

"I'D RATHER LEAD A BAND"

Lyn Christie Preferred Music to Medicine

THE theme for one of Fred Astaire's most famous songs was probably invented about 1923 by Lyn Christie, whose band may be heard each Saturday night relayed by 3ZB from the Christchurch Welcome Club; because in 1923, when young Lyn was ready to leave St. Andrew's College, Christchurch, his father offered him the luxury of training to become a doctor and young Lyn replied, "No, I'd rather lead a band." And lead a band he did, or at any rate play in one, from then on.

He had been at the Christchurch Boys' High School and had played a flute in the orchestra and had then conducted the orchestra for two years: at St. Andrew's he played flute and saxophone, and became conductor. As soon as he left school he joined J. C. Williamson's, and for four years toured New Zealand with the company, sometimes playing in the orchestra and sometimes playing saxophone solos. He was a member of the orchestra that broadcast from the Dunedin Exhibition and of the orchestra that played in the original broadcast from 3YA in 1926.

Busy Time in Australia

In 1927 he decided to go to Australia.

"Had you a job to go to, or did you go, full of money, for a holiday?" he was asked.

Lyn Christie laughed. "Not exactly. I arrived with £2 10s. But then I was lucky. I dropped into cabaret jobs, stage presentations, and casual playing for a month and then, all on one day, I had four auditions for four different jobs and was given three of them. One was to go to Java, and I turned that in. I put a friend of mine on to it, and he stayed in Java for three years and liked it, so I suppose I did the wrong thing. But I took a contract with Fuller's conducting stage orchestras and also one with the Wentworth cabaret, at that time the biggest cabaret in Sydney, to conduct the dance orchestra for the winter season. Of course, that was the boom time in Australia, before the talkies came in.

"That was the end of stage presentations, but there were still the cabarets

and lunch and tea-hour orchestras in restaurants and I was kept busy."

Lyn Christie joined Horace Keats' orchestra as a saxophonist and broadcast in one of the earliest of the big sponsored sessions in Australian commercial broadcasting.

Conducting for the ABC

Between 1930 and 1931 Lyn Christie was back in Christchurch for a time; but he soon went back to Australia and became conductor of the ABC dance orchestra, which broadcast a programme of 56 dance numbers every Saturday night. It was at this time that Lyn Christie engaged Jack Davey, who took over the announcing.

"There was a great deal of rehearsing to do," Lyn Christie said. "At that time I got every piece of music that came into Australia and I had a stiff job sorting out the good numbers from the bad. We also put on a series of old-time dance presentations from the Sydney Town Hall. These were so popular that we used to have audiences of 4,000; so we broadcast an old-time programme each month from the studio."

During one holiday season, Lyn Christie took an ABC dance orchestra of 12 to Tweed Heads and Coolangatta, the towns on the border of Queensland and New South Wales. The railway line divided the two towns and made a walk of two minutes from the New South Wales hotels to the Queensland ones. "The hotels in New South Wales," Lyn Christie explained, "closed at six o'clock, those in Queensland at nine. The theatres in New South Wales were closed on Sundays, in Queensland they were open. Patrons were permitted to smoke in Queensland theatres but only on one side of the central aisle in New South Wales theatres. So to make up for their disadvantages I conducted community sings on Sunday nights for the New South Wales holiday-makers and competed happily against the Queensland picture theatres."

Lyn Christie's present orchestra, the one heard from 3ZB, consists of two saxophones, a trumpet, drums, and piano. His wife, Olive Winston, is pianist and conductor.

aged. And any suggestion, sometimes made by a harassed official who's been subjected to fierce attack, that the press should be curbed has been instantly and vigorously resented.

Last, but most important of all, we come to the spirit of the people themselves. Everything really hangs on this. If democracy is decaying for them, then our democracy is doomed, but if their spirit is more democratic, then sooner or later the Government will be more democratic. You may bet your last penny on that. I have no hesitation whatever in declaring that the spirit of the British people is more truly and sharply democratic than it's been for at least a generation, perhaps than it's ever been before, and that these people who are "taking it" know what they're taking it for, and that in the end they will have their own way. So please don't talk of Britain and forget the British people. They are Britain. You'll see.

"Our Propaganda Is Simply Terrible"

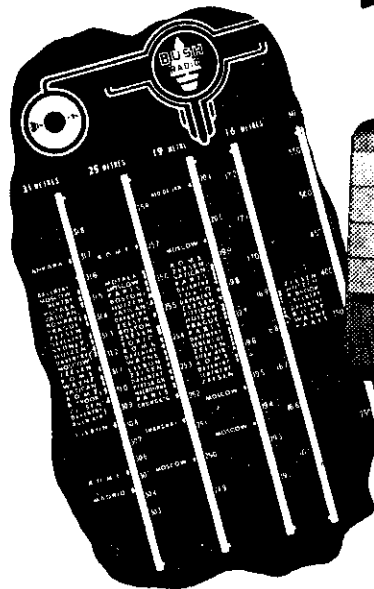
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a company of yes-men, but hasn't hesitated to be critical and outspoken, the members often voicing the discontents of the people who elected them.

"The Press Is More Alive"

And the press has been still more critical, lively and outspoken. Though working under all manner of disadvantages, with less paper, less advertising and all the difficulties created by the raids and faulty communications and transport, nevertheless the press seems to me ten times more alive than it was before the war. With one or two exceptions it is much more sharply democratic in tone than it used to be, much more like the sort of newspapers that most of you read. Anything less like a Government-controlled press of a Fascist country can hardly be im-

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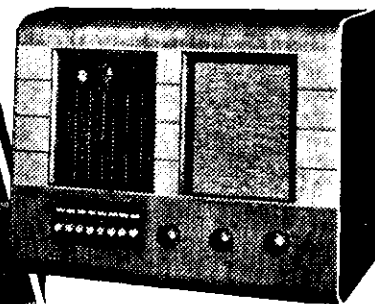
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