

BBC v. MUSICIANS' UNION

(From Our Own Correspondent)

LONDON, JANUARY 22.

THE report of the independent committee set up by the Ministry of Labour after the dispute between the BBC and the Musicians' Union last year has just been published. It criticises both sides for their handling of their affairs and suggests that a joint standing body, with scope and functions clearly defined, would improve their relations.

The committee awards a 10s. increase in the scale of minimum fees for casual studio work and calls on the union to lift its ban on relays of outside broadcasts; these, it says, were for over 20 years an essential part of broadcasting (for some months there have been none at all). The BBC has offered to pay 25s. per musician for such relays, and the committee in effect orders the Union to accept that. It is double the previous payment. To insist on the ban "entirely overlooks the interest of the listening public."

The report criticises the Union, for having "afterthoughts" (claims put in

for the hearing, which had not previously been put to the BBC) and the BBC, for blustering when the dispute was going on (making a public announcement at the wrong moment and complaining of duress when it had entered into a voluntary agreement with the Union after hard bargaining).

The BBC had wanted to increase its broadcasts of gramophone records from 28 to 32 hours a week; the gramophone companies had agreed to 35 hours, and the report says this would serve public interests without prejudice to the musicians.

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And what was the reward of the Girl with the Chestnut Hair? She got her brood on, clucking hen fashion so well, that half-way through the year they were "put up" and given in charge to another teacher. The blow was unexpected and terrific and without knowing it, while her brood gaped at her, she stood with the tears running down her cheeks.

But there was a treacherous streak in the Girl with the Chestnut Hair. She is now just as fond of another group of primers that was sent on to her, just as fond except for the naughty little boy who with his unruly scuffling has made a place for himself in her bosom for all time.

A Comforting Conclusion

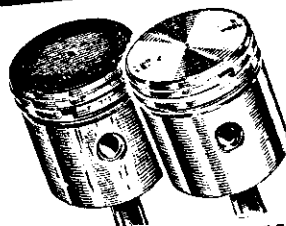
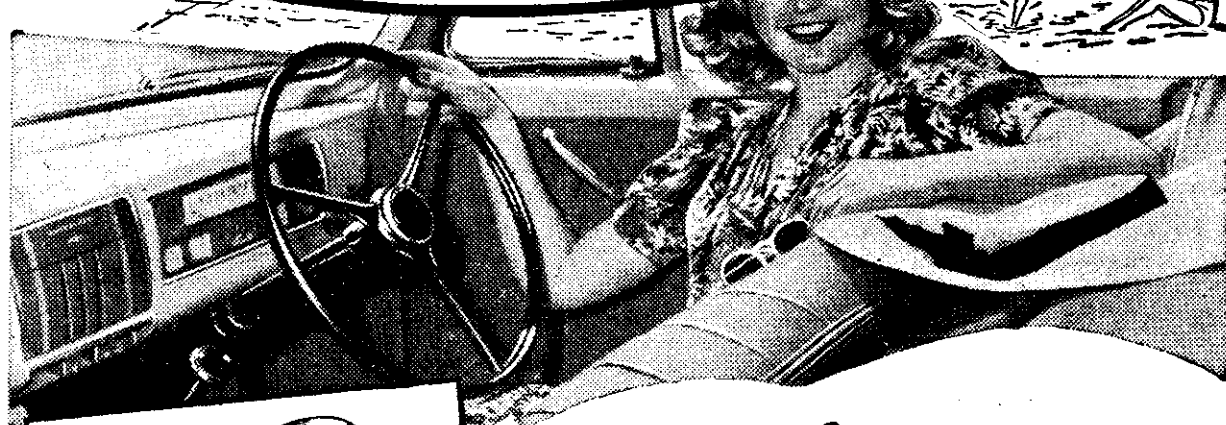
Why this trifling sketch? Because there is a broad and comforting conclusion to be drawn from it, which is this. Inside the education system—alas that it should be a system and has, as such, to bow low to so many cold hard facts—there are to-day hundreds of girls with every variety of hair who do their job like the one with the chestnut locks because (till matrimony turns the current of their being in another direction) they have fallen in love with it. The crop of men teachers coming on blunders round more and is slower to find its feet, but there are hundreds of them, too, who are working their way down in to the life of the schools in quest of an increasing purpose. Their hallmark is a disinterested interest and the best of them go deeper than their feminine opposite numbers. Go deeper the very best of them are determined to. I know a man teacher—but my space has run out and, as one brought up in a now obsolete cult of teaching, I finish by repeating that teachers are better now and that the best of them could hardly be bettered.

(Note: For a theory of education based upon the clucking hen see that greatest of all educational thinkers, Wordsworth, his *Prelude*, Book V., lines 246-56.)

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