

Let's Whoop 'Em Up!

A Lowbrow Looks Over Our Radio Programmes

THESE New Zealand radio programmes of ours—let's whoop 'em up!

Yes, I mean that. When I sit shivering in my little attic on these chill winter nights, there's nothing very warming about a Violin Sonata, No. 42, in A Major—but I could get quite a kick out of a broadcast of a scene from a new musical talkie or two or three numbers by a good dance band. (Now, don't say we haven't got one—we have.)

I'm so lowbrow, you say, that my forelock's hanging on the ground? I know I'm lowbrow—but so are about a million other people who help to pay for the National Broadcasting Service. For a start, let's look into this business of "good" music. Most of the great symphonies are fundamentally inartistic. Leo Reisman, the well-known American conductor, says their composers were mechanical tailors who had no idea of the entertainment value of music.

If they had, he contends, they'd never have written their symphonies so long. No one keeps his eyes glued solidly to the book he's reading for two hours. Well, it's the same with symphonies. You can't listen intelligently to them for that length of time.

I'll tell you an idea I've had at the back of my mind for a long time. What about an "In Town To-night" programme, like the B.B.C. puts over from London? Take Auckland for a start. The broadcast starts at—say—St. James Theatre, where the orchestra plays a number or two. You hear the audience applauding and you get the right atmosphere. Then over to the Civic Wintergarden, where the band's playing and the crowd's dancing. At the next port of call, the Peter Pan Cabaret, there's a floor turn on—a girl's singing a new song—and it sounds pretty good to us. We feel like applauding along with the folk who are there. And so it goes on—to a night club,



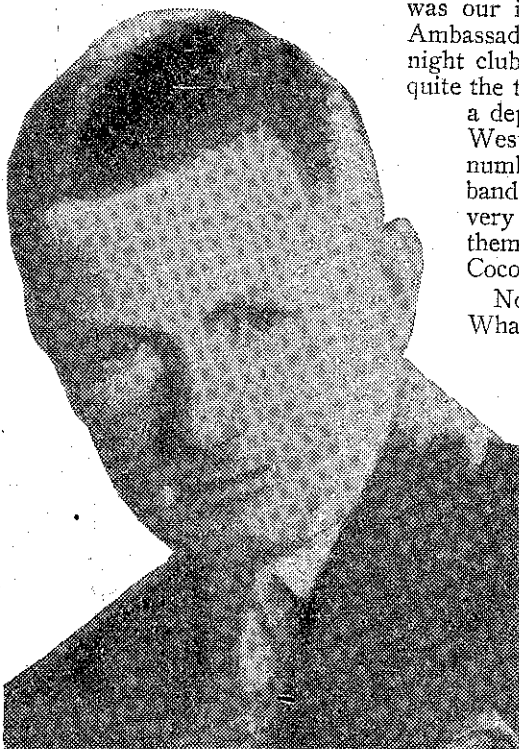
perhaps, to a new musical talkie—just a peep in while the "hit" number of the show's being played. And with it all an announcer with a bright and breezy manner. After a week or two it should be possible to have a programme of that

kind working like clockwork.

And now for some of these American recordings. Without much trouble you'd get enough wreath donations from New Zealand listeners to build a handsome mausoleum entirely of flowers for the Honourable Archie and his Japanese houseboy. Even worse, in my mind, are Eb and Zeb, a couple of American yokels whose humour might pass for such among a pack of cowboys in Texas—their efforts at being funny are merely pathetic.

There are the Cocoanut Grove Ambassadors, too. In the dear dead days when Mary Miles Minter was a dashing young thing and Clara Bow, quaintly enough, was our idea of it, the Cocoanut Grove Ambassadors, musicians of the most famous night club in Los Angeles, were considered quite the thing. But since then there's been a depression, talking pictures and Mae West—in other words, they're back numbers. America's full of first-rate bands, making good recordings of the very latest tunes. Let's have some of them and forget the lads from the Cocoanut Grove.

Now I'm willing to be more serious. What about "amateur nights" on the air? People who think they can keep a Great Bored Public amused send in their names and say what they can do—play a mouth-organ, tap dance, sing "Annie Laurie" while standing on their heads, walk a tight rope—and they are sorted out and a programme arranged. Sometimes the microphone finds a winner—and a new star is born. More often than not the programme is just a darned good laugh for the listener. A great deal of excellent talent has been unearthed in America in the past 12 months by these "amateur nights." American youth, too, has been given a chance to speak its mind, a high school boy and girl holding the floor.



REGINALD SHARLAND—here in New Zealand a few years ago as male lead in "The Girl Friend"—is to-day the Honourable Archie of radio fame. Lots of listeners would be willing to subscribe to a wreath for this particular radio character.