion into their very private world, he said

"It wasn't much *FUN*, but we enjoyed it!"

Sunday. A similar procedure is followed at Auckland, except that the 1ZB radio theatre is used.

### Competent Speakers

To set a good pace from the start, and get the audience on to the most profitable lines of argument, competent, and often authoritative speakers, are chosen. For example, the question of staggering the 40-hour week was debated by official representatives of the Federation of Labour, the Federated Farmers, and the Public Service Association. A chairman—in Wellington at present he is Professor Ian A. Gordon, and in Auckland P. Martin-Smith—presides over the gathering.

For those who have not yet heard *Citizens' Forum* in action, here is a brief outline of the proceedings at a typical meeting. Before microphones on the platform are the chairman, and the selected speakers for the night, while in the body of the hall audience microphones are installed. After a few preliminary words by the chairman stating the subject and indicating a few of its possibilities, the discussion is opened by the platform speakers. No rehearsals have been held, so that although each speaker has studied his case beforehand, he doesn't know what line any of the others will take. This tends to produce a spirited and spontaneous debating of the subject, lasting for perhaps 20 minutes, after which the discussion is thrown open to the public.

### Audience Takes Part

Once the audience becomes warmed up, arguments and interjections begin to fly as individual speakers air their views. There are a few humorous sallies and wisecracks, and all seem thoroughly to enjoy themselves. At the end the



chairman calls on the official speakers to sum up, and eventually all the "citizens" depart, feeling probably that even though no one may have been convinced by anyone else, the subject has at least had a good airing.

Altogether, a meeting of *Citizens' Forum* will not last much more than an hour, and can be trimmed down to a stimulating half or three-quarter-hour radio programme. The pervading atmosphere at meetings seems to be one of spontaneity, enthusiasm, and sincerity.

This radio adaptation of what is one of democracy's oldest institutions is something novel for most New Zealand listeners, and as interest and enthusiasm develop, and more meaty subjects are debated, this enjoyable and instructive Wednesday or Sunday evening's entertainment should command an ever wider audience. To set debaters thinking, here are a few of the topics suggested for future discussion: "How easy should we make divorce?" "Should New Zealand athletes be paid a salary while touring?" "Should some form of sex instruction be given in New Zealand schools?" "Should consumer co-operatives be encouraged?"