

This Week's Special Article

What Does the Great Dumb Public Think?

IF one is to judge by newspaper correspondence, listeners in New Zealand are divided into two classes—two classes between which there can be no merging. The class which laps up the "commercial method." And the class to which it is a violent emetic.

But newspaper correspondence is about the most unreliable of all bases to make any judgment on—for the reason that 99.9 per cent. of the public is constitutionally mute.

It would probably be far more accurate to say that an overwhelming proportion of listeners neither lap nor retch. They merely do a little dial twisting until something catches their ear and leave the set tuned in until something comes along to irritate or bore them.

To a large extent the claims of partisans for "blocks" of listeners can be discounted. John Citizen, as I know him, markets very freely and fairly for his entertainment and changes from feature to feature, day to day, or week to week.

A dispassionate indifference to the battle thundering so loudly upon the ears of Dominion radio folk to-day, does not, however, alter the fact that a tremendous gulf exists between the psychology of the two services.

IF the introduction of commercial broadcasting into New Zealand has done nothing else, it has stimulated public interest in the technique of radio presentation. The controversy, political and otherwise, that has raged about the persons of radio executives during the last year or so has made the public almost painfully radio minded.

Here is an article by "Sari" in which he discusses the psychology of the two services frankly—and comes to a reasonable conclusion.

In this New Zealand is not alone. The same gulf exists between nationally subsidised and commercially supported services the world over. The nationally subsidised service, following largely a tradition established by the conservative British Broadcasting Corporation, regards itself chiefly as a medium for the transmission of information and entertainment—an organisation for the reception and co-ordination of news, comment, musical and dramatic talent; and an organisation for the efficient dissemination of these things.

An approach to radio of this nature means that the personality of the medium is, as far as possible, eliminated. Emphasis is laid solely on the intrinsic nature of the programme—whether news, a play, a concert, a talk, or a time-signal.

The announcer is regarded (in the words of one NBS official) as "a necessary evil." The service stands or falls by the nature of the goods it slips unobtrusively but efficiently on to the ether.

This is why the public never hears about the doughty past of an NBS announcer, why his utterances are never chatty, why he never claims a "record" in this or that, why his picture is seldom in the radio magazines, why he never wisecracks lightheartedly on the title of a gramophone recording, why no national feature is ever brought to you at "tremendous expense or by medium of amazing technical ingenuity." The tremendous expense and the amazing technical ingenuity may be there, but it is foreign to the tradition of a nationally subsidised (Continued on page 39.)

In the Wake of the Week's Broadcasts

When the historical play series, "Coronets of England" was first heard in New Zealand over the air from 2ZB we voted it the most consistently excellent feature of its type yet heard. That

WE VOTED IT THE BEST

appreciation still stands. Through some forty episodes "Coronets" have run their course, and there has hardly been a night which has failed to give its meed either of provocative interpretation, brilliant characterisation or exciting event. Now that Queen Elizabeth has taken the stage from her father, Henry Bluebeard, the series is even better than before—for this Elizabeth is a vital and credible person, a

ranting, scheming, capricious and yet profoundly tragic figure whose dangerous game with human emotions and nations' destinies becomes frighteningly real to the twentieth-century listener. Henry Bluebeard in his lonely old age palled a little—for it is the women who have the finest voices in this series—but Elizabeth in her maturity is vastly more stimulating than she was as a girl. Only one thing is wrong with the "Coronets" series. The incidental music is far too loud, so that you have to sit close to the dial and be ready to switch over when it comes. "Coronets" series are running at present from 1YA on Wednesdays at 9.5 p.m., 2YD on Sundays at 7.35 p.m. and from 4ZB on Tuesdays at 9 p.m.

Onions bring a tear to every eye, but apparently onions are too plebeian for the modern film director. Those great, slow, looming drops in the heroine's beautiful eyes are now generally encouraged by more

THE DIRECTOR WEPT TO SHOW HER

civilised means. Film stars listen to sad music or think sad thoughts when they want to feign tragedy for the camera. That, at least, is according to John Batten in one of his daily two o'clock talks from 2ZB last week. He had a good story to tell about a scene in one of his own pictures where he had to say good-bye to his sweetheart and leave her picturesquely grieving as the door closed