

WELL-KNOWN AIR VOICES

Pep-Talkers From The BBC

THE war has certainly brought the voices of many well-known British people into New Zealand homes, via the BBC talks. Now, instead of judging celebrities from their photographs, they are judged by their voices. Probably the ultimate result will be the same, but, no matter how interesting the subject matter of the talk, unless the voice has a certain appeal it is useless over the air.

Take A. G. Macdonell, for example. No one imagined that the author of "England, Their England," and "Napoleon and His Marshals" could possess a voice which so belied a man of his years and attainments. A rather high-pitched voice suggested a young man of no particular scholarship, though he is a man of 45 years, and a keen student of international affairs.

Macdonell is only one of the BBC's "pep-talkers." They are a mixed bunch, often chosen only a few hours before they are timed to speak. Those who get their voices and messages over to listeners are brought back week after week, others are dropped after their first talk.

Listed among the most popular "pep-talkers" are the following:

The Hon. Harold Nicholson, a diplomat for 21 years, is now a National Labour member of the House of Commons and a popular journalist. He is married to the novelist, Victoria Sackville-West, who lives at Sissinghurst Castle, Kent. They see each other only at week-ends. Some listeners have complained that they find Mr. Nicholson too casual.

"Red Ellen" Wilkinson

Miss Ellen Wilkinson ("Red Ellen" because of her flaming hair), talks over the air in a confident and sharp voice which sometimes rises to a waspish buzz. She is Parliamentary Secretary to Sir Walter Womersley, Minister of Pensions.

J. B. Priestley's voice is rumbling Yorkshire. He had his first big success with "The Good Companions," and has never lacked admirers since the day it was published. He has a wife and six children, likes violent exercise, work and music, and believes that "nearly all great men have provincial voices."

Leslie Howard's voice was well enough known because of his work on the screen, but there was a noticeable difference between the two "voices." Most people seemed to prefer the "screen voice."

Journalistic Diplomat

George Slocombe, author and journalist, is an ardent admirer of the French and, until the war broke out, he lived in France with his Russian wife and their three children. His hobby is landscape painting. It was George Slocombe who initiated negotiations with Gandhi, when he was in gaol, which led to the Irwin-Gandhi Pact of Delhi and the appearance of Gandhi at the Second Round Table Conference. His voice is that of a serious man. "The Heart of France,"

"Paris in Profile," and "Henry of Navarre" are among his best books.

Sir Robert Vansittart's recent talk is still being discussed by listeners. Sir Robert has been Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Foreign Secretary since 1938. After serving with the British Diplomatic Corps in Paris, Teheran, Cairo and Stockholm, he became secretary to Lord Curzon then, from 1928 to 1930 principal private secretary to the Prime Minister. For the next eight years he was Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

SCHOOLBOY'S LETTER

He Didn't Want To Leave England

A LETTER written by an eleven-year-old English schoolboy to his father created great interest when it was published in "The Times." The letter was simply signed "X". Winston Churchill saw it, rang "The Times" to find out the name of the author, and discovered that he was David Benn, son of William Wedgwood Benn, Labour Member of Parliament. David is a pupil at a boarding-school in the south of England. Here is his letter:

"I am writing to beg you not to let me go to Canada (I suppose you know that we are probably going?). (a). Because I don't want to leave England in time of war. Prejudice apart, if it had been peace-time I should have opened my mind to it. (b). Because I should feel very homesick—I am feeling likewise now. (c). Because it would be kinder to let me be killed with you, if such happened (which is quite unlikely), than to allow me to drift to strangers and finish my happy childhood in a contrary fashion. (d). I would not see you for an indefinite time, probably never again."

This remarkable letter ended with a postscript: "I would rather be bombed to fragments than leave England."

NATIONAL LEADERS: Rt. Hon. A. Greenwood



Arthur Greenwood is a man of courage and determination. He has served on more committees of investigation and research than any other man in Britain. He was born at Leeds, and began his career as a school teacher. A scholarship took him to the Manchester University, and after some years of studying history and economics he became head of the economics department of the Huddersfield Technical College and Lecturer in Economics at the Leeds University.

Arthur Greenwood won his first seat in Westminster in 1922 and has represented Wakefield since 1932. After the last war he gained a great reputation when he worked on committees concerned with reconstruction, relations between employers and employed, adult education, profiteering, Trusts, health and labour commissions. When Ramsay MacDonald formed the first Labour Government he was made Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health. He became Minister of Health in the 1929 Labour Government. One of his most important tasks before he was appointed to the Churchill Cabinet was Secretary of the Labour Party Research and Information Department.

It has been said that Arthur Greenwood would stand to the last by a friend he knew was wrong, but that is the sort of man he is. He is worshipped in Yorkshire.

ONE of Winston Churchill's right-hand men is the Right Hon. Arthur Greenwood, Minister without Portfolio in the British Cabinet. He is now 60 years of age. Twenty years ago Mr. Greenwood turned his back on what people describe as "a dazzling career" in the Civil Service and joined the Labour Party. No hard and fast system could ever hold him; his gifts have now found an outlet in organisation.

David Benn's father is to-day one of the prominent members of the Labour Party, but he was formerly a Liberal. During the last war he saw service in Egypt, on Gallipoli, and in the Mediterranean with the Royal Naval Air Service and won the Distinguished Flying Cross, the French Legion of Honour, the French Croix de Guerre, the Italian Military Cross and the Medal for Valour. He switched from the Liberal to the Labour Party after the war and in 1929 Ramsay MacDonald made him Secretary of State for India.

Winston Churchill was so delighted with the letter that he sent the boy a signed copy of his book "My Life."

MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

Bronze Of The Victoria Cross

(By L.E.)

THE Victoria Cross, the most coveted of all British military decorations, was instituted on January 29, 1856, at the end of the Crimean War. It is made from the bronze of cannon captured in the Crimea, and consists of a plain Maltese Cross, 1½ in. across with the Royal Crown surmounted by a lion in the centre and the inscription, "For Valour," beneath. The ribbon is crimson for all services.

An interesting story attaches to the words "For Valour." The Minister for War at the time was Lord Panmure. When the design for the Cross was submitted to Queen Victoria for approval, she returned it to the Minister, with the words "For Valour" substituted for the words "For Bravery" on the design. "I trust," wrote the Queen in an accompanying note, "that all my soldiers are brave." So "For Valour" it is still.

A special annuity of £10 a year is granted to all recipients of the V.C. below commissioned rank, with £5 extra for each bar, a bar being added for additional acts of bravery which would have won the V.C. had the recipient not already received it. All members of the Naval, Military, and Air Force of the Empire, men and women, may be awarded the V.C. There are about 450 living holders of the Cross.

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