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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Import of Brains

I READ recently in an Australian paper a querulous outcry against the broadcasting service for importing BBC reproductions at the expense of local talent. It is our own house which we have to keep in order, and what goes on across the Tasman need not concern us, were it not for the fact that sporadic protests of the same sort are apt to crop up in regard to our own programmes. That the best local talent should replace the worst overseas recordings I certainly agree, but when it comes to criticism of the BBC features, surely someone is speaking with tongue in cheek. If the BBC importations were swamping the local programmes there might be cause for complaint; but instead, they are as sparsely set as jewels among the cogs and wheels of a watch. The extremely high standard of these programmes is another thing in their favour. To quote one or two recent examples from the 4YA programmes—Bertrand Russell on "Science and Democracy," the *Brains Trust*, and the perennial *ITMA*. Who would want to throw these programmes out in favour of more local talent? If we possess, blushing somewhere unseen, a thinker of the calibre of Bertrand Russell, a panel of conversationalists to equal the *Brains Trust*, or even, to descend to less lofty heights, a comedy team with the appeal of the *ITMA* gang, then let them be produced, and I for one will be willing to allow such paragons the full use of the radio time now taken up by the imported BBC features.

### Dinkum Aussie

I SEEM to have heard several Australian radio programmes in the last week or two, and it set me wondering to what extent they could be regarded as typically Australia. They certainly do not reveal much of Australia's rightly esteemed indigenous culture; they are as surprisingly various, considering their common origin, as the allotropic forms of carbon. Moreover, they seem to indicate that there is no such thing as a typically Australian accent. *Bluev and Curley* was a sad disappointment. It lacks the pungent brevity of the comic strip, but ploughs its way dustily



through the white-anted Q.M.S. where they keep the chestnuts. Jack Davey's *Cavalcade* is much more the dinkum oil. With happy topicality last week's instalment dealt with sit-down strikes and stop-work meetings in the building trade, and gave us laughter laced with tincture of rue. *Melba, Queen of Song*, is a good quality production, with, apart from its subject, no particularly Australian hallmark. (Life in Victorian Australia seems to have been for a young female regrettably like life in Victorian England.) There remains, of course, *Dad and Dave* who, variable and unvaried as the weather reports, are always with us. But *De Mortuis* (from the neck up) Nil Nisi Bonum.

### Light on the Goodwins

THE story of the Goodwin Sands, where so many ships have been wrecked ever since history recalls that ships sailed that way, made interesting material, well presented by the BBC. The difficulty of presenting in coherent and palatable form the various episodes of shipwrecks and attempts to combat the menace was successfully overcome by putting the narrative in the mouths of seamen, lightship-men, and rescue workers. The respect with which the Goodwins are regarded even to-day is easily understandable after hearing this account of calamity and sudden death, and of the fruitless attempts to erect lighthouses on the sands, and one is also ready to believe that the treasure supposedly buried under the sand is likely to remain there to the end of time. As a relief from these too recent accounts of tragedy, the story of 'Earl Godwine, after whom the sands were named, provides a little interesting speculation. Just exactly what did the Earl do to draw such a deadly curse upon his lands? And since even the most potent of

curse has its antidote, can modern science discover the means to lift it? After all, 900 years is a long time for any curse to function with all its youthful vigour.

### The Eyes Have It

I NOTICED that in the printed programmes 4YA and 4YZ both advertised the *Brains Trust* on the same night. The difference was that one station printed only the names of those taking part, while the other printed a couple of the questions to be discussed, leaving names out of it altogether. It would be interesting to know which method of advertising attracted most listeners. I think one of the main appeals of the *Brains Trust* is in the personalities of its members; I personally would tune to the *Brains Trust* no matter what the discussion, safe in the assumption that the combined effort would result in a half-hour of stimulating entertainment. From the point of view of a radio commentator I was vitally interested in one subject under discussion on the night in question—namely, the chances of a speaker being misreported in the Press. One *Brains Trust*er suggested that a way of getting absolutely accurate reporting was to put the whole speech over the radio, but this was immediately qualified by the query as to which reports best, the ear or the eye. The commentator wholeheartedly concurs with the suggestion that the ear is not to be relied upon. You can go back over a printed speech (99 per cent. accurate if well reported) and check on anything you have missed or forgotten while reading it. But the listener cannot turn back the radio; a name, place, or statistical data once lost is gone forever on the air. So I suppose the best advertising of such a session as the *Brains Trust*, as far as the commentator is concerned, is for the stations to print all the speakers' names and all the questions as well!

### Between Two Stools

FROM time to time I listen to Radio *Playhouse* from 4ZB, but it seldom attains to more than a mediocre standard. I attribute this to the selection of plays, most of which are of not more than passing interest. With better material, the people who act in these plays could give us something really good; as it is, they are working usually with material which gives them little scope for showing us what they are made of. The opposite is the fault with *Playhouse of Favourites*, where the material is vastly superior to the means of production. Full-length plays by recognised dramatists, as well as full-length novels by recognised authors, are ruthlessly cut to half-hour pattern. *A Doll's House*, *Moby Dick*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and so on, treated in this fashion leave the listener with an exasperated feeling of combined surfeit and hunger. The problem is whether it is better to have a poor play which was especially written for half-hour presentation, or a good play which has been cut for the purpose. There is no solution as far as the ZB's are concerned, for the rigid conventions of advertising seem to forbid the extension of any session to more than half-an-hour. Nor have the YA's yet graduated to the stage where they are willing to try their listeners out