

# NOEL COWARD FOR NEW ZEALAND

## "The Man From Mayfair"

**N**OEL COWARD is coming to New Zealand. He will arrive from Australia on January 4 by Trans-Tasman flying boat and remain in New Zealand until January 18.

In that time he will travel from Auckland to Dunedin and back, as the guest of the New Zealand Government.

His itinerary includes six fifteen-minute broadcast talks and concerts in aid of patriotic funds in each of the four main centres. With him at these performances will be Heddle Nash, English tenor; Andersen Tyrer, English pianist; a New Zealand woman vocalist to be announced; and the NBS String Orchestra.

Mr. Coward also wishes to make opportunities to visit military camps for entertainment purposes.

He comes here after tours of America and Australia.

For the arty, who like to pretend to be plebeian, Noel Coward is the Man from Mayfair of the stage, just as Michael Arlen is the Man from Mayfair of books.

For the rest, Noel Coward is a first-class entertainer. He writes — plays, sketches, cavalcades, and autobiography. He composes. He sings — although he

admits it's really croaking that won't go over unless it has his face behind it. He produces. He acts.

All of these things he performs with slick efficiency. He does not pretend to be deep. He skims the surface and his critics supply the complexities of social philosophy inspired by his brittle expertness.

They say he's typical of his generation, which supposedly does not worry about what is beneath the surface. But that is only the face presented to the rest of the world, for Coward as well as for the rest of the post-war cleversticks.

He is so clever he's been called more than once an intellectual snob. Here is

*Noel Coward was busy in Australia, but nothing he did arrived with quite the impact of a record-breaking broadcast from Ingleburn over 2FC. He used that "great Australian adjective." No Australian has ever done that before on the air and got away with it. We have not yet had time to find out whether Mr. Coward has heard of New Zealand's.*

an extract from a talk he gave for the Australian Broadcasting Commission:

"Perhaps one of the few benefits that will emerge from this war will be the final destruction of those false snob values that have been imposed upon the honest heart of London like so many barnacles. Let's pray with all sincerity to profit once and for all by the lesson we are learning."

Thus "The Man from Mayfair."

His intellect may not attract everybody. It is typical of the post-war years, in which intellect has had to be clear, firm to hardness, swift, and cold enough almost to be ruthless.

But New Zealand will not be concerned with Mr. Coward's place in the philosophy of the times. He comes here on a goodwill mission to tell us something about England, America, and Australia. He will find out in New Zealand whatever he can to take our story



on with him when he leaves for America again.

About England he has been speaking frankly. He said for the ABC:

"Had we, as a race, been more volatile, more amenable over the years to foreign revolutionary theories, to the subtle undermining of our national fibres by the clever alien propagandists of Communism, Fascism, and many other "isms" that they have diligently been trying to infect us with for so long—had we, as a people had a little more political imagination, which would have been dangerous, and a little less humour and horse-sense, which would have been fatal, we might have listened too

much and debated too much and admitted too much, instead of shrugging our shoulders and getting on with the housework.

"These rather negative virtues of ours though, can be carried too far. They have been carried too far. In fact, they are one of the principal reasons for the war."

But he is not going to spend all his time lecturing to us. He is going to—well, we're not quite sure what to call it; but it's most amusing. You have to see him to appreciate him. He won't broadcast anything but "straight" material. They caught him on the stage with radio microphones in Australia. He protested: "You see, I have no voice at all; I can't sing. But I have got a personality. Put me where they can see me, and I can croak along and get away with it. That performance was bad, very bad, I know."

So we discover that Noel Coward not only acts Noel Coward, but produces Noel Coward. That wise saying was made by one of the ABC men who listened to him discussing arrangements for his tour. The discussion was not long, but a lot happened.

What else is there about him but a long list of successes and some few failures? He is 41. Has written a list of plays as long as his more than somewhat Roman nose, some novels ("All of them terrible," he says), revues, and who knows what?



**SEFTON DALY**, N.Z. pianist, who toured with Noel Coward in Australia and will be his accompanist in New Zealand, worked in a Christchurch store as an interior decorator. The firm, after sacking him several times as a musical crank, finally made him pianist at their restaurant. At the time he also studied classical music, and broadcast some of his 40 compositions on 3YA. He went to Sydney 2½ years ago, did some interior decorating, including his own flat, broadcast for the ABC, played nightly at King's Cross café, and was chosen as Marie Burke's accompanist at camp concerts and on a 10-week tour in Sydney and Melbourne

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