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RADIO IN THE FACTORY

SOME LIKE IT, AND SOME DON'T

"THE Listener" recently printed "certain basic conclusions" from a research conducted into the use of music in industry in England. Since that article appeared, we have sought the comments of employers and employees at several New Zealand factories

Tobacco Factory

FIRST we chose a tobacco factory where, someone had told us, the workers had music to lighten their labour. Half-way down a passage a window slid back and a man looked out from over a sign marked "Timekeeper."

"I'm from *The Listener*. I want to ask about the music they have in the factory."

"Want to sell him some records?"

"No, no; I've got nothing to sell."

So we were permitted an audience. At a point of vantage from which four fairly big work rooms could be seen (one of them through a well in the floor), we found a sort of glass cockpit-office with the overseer's desk as its main piece of furniture, and an amplifier and a pile of records taking up most of the rest of the space.

From this point, wiring led to three loudspeakers with baffle boards to carry the music to women who were stripping tobacco, feeding it into processing machines, tending conveyor belts or cigarette-making machines, or packing roll-your-own tobacco into cartons.

"How do you operate this music," we asked the forewoman. "Do you limit the use of the machine to any particular times? Do you make up any special sort of programmes? Who paid for all these records? What's the most popular record at the moment?"

The machine was installed by the firm, and the girls brought their own records. Collections had been taken up at times but generally a girl brought in a new record, it was played to death by a procedure of request performing, and then perhaps taken home again.

"Then there's no limit to the use of the amplifier, and they have it on just when they want to?"

"Yes. The girls can ask for any one of the records to be put on, and one of



... Saw rows of girls at tables with high piles of hats.

a certain number of the senior women can come in and fix it up. Swing's the most popular, of course, and they've no time for this classical music, you know. What they want is crooning and all that; Jazz and waltzes, a bit of everything really."

And we left the tobacco factory with a new recording of the *Blue Danube* over-riding the noise of light machinery and 250 busy pairs of hands.

Music for Milliners

CALLING at a hat factory, we asked for the proprietor, and as he opened the door we saw rows of girls at tables with high piles of hats, blue, brown, red, each one performing a single operation to hat after hat of the same pattern.

"From *The Listener* . . . understand you have a radio . . . what they like best . . . does it help things? . . ."

He spluttered for a moment, waved his hands in front of his face. Then:

"You can take the dumb thing away and smash it. That's what I think."

"Don't you like it? What's the matter? Programmes?"

"Dumb rotten."

"What do you have it for, then?"

"If you don't have the radio on the girls want to talk, and if they want to talk they have to shout to be heard over the noise. Put the radio on and they shut their traps."

So we left the hat factory.

"The Same as at Home"

A SOFT-GOODS factory where we knew they had a radio was a little too far out of town, so we rang them up. One of the girls in the workroom told us about it:

"Yes, we just turn it on all day. We put it on 2YA when Aunt Daisy's on and back to 2ZB when the classical hour comes; you know, just the same as you do at home."

Definite Ideas

SO far we hadn't spoken to anyone who was likely to have very definite ideas on the aspects of the subject which

the BBC had investigated. We had seen people working at dull, monotonous tasks, some of them on piece-work, to judge by the rate at which their hands were moving, and where the noise of machinery was not too great, music was plainly a diversion and a relaxation, something to make the job pleasanter.

But the manager of a radio manufacturing concern, where half the workers are now on direct munitions work, had read the subject up, and had seen *The Listener's* article and editorial.

"There's a lot of hooley been talked about it. Some people, perhaps with business experience, but not much of that, have been put in charge of installing radios or amplifiers in factories and have been full of enthusiasm when reporting on their results, but not so full of real understanding. The point is that music in a factory is only one of dozens of different factors which can affect production by way of the general attitude of the workers, and it just isn't possible to single

(Continued on next page)

The Old Men Speak

Oh, we are old and we are tired—
We are not radiant and inspired

As those young men who go to war
And know what they are fighting for;
And when this bloody war shall cease
We know we shall not win the peace.

WE shuffle cards. We count our coins
What time the children of our loins,
Lie rotting in some foreign field.
To multiply the harvest yield,
We hold our lives upon a lease,
We know we shall not win the peace.

WE set great store on membership
Of some old club, maybe. We dip
Our hands in Maundy dish and cry
In silence: "Master, is it I?"
We spare our coats from spot or crease,
We know we shall not win the peace.

AND yet within our bleak old hearts
Is some strange bird that sings
and starts
When bugles call and music plays,
For we were young in former days,
And though we perish in our grease,
Those lovely boys shall win the peace.

—C. R. Allen

the first of



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