

# Sportswoman on the Air

COMPLAINTS were made in the correspondence columns of *The Listener* recently that too much broadcast time was given up to sport. But figures published in the annual reports of the NZBS and the ABC show that the Australian Broadcasting Commission devotes just over 5 per cent of its time to sporting results whereas in New Zealand the figure is 3 per cent. *The Listener* asked Dot Debnam (Mrs. D. Mummery in private life), manageress of the visiting Australian women's cricket team, and one of the two women sports announcers in Australia, what she thought of the comparison between the two countries.

"I don't know what your figures are, but I do know that people call us Australians sports-mad," said Mrs. Mummery, whose broadcast session, for 10 minutes every Saturday morning on the national inter-State programme, covers every women's sport from croquet to baseball. "In Melbourne alone six commercial and two national programmes give up a lot of time to sport. I'm afraid that when we pick up our morning paper we read the sports page first then the comics, then the local news and finally the international news—which, I suppose, is rather awful. Speaking of the present tour, she remarked that she was tremendously impressed with the interest—a sensible interest—taken in women's cricket in New Zealand. "In Australia they call it the hit-and-giggle-game," she said. "But



MRS. D. MUMMERY  
The international news also ran

here we are really treated as cricketers. That's good for the girls and good for the game."

Interviewed by 2ZB while in Wellington, Mrs. Mummery had some encouraging things to say about the ability of New Zealand's women cricketers and the physique of New Zealand girls generally.

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way of breaking down the monopoly of the syndicates. I am sure that unless they do so this thing is going to cripple the English theatre entirely."

"What of the English actor?"

"We still have some of the finest actors in the world, and we also have some of the worst. I consider that a large majority of all English actors are badly trained and educated. Their minds are intellectual deserts, and anything savouring of art is suspect to them. They have very little intellectual, artistic or cultural background, and without that they cannot aspire to the full heights of the profession. Amongst other things, the English actor has to contend with the jungle-like system of the English theatre where everybody is at each others' throats, and where the actor, to survive, must take care of himself first, last, and all the time.

"I personally take the theatre very seriously. Matthew Arnold has said, 'The people will have the theatre; then make it a good one . . . organise the theatre.' But the English theatre at the present time is about as disorganised as it could possibly be, and is not fulfilling what I consider to be its true purpose—to understand, interpret, and influence life by theatrical means. To do this I believe it is essential to break away, completely and unequivocally, from the traditions of the profit-seeking theatre. I think there will always be room for a certain amount of private enterprise in the theatre, but I also believe that the essential basis for its health and progress is the permanent acting company run on a non-profit-making basis and financed by the State. Permanent companies are the real life of the theatre. Members of a permanent company, used to each others' methods and working as

a group, can give a far sounder performance of any play than the most brilliant scratch company that can be got together.

## Old Vic Tour

"I noticed the Government were taking a lively interest in the recent conference in London—Sir Stafford Cripps spoke at it—and then the British Council is doing great work forming small companies to tour places like the Durham and Welsh mining villages. The Old Vic tour of Australia and New Zealand is also being financed by them."

"Can you tell us anything about the plays the Old Vic actors will put on here?"

"They are doing *King Lear* in Australia, but I believe that will be changed to *Richard III* or *Henry IV* here—Richard is of course one of Laurence Olivier's best roles. I was surprised to hear that they are going to do *By the Skin of Our Teeth*, as it didn't go over too well with many English audiences because of its advanced ideas. But it is a marvellous vehicle for Vivien Leigh, and I suspect that is why it was chosen. Members of the profession in London didn't have a very great opinion of Vivien Leigh as an actress until her magnificent performance in this play."

Frederick Farley has had many years experience in Repertory in England. Before going on the stage he spent five years in the publishing and bookselling business at Oxford and did much amateur work before turning professional. He founded and directed the amateur Oxford Theatre Unit, and produced and acted in several open-air productions of Shakespeare in the gardens of Oxford Colleges. Later he appeared in prize-winning productions of *The Spartan Girl*, Molière's *The Mock Doctor*, and *Love on the Dole* in the British Drama League Festivals in London.

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