

WHY DON'T THEY SPEAK UP?

Women Have Still To Capture The Wavelengths

WOMEN have not become regular top-line broadcasters in this country, or in any country except Russia, writes Tom Harri-son in *The Observer* (London). Traverse the wavebands day or night, through the multiple clamour of five continents in war; on all important matters (news, talks, propaganda) you might hear a minute of women for every thirty of men. Here, outside the specialised women's programmes, the keypoints on the air are strongly held by men. This is a pity. Home broadcasting needs the new impetus which women could give.

The blame for this state of affairs rests largely with women themselves. They are the principal critics of feminine broadcasting. It is a man's wife, his mother, his secretary, and his charlady who condemn the very idea of Lady Bartlett reading the news; not he. Clearly, however, the roots of the matter lie deeper.

It is partly that women have a less positive approach, a less aggressive quality and range of tone in speaking. Radio demands some degree of dynamism, if the speaker is to reach out and touch the unseen listener. Most women tend to produce a flat, impersonal feeling on the air, a lack of vocal variety, a sea-saw,

phrase to phrase, sentence to sentence, up and down in anticipatable ascent and decline. When the movements of a voice become predictable it bores. The aerial bore is the only sort one can instantly, satisfyingly destroy. That is why the qualities of variety, vitality, and extroverted energy, the ability to visualise an unknown audience, are important in broadcasting; a dash of threat in the voice ("you'd better not turn me off"), helps, too! These vocal qualities are rarer among women than men.



There is one broad exception to the inadequacy of the feminine voice in broadcasting. Expressions of emotion often come best from women, for instance in poetry reading. On the serious talk side, the record is feeble. The best effort I have heard was Lady Snowden in the Brains Trust. Female postscripts are rare, too. Lady Cripps was definitely a failure. The only first-class one on my recent listening log was Ariadne Lazare, a Greek woman. She told simply of her home life and childhood at Evidrion, with informative words and no straining after effect, a message sad, yet heroic, a voice distressingly moving.

Yet I cannot believe that there are not many women who could and should broadcast, and who deserve better chances. Why don't they speak up?

SEX EDUCATION

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just as simply as he accepts the origin of the bathroom tap or his milk bottle. By the time the child is five years old and ready for school, the foundation can be laid for a sensible matter-of-fact acceptance of the phenomena of sex as explained more fully by his teachers. An important point in a child's sex education should be the emphasis laid on the kinship, the similarity of all things natural; the reproductive struggles of the flowers, insects, animals, birds, fishes, not only in their sex relations, but in their efforts to survive, and their sacrifices for the generation that is to follow them.

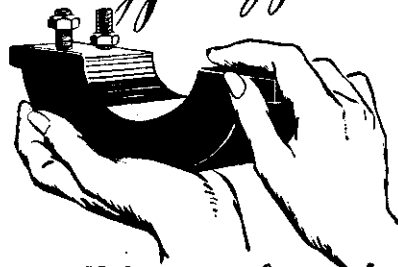
A Job for the Experts

Yes, you say, but is Miss Jones of Standards 1 and 2, or Miss Smith of the kindergarten a proper person to impart this knowledge? She may be, but the chances are that Miss Jones or Miss Smith has grown up with her own mind a muddle of ill-assorted sex fears and repressions and half-digested knowledge. Until we have raised a generation of sex-normal teachers I think we shall have to depend on the expert. Just as in

some countries there are teachers who specialise in the teaching of group singing and in art work and who go from school to school at stated times teaching these subjects, so we shall have to choose and educate suitable teachers to enlighten our children on the subject of sex. It should be easy, once we have accepted the idea of systematic sex education, to work out a course of instruction on the subject. We already have our experts, our psychologists, biologists, child behaviourists, our pedagogues. Let them get together and compile a course in Sex Education for Children, and then let this course be given to a selected group of students in our teachers' training colleges.

Yes, we shall have to do something about the parents—something dramatic to some of them, but propaganda has been used with telling effect before to-day. Look how the campaign for better diet has caught on. People want to be healthy both mentally and physically. There is no subject on earth that interests the average person more than health. All right, give people sex instruction from a health standpoint. My guess is that they'll jump at it. Because, after all, we're all human, aren't we?

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