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BBC Bans "Drivel and Snivel":

"The BBC has decided to ban, first, any form of anaemic and debilitated vocal performance by male singers; secondly, insincere and over-sentimental performances by women singers; thirdly, numbers slushy in sentiment and suggestive or otherwise offensive to good taste or religious and allied susceptibilities; and fourthly, numbers based on tunes borrowed from standard classical works."

THE above cable from London appeared in all New Zealand newspapers toward the end of July. Oddly enough, it attracted almost no notice. It was, however, obvious to close readers that it contained enough explosive for a very big noise sooner or later, and we therefore abstained from comment until the overseas newspapers of that date should arrive with fuller details. This has now happened, and we quote some typical reactions.



BOTHER FOR BLISS

("News Review," July 2)

THREE months after he became music boss of the world's biggest radio organisation, Arthur Bliss ran into trouble. A composer of note, Bliss has liberal tastes in music, and can enjoy his jazz with the rest. But as the BBC's Director of Music he has to watch the ticklish question of Good Taste.

For some time, he and other music bigwigs of the BBC European and Overseas service have been uneasy about the number of "plugs" given to dance tunes with sloppy words. Because band leaders seem incapable of judging what is or is not Good Taste, the BBC inserted the thin edge of this musical wedge into a recent Forces programme. Banned was the arch-sentimental tiny-tot number "Mandy is Two."

Last week, Broadcasting House news scouts reported that Bliss was to have a meeting with leading music publishers to discuss the allied, but wider, question of pseudo-propaganda numbers such as the Judy Garland song from *Babes on Broadway*, telling the British people to keep their "Chin Up! Cheerio!" and military-sounding hearty items such as "We're in the Army Now," played to Overseas listeners last week on the day Tobruk surrendered.

Result of the showdown will be that either publishers will have to provide fewer songs about babies, shrines, Peace on Earth, and the gallantry of the British people, and/or bandleaders will have to take a course in common Good Taste, as well as keep up with current events and current popular feeling. Penalty: the BBC will close its air to anything but popular music of its own choosing.

"ANTI-SLUSH" HEADACHES

("News Review," August 6)

LAST week, the BBC's censors of "slush" were getting their first headaches over the job.

Headache No. 1: The irrevocable banning of a certain song may result in the scrapping of a favourite accepted

artist, with a consequent public outcry that the "new dictatorship" is being carried too far.

A typical case in point is that of Bing Crosby, whose records are featured for the Forces every week in "Bing Time." Crooner Crosby's very personal method of performance will pass the normal tests of good taste; but the same number sung by a less able artist may result in just the sloppiness the new ruling is designed to suppress. In such cases, is the song or the type of performance to be banned?

No test case has yet occurred, but its early possibility is being considered. Where public taste is definitely known, the BBC is likely to give way and let the public have its slop as before. Ultra-sentimental crooner Vera Lynn, for instance, is far too popular to make the BBC's life worth while if she were barred. Even the Overseas Service, already strict in the matter of "suitability," grants troops stationed in the Middle East their numberless requests for Miss Lynn's recordings in the regular "Forces' Favourites."



BING CROSBY
Normally in good taste



ARTHUR BLISS: It's time to get tough

Headache No. 2: While the general effect of the New Order on listeners' taste and tempers is yet to be felt, the BBC anticipates an inevitable swing in the opposite direction. Radio authorities are expecting to have to ask songwriters and publishers to ease up a little on the production of super-hearty and "virile" songs about sergeant-majors.

It was revealed last week that close checking of popular tunes is a new policy only in the BBC's Home and Forces Services. Overseas broadcasts of dance tunes have been carefully watched for some months. Among the numbers considered too sentimental for overseas listeners have been "Lullaby to a Hero," "Somebody Else is Taking My Place," and vocal refrains of the "Dumbo Lullaby" and "Baby Mine." "Lullaby to a Hero" was outlawed as being in poor taste. "Somebody Else is Taking My Place" was barred as being bad for the morale of troops serving overseas. German propaganda to the French in the Maginot Line plugged this sort of thing during the "phoney war" period, suggesting that British soldiers were flirting with French troops' wives behind the lines. Constant reiteration had considerable moral effect on an already demoralised army.

The words of "Baby Mine" were disallowed as the result of over-sentimental performances, including "mother's-darling" patter.

BBC IN DORIAN MOOD

("Time," August 3)

THE London *Star* ran a cartoon showing a frail BBC selection committee studying scores and saying "Remember, we must be frightfully, frightfully robust." The British Broadcasting Corporation had decided that it was time for its crooners to get tough.

This latest austerity, explained the Corporation, had long been meditated. Surveys had indicated that the public was fed up with luscious thrushes and loving lullabies. Let dance music be virile, BBC ordained — but not unrefined.

(Continued on next page)