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NASH: All medical supplies that we have to import when the importer orders them. Before penicillin?

UNWIN: No—no.

NASH: All right, before streptomycin?

UNWIN: Yes.

NASH: All right. Streptomycin, I know, has saved one or two lives of friends of mine. I think anything that would save persons' lives comes before things that are interesting and cultural, and body-building and mental factors.

UNWIN: Right, granted that, what is the amount involved for medical supplies?

NASH: Some millions.

UNWIN: Some millions?

NASH: Yes, yes, and on top of that there's a million or so in books. All that is said in connection with non-restriction is the fact that we've got so much money, and in this country I agree with you that no one knows properly what other books any person ought to read. There's neither you nor anyone in this audience competent to determine fully what somebody else is able to read to their advantage. No, but I would say that there isn't an educational book that can't be bought, there isn't a book that's recommended by a competent man in connection with the cultural world that cannot be bought. There is a bar on every licence issued to say that this licence shall not be used for the importation of pulp magazines, or magazines that depict horror, or crime, or obscenity, and so on, so that if there are any of those here, your friends the booksellers have brought them in against the request of the Government. They've broken a gentleman's agreement if any of them are here. So that there is no bar in the long run inside any reasonable financial field to anyone that wants to import books in the cultural field. If you say that the bar is against good books, I say that you are indicting your customers, the booksellers. They can determine what books they shall buy. No licence says what books they shall buy. It says that this licence shall not be used for bad books.

UNWIN: I'm perfectly well aware of the licence. I've seen the form and examined it. Mr. Nash has not called, recently, as I have done, on bookseller after bookseller in town after town. I have discussed this question. I have examined their stock. I do not bring any such indictment against the booksellers of New Zealand as Mr. Nash, I think, is inclined to do. The position is perfectly clear. If you restrict the bookseller's turnover—with the best will in the world, even if he's the most saintly person imaginable, if he's going to carry his business on with a turnover that's restricted—he is bound to look to the books which will sell fairly rapidly. And there are good books which sell fairly rapidly. There are also many scholarly books which unfortunately do not sell rapidly. And if you are restricted in your turnover you have got to select the book that will sell fairly rapidly. The result of the licensing system is that there is an acute shortage of the better type of book in the bookshops. But that does not say that those booksellers are stocking the books which come under the ban on the licence. I think, speaking broadly—and I have had perhaps more intimate opportunities than Mr. Nash has had of examining the inside of bookshops, I can't

count the number, but in every place that I passed through, without exception, I have visited and inspected the stock of every single bookshop—speaking broadly, the stock is of a reasonably good standard. Obviously, they aren't all Allen and Unwin and Oxford Press publications or Dents or other excellent firms, but on the whole, the stock, bearing in mind the conditions of each particular town, is not bad stock. It certainly doesn't include stock of the category endorsed on the licence. But there is an acute shortage, despite all Mr. Nash says, just because of this restriction imposed by the licensing on the better type of book. And New Zealand is suffering at the moment from mental malnutrition, as the Christchurch Press said, and I haven't the slightest doubt about the truth of that statement.

NASH: I have a grave doubt about the truth of the statement, even though it was said by the Christchurch Press and Sir Stanley Unwin. I do not think the people of New Zealand are suffering from mental malnutrition because they want to buy books that cannot be obtained. Now, there's someone here that might ask questions about it. I notice that whenever a book of any standing is placed outside the ordinary category, and anyone comes and says that they want to import that book (and if it's a book out of the normal) they without qualification can get the licence.

BEAGLEHOLE: It's not quite the same thing, though, as making books freely available. There's a not very subtle, but very effectual bar. You see lots of books advertised in the good English papers and good American papers. Now, it requires quite a considerable lot of energy and ingenuity to get the book and you wait a long, long while. It isn't quite the same thing as walking into the bookshop and saying, "I want that book," and paying for it there and then. On a general principle, the mastadons have contended and the feeble little jungle animals like me can do no more than twitter rather ineffectually, but I think that point needs to be brought forward. It isn't making books freely available to say that they can be got if you go to a certain amount of trouble and apply for a special licence. That's a very important point.

NASH: I'm trying to get the point. If the booksellers—that's a good bookseller—reads the book reviews and the *Times Literary Supplement*, etc., and he sees the books that are there, he can order the books.

BEAGLEHOLE: No, it isn't always the bookseller, Mr. Nash, it's the customer. It's the customer who reads about a first-rate book in a review. It may be an expensive book, it may be a book out of the ordinary and not so expensive, but the bookseller hasn't got it. And no bookseller in New Zealand has it—it has to be ordered specially. But to order a book specially, and to wait for the book a considerable time, is not the same thing as being able to go into a shop and buy the book.

NASH: The position has been operating for years long before it was ever thought of here. Everybody that wanted on the average the good books, outside the best-sellers, had to wait till the bookseller sent home for them. In Britain they don't buy them for the bookshops. They wait till the customer comes in and asks for them, and then they send up to Simpkin Marshall (they used to anyhow), or Allen and Unwin, and the other publishers to buy them.

BEAGLEHOLE: Ah, there always has been a system whereby a bookseller orders certain books, and for certain other books a special indent is arranged for a particular customer. But the point I think is, that since the import licensing system started—and a very good system it is in most ways, of course—it is becoming increasingly necessary for the customer to order the books specially. I think that's true. Will the booksellers here bear me out on that?

NASH: The figures with regard to books and periodicals are £568,000 in 1938 as against £1,375,000 last year. I do not think the people of this country are starving for the want of good books. I do think that I would be willing as soon as ever the circumstances were such, with regard to foodstuffs first, with regard to medical supplies second, with regard to books and others, to give them the licences. But I do not think, whilst there is a shortage of sterling funds for this or any other country, that we ought to give anyone the right to contract debts that the people have to pay. Not the bookseller, the whole of the people have to pay out of our sterling funds to the extent that we can't meet our commitments. And if the bookseller does not use his licence, obviously the mistake is his.

UNWIN: No, No, No, No. On that issue, please. In one case of a steamer being delayed 13 hours his licence was invalidated.

NASH: And he hadn't the right to bring those same goods in? The books did come in. They can come in, first of all charged against his next year's licence, and if he then proves that those books coming against the current year's licence have prevented him from importing books that are necessary and worthwhile he can go and ask for another licence. And 99 times out of 100 he gets that licence. Now, listen. By the actual printed books I asked them to dissect the licences issued, not the actual imports. These are the licences issued in 1946, '47, and '48, dissected into school text books, religious publications, etc., music text books, etc., and printed books not elsewhere included. Is that clear? Well, in 1946 the printed

books were £640,000. In 1948 they were £1,054,000, and out of that £1,054,000, £916,000 were issued for importations from Britain, £64,000 from Australia, £70,000 from the United States. That's in 1948 books, printed books, and that is nearly—no, pretty well twice as much as everything printed that was imported in 1930.

UNWIN: Well, those figures do not tally with the figures from Great Britain.

NASH: But these are right. They're obtained out of our own Government statistics to-day and there's no purpose in their being challenged by . . .

UNWIN: . . . It's a question of dissecting statistics which include journals and periodicals and taking the books separately from them, and that is the whole point at issue. Actually, even on Mr. Nash's own figures, New Zealand has gone back, because if you take world figures, Great Britain sold in 1938 ten million sterling pounds worth of books. In 1948, the figure was very nearly thirty-two million. So it is well over three times the quantity.

CHAIRMAN: I think Mr. Nash has the last word.

NASH: I think this is certain. What Britain sold was what was sold to Britain and outside Britain—would that be right?

UNWIN: The world figures.

NASH: All right. The figures I'm giving are those imported, and added to those are all that are published in New Zealand that are not taken into account here. And taking that into account, I should say the reading of books in New Zealand has advanced more in the last 10 years than it has in the United Kingdom. The New Zealand published books are not in these figures. All Mr. Reed's turnover, Mr. Davies' turnover, Whitcombe and Tombs and all the rest of them are not in these figures. So they've got to be added, and then you'll find they are about three times as much.

CHAIRMAN: Well, it would not be for me to make a decision in this case, but I think we can say broadly, anyway, without disagreement, that books are not just another commodity.



PIANISTS ON TOUR: Dorothy Davies and Wainwright Morgan who are touring National stations as associate artists with the visiting English musicians Peers Coetmore (cellist) and Ruth Pearl (violinist). Peers Coetmore and Dorothy Davies will be heard from 3YA on July 6 and 8, and from 4YA on July 10. Ruth Pearl and Wainwright Morgan will broadcast from 4YA on July 4 and 7, and from 3YA on July 10.