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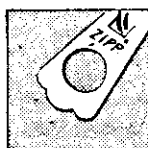


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JULY 1, 1949

Editorial and Business Offices: 115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

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Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Telephone 41-470.

Books in the Market-Place

THE discussion about books, printed on pages 6 and 7 of this issue, covers so much ground that comment may seem superfluous. There are, however, one or two points which invite further examination. The debate showed plainly enough that books cannot be lumped together: they are not "just another commodity." Nor can the appeal to figures, impressive though it may seem, be always convincing. Sir Stanley Unwin declared that New Zealanders are not buying as many books as in the past; Mr. Nash said they are buying more, and to support his claim he referred to the larger volume of books now being published in New Zealand. But even when books have been separated from periodicals, and magazines have been separated from the forbidden "pulp," classification has scarcely begun. New Zealand books are in special classes: they are confined mainly to subjects which would not be treated adequately if we had to rely on overseas publishers. In recent years much work has been done in biography, personal reminiscence, educational research and provincial history. We have come to realise that valuable material should not be lost, and that there is some work which nobody else can do if we fail to do it ourselves. Outside these specialised fields the range of publishing in New Zealand is very narrow. If we want to know what is in the minds of the world's thinkers, we must have books that are published in Britain and the United States. Moreover, we should have them quickly. It is sometimes alleged that New Zealanders discover new trends in the arts, and new ideas in the social sciences, a little belatedly, and that by the time we have digested them they are being superseded. In one way, perhaps, this is not a bad thing: the pursuit of novelty should have no place in our practical and rather serious environment. But all that is new is not merely a change in taste, of interest only to those who like to be fashionable.

The pace of living is quicker than it used to be, and it has become easy to be out of touch with educated opinion. The difficulty has been reduced to a certain extent by the wider range of broadcasting. But radio does not supply a complete substitute for the printed word. When it stimulates interest in a particular subject, the listener's impulse is to seek further information, and he usually finds it in a book. The value of reading is not to be measured in money. A single book, worth only a few shillings, can change the life of an individual; indeed, it can help to change the life of a nation, or of the world. Influential ideas may slip unobtrusively into circulation, so that it is not easy to arrange more than rough quotes and priorities for commodities of the mind. At the end of a useful debate the impression remained that, if access to some books cannot be as easy as we would like it to be, the books can still be reached by a determined customer. And it seems unlikely that there is a declining interest in books in a country where the subject has been opened for discussion on a platform as wide as radio can make it.

Symphony Concert Previews

THIS year the National Orchestra is travelling further afield than it has done in the past. It is also playing a considerable number of works that will be new or unfamiliar to many listeners and concert-goers in this country. The NZBS is therefore making the experiment of broadcasting short "previews" of the more important works to be played in each centre shortly before the concerts actually take place. This year's concert season opens in New Plymouth, where the National Orchestra will play on July 4, 5, and 6, after which it will travel to Hawera, Wanganui, Palmerston North, and so on through the North Island. Station 2XP will therefore broadcast this Sunday, July 3, at some time in their concert programme starting at 8 p.m., the first *Concert Preview*, discussing works to be played at New Plymouth and Hawera during the subsequent week. Background notes and musical outlines of thematic material, mainly for the help of the more serious student, will be included. (See also Page 15).

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 1, 1949.