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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

The Third Goes Slumming

ONCE a week the BBC Pacific Service does its best for us with a feature from the Third Programme. So far we have escaped what some wit foretold—an hour of meditation with T. S. Eliot—for the more tender slices of culture, such as V. S. Pritchett reading his short story "The Fly in the Ointment." This is a study of decay; the decay of an acquisitive man, symbolising, if you like, the decay of the myth which equated material acquisitiveness with morality. The key of the story is in the sentence "... all big-faced men have two faces." There was the large, rosy, innocent outer face of this old man, but "... the big face smiled and overflowed onto the small face" which was "like a fox looking out of a hole of clay." The outer face of the old man wobbled indecisively; he was obsessed by a fly in the room, he was maudlin about the people who had sympathised with him in his bankruptcy, he worried about his son's approaching baldness, he made vague, hopeless plans for his retirement, a cottage in the country perhaps. But when the son, appalled and embarrassed, offered money, which he said he would raise somehow, the little acquisitive fox face, summoned by the familiar word, peered out from the old man's head. What money? How much? How was it going to be raised? Father was back at his job. The acquisitive way of life, although decaying too, was stronger than the man who had tried to live by its myth.

Woolstore Actuality

REALITY in radio? Yes, of course. Genuine reality? All the muddled, elliptical sounds we understand easily in life because we have eyes and because we know the people and things which make the sounds? I used to think so, but not any more. There must be selection, or radio reality is nothing but



muddle, and selection untouched by art is usually a bore. If the subject is of immediate topical interest and has a focal point, like a horse race, a game of football or the arrival of a V.I.P., then the straight actuality is enough, but when the subject happens to be as diffuse and complex as the operation of a Canterbury wool store, artistic selection should have a hand. Make the actuality recordings by all means; the thud of the bales, the whine and whistle of the electric hoist, the rumble of trolleys on the wooden floor, the tallying and checking calls, the smoko conversation, and, if you must, the bawling of sheep, but cut them, select them, and dub them into the narrative at the right places. This was not done in the first

3YC broadcast on the wool industry. Instead there was a dialogue between the announcer and the wool store manager over the background noises. It was complicated. The manager talked about brands, bins, lots, stacks and block-stacks, but not, I think, stooks. The announcer asked his questions, and followed up the answers by saying, "Well, well, four thousand bales!" or "Eight operations, really!" It was not a good broadcast because it did not illuminate the reality. It was done on the cheap, by one man and a technician, when it needed a director, a skilled writer, an accomplished narrator, and a fairly large cast, both of actors and the men on the job.

Chainless Minds

ONE of the most moving programmes I have yet heard was *The Spirit in the Cage* from 2YA on a recent Sunday, in which three ex-prisoners of war discuss the mental effects of solitary confinement. I do not suppose the three men who talked of their experiences were hand-picked for mental resilience, except in so far as it is only the mentally resilient who survive (as two of the three did) more than two years of solitary confinement under almost unspeakable conditions. The effect of the programme was to fill listeners with a sense of grateful wonder at the nobility of the human spirit, of pride at being co-members of the human race with these three who could tell their tale without bitterness or even heroics. (There was also shame at sharing humanity with those others who were responsible for the conditions endured.) The programme was an impressive blend of reticence and frankness. There was reticence in discussing the physical conditions, the pain, the shame, and the horrors of confinement, and a valuable and almost unprecedented frankness in discussing the mental struggles of the prisoners, their gropings towards God and the achievement of almost complete serenity, the final consciousness of the inner reality. All were agreed that the spirit travels further when it starts from a cage, that it is only when the body is a painful encumbrance rather than a source of comfort or gratification that the true potentialities of the spirit can be realised.

Art in Dunedin

I HAD a lively anticipatory interest in the subject of the 4ZB Citizens' Forum discussion "How Can Dunedin's Art Gallery best Serve the Interests of Art in the Community?" Our Art Gallery has always seemed to me to contain, like the curate's egg, a minimum of really good spots, together with a lot of undistinguished work which doesn't deserve to be exhibited in a public place at all. Speaking from the viewpoint of a mere amateur dauber I'm not willing to revive an old controversy by saying which pictures come under the heading of "good" and which "bad." But from the same viewpoint I couldn't but help being interested in the opinions of the discussion-group. For once, it seemed, we had speakers at almost complete