

KARL ATKINSON

KARL ATKINSON, for a number of years a special programme officer in the Head Office of the NZBS, died suddenly at Wellington on May 5. The following tribute to him was written for "The Listener" by a colleague, ALAN MULGAN, formerly Supervisor of Talks for the Service.



KARL ATKINSON

KARL ATKINSON was the kind of man who grows into an institution among his associates inside and outside the office. He is always at hand, always ready to help, steadfast, reliable and unchanging. His knowledge is increased by study and experience, but his enthusiasm is undiminished by the fretting of the years. So he becomes an integral part of the daily round, like a street or a building. I knew him as a broadcasting officer for over 12 years, and for 11 of these I was associated with him daily. At the end, he was as industrious, as keen about his work, as excited over a discovery, as he had ever been. He planned to go on working at his beloved scripts and annotations after he left the New Zealand Broadcasting Service and everyone knew that he would work as long as he could. Death, however, took him suddenly and unexpectedly. To all who knew him the shock was profound.

A more forthright Englishman than Karl Atkinson would be hard to find. Yorkshire was his native county, and his devotion to it was passionate. Karl was a Yorkshire "character." His burly figure and weighty walk, his kindness and honest bluntness, the Northern touch in his speech, his robust and homely humour, were all of a piece. J. B. Priestley would have delighted in him. The way he would seize on a piece of news from or about Yorkshire, such as the success of a Yorkshireman, was a joke among his colleagues.

He had been a journalist in Taumarunui, and a travelling salesman in the King Country when that territory was dotted with railway construction camps, and life was pretty rough. His sympathy for the rank and file was innate, and these experiences deepened and strengthened it. But because he had always been a singer, and was devoted to music, he found in the performance and transmission of music the best outlets for his talents. With his enthusiasm and special knowledge it was inevitable that he should be drawn into broadcasting. When the company engaged him in 1931 to supervise their recorded music, his knowledge of this branch was probably unsurpassed in New Zealand.

Then, under the Board, he made a place for himself as a special programme organiser and architect. For occasions such as anniversaries and celebrations of all kinds, British and foreign, he had a very unusual aptitude. He could see the news value in an event or an association of ideas, and his knowledge of music and the history of music and musicians was wide and accurate. One particular line of his was the personal history of musicians. To a considerable book library of his own, he added a carefully kept collection of cuttings, so that there were hundreds of subjects

which he could illuminate from his own material. In the earlier days of the Service, when it was building up its own library, this collection was of very great value in programme-making. Up to the end his colleagues called on Karl freely for help, and it was always cheerfully given, either from the office records or his own. If you wanted for a script some fact in musical or general entertainment history that you couldn't find in the usual reference books, Karl could generally supply this, and it cheered you to see the pleasure the request gave him. Or if you wanted a musical background or illustration for a script, he found it. He must have looked out thousands of these. He himself wrote many scripts on musical and literary and biographical subjects, often for Sunday afternoon programmes.

In council he was wise and downright. He hated humbug and pretence, respected popular taste, and never forgot that in preference for kinds of entertainment there is no sharp division between the "intellectual" and the common man.

Because he loved England he set himself to spread knowledge and appreciation of British history and achievements. Not only was he President of the Wellington Yorkshire Society, but he organised the English Folk Association and was one of the founders of the British Music Society. Every association connected with the Motherland had his interest or active help. He was convinced that music in England—composition, performance, and appreciation—was under-rated, and he loved to do it justice. He had far too much sense not to recognise the genius of foreign composers, but he used to say that in music, as in other things, England had been over-Germanised.

To all this work in the Broadcasting office he added many activities outside. He sang in church choirs for many years, and took a deep interest in church music. The number of lectures and recitals he gave for the benefit of societies of many kinds was beyond count. He was always ready to sing, or give a talk, or organise a programme. Sometimes this voluntary work involved hours of work and writing.

Had he not spent himself so prodigally he would probably have been spared much longer to his family circle, where there were such deep affection and perfect understanding, to his friends, and to the public he served so long and faithfully.



Next time, Mum,
don't wish so hard!



BABY: 'Smatter, Mum? You wished you could have my "soft life" for a change, didn't you?

MUM: Yes—but I want to switch right back! I'd forgotten babies were so helpless—and had so many things to make 'em uncomfortable. A baby's life is hard!

BABY: Not if a baby's mama is smart! Not if she does things he can't do for himself—like keeping his tender skin smoothed up with Johnson's Baby Cream and Johnson's Baby Powder!

MUM: Say! Guess I've fallen down there! But... why both?

BABY: They're for different things, Mum! Johnson's pure, gentle Baby Cream to keep me cherub-soft where necessary and help prevent what Doctor calls "urine irritation."

And Johnson's Baby Powder for cooling sprinkles that make chafes and prickles scat like THAT!

MUM: Okay, bright baby—from now on you get treated right—with Johnson's!

BABY: Can't do better than that, Mum—ask any expert! Quick swap places and let's scoot to the chemist now!



★ Sterilised for your protection in accordance with the regulations.

Safe for Baby—Safe for You
*Johnson's Baby Powder
Johnson's Baby Cream
Johnson's Baby Soap

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