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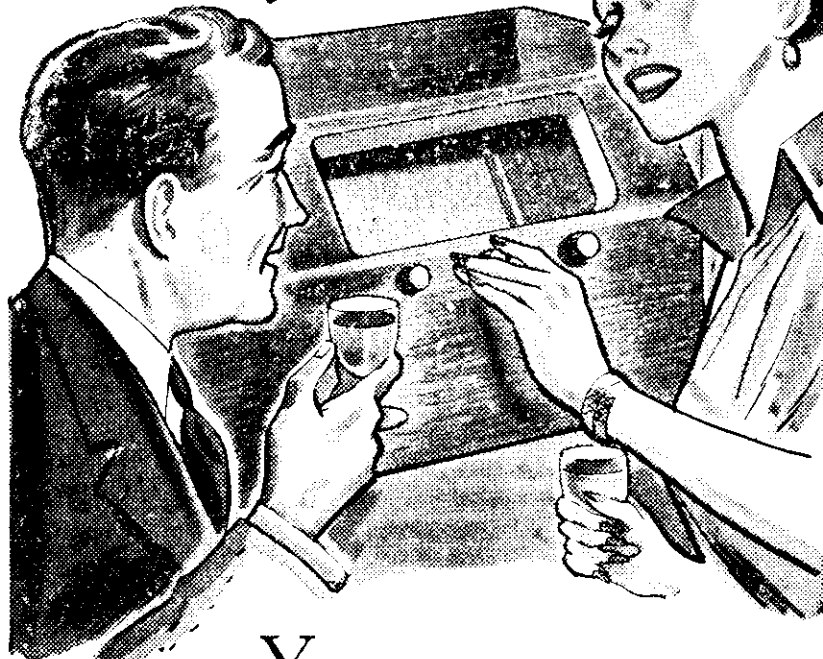
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The Outlook for Freedom

THEN BBC talks with a not very appropriate title, *What Price Freedom?* (see page 26), will shortly be heard from YC stations. The speakers are leaders in their fields; and the subject will confront listeners, not with academic definitions, but with central problems of the age. For freedom, as we are now learning almost every day, is affected by trade and politics, and increasingly by machines. It is not a state of mind which can be expressed permanently in laws. Nor is it an achievement of one civilisation which can be made more generally available as the power and influence of the West are felt throughout the world. We cannot think of it exclusively in terms of Anglo-Saxon experience. What happens in England or America is inseparable from events in other countries. The world is in a fluid condition as the nations move slowly and not very willingly towards a universal society. We have yet to see if the ideas left to us by the Greeks, and the systems of government built upon them, have a power of indefinite survival.

They are old in history, but not nearly as old as some eastern civilisations which are now sharing the general advance into a scientific age. Who can say what the pattern will be when the contributions of East and West have done their work for the future? If Western influence remained unchallenged, it would still be necessary to remember that freedom has always been precarious where it has been most valued. Britain can justly claim to have led the world in the evolution of political democracy; but repeatedly the struggle for liberty has had to be renewed, or its scope extended; and today, when so much has been gained, the rights of individuals seem sometimes to be forgotten in the plans for a welfare

state. It would have seemed impossible a few years ago for land-owners to be dispossessed because, in the opinion of various officials and committees, the standard of farming was inadequate. Economic needs can become tyrannical in a country organised for the common good. In some ways freedom appears to be strongest today in countries, including New Zealand, which are so productive that exportable surpluses maintain a high standard of living. But freedom shrinks when the money dwindles.

We cannot be sure that Western ideas will peacefully become universal. Technological development is certain to bring about a blending of cultures. It is hard for some people to accept the fact that white supremacy belongs to a relatively short chapter in world history, and that it is unlikely to last indefinitely. "The coloured races," Lord Boyd Orr has written, "have shown no difficulty in acquiring and applying the technology of the West, and those who have enjoyed the physical and educational advantages of the Europeans are not inferior, either physically or mentally, to the white man whether in war or in peaceful pursuits." This may not mean, as some have feared, that white domination will give way to coloured. The needs of the human race are now being shared increasingly in common. There is no place in the world for isolated societies; and although nationalism seems stronger than ever, it is strongest in newly-liberated countries which presently will feel their dependence on peoples beyond their frontiers. In this movement and mingling of cultures the idea of freedom, which rests finally on the concept of human dignity, and on the religious beliefs and legal systems which support it, will serve the future only if it is guarded and strengthened where its roots are already deep.

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