

"PEOPLE OF NO IMPORTANCE"

The Common Man Talks About The New Year

IT is customary for newspapers at the beginning of a year to ask religious, political, or intellectual leaders for New Year messages. Such people are asked, first because they have more information than average men and women, and in the second place because they speak as representatives of the State or of a group. For a change this year, we have turned to "people of no importance." In addition, we have not told any of those whose messages appear on this page that their remarks would be printed. We interviewed them all by stealth—in other words, talked to them without "interviewing" them—and in no case did we know any more about them than their occupations. They may or may not be the "voice of the people." They are certainly voices of people met at random and talked with in the course of their work. It must be unnecessary to add that we do not ourselves regard them as people of no importance.

BARBER

"WE'LL have to watch yet. There's some funny things going on. But I think we're round the corner. Don't you?"

MAN IN AN OFFICE

"NEXT year? Oh, I think that will be all right. We shall see the end of this show, I should think. I suppose we can think of a Happy New Year in that sense. It's the beginning of the next year after that that gets me. I'm blest if I can see a way through the peace."

REFUGEE

"IT depends on England. The English are soft. They do not know and they will not learn. The Russians know. The Americans—I think so. The Nazis fear the Russians, the Japanese fear the Americans. Both Nazis and Japanese hope to escape through England. Then we have it all over again."

DECK-HAND

"I DON'T trust the French. They still have ships in Alexandria which they won't hand over. What the hell is Darian doing? Not helping us, I know that. But the Americans are probably just giving him a run while it suits them. They are in a hurry, and they don't want any arguments while the Germans are in Africa."

BUTCHER

IT was clear that he was a butcher by his hands and his boots. But we met him in a bus. "Things are never as bad as they look," he said. "Look at the last war. When I went off, my people thought it was the end of me. But I came back all right. And then the depression. You remember what things were like then. I had a shop then, and I lost it. Well, I felt pretty sick about it. But I am making twelve quid to-day with my eyes shut, and I don't have to worry about a shop."

U.S. MARINE

"THE New Year? Sure I think this little show will be over this year and I'll be home with the folks at Christmas. I'm with the reserves, so there won't be any hanging about with an army of occupation either. Whoopee! But I'll be having a smack or two at them in the Solomons first, I guess."

HOUSEWIFE

"I HOPE the New Year won't bring so many awful shocks as this year brought. And I hope we won't have many more shortages. Not that it really matters at all, but it just complicates life—if that is possible. Perhaps it is a good thing. I haven't so much time to worry about my two boys. They are both overseas. I'd like to say I hope they will be home by Christmas, 1943, but I daren't."



WOMAN TRAM CONDUCTOR

"YES, I think we can look forward to peace and victory. And then what? Well, I'll be out of this job. No, I don't find it hard. You see, I have two kiddies and a mother to support, and I can manage fine now. After the war, I don't know. You see, my husband won't be coming back," she added, slowly, "and housework at 15/- or £1 a week will be a whole lot harder. I was on a tobacco farm last year before I came on to this, so I know a bit about hard work. Anyhow, the main thing is to get the war over. We get along somehow. We always do."

HOMEGUARDSMAN

"THE brightest spot in the New Year is that we get some time off to get our gardens into order. Mine is thoroughly out of hand. I must say I rather hope by the end of the year our particular picnic will be over. Between you and me, I'll be sorry to see the last of homeguarding. We have had some good days out on the hills, and it's surprising how sociable we have grown in our suburb."

SOLDIER

"THE New Year doesn't mean much to me. It's only an artificial fence people put up. Time just goes on and sometimes something good happens and sometimes something bad, and I reckon every year has its share of both. No, I'm not hoping and I'm not worrying, either."

WOMAN IN CAR

A WOMAN gave us a lift into town on one of those busy shopping mornings last week. She was in a rush—no hat, no gloves, and, please note, no wedding ring—and said she had to get back to her three children, a practically full-time job. We agreed, and eased her round to the New Year problems.

"Well, it looks more cheerful, I must say. But you don't like to say too much, you know. I mean, touch wood for fear it's too good to be true." She said she had great faith in New Zealanders—you could trust them to go through with anything they tackled. She also said she had great faith in the Russians: "They've got great powers of endurance, and they can safely be left to deal with the enemy so that he won't be a danger to anyone ever again. They won't make the mistake that was made after the last war."

BUS DRIVER

"I CAN tell you I see life on this run, and I know the way people are going, and that's downhill—fast. The outlook for the new year is a bad show if you're going on morals. I tell you, people have gone mad, and what's being done to stop them? They're all out for pleasure, and for that matter can you blame them? There's been a big change in the

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