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The Adolescent's World

PROGRAMMES from 4YA announced on page 6 are experimental in that they are intended mainly for older children. In practice, of course, their audience will cover several age groups: some boys and girls under 14 will listen, and so will adults—many of whom take pleasure from sessions planned for the young. The discussions should be especially interesting. Most parents have discovered that children have opportunities for self-expression at school which were quite unknown in their own time. Talks and debates are often used to promote confidence and clear speaking. Moreover, children have grown up under the influence of broadcasting. Although most of them may be more interested in serials and light music than in the better programmes, they are unlucky if they do not sometimes hear a good voice, a clear thinker and a fluent speaker. And whatever their private listening may be, they must owe a great deal to Broadcasts to Schools.

Some people may wonder if youthful discussions can have much value. The opinions, they may think, will be mainly echoes, for children between 14 and 18 have had little time to gain the experience on which judgment finally rests. But the value is not so much in what is said as in the opportunity to say it, and in the training it supplies for later years. Nevertheless, the quality of the discussions may sometimes be surprising. In adolescence the mind is open and adventurous. Something has been learned from teachers and books; but equally important is the new sharpness of vision, the awakened feeling, and the multiplying interests. Not all adolescents go out easily to meet responsibility: some draw back, and are reluctant to leave childhood. These are the difficult ones, known to every post-primary teacher; but they may also be full of promise if their diffidence rests on sensitive

feeling rather than on weakness of nerve or mind. Children growing up are impressionable, and inclined to be idealistic. Young people who take part in the broadcasts will not, of course, be expected to instruct us on the ills of our times—or indeed to instruct us at all, apart from what we may learn indirectly of their attitudes. They will speak to other children of their immediate concerns: hobbies, sports, and life at school. Older people will take part in the sessions, but it is the children's own world that will be presented to listeners. Admittedly, one world opens into another; there will be information about careers and etiquette as well as photography and motor bikes.

The young have new opportunities nowadays, but their needs are great. Growing up has never been easy; there can be few of us who have no hot-faced memories of rejected love, social mistakes which would have made earthquakes seem welcome interruptions, and painful discoveries of human frailty. We often hear it said that adolescents have more confidence than their fathers had: they seem to be assured in personal relations, to be familiar with machines, and to be untroubled by the faster pace of living. It would be strange indeed if they were uneasy in the only environment they have known. And there would be reason for dismay if freer treatment in the schools were not reflected in easier behaviour, even if ease and manners are not always found together. Yet it would be foolish to see too much in that deceptive confidence. Every generation has its own difficulties, its own strains and fears. The one constant factor is the vulnerability of the young. Adolescence is a time of rapid physical change and growth. While boys continue to grow into men, and girls into women, they will need all the help that can be given them as they turn to face the world.

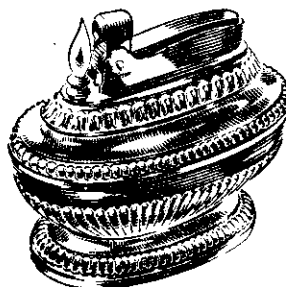
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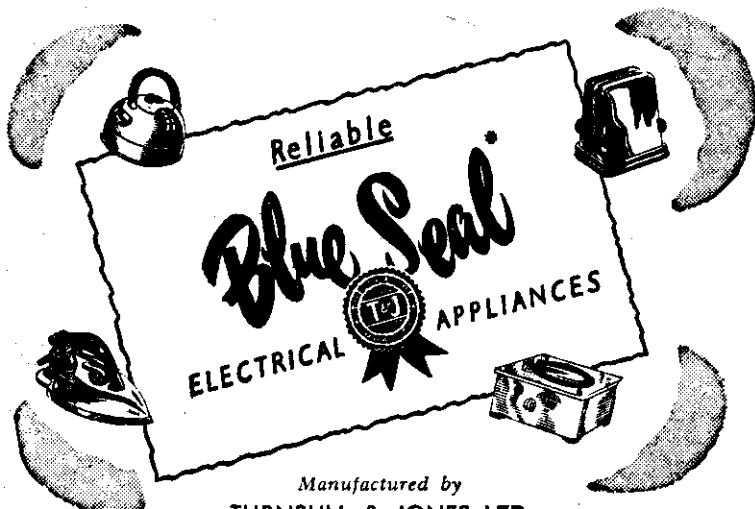
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