

TARDILY discovering the possibilities of some intelligence in its public, the BBC Forces Programme planners last winter decided to supplement the system of education used for the 3,000,000 soldiers in Great Britain. The BBC's idea was to let soldiers ask questions, which would be answered by various wise men chosen with proper care.

Beginning last January, *Any Questions?* went on the air with Professor Cyril Joad, Dr. Julian Huxley, and Commander Archibald Campbell—a Brains Trust capable of taking on all comers.

For half-an-hour on Wednesday afternoons in the Forces Programme, *Any Questions?* answered the queries of its correspondents. Though devised for a small minority of the Army which wanted intelligent fare, it rapidly became apparent that *Any Questions?* was a widespread favourite with the general public as well.

Thousands of questions shot in by civilian listeners remained unanswered. So that they could be dealt with, it was decided to transfer the Brains Trust to special star status on Sunday afternoons.

Typical Brainstormers

The Trust now answers impromptu questions of general interest chosen from a large number sent by inquisitive listeners. Its members are often supplemented by one or two guest members, among whom have been such notables as Professor Harold Laski, Clemence Dane, E. M. Delafield, E. N. de Costa Andrade, Gerald Barry, and the Crossword Expert "Caliban."

Typical brainstormers are: What is love? What is civilisation? How would you define charm? Why don't you laugh when you tickle yourself?

Regularly each week the BBC receives 1,000 questions for solution. These are sifted and reduced to nine or ten by a staff co-operating with Donald McCullough, a peacetime advertising man.

The programme is broadcast from a London studio, and during the worst of the winter air raids, Joad, Huxley, and Campbell were sometimes carted all over London in a taxi to find a vacant BBC studio.

The biggest success of this most successful programme is Professor Joad, whose academic but intensely vital voice makes a striking contrast to the slightly diffident tones of Professor Huxley during their debates. Joad is head of the

TUBERCULOSIS

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specialist is helped in his treatment advice by this modern aid against the disease.

Tuberculosis in New Zealand has shown a slight rising tendency of late; 520 deaths 1939, 600 deaths 1940. If every family affected took advantage of the above facilities, new infections would be cured early and sealed off. Other folk would not then be peppered with the germ, and the future would bring diminishing tuberculosis of the lungs to our land. It's a family disease; now families, what about it?

(NEXT WEEK: "How Likes and Dislikes for Foods Arise," by Dr. Muriel E. Bell)

ANY QUESTIONS?

BBC Has A Brains Trust

(Condensed from an article in "News Review.")



Dr. Julian Huxley
Smells for the films



CLEMENCE DANE
Co-opted brain-truster

Department of Philosophy and Psychology of Birkbeck College, University of London. A dynamic personality, Joad restlessly ejects ideas as he strides up and down the study of his period home in Hampstead.

The Public Can Think

"Providers of popular entertainment in the Press, the BBC, the theatre and the cinema," he stated last week, "consistently under-rate the intelligence of the British public. There is an illusion that in order to appeal to the man in the shelter you can't afford to be serious for two minutes because he is incapable of concentration, and so entertainment must always be facetious since the public are really half-wits and adolescents. I believe there is an accumulated fund of unexpended seriousness among the people."

Consistent with that belief are the answers he gives on the Brains Trust programme. To qualify these he said: "The war has made many people at once more courageous, more disciplined, and more purposeful. It would be a curious effect if it improved our intelligence as well as our characters. Anyway, I wish the press and the BBC would realise once and for all that the average Briton is not always stupid and is not always a Philistine. If I had my way, everyone in this country would continue education till the age of 18. The present system means that the education of the vast majority of people is lamentably cut short at 14. Now the State maintains the men and women in the Forces, who are giving up all their time and their lives. These men and women are idle and unoccupied for comparatively long periods, and it is only fair that the State should repay them for their sacrifice and relieve their boredom by giving them as much education as it can. This war has given the BBC a wonderful opportunity for educating the people."

Power Has Outgrown Wisdom

Here is a typical Joadism: "The distinguishing feature of our civilisation is the extent to which our powers have outgrown our wisdom. Science has given us power fit for the gods, yet we bring to their use the mentality of public school boys and savages. Men of genius by the dozen, men of talent by the hundred, laboured in order that wireless might be. The miracle was performed, but with what result? The ultimate ether vibrates to the sound of negroid music and wireless waves transmit such announcements as 'Ladies and gentlemen. Sid Ambone will now sing *Tripe and Onions*.'" Of the aeroplane Joad said, "The greatest of man's inventions threatens his civilisation with destruction. The super-man made the aeroplane and the ape has got hold of it."

The second member of the Trust is Julian Huxley, whose fine features, noble head, and cultured voice might belong to a leading Shakespearian actor. Huxley is known to millions largely because he has been Secretary of the Zoological Society of London for the past seven years, and he has earned a big following among cinema audiences by his first-rate commentaries on Nature "shorts."

Like his younger brother, Aldous Huxley, Julian was educated at Eton and Balliol, and is the grandson of the Victorian anthropologist, Thomas Henry Huxley.

Commander Campbell, a pipe-smoking raconteur, is popular as a writer, and famed as a radio personality. Big and bluff, he is fond of talking about "When I was in Ecuador." Good-naturedly he takes leg-pulls from his colleagues. Sober, ballast to the Brains Trust, a man of action rather than of pure intellect, Campbell has a shrewd outlook and mordant humour.

Questions are not directed at any single Braintruster. Anyone who thinks he can answer holds up his hand, schoolboy fashion, to catch McCullough's eye. Millions switch on at five-thirty on Sundays to be sure of a good half-hour, some scintillating intellectualisms, and at least a couple of pungent Joadisms.

An aircraftswoman's query, What is a word? lately provided a sample:

Joad plumped instantly for: "A series of waves in the atmosphere due to the action of the larynx. 'You're merely using words' is a profound misapprehension. We can't express ourselves for long just by wagging our ears . . . an instrument devised by human beings for things which are not immediately present."

Commander Campbell brought down the house by adding that "skookum" is the only word used by a remote Indian tribe. As an adjective "skookum" can mean "it's a lovely day." Spoken in another intonation it could mean "We had a dreadful time."

All About Smells

To the query "Does perfume travel by its own waves like sound?" Professor Huxley replied "Certainly not. The idea of smellies (as regarding films) has recently been put into practice in an eastern State of America. By means of certain blending of scents, the idea was that the audience should have their emotions heightened during the tense scenes."

Joad here leapt in to ask why there is no art of smelling as there is of sight, hearing, and touch.

Commander Campbell pointed out that in one group of far islands plants have a definite aromatic sense. Joad maintained that there can be a sequence of smells.

The great success of *Any Questions?* has led to a demand for similar programmes. Enthusiasts believe that a Renaissance of Thought may thus come about.



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