

INFORMATION PLEASE

Many Traps For The Unwary In Popular ZB Session



BY now, most listeners who have heard it will have realised that the ZB feature *Information Please* is a cross between those old-fashioned animal-vegetable-mineral competitions once so popular at children's parties and a straightforward general information quiz. In America, where the session originated, *Information Please* usually consists of an audience cross-examining a board of specialists in various subjects, with prizes for anyone who can stump an expert. A professor of science, for instance, may be asked to explain about a cosmic ray, a doctor to give the reason for a common cold.

It was necessary to adapt the idea for New Zealand radio, one of the difficulties apparently being to find a board of experts who would be willing to submit to a gruelling interrogation in public.

As it is now broadcast over the Commercial stations, the session is conducted by one person at each station, in each case an announcer masquerading under the title of "Professor Speedee." The public is invited to send in questions, which the Professor puts to successive members of a class of four people. If a member of the class knows the answer he gives it immediately, and that is the end of it. But if he is not quite sure, he is allowed to ask any number of questions around and about the subject. As long as they are not leading questions, the "Professor" will answer them to the best of his ability.

There are four rounds, and for each question answered correctly the contestant is awarded two marks. At the end of the session, marks are totted up and the winner receives a one pound National Savings certificate. The second prize is two five shilling certificates, third prize is one five shilling certificate, and there is a consolation prize of cigarettes or chocolates.

On A Recent Evening

When a session of *Information Please* is about to start there is usually a tense atmosphere among the audience and class in the studio, sure indication that people are about to go on the air who have seldom if ever faced a microphone in their lives before.

A recent evening at Station 2ZB was no exception. Two men and two women sit in a semi-circle in the studio around a small desk. At the desk is "Professor Speedee," in this instance Michael Forlong. He has two microphones, one for his own use, one jutting aggressively in the direction of the competitors.

These comprise a girl in a knitted cap who is a librarian, an earnest young man in glasses who is a clerk, a housewife, and a nervous young business man.

Solomon and the Samurai

First question is put to the librarian: "Who was it," asks Mr. Forlong, "who recommended his son to 'go to the ant, thou sluggard,' and in which book and chapter of the Bible is the advice given?"

"I had a feeling anything connected with the Bible would stump me," protests the librarian. "Is it in the New Testament?"

This not being a leading question, Mr. Forlong tells her it is not in the New Testament.

The librarian cautiously suggests the Pentateuch, then gives it up. She is reminded that it was Solomon who gave the advice, and it is found in the sixth chapter of Proverbs.

The Daughter of the Samurai was a widely read book. Who are the Samurai? the clerk is asked.

"This is a tough one," says the clerk. "Not so terribly hard," says Mr. Forlong.

"The Samurai are Japanese?"

"Are they?"

"Are they a tribe?"

"No."

"A class of people?"

"Yes."

"A social class?"

"Yes."

"Religious?"

"No."

"Unfortunately I haven't read the book."

"Most unfortunate."

"Have they no religious significance?"

"To a certain extent."

"That's delightfully vague. Slightly social, slightly religious."

"That's true."

"Then I'm slightly stumped."

The Samurai, the clerk is then told, are members of a Japanese military class.

The Wrong Emotions

The housewife, who is next on the list, is given a definition of the word "emotion," and asked to name the three primary emotions. Joy, sorrow, and pain, she says, after a little thought. Unfortunately the answer proves to be fear, anger and love.

The business man is asked the name of the inventor of roll film and the Kodak camera. Eastman invented the Kodak, he replies, but he has to confess that his ideas about roll films are all fogged.

Eastman proves correct, but it was Eastman also who invented roll film. The business man receives one mark, and finishes the round leading by one mark from the other three competitors, none of whom has scored at all.

Some More Questions

The succeeding questions cover a wide range of subjects. Here they are for the sake of people who are anxious to brush up their general knowledge.

Princess Elizabeth is celebrating her birthday shortly. How old is she, and what are her other two Christian names? (She will be 15, and her other two names are Alexandra Mary).

What is a cadaver? (A dead body).

Where is Mercury Bay, and how did it get its name? (It is on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, North Island of New Zealand, and at the time he discovered it, Captain Cook was making a special astronomical observation of the planet Mercury.)

What is the difference between pathos and bathos? (Pathos is a quality in speech, writing or events which excites pity or sadness; bathos is a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous, an anticlimax).

For what was Mata Hari renowned, and what was her nationality? (She was a famous spy during the Great War, and she was Dutch).

What is the incubation period of an infectious disease? (The time between the contracting of the disease and the appearance of the first symptoms.)

Name a famous merchant who competed for the America's Cup. (Sir Thomas Lipton).

Who wrote the "1812 Overture," and what does it commemorate? (It was written by Tchaikovsky and it commemorates Napoleon's retreat from Moscow).

What is the Bertillon system, and in what connection is it used? (It is a system of identification by means of measurements, and it is widely used in the identification of criminals and police suspects).

Divide the number of Ali Baba's thieves by the number of Dionne Quintuplets, add the number of Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and subtract the number of days it took for the creation of the earth. (The answer is six, a catch for an unwary competitor being the fact that the number of days for the Creation is six, not seven).

If a man dies intestate, how is his estate divided between his widow and his children in New Zealand law? (His widow receives one-third of his estate, his children two-thirds).

When all points had been totted up, the result showed the librarian was the winner, the clerk was second, the housewife third, and the business man fourth. Which may or may not give any indication as to their relative standard of intelligence.

Information Please is conducted at 1ZB by Hilton Porter, at 2ZB by Michael Forlong, at 3ZB by Teddy Grundy, and at 4ZB by Don Donaldson.



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