

The NBS And Army Education

(Continued from previous page)

The song might almost have been written expressly for Army Education use; but the last chorus had a touch of irony:

*Ho hum! dreaming in the sun
I'm a lucky one, it's true.
Ho hum! I'm not so very dumb
I bet you'd like to dream there, too.*

Wild applause, and then it was Wally's turn with songs of the "King's Highway" type, delivered in a lusty baritone voice, and this was followed by a song of the boredom of a soldier who found that army life, or life in any of the forces, and even his post-war job, was nothing but:

Bungin' em in, and blowin' 'em out.

Then, according to a custom established by the concert party, the compere demanded that a member of the audience should perform in some way.



The accordionist relied on candle-light

"Come on, who's it going to be?" he challenged them. There was a silence, then someone spoke up: "I saw Max and Harry doing a pretty good representation of the *Organ Grinder's Swing* with a handle of the duplicator this afternoon."

But Max and Harry (we deliberately forget their real names), were suddenly coy, perhaps because of the Colonel, who was in the front row with his cigar, and the men had to be told that theirs was the first unit visited that had failed to entertain the entertainers. So there was a return to general singing, led by the accordion, with the soldiers naming their own requests.

Wherever this concert party goes, enthusiasm is unbounded, and no invitation could be more earnestly extended than the "Come again soon!" of every unit we visited.

THE LIGHT TENOR AND THE THICK BASS CAME OFF WORST

SOME of the lessons the BBC learned from its "Lend Us Your Ears" Programmes are summarised in this article from "London Calling."

THE *Lend Us Your Ears* experimental programmes were conducted in this way. Six programmes were broadcast to audiences of our Shortwave Services, offering various sounds, voices and instruments for identification and comment in all of them. Listeners were asked to send in postcards to the BBC reporting on how these sounds sounded to them. The BBC has, of course, its technical experts who report regularly on reception in all areas. But the listening audience is not composed of wireless experts listening in ideal conditions. The BBC wants to know how its programmes reach the ordinary man and woman at home, whose radio set may be far from perfect. Such direct information is of immense value in planning future programmes, and the BBC is extremely grateful to any listener in any part of the world who will take the trouble to provide it.

Nine Thousand Replies

The response to the appeal for co-operation in *Lend Us Your Ears* has been most encouraging. Some 9,000 replies have come in from all parts of the world, and the results, now carefully tabulated, have taught us some remarkable and instructive facts.

The U.S.A. sent in most replies, closely followed by the Union of South Africa. East Africa also sent in a high total, and several hundreds came from Central and South America. New Zealand sent in six times as many as Australia. Cards came from all parts of the world: from sailors on the high seas, from Arabia, Sweden, Iceland, Gibraltar, Iran, Switzerland, St. Helena, the Seychelles, Turkey and many other far-away places—so many that we could handsomely stock a stamp album.

The detailed tabulation of these replies took many weeks. Here, without

going into figures, is a rough synopsis of the results of each experiment.

(1) Sound Effects:

It was interesting that the most easily identifiable effects were those which are stable all over the world; a baby crying, a train starting, water running. Least easily identifiable was the rattle of machine-gun bullets; bombs fared only a little better. Let us hope they remain unfamiliar to our audiences.

(2) Sounds "with a story."

A story was told with sound effects introduced as illustrations or as a background to the voice. The noises of a canteen proved confusing, but the voice was heard easily through the sound of running water, and only a little less easily through music.

(3) Speaking Voices.

A story was broadcast in which each section was read by a different type of male or female voice. These included a "straight" man's voice, an "incisive" woman's, a light tenor, a thick bass, a

high soprano, a contralto, and a "harsh" male voice. The straight male topped the list for easy listening, followed by the contralto. The harsh male and the incisive female tied rather surprisingly for third place, and the light tenor and the thick bass easily came off worst. America particularly disliked the tenor, and the Pacific was quite original in preferring the incisive female voice to the rich contralto.

The Tenor Was Distorted

(4) Singers.

Once again the tenor came off badly, and suffered more distortion than the others. The soprano voice, low on the list for speaking, came out top for clarity in singing. The contralto was just the opposite; second in popularity for speaking, it was bottom of the list in this experiment. Baritone closely followed soprano for good reception, especially in the U.S.A., though Rhodesia preferred the bass.

(5) Musical Instruments.

There were plenty of surprises in these reports, which gave first place to the bassoon and the clarinet. Other wind instruments, the flute and the oboe, did not fare so well. In the strings, the viola was most distorted in reception; violin fairly good, and cello easily the best. The piano registered quite well, the church organ very poorly. We were interested to note that when listeners were asked which they thought was the "live" instrument (records were broadcast except in the case of the piano), only a third gave the right answer. On results of this particular test, instruments in general travelled better than the human singing voice.

(6) Orchestras.

The military band and the small dance band shared the honours for "natural reception"—the small dance band being noticeably more successful in transmission than the large one. Also the small light orchestra travelled better than the full-sized symphony orchestra. Neither brass band nor cinema organ registered very satisfactorily. Unsatisfactory, too, was the reception of the human voice reading long passages against a musical background, though in this a male voice proved more audible than a female.



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