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RADIO ROUNDTABLE Popularity Of "Any Questions?" Session Grows Apace

THE members of the "Radio Roundtable" (who broadcast the *Any Questions?* session from the ZB stations in the Campaign for Christian Order), are getting to know one another. That at least is the impression that they give as they reassemble week by week to discuss the questions that have been sent in to them from all over New Zealand. Sometimes the letters contain a criticism of the method of discussion. "Too little humour, too little fire, a tendency to talk round the question," reads Howard Wadman, the Question-Master.

"Aren't they asking rather a lot," says Harold Miller. "We are only human like themselves and can only answer questions to the best of our ability in the hope of helping people generally if we can."

But the group has more assurance now. They know each other as friends, they meet each other as friends, and they enjoy talking together as friends. Besides, they have chewed over the questions and a meal and the combination goes well.

For, as has been explained over the air, the speakers try to strike a balance between complete spontaneity and just enough preparation to make the discussions as informative and authoritative as possible. The Question-Master selects the questions for each session, meets the permanent members and the "guest" member at lunch on Wednesdays, gives them copies of the agenda for that afternoon, and indicates who, in his opinion, should lead the debate on each question. They chat over the subjects at lunch and collect their thoughts on each topic, but when they gather later round the table at the CBS studios, they are not allowed to have written statements but must speak extempore.

Their discussions are recorded (because good reception would be difficult to ensure with direct rebroadcasting), and are circulated in turn to each of the four ZB stations for transmission on Sunday evenings at 9.10 p.m. Each time listeners to 2ZA, Palmerston North, hear the same set of questions as listeners to 2ZB, but listeners to 1ZB, 3ZB and 4ZB hear different sets.

Clean Sweep or Clean Slate

Here is a typical question and the discussion that followed:

Question: Have you read *Black Record* by Lord Vansittart, and should the Church preach against "Vansittartism"?

"I don't know the method of drawing up an indictment against an whole people," said Burke, and I would agree with him," replies the Rev. A. B. Kilroy. "We Christians cannot be concerned with revenge."

"*Black Record* is pernicious and wrong," comments the Rev. H. W. Newell. "We are fighting against an evil thing, not a nation."

But Harold Miller is prepared to defend Vansittart. He says that Vansittart is a man of some standing and authority who has worked out what he considers is the prevailing tendency in Germany. Are his facts right? If they are, then what is the appropriate action

that should be taken? Vansittart makes out a case that something ought to be done, and done to a whole people not just a gang.

Mr. Kilroy thinks that the Church should not be a party to anything that smacks of revenge, but Mr. Miller says that the attitude is not so much one of revenge as of taking adequate precautions to prevent Germany from troubling Europe again.

"All the same," says the Rev. David Rosenthal, "this habit of mind that our enemies are vermin should be stamped out by the Church. They are men and women like ourselves."

"I don't agree at all," says Mr. Miller, and the Question-Master asks if we should then impose a super-Versailles. "Germany got off very well," answers Mr. Miller. "She didn't pay her reparations. The trouble was that we were half and half. We might have been more generous but we might also have occupied the whole country."

But the layman has the clerics against him. We should have been generous, they say, and we must be generous. We should never treat human beings as vermin to be exterminated.

"A Useful Job For Democracy"

IN an interview with *The Listener*, the Question-Master said that the "fan mail" of the session was increasing steadily, now averaging about 80 letters each week. In many cases, letters contained more than one question. The indications were that the session was becoming so popular that it would continue past the eight weeks originally allotted to it. Two changes to bring new blood into the permanent panel of speakers were projected.

As an indication of the session's popularity, Mr. Wadman mentioned that he had heard of a whole ward at a hospital tuning in on Sunday evenings and discussing the questions afterward. He had also had several questions from soldiers, including groups at two leading camps. One of the best questions had been from a young man going into the Air Force who wanted to know why God permitted the slaughter of innocents.

"What are the most popular questions?" we asked.

"Questions about the Church's attitude to interest, or usury as they often call it, keep on cropping up most frequently," said Mr. Wadman. "After that, I think questions about divorce and the Church's justification of war — both admittedly very ticklish questions for us to handle."

"Do you get much criticism or suggestions for improving the session?"

"Quite a lot," said Mr. Wadman. "One of the brightest was from a man who sent us 2/6 in stamps towards the Campaign, with the proviso 'If you still believe that sinners will be sent to a lake of burning brimstone kindly return 2/4.'"

"He allowed us 2d for postage, you'll note," commented Mr. Wadman.

(Continued on next page)