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RADIO REVIEW

Something of Our Own

ONE of the major differences between broadcasting in New Zealand and broadcasting out of it is that we have very little that can be called our own. Music comes almost exclusively from overseas, few of the short stories read are by New Zealanders—an old plaint this!—and not many of the plays have any native imprint. (As listeners we are more familiar with the inflections and idioms of the Englishman, be he cockney, butler, or belted Earl, or the American, be he from Brooklyn or the Deep South, than we are of the New Zealander, be he from the King Country, the West Coast or the town.)

It is therefore with an interest that amounts almost to avidity that we tune in to a programme which purports to show us to ourselves. If the scene presented has a background of countryside or history which is familiar to us, the interest is heightened still further, and it was with more than casual curiosity that I listened to the Mobile Unit's visit to Arrowtown.

The programme opened on a good line—"This week we are in jail!"—and we were then introduced to the local constable and shown around the old stone building. But the joke staled. To all intents and purposes, we stayed in jail throughout the broadcast, which to law-abiding citizens like ourselves seemed a little unfair. We were not taken to the museum which deserves more than a casual glance, nor were we given any real idea of what the town looks like. The lovely old trees which line Buckingham Street were mentioned, but only casually; they were never described, nor were the little wooden cottages which are so much a part of the scene. The records of Arrowtown in its gold-mining days are numerous enough and hectic enough to form the basis of more than one picaresque novel, but they are not the whole story of Arrowtown which was presented to us as a relic of bygone days, a sleepy hollow basking in the sun of dead splendours, a "quaint," quiet memorial to past grandeurs and past extravagances. There is life in Arrow today which is as individual though less flamboyant than in the old days, but this was hardly touched on.

The only time the broadcast gripped us was when one or two "old identities" (all women as I remember) were interviewed. This part of the programme was really excellent. The voices were natural, unaffected and warm with humanity. We were told of things remembered; the drunken woman chained to the log, the Chinese who went far afield to get ducks to sell because those taken from a certain locality always had gold in their crops, the man who begged for a night's

lodging and turned out to be all that was left of one of the biggest, browniest and most aggressive of the gold diggers—and so on. This was the real thing and came alive to us, not because of historical interest alone, but because the speakers themselves were very much alive. Records like these—the voices and the stories—are priceless and for these alone the programme justified itself. But for the rest, the script was in-

coherent and facetious. The facetiousness got in the way of information and wasted time. A lack of routine blue pencilling was obvious. The word "massive," for instance, occurred so often that I got to the length of counting the times it occurred.

The idea of the Mobile Unit is a very good one. The "personal appear-

ance" of men and women as closely identified with the country as were the old ladies in this broadcast was invaluable, but the scripting and general approach could be improved. There was too much sentiment and not enough sensibility.

—Sycorax

The Light in Heart

THE new series of *Opinion Please* from 1YA seems to me to have rather more body in it than the series heard earlier this year. Vernon Brown and G. Blake Palmer, both reliable discussers, remain from the original panel. M. K. Joseph is a decided acquisition, with his well-reasoned and quietly pointed comments, while Bryce Hart, although his characteristic style of wit is a little cramped before the microphone, can usually be relied on to produce some outrageous pun or quip should the discussion threaten to flag. The only dissatisfaction I have with the present programmes arises from a feeling that most of the panel, especially the chairman, A. R. D. Fairburn, take too seriously their policy of never becoming too serious. I realise that the few minutes allotted to each question make it difficult to strike down to fundamentals, that the impromptu nature of the session prevents anybody doing full justice to his own view and that the avoidance of genuinely controversial topics limits discussion. All the same, it seems to me that the tone of several questions submitted by listeners often suggests that the writer is seeking for a more serious answer than is attempted or given. After all it is only opinions which are being asked for, and I feel there is little danger that an occasional attempt to treat some topics in a less light-hearted and surface-skimming manner, would lead New Zealand listeners to regard

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