

## BBC BANS PACIFIST CONDUCTOR

### Famous Choir Off The Air

WIDESPREAD interest was caused in Great Britain recently by the report that Sir Hugh Robertson, founder and conductor of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, one of the most famous and popular choirs in the United Kingdom, had been refused further broadcasts by the BBC because he is a pacifist. The choir refused to go on without him, and its transmissions were cancelled.

The BBC issued the following explanation from Broadcasting House in London: "The BBC does not, in time of war, invite to the microphone anyone publicly known to be opposed to the national war effort. As Sir Hugh Robertson has reaffirmed the views he has publicly expressed on this subject, the BBC could not, as it would otherwise have done, invite him to appear at the microphone with the Orpheus Choir."

The president of the choir, F. H. Bisset, pointed out that he did not share Sir Hugh's views on the war, neither did the other members of the choir, which was purely a musical organisation. Commenting on the BBC's action, Mr. Bisset said: "Joan of Arc has been a long time dead, but it appears that the English heresy-hunter still runs true to type. Among members of the choir are soldiers and sailors, munition and armament workers, A.R.P. officials, Home Guards, clerks, typists, artisans, teachers, university lecturers, graduates and students, musicians and shop assistants. Because Sir Hugh is a professed pacifist, the ever-patriotic BBC has cancelled the choir's broadcast engagements. Well, not quite. If Sir Hugh is prepared to recant, or if the choir is prepared to find some other conductor whose personal views find favour in the eyes of the BBC, everything in the garden will be lovely. Honour will be satisfied. Thus do we guard and cherish liberty of conscience."

#### Would Not Recant

The BBC's decision was made known to Sir Hugh Robertson by Melville Dinwiddie, Scottish Regional Director, who said that by order of the Board of

Governors no person known publicly to hold pacifist views on the war would be allowed to broadcast, this decision having been arrived at as a result of the outcry about broadcasts given by J. Middleton Murry. If Sir Hugh had by any chance changed his views on the war the matter could be immediately reopened.

In a statement to the Press, Sir Hugh said that he had replied to Mr. Dinwiddie that he had not changed his views; that his views were his own business and affected neither the BBC nor the Orpheus Choir as far as his musical work was concerned; that the choir was a musical and neither a political nor a sectarian body; that the great majority of its members did not even share his views; and there was no analogy between the broadcasting of a speaker and that of a choir, since a speaker was—or should be—expressing a personal point of view, whereas a choir's business was to sing.

#### "Regrettable and Ridiculous"

Newspapers all over Great Britain have been discussing the BBC's action, both editorially and in their correspondence columns; and although they do not support Sir Hugh Robertson in his pacifism, the general opinion seems to be that on this occasion the BBC has blundered. A leading article from the "Birmingham Post" is typical of editorial comment: "In its dispute with Sir Hugh Robertson, the BBC has put itself in a regrettable and ridiculous position. It has cancelled a broadcast by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir because Sir Hugh, the choir's conductor, is a declared pacifist. We shall not be suspected of sympathy with pacifism when we say that it has nothing to do with the case. Sir Hugh is not the conductor of a choir of pacifists but the conductor of a choir of musicians. What he would broadcast would be music, not propaganda. Few members of the choir share his political views, but were every one of them pacifist it would have no bearing on their engagement as musicians. . . There is no comparison between allowing a pacifist musician to broadcast music and giving the freedom of the microphone to a preacher of pacifism. . ."

## YOU CAN'T PRINT THAT

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be happening next week, or next month, are curious. We live—"a la Dunne" and the "Experiment with Time"—in a world in which we can glimpse the future before it happens. We knew that appeasement had been flung overboard with a loud splash, and that Hon. Matsuoka-San received the information. And we can sense, even if not told in precise words, just how far the Axis can go (and also the well-upholstered fifth columns here) in ruffling the Eagle's feathers before the lid blows off creation.

In the light of that "off-the-record" information, it would appear that Mussolini and Franco are in grave danger of joining the Son of Heaven out on that limb. That Hitler's regime is booked for

an early demise, and that the American nation was never further from bluffing than it is to-day, when every decision, however precipitate it may appear to the outside world, is the fruit of careful deliberation.

The American news in your newspaper is written by journalists who are permitted to be two jumps ahead of you. What is bothering the President and his official family to-day is not what they are talking about in public, but what they won't let out one cheep about for publication. On many of those key-subjects high-ranking officials have talked at length to correspondents, adding those fateful words: "but you can't print that, boys." The system has its points. It enables correspondents to be as well informed, within limits, as Cabinet Ministers. But it is responsible for a God-awful amount of high blood pressure.

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