

BAN ON AMERICAN SERIAL FEATURES

A Help Rather Than A Hindrance

IN Australia, recent import restrictions are welcomed as a means of helping one big industry to grow bigger.

Here in New Zealand, radio features are mainly imported. Some locally produced plays, and a few features, are recorded in Government-owned studios attached to the National and Commercial stations. But the industry here has not been nourished on the market which Australian privately-controlled studios have found for their work.

Opinions expressed in Australian radio journals arriving this month show that the import licensing regulations, introduced by the Commonwealth Government since the war began, will ban all further importations of American transcriptions for broadcasting.

A Welcome Ban

One station manager is reported as regretting the ban insofar as it will remove desirable competition. Otherwise, comment is wholly favourable.

About six years ago Australian broadcasters decided that the air had room for more than just musical programmes and announcements. They looked about for new ideas, and found them in the American recorded feature.

The big American studios work on the principle that playing a record over their huge networks would be like asking listeners to kiss their sweethearts' photos instead of the real thing; but there, especially in California, radio has built itself a big feature production business for the export market.

This met the Australian demand, at first, and, as all listeners know who have laughed at Eb and Zeb, and the Japanese Houseboy, also made good use of a ready market in New Zealand.

Home-Made Preferred

But now Australia has at least six big recording studios. During the last twelve months a current survey shows that Australian-produced features far exceeded the number of American productions on the air. At one station, it has been found that advertisers last year sponsored Australian productions in favour of American records in the ratio of 9 to 1.

Although the official ABC concentrates on studio work, Australia is also served by commercial stations, privately-controlled, in numbers which far exceed the aerials at present available for the Government stations. These find it cheaper to use records instead of keeping all the time to flesh-and-blood artists, and the economical circulation of records among stations run in chains by one firm cuts down relaying costs.

Serials Without An End

Some stations have not been canning their drama fast enough, and are likely, if the ban is held down fast, to find themselves without the concluding instalments of some serials. Others, especially in South Australia, where they seem to have looked ahead, are carrying all the instalments they require to complete current items.

New Zealand, too, has turned away from concentration on the American production. More and more Australian radio features have been finding their way through the aerials of both the YA and ZB stations. Some of the titles are:

The Woman in White, Westward Ho!, Greyburn of the Salween, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Fred and Maggie Everybody, Notable British Trials, Mittens, Inspector Scott of Scotland Yard, Famous Women, Knights of the Round Table, Every Walk of Life, David and Dawn, The Rich Uncle, Robinson Crusoe.

Most of these come from the George Edwards Company, which rehacks old stories, peeps up old plots, turns literature into dialogue, and puts the result on discs at the big Columbia studios. Once, another company of artists worked along similar lines. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Howlett, who came to New Zealand last year and were described in *The Listener* as stars of various features well known over the New Zealand broadcast band, told of its dispersal and the growth of the George Edwards Company in the sunlight of Columbia's rich smile.

Import restrictions worry these people no more than a strike of oil would worry the Taranaki dairy farmer whose home paddock held the successful bore.

The Craze For "Crazes"

While they are no longer receiving records from America, Australian producers are accepting new crazes from overseas. "Bees" of all sorts have for some years been featured successfully by the BBC, which is not so austere as some would make it out who haven't heard the lighter side of its programmes.

The "craze" idea spreads also from America. Musical auctions, spelling bees, crazy courts, intelligence tests, are all included in the list of "audience participation" items. But while the

BBC, for instance, takes endless pains to work up relays and hook-ups for spelling bees between Leeds and Manchester, North of England and the South, one regional station against another, in Australia they have accepted the idea and turned it into records. The "bee" is organised, perhaps broadcast first of all as an authentic studio presentation, then circulated on discs among subsidiary stations.

A good disc will travel well. If a song, or a play, or music, or a talk, or any other feature, can be caught while it's hot, it can at least be kept warm for many more re-broadcasts afterwards.

Sometimes a record may leave a distribution centre and not come back for a year. By carefully avoiding the danger of putting a date on their work, a radio commentator can, for instance, interview a sporting celebrity in such a way that his story of one football season can carry over for use in the season following.

It's cheap.

SHE IS MUM



DORIS BINGHAM: Radio parent for Dad and Dave. She had years of experience as a professional stage actress before turning her talents to radio. Miss Bingham has been associated with George Edwards Productions for a long time, her main role being "Mum" in "Dad and Dave." She has played other parts in "His Lordship's Memoirs," "Greyburn of the Salween," "The Woman in White," "Drama in Cameo" and "Inspector Scott"

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

APPEAL TO MEN

To the Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—In your editorial entitled "Appeal to Men," you say, "if there are other ways of defending them (our liberties) than by fighting for them, we don't know what they are." Being a pacifist, and therefore gullible, I shall regard this as a sincere desire for knowledge on your part, and would suggest that you read Richard Gregg's "The Power of Non-Violence," and Bart de Ligt's "Conquest of Violence." That will do for a start. When you have got through these, you may be ready to admit—though I don't expect any editor these days publicly to acknowledge it—that there is another way: that of non-violence, passive resistance, civil disobedience etc.; and, on the positive side, of "implacable" friendship to all people. For myself, I believe that this is the only way worth trying; for although I'm only a gullible pacifist, I'm not gullible enough to believe that by using the war method again we are going to achieve any better results than we did last time.

Anyway, you do acknowledge the existence of a "small section of the community which is opposed to war in any circumstances" (I am convinced that there is a much larger section which is opposed to this war in particular); and these days when everybody else is telling us how unanimous everybody is about this war, such an acknowledgment is at least something for which to be grateful. And if you publish this letter, that goes double.

Yours etc.,

G.P. (Gullible Pacifist)

Wellington,
January 4, 1940

CELEBRITIES WANTED

To the Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—You will perhaps, when you read this, say: "Another malcontent!" Regardless of that, I shall put in my plea.

It's always been a mystery to me (and still is) why we don't hear more records of "celebrity" singers over the air. By "celebrities" I mean long-recognised artists like Galli-Curci, Miliza Korjus, and Beniamino Gigli—to mention a few. Of course we get them occasionally, but more often we have to suffer in silence some blighted youth drooling "I love you-ou-ou!" I have nothing against youth—far from it!—but when young men feel like that they should take themselves where they can go on with their "music" in cloistered happiness.

My complaint is that we hear only half as many records of famous singers as of the cowboy, pastry-cook, naked native type of thing.

Yours, etc.,

M. D. BASSETT.

Kumara, Westland,
December 16, 1939.

DUNDEE SINGERS

To the Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—I was interested to read a paragraph in your current issue, referring to celebrated singers who claim Dundee as their birthplace. While I write subject to correction, I am under the impression that Fraser Gange (bass) is also a native of Dundee. This fine singer has made many excellent records and has also, I think, visited New Zealand. Perhaps some other reader of your interesting paper could confirm or correct this. Wishing *The Listener* a prosperous New Year.

I am, etc.,
SCOT.

Auckland,
December 28, 1939.