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RADIO REVIEW

Worth the Whole Candelabra



THERE are some people who resent the time allotted on the radio to racing, and perhaps also to football, at the expense of other sports. I am one of them. But he would be a sourpuss, indeed, who could find fault with the radio coverage of the Empire Games. This was, I should say, the most exacting piece of radio journalism ever undertaken by the NZBS—a major test of its resources and efficiency—and I, for one, believe that it was not found wanting. Clearly the Empire Games merited thorough, intelligent and human treatment, to bring the events alive to the hundreds of thousands who could not attend; and they received just that. This successful effort of the NZBS to fulfil its function as an instrument of public service must have compensated many listeners for the odd grudges they nourish against the Service. All concerned deserve a large bouquet without a brickbat anywhere concealed.

From the impressive opening ceremony to the final presentation of the flags, the radio was on the job, with running commentaries, interviews, summaries and results. Through it we shared the heat of the day, we fancied ourselves jammed in the crowd, shouting at the finals, roaring when New Zealand got a place, cheering such a popular win as that of the Fijians, and even enjoying the downpour of the last two days. The whole series of broadcasts was a remarkable piece of team-work. Behind the voices of the commentators, one was aware of a huge network of organisation, of the careful harmony of technicians and officials which brought the Games to us hot on the plate. It was striking with what ease, too, the announcers gave their impromptu impressions. Even when there was nothing in particular brewing, their descriptions of settings and people helped the listener to get the authentic Games atmosphere. Although I was particularly impressed by the swimming commentators, it is really impossible to single out individual speakers for praise; all seemed to be giving of their best during the hectic week, conscious of the importance of the occasion, and keyed to a pitch of enthusiasm which was infectious. Even a well-known sports announcer whom I normally find unintelligible in moments of excitement became understandable and fitted in neatly with his calmer associate at the athletics.

A pleasant postscript was A. R. D. Fairburn's Sunday morning "layman's review" of the week, which recaptured much of its spirit and which ended appropriately with an unsolicited tribute to the broadcasting authorities. Our radio will seem quieter for a week or two (unless we inadvertently tune in to a Stan Kenton recording), but something vital will have gone from it. The Games were a grand occasion, and, so far as I am concerned, radio grasped its opportunity firmly with both hands.

Before and After

ANYONE who had read Christopher Sykes's *Answer to Question 33* or his *Character and Situation* would have

expected his radio script for *Return Journey to Berlin* to be full of the sense of place, intelligent and shrewdly perceptive. The programme was all these things, and the BBC's documentary method of selecting appropriate noises and dimly-heard conversations as a background, as well as Sebastian Shaw's incisive voice, helped to make the feature extremely telling. The same economy of style and gift for dialogue which mark Mr. Sykes's short stories came out clearly here, especially in the convincing scene which re-created a pre-war conversation he had with a German family about the respective merits of James Joyce and Bernard Shaw, with the Germans stubbornly insisting that the English didn't really like Shaw, because he was an Irishman! This, and later conversations, quite free from burlesque, concerning the British "regard for tradition" and the German "regard for the future" bore out his suggestion that Germans rarely discuss but "talk for victory." References to present-day Berlin, touching and ironical, blended with his recollections of the past to show us, in a mature and thought-provoking programme, the differences between then and now—and the significant similarities.

—J.C.R.

One Orchid

IT is not often that we listeners are given the opportunity of hearing the front-room boys with their back hair down asking each other questions about their place in the radio scheme of things, and I felt very grateful for the privilege of hearing an Auckland panel of rare talent discussing in all humility the topic "Are Radio Discussions Worthwhile?" A. R. D. Fairburn has thought so, thinks so, and will think so. John Gundry (included in the discussion on account of his termitic activities as radio critic) had obviously come along prepared to say they weren't, but was reduced to urbanity by Mr. Fairburn's unflagging conversational virtuosity. M. K. Joseph, apparently repudiating the suggestion that Brains Trusts sprang fully-armed from the head of Joad, traced their honourable descent from Socrates via Johnson, and remained calm and judicial throughout. Hesitating to say that here was a discussion to end all discussions I shall confine myself to remarking that it was the best I have yet heard—and all occasioned by the apathy of 1YA's listeners, from whom this talented trio has not yet drawn the meed of one euphonious fan-letter.

Harping Party

THE topic for 2ZB's first Citizens' Forum discussion for 1950 was a lush one, "Do Modern Songs and Modern Vaudeville Suggest a Moral Decay?" Round their home radios upbeaters and downbeaters gathered thick as jitterbugs on a rug; in the studio Chairman Macaskill brooded over a talented team consisting of 2YA's official accompanist Frank Crowther, L. D. Austin, well-known as music teacher and columnist, and Ray Harris, exponent of the musical new look. But they had left their