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## BIRTHDAY PROGRAMME ZB's Will Pay Tribute to G.B.S.

ON Monday, July 26, George Bernard Shaw will reach the age of 92. He has survived early years of poverty, two world wars and the atom bomb—all with unflagging faith if not in his fellow men, at least in Bernard Shaw. And even at his great age, his tart comments on all forms of humbug and pretentiousness, and on the sundry backslidings of mankind are still eagerly looked for.

Much of his life seems to the present generation like ancient history, for Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy and Oscar Wilde were his contemporaries, Tennyson and Browning were still writing when his first works were published, and as a music critic he was an early champion of Wagner. On the eve of his birthday, Sunday, July 25, all the Commercial stations of the NZBS will broadcast a special programme, *G. B. Shaw—92 To-morrow*. It will be heard from 1ZB, 2ZB and 2ZA at 7.30 p.m., and from 3ZB and 4ZB at 7.0 p.m.

Though Shaw's first 30 years were spent in poverty so dire that occasionally he existed on his mother's earnings as a music teacher ("I did not throw myself into the struggle for life; I threw my mother into it") he has lived the greater proportion of his life comfortably. Most people in New Zealand know him as the author of such plays as *Saint Joan* and *Man and Superman* or (more vaguely) through the film versions of his *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara*. When he turned 90, the BBC paid him a special tribute, broadcasting a programme made up of extracts from his own rare radio pronouncements through the years to the present day.

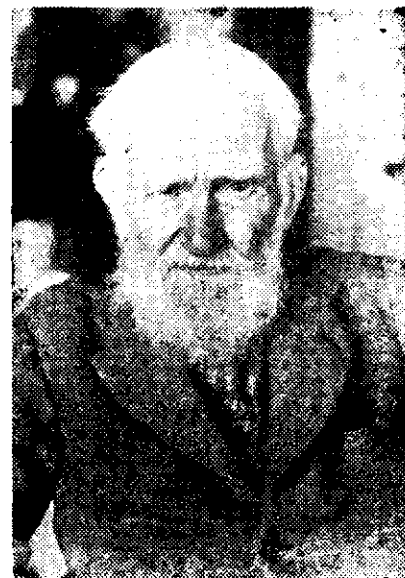
That occasion was also marked in England by a televised interview and by a broadcast in the BBC's Home and Overseas Service by a compatriot, Denis Johnston, one of Ireland's leading younger dramatists. The Commercial Division of the NZBS will use part of this broadcast in its programme on July 25 and listeners will also hear the voice of Shaw himself giving some typically succinct advice to the world at large.

He has always been interested in broadcasting. He made a microphone appearance as long ago as 1924 when he read his play, *O'Flaherty, V.C.*, and in 1938 he broadcast from a BBC studio a special prologue to *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, visiting the studio to speak it.

### Truth and Courage

The ZB programme which *The Listener* has heard in advance, was written by Dorothy Haigh and produced in the Production Studios of the NZBS. Following the introduction by two compères, and a short discussion between a man and a woman as they leave the theatre after one of Shaw's plays, comes Denis Johnston's greeting to his fellow-countryman, recorded two years ago. Johnston says:

Shaw isn't dead or anything like it. The time is not yet ripe for dewy-eyed students to say "Good-bye Mr. Chips." Let the tribute not be one of sycophantic praise. Let it be "We love you, we honour you and we disagree with you." Shaw's advice to-day is as homoeopathic as ever it was.



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

"You mustn't think that because I am very old, I'm very wise"

When I met him first, I was the usual young man with a play in his pocket. In he came and we talked of many things. He was very charming and delightful, and as I went down in the lift, I realised that the only thing we hadn't discussed was my beastly play. That summer, for no apparent reason, my play was being performed. But it's no use sending Shaw a play—that's flat. His courage is not commando courage. The easiest thing to risk in this world is your life. His courage is of a different kind. He speaks the inopportune truth at the awkward moment—in 1895 he continued to speak well publicly of Oscar Wilde. That was a feat and a half.

The programme continues with a description by one of the compères of Shaw's early life and his first job in a Dublin land agent's office at a salary of less than £20 a year, of his arrival in London and the famous friendships which he made there.

### The Master's Voice

Here, in part, is what Shaw said from the BBC on his 90th birthday, which is included in the ZB programme:

"You mustn't think that because I am very old, I'm very wise. Age does not bring wisdom, but experience, which young people can't have. I have seen artists, writers, musicians and all sorts of people grow up and get married. I have seen them middle-aged, and elderly persons, and then they died. When I was young I didn't want to be a great writer at all. I wanted to be all sorts of other things; but it was natural to me to write.

"My advice to parents is: If your son wants to be a great artist, or a musician, or a writer, do your utmost to prevent him. Tell him he should be a prosperous shopkeeper or a stockbroker. If your daughter wants to be a great actress and thinks she is the only person to play *Saint Joan*, tell her to marry a prosperous shopkeeper or stockbroker. It's much more fun to celebrate the great people. There are more kicks than ha'pence in the pursuit of greatness. The way to a happy life is to be too busy doing the things you like to have time for anything else."

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