



# LISTENING WITH THE CHILDREN

*Is Our Radio Doing Its Job?—*

*Asks "Materfamilias" in this article for "The Listener"*

"THE children are the BBC's chosen people," according to Tom Harrison's radio column in the English *Observer*. "The educational and children's hour programmes have maintained a steady, sensible standard without providing anything remarkable or sensational. . . . Some of the best broadcasters speak in the juvenile periods. In several respects—especially serious and topical talks—grown-ups are comparatively ill served."

Can we say the same about New Zealand children? Have we anything to compare with the excellent history talks

*The active use of radio: Primer children take part in a broadcast game*

of Rhoda Power? Or the Parliamentary series of Megan Lloyd George, who not only introduces children to Parliament in a friendly and amusing way, but also relates her talks to the future responsibilities of her young listeners?

Or take it from this angle. The BBC provides Nature talks and five-minute chats which go by the name of "Field Fare." The speakers who give talks in the Senior English programme include well-known writers like L. A. G. Strong. Do we approach this, or seriously aim at it?

Our country is smaller. We have fewer illustrious names and able heads to draw upon for any sessions, let alone sessions for children. But are we giving the best that can be got here?

\* \* \*

YOU may argue that a great part of the daily programmes are suitable for children of one age or another. Children listen to popular numbers, to crooning, to serials, to the news, to gardening talks. In fact they soon develop the habit, still common to many households, of having the radio on all the time and pricking up ears only when something happens to tickle the ear-drum. Is this so? Is it all right that

it should be so? Or should children be encouraged to listen only when there is something that they ought to hear? And if we believe that children should use their radio with discrimination, as they should learn to read with discrimination, how is this to be achieved?

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I HAVE spent a good deal of time lately listening to all the things that come over the air for children, and I am seriously worried. The programmes which are most obviously directed to children are the educational sessions from all National stations on Mondays,

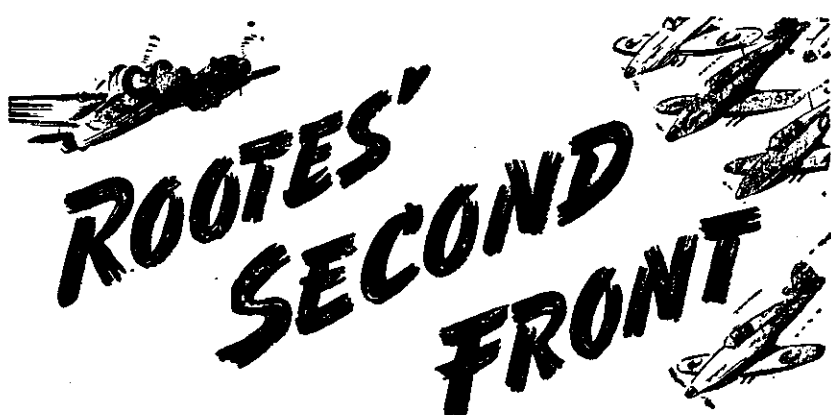
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