

BBC FOREVER ENGLAND

How Radio Reflects The National Character

Interview

By

JACK DAW



ACTOR ARTHUR BRISCOE.

... Has been temporarily assisting in NBS productions.

S LIGHTLY dull and on the formal side.

That was the impression people from the Dominions had when they first heard the radio programmes of the BBC, Mr. Arthur Briscoe, of Melbourne, told me last week.

As a fact, this is more or less the way in which the people of other countries have been seeing the Englishman himself for generations.

But, said Mr. Briscoe, when you got down to it, you found that the programmes were not dull really. They were full of a wide variety of interest and of a very high standard.

Which is very much what the other nations have discovered about the Englishman himself, when they got down to studying him.

Radio To Suit

IT is Mr. Briscoe's theory that the radio in Britain, Australia and New Zealand has slight divergencies in every country. It reflects the national outlook. And in each place it has a high standard.

He should know, because he has worked in radio in all three countries. He has just spent a year in England, doing much work for the BBC, and is on his way back to his home in Melbourne, via Sydney. On his way back he was staying in Wellington for a week or two, and taking part in the production of some NBS plays.

Three times he has been through New Zealand before, first with Oscar Ashe, a number of years ago, in "Kismet" and Shakespeare, then with Hugh Buckler in Pinero's "His House in Order," and then with Julius Knight in "Under the Fire."

WHEN they produce a play at the BBC, says Mr. Briscoe, they never hurry over it. Of course, they have the pick of the radio artists in the world, and they use them.

For their plays they have men like Howard Rose (producer with Sir Herbert Beer-

bohm Tree), Robert Farquharson, Leon M. Lion, Leon Quartermaine and Carleton Hobbs.

Often the one play is made with actors in several different studios, and other studios are used for certain stage effects.

One of them is used for an outdoor echo effect, and another for the effect of sounds coming from a great distance.

"The last," said Mr. Briscoe, "is most effective for the production of nativity plays. It gives a wonderful effect of voices coming from the heavens."

Purely English

THEY have a purely English method of producing their plays at Broadcasting House. There is little of the haste that one sometimes finds in Australia and New Zealand.

When they start rehearsal, they are never so well prepared as we are. They gather together in the studio and chat round it, and so on. But they get there on the night with a very perfect production.

This leisurely touch, peculiar to the Englishman, extends even to the announcers. They are very natural. They are not formal and not aggressive.

I GATHERED that if they make a slip in a word while announcing, they do not become rigid with tension as some of our national announcers do, nor do they try to bluff it out, as some of our commercial announcers do. They make a pleasant apology—just as one would do in ordinary conversation—and go serenely on.

In other words, they have what is inborn in the Englishman. Simply, poise.



—By Courtesy BBC.

"THEY HAVE THE PICK OF THE WORLD."

... Ian Hay, novelist (left) meets Will Hay (radio headmaster) in the studios of the BBC.