



WHAT is the meaning of Sound? The technician might answer that question in terms of frequencies and decibels, but it would make most people think about a vast field of personal experiences—the sort of experiences often not fully valued until they are curtailed, or cease altogether. And some people, born into perpetual silence, could not answer it at all. Listeners to *Prisoners of Silence*, an NZBS documentary soon to be heard from main National stations, will learn

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terminated, I strode to the counter with a bunch of irises for the storekeeper's wife.

"Here, Max," I mumbled, "your wife might like these." There—it was out at last. As shy and as nervous as a courting couple, we looked at each other and smiled. The way ahead seemed to be clear.

But the following day found us back on the old prim footing of "Good day Mr. Graham and good day Mr. Riley." I had fully decided to consolidate the gains of the day before and to bring intimacy closer. It was not to be. I had myself risen late and reluctantly and my temper was none too sweet. And the day for Mr. Riley had begun as badly, for the paper boy had missed him altogether. In this chilly atmosphere, no further gains were possible.

The end of the second six months found us standing awkwardly on the edge of Christian-name friendship. It was thrust and parry all the time, with "Mr. Riley" giving way to "Max" one day and "Max" being rejected for "Mr. Riley" the next. Try as we might, we could not achieve the easy, unembarrassed relationship we desired. Relapses into the old distant courteousness came all too frequently.

Had it not been for the bananas, we might have gone on like that for years. But when Mr. Riley disappeared mysteriously out the back and returned with a bag full of beautifully ripe bananas, all restraint was suddenly gone. It was so long since we had seen bananas, so long since we had had so many at once, that I became Mr. Riley's friend for life.

"Thank you, Max," I said. "I'm very very grateful."

"It's a pleasure, Bob," he replied. "A real pleasure."

PRISONERS OF SILENCE

something about the problems and achievements of those working for the welfare of the deaf or hard of hearing, and they should also gain a very vivid impression of what it means to lose all, or even part, of one's ability to hear.

In making this documentary the NZBS had the benefit of advice from a firm specialising in the manufacture of hearing aids, as well as from C. L. Allen, Headmaster of the School for the Deaf, Titirangi, and several of his teaching staff, and from Mrs. B. M. Wells, Principal of the N.Z. League for the Hard of Hearing. Technicians were able to record both speech and music as picked up by a hearing aid, and to reproduce the effects of varying types and degrees of defective hearing. A doctor talked about the mechanism of the human ear and some of the things that impair its efficiency.

At the Titirangi School the NZBS team recorded the voices of the children at play and in the classroom, while several groups of children and some of the staff took part in demonstrating the effects of varying degrees of deafness on the children's ability to speak.

"It is important to realise that every deaf child has a voice," Mr. Allen explained, "and one of our first tasks is to teach him how to use it, even though he may have no conception of sound, not even of the sounds he is producing himself. Not very long ago a child born deaf was automatically regarded as dumb also, and sometimes treated as mentally defective. Our experiences prove that the deaf child is by no means dumb, in any sense of the word. He is as mentally alert as any child of his age. Some of our brightest pupils are among those with the most severe hearing losses.

"Fortunately there are comparatively few children whose deafness is absolute. Some of our pupils can hear ordinary speech when close to the speaker, but miss the quieter sounds to such an extent that they could not learn freely at ordinary schools. Others must supplement their hearing with lip-reading, and others again can hear some sounds but cannot interpret speech sounds. Some benefit from the use of hearing aids—we have group aids at the school—but others do

not. Those with residual hearing get a great deal of enjoyment from using this faculty and we try to see that they make the most of it.

"Deaf children have a handicap, more severe in some cases than in others, and they need the patience, friendship and help of those with whom they come into contact. Given this they should have excellent prospects for a useful and happy future."

"Is there any special provision for these children in the immediate future, when they leave school?" *The Listener* asked.

"Within the last few months the Friends of the Deaf have become an established organisation. They aim to provide for the spiritual, mental and physical needs of the adult deaf, and to complete their education. Previously the children were very well provided for until they left school, but after that there was nothing, though for some time now the League for the Hard of Hearing has been doing splendid work for the more elderly people."

Prisoners of Silence will give an account of the work of the League, and tell listeners about some of the problems to be faced by people learning to lip-read, and by their teachers. The microphone was taken to a class in lip-reading, and in addition some of the League's pupils were interviewed by the Principal, Mrs. Wells. The head office of the League is in Auckland, but it plans and works on a national basis. There are at present eighteen branches, but it is hoped, in time, to expand to between seventy and eighty to help the adult deaf wherever they may live in New Zealand.

Prisoners of Silence was written and produced by Arthur E. Jones in the Auckland Studios of the NZBS. The narrators are Christopher Venning, now an announcer at 1XN, and Peter Carswell, a teacher at the School for the Deaf, Titirangi. It will be heard first from 1YA at 8.0 p.m. on June 24.

At top of page: Children at the School for the Deaf, Titirangi, using a group hearing aid

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