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recent debates on coal their contributions have been of great service. And it's true of everything else.

Lakin: I can fully confirm that. And I should like to add this. Bartlett has put up a case for a few Independents; a few admittedly do good work. But there would be absolute chaos if you had a House full of Independents who would not, or could not, subordinate their differences in the interests of common action. But now to go back to Ensor for a moment. You don't think, do you, that our present system is perfect and needs no change?

Ensor: No, I wouldn't say that. Though the two parties are fundamentally not parties of opinion, they have to be the vehicles of opposing points of view. Only, it is risky for them to go far from the centre. When the Democratic Party in America took up Bimetallism in 1896, it forfeited office for 16 years. When the Liberals here took up Irish Home Rule in 1886, they forfeited office for most of 20 years. Similarly, when Joseph Chamberlain had identified the Conservatives with Tariff Reform, they lost three successive general elections.

Webb: I'm not sure that you are not over-stating the extent to which contempt for the Parliamentary system has grown up. I think Parliament's record in the War has reduced it far more than those of us who criticise Parliament are prepared to admit. But still, there is undoubtedly disquiet, and that's dangerous. What do you suggest should be done about it?

Bartlett: We should have scrapped party discipline as much as possible, even before the war, and in any case if parties may be a danger in peace time, they must be a danger in war time. Party politics are supposed to be in cold storage. But they aren't really. Or not entirely. An encouraging number of M.P.'s have spoken their minds frankly and honestly, irrespective of party. But if it comes to a vote the party whips are still apt to consider that critics are betraying their party or even the nation. That means that the delay is longer than it should be before currents of public opinion are reflected in government action.

I have one last, and very important, objection to party government. It is inevitable that the party bosses should want their parties to be financially strong. If you abolished parties and made it against the law to spend anything like so much money on elections as the party system make it possible to spend, I believe you would get a better type of candidate elected.

Webb: You said just now "If we abolish parties." But you can't abolish parties. Unless, of course, you take away one of the essential freedoms; the right of men to associate together for a common cause.

Bartlett: Which none of us wants to do.

Webb: Exactly. It's the Fascists who want to abolish parties. And even they cannot do it completely. So strong is this urge to combine that men go on doing it in secret and under threat of vicious penalties, even in the totalitarian countries.

Magic Has Charms

TIME was when it was the magician who was the big man.

The witch-doctor in his village could cast spells to make the fields fertile, to secure good hunting for the village braves, to heal the sick, to remove the evil eye. He had to guard his secrets closely to keep his prestige. He had always to keep a step or so ahead of his flock—and did, until science began to make better magic than the wildest dreams of old-time sorcerers.

All the same, the days of magic are not over. Theatres are still thronged when professional magicians come along. We scoff, but we go. And if we sit at home we listen.

Well, here is news. On Wednesday evenings at 8.45, 22B is putting on a programme called *This is Magic*, and it should work like magic among the younger portion of the community. *This is Magic* tells the story of some of the tricks by which conjurers, Indian magicians, gilly-gilly men, Yogis, Maske-lynes, or our own Uncle Jims have from time to time befuddled us. But this time we are not going to be left gaping. Major Cedric Talisman is taking listeners on an extended tour of all the well-known tricks, big and small, and he is also going to explain how they are done. In



each programme one big trick will be dramatised, as well as one smaller trick such as you, with the aid of a pack of cards, a toothpick, and an audience, can yourself perform.

Here are some of the big tricks that you may hear about—the mango tree (have you ever seen the Indian street conjuror make a mango tree grow under your eyes?); the Indian

rope trick, in which a rope is thrown into the air and a boy climbs it; the magic chest; the sword swallower, and we think also the fire-eater. There are also sketches on such old Egyptian money-makers as the Magic Hand of Tutankhamen.

Those are tricks we shall enjoy hearing about but which we can never hope to do ourselves. The "Home Tricks" are within everybody's reach, and each week, followers of this session will be told to bring along some stage props with them to assist their listening: a glass of water, a pack of cards, a watch-glass, or a penny, and the ever useful handkerchief.

If you want to know How to entertain the children, How to fill in that sticky moment at the party, How to pass a long night on the Main Trunk, or What to Do while you are waiting for a seat at your favourite lunchplace, this series should be valuable.

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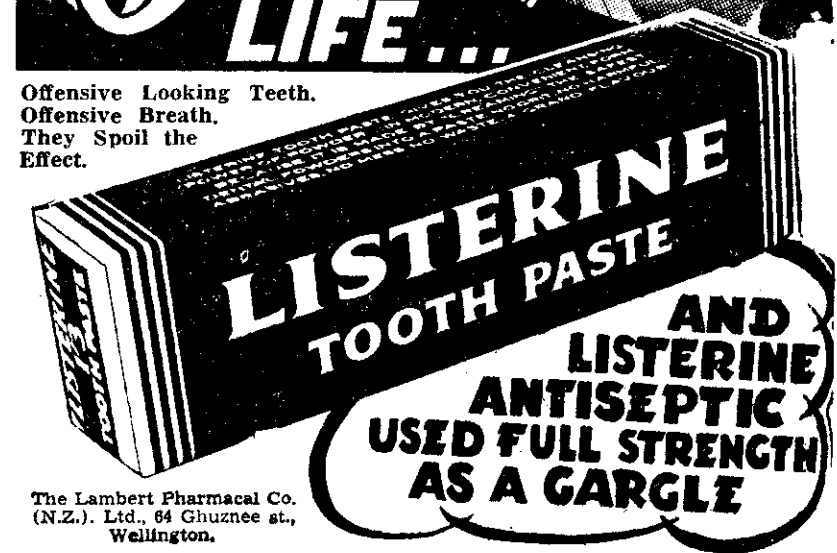
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