



A. J. SINCLAIR
He likes his humour pawky

NOT BALD, NOT BEARDED

A Scot Who Speaks With Equal Authority On Burns Or Butterfat

One of Auckland's most popular radio speakers is rarely heard from a major station, but his audience extends far beyond the bounds of the province. This speaker is A. J. Sinclair, whose frequent Scottish sessions are a feature of the programmes from the auxiliary Station 1ZM. He requires little introduction to Scots listeners, for among these he has a strong following in all parts of New Zealand, but this interview will perhaps serve to introduce him to the Sassenachs—and if you are one of those listeners with a weakness for talks then his acquaintance is worth making

Accuracy Needed

Speaking to Scots about Scotland or other Scots is an exacting business unless one is completely sure of one's subject, and Mr. Sinclair said that while some of his talks gave him little trouble, others required references to many authorities—his mail had taught him that he must be meticulously accurate.

When he gave a talk on "Warlocks and Witches" he had to make extracts from books by fourteen authorities. His most popular talk, if correspondence be any criterion of popularity, was that on "Rob Roy and the Clan Macgregor," and he posted over 200 copies to listeners "of whom about 120 were surnamed Macgregor."

Prefers Pawky Humour

"I find," he says, "that books like Wilson's *Tales of the Border* are a mine of wealth, but the tales must be condensed and given a humorous turn, as they were written in a leisurely age for leisurely people.

"I dislike broad Scottish humour of the Broomielaw or 'Coo-caddens' variety—'Sailin' Doon the Clyde,' and that kind of stuff; I prefer the pawky yet subtle humour of Scott, Burns and Hogg. But humour before a microphone is difficult to me. I have found that a comment which will draw a hearty laugh when made on a platform gives me a heavy feeling in the pit of the stomach when it is given over the air. I derive comfort, however, from the fact that when listeners comment to me about my talks and I ask them what part made most impression, they can invariably recall some humorous touch."

Mr. Sinclair is a native of Motherwell, in Lanarkshire, and came to New Zealand in 1911. New Zealand, he thinks, is the finest country in the world—with one exception.

"Delving into the lore and legends of one's native land is a fine hobby," he says, "and I get ample evidence in my mail that Scottish listeners like to hear the result of my labours."

Burns Night and Blitz

Speaking recently of the hunger which Scots have for the past, Sir Arthur Keith suggested that for the Scot the past was a refuge from the present. It is difficult, Mr. Sinclair thinks, to explain otherwise the clannishness of the Scottish people and the manner in which they persist in perpetuating their ancient customs. Each year, he pointed out, a haggis is sent from Glasgow to Chicago in time for Burns night, and it is piped through the main streets with full honours. There may be a Battle of the Atlantic and many more blitzkriegs on

the Clyde, but that haggis will get to Chicago "on skedule" as the Americans say.

Treat in Store

Every Scot in exile gets sentimental when someone quotes the verse:

From the lone shieling of the misty island

Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—

Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

This poem was first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1829. No one knows who was the author, but all agree with Lord Rosebery, who described it as one of the most exquisite laments ever written about the Scottish exile. Neil Munro went further—it was too great a poem to be earmarked by the Scottish people. "It is one of those few lyrics," he said, "which have become part of the common feeling of the British race throughout the world."

Towards the end of July, Mr. Sinclair, in a talk from 1ZM, will tell listeners of the controversy carried on for several generations in Scotland concerning the authorship of this poem, which has been attributed to Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilson, John Galt, James Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd, Gibson Lockhart (Scott's son-in-law and biographer), and many others. Very wisely, Mr. Sinclair will give an unbiased account of the claims made, leaving listeners to draw their own conclusions.

This will be the ninetieth talk on Scotland given by Mr. Sinclair for the NBS.

ARTISTS ORGANISE TO AID WAR EFFORT

ARTISTS are frequently caricatured as long-haired, escapist fellows, immersed in aesthetics, and painting away in their studios when the ceiling is falling. But, however little evidence of world turmoil their work may present, New Zealand artists are at least not unconscious that there is a war on. Practical evidence of their eagerness to help in the humanitarian side of the war effort is their donation to the National Patriotic Fund Board of a collection of nearly 150 paintings, which will be shown at art galleries throughout New Zealand, and afterwards auctioned, all proceeds going to patriotic funds.

Sponsored by the New Zealand Society of Artists, a newly-formed group which includes a majority of the working artists of the Dominion, the collection had its first showing at Nelson on May 1, and will stay approximately a fortnight in each centre. The value placed on the pictures is clearly indicated, and they can be bought while the exhibition is on tour. Naturally, the Patriotic Board will not be disappointed if only a small number of pictures completes the tour.

The collection is a good representative show of New Zealand

art, the average value being round about £10 a picture. Since the main idea is to sell pictures, and the public's taste is fairly conservative, it includes few examples of modern trends in art.

All Working Artists

The New Zealand Society of Artists was founded 18 months ago in an endeavour to set up a body apart from the Academy and the Art Societies which would look after artists' interests and act on their behalf. The members are

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RUSSELL CLARK

The society's official nominee as war artist

IT is now 30 years since A. J. Sinclair left his native heath and settled in New Zealand, and in that time he has become one of the leading spokesmen of the Dominion's dairy industry (he is secretary-manager of the Te Awamutu Co-operative Dairy Co., Ltd.). But whether he is talking of the poems of Burns or the price of butterfat there is no question of where he came from. His speech gives full value to every "r" and "ch" and the whole is marked by an accent of the most genuine heathery texture.

But however characteristic the accent, it is not a good enough basis, however broad, on which to build a picture of the speaker. Mr. Sinclair told a representative of *The Listener*, for example, that several listeners to his talks had told him that his voice convinced them that he was a very small man, about 70 years of age, with a shiny bald head and a long beard. It seems hardly necessary to emphasise that he is not and has not, but lest there be doubters still, Mr. Sinclair's portrait appears on this page.

Voracious Reader

Anyone who has listened to his talks on Scottish subjects must have been struck by the store of erudition which they displayed and anyone who also knew what a busy man he is in the dairying industry must have wondered how he managed to collect the material for the talks, each of which is usually about 4,000 words long. Here is his own explanation:

"For the past 25 years," he said, "I have read Scottish books consistently, and I average two every week. I read in trains, service cars, and hotels, and mark every passage which interests me, giving it a suitable heading. I then prepare a subject index and paste this in at the back of the book. Were you to ask me if Macaulay ever made any observations on policemen, or if Robert Burns ever said anything (satirical or otherwise) about John Knox, I could tell you in a moment."