

## The Duller the Game, the Harder He Works

EVERY New Zealander who has turned the knob of a radio set has at some time heard what some commentator thinks about some cricket match. But what does the commentator think about commenting? *The Listener* asked Ernest Eytle this when it saw him in Wellington a few hours before he left on his way back to London. Mr. Eytle had been with the West Indian cricket team on its Australian and New Zealand tours, and listeners will have heard him from cricket grounds and radio studios. He also recorded a talk on the New Zealand tour in retrospect (including comments on the state of cricket in this country) which some listeners will have heard by the time this appears in print, and a second talk on cricket in the West Indies which will be heard from various stations soon.

Mr. Eytle finds the job of a commentator an interesting one. "You've got to be pretty well oblivious of everything around you except the game and the scene as you see it," he said. "It's a job that keeps you awake even when the game is dull, though it's then that a commentator really does earn his living. However the play is going, he mustn't bore his audience, and if he can't main-

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tain some interest in proceedings himself he's bound to bore other people.

"I like to give a comprehensive picture not only of the ball travelling from the bowler to the batsman or from the batsman to the boundary, but of the entire scene as I see it. If a dog should cross the ground, for instance, it will arrest the attention of the crowd and become as much a part of the scene as the travelling ball, and you should be able to convey that to listeners. For that reason I think the weather and the crowd and many other details have their own importance. If you only describe the travelling ball it's going to be a bit monotonous. Of course, even two commentators having the same approach probably wouldn't describe the match in the same way."

Mr. Eytle, however, wouldn't discuss the work of other commentators, saying it was for commentators to pass opinions on cricket, and for the public to pass opinions on commentators. But one did learn a lot from other commentators, he said.

A lawyer in London, Mr. Eytle went to England in the first place to com-

plete his legal training. He started broadcasting early in the war, when he was asked to compile a newsletter for the West Indies. From that, as he put it, he "drifted inevitably" into other sorts of broadcasting, most of it for West Indies listeners—interviewing, for instance, and taking part in features and radio plays. "And reading short stories," he added. "That's the most difficult of the lot. You've got to be a one man cast, and that takes a lot of doing."

Before long there were cricket broadcasts, too—summaries at first, then commentaries. On the recent visit to Australia with the West Indies team he was doing comments rather than commentaries for the ABC, sending back cabled reports to the BBC, and covering the tour for some West Indies papers, to which he has contributed for some time. In New Zealand he shared commentaries with the NZBS team.

Mr. Eytle likes broadcasting and finds it fits in well with his legal practice—so much can be recorded at convenient times. His interest in cricket is longstanding, and not merely that of a spectator. During the war he played regu-



ERNEST EYBLE

larly in the British Empire in England, where he met a good many New Zealand players—C. S. Dempster, F. O. Rabone, R. W. G. Emery, Martin Donnelly, F. T. Badcock and Ken James among them.

"But you don't play cricket any longer?"

"Oh, yes," he said quickly. "I still play club cricket—weekend cricket, you know—in London. And it's very pleasant, too."

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