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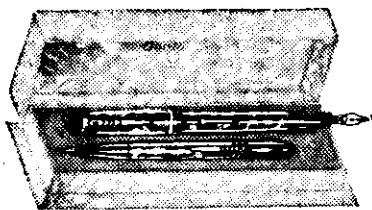
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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Justice in the Dock

THE BBC Third Programme performed its customary gambit of stooping to conquer when it produced British Justice, an entertaining and valuable account of the development of the commodity in question from "time immemorial" to the present day. And all done by personification, or even apostrophe, since Justice herself was put in the dock and addressed in language less respectful than Wordsworth's. The witnesses for the prosecution were many, and convincing. There was the Saxon serf who was tried by ordeal and didn't like it, the Norman landowner who found her uncertain and coy, since she varied in behaviour from county to county, the Poorman who found her too expensive for his means ("open to all, like the Ritz Hotel"). In her defence Justice was able to plead that throughout her long reign she had consistently striven to improve herself, and that in her were to be found peculiar virtues not found in other legal systems. The Juror figuring in the fantasy was described as having "the dazed expression of one who has done too much listening." The same cannot be said of the listening audience, for whom the hour-long programme passed with almost unseemly haste.

### When Talks Are Talks

THE more I listen to radio discussions the more obvious it becomes that the best sessions result when speakers are selected for what they have in common rather than for their divergent interests. The literary discussions we have enjoyed from 2YA are a proof of this, and I have happy memories of a gaggle of housewives discussing the 40-hour week. People with similar interests make for a fluid and spontaneous discussion, they cut in on one another, contradict, amplify, and round out another's argument. Less satisfying are the discussions which result when a panel is selected comprising people in different walks of life, and these are set to discuss a problem from their own individual viewpoint. Take last Monday's discussion from 2YA on *The Christmas Crisis*, with panel consisting of a railwayman, a housewife, and an A.A. official. Each conscientiously covered his own bit of territory, then waited courteously for the chairman to wave on the next speaker, with the result that the deeper and more general arguments for and against the staggering of the Christmas holiday were scarcely touched on. An illusion of progress was given to an almost static discussion by the indefatigable chairman, who, like a general at Staff Headquarters, rushed forward to stick in flags at the slightest suspicion of an advance.

### Inspiration

FROM 2YC recently we had a programme of music "inspired" by other subjects. My first reaction was that the programme organiser intended to be facetious: the Vaughan Williams "Wasps" Overture "inspired" by classical languages, Bizet's "L'Arlésienne" by modern languages! On hearing the

broadcast I began to realise that the thing was serious. What utter nonsense! Was "L'Arlésienne" in a modern language to Bizet, or was it in the language he himself spoke, and was it the language alone which inspired him? Was Williams "inspired" by the subject



of Aristophanes' play or by the fact that it was in Greek? Even more disastrous was "Sumer Is I Cumen In," "inspired," believe it or not, by mathematics! I pass over in decent silence some of the other choices. It was evident that whatever "inspiration" the composers had, the programme organiser had none.

### Guy Fawkes

IMPRESSED though I was by the Guy Fawkes Commemoration Programme from 2YA on the Night Itself I felt that the authorities perhaps carried topicality a little too far when they put it on at 7.50, a time when keen guyers were out and about, active participants rather than passive listeners. When the last match was spent and the last cinder blackened would have been more fitting, since by that time listeners, wearied of their juvenile incendiarism, would have provided an excellent culture for the growth of historic melancholia. The slight dampening of the party spirit which it effected in me is a proof of the potency it exercised in spite of outside competition. It would be too much to say that the programme made Guy Fawkes the man come alive to me (it would take more than one radio programme to unwind the ceremonies of tradition), but it did make me uncomfortably aware of the contrast between our lighthearted exploitation of an occasion and the bitter realities of the original November 5. Even the final waggishness of "I always said Guy Fawkes was the only man who went into Parliament with the right idea" could not cancel out the effect of Fawkes's tortured groans.

### Bible Readings

IN the BBC Chapter and Verse series, programmes of quarter-hour readings from the Bible have been heard on recent Sunday afternoons from 4YA. I, too, like the listener who wrote to the editor about it, was puzzled by the accent of Stanley Maxted. Having met only one Canadian, I couldn't quite place the voice over the air, but found it clear and resonant and very easy to listen to—although I thought the reader did not get enough of the necessary prophetic fire into the Book of Revelation. There is, however, one thing which is brought home to the listener with redoubled

(continued on next page)