

Talent Quests Have Come And Gone, But H. Gladstone Hill, In A Frank Talk With J. Gifford Male, Asks What N.Z. Radio Has Really Done To...

FIND AND DEVELOP SOME LOCAL TALENT

TALENT hunts, personality quests and such-like are matters on which broadcasting authorities are sharply divided.

On one side we have the undoubted stimulus given to local talent by such enterprising features as the "Personality Quest" conducted over station 1ZB Auckland in 1937, and the "Search for Deanna Durbin" conducted more recently over all the commercial stations.

"The Personality Quest" brought to light several New Zealanders who might otherwise have remained in obscurity—Stuart Harvey, the winner, whose fine voice has since been heard fairly frequently over the air; young Jimmy Fitzpatrick, who is now singing in Australia with Jim Davidson's ABC Dance Orchestra; and Cushla de Lange, whom the quest also launched into a promising musical career.

AGAINST this must be balanced the fact that too often a quest for talent, however admirably conceived, is after all, soon forgotten; that winners and rank and file of entrants alike too often share the same fate; that without resorting to stunting, radio generally is carrying on an unceasing search for talent, and that most worth-while talent is brought to light in this way.

A staunch champion of properly conducted talent quests is H. Gladstone Hill, New Zealander who is well known in Australian radio, and who is at present back in the Dominion on a holiday visit.

He thinks New Zealand radio should be much more active in such matters than it is at present; he has several constructive ideas concerning the best procedure of conducting quests; he even has a plan for the commercial utilisation of the talent thus unearthed.

Mr. Hill has had sufficient experience in competition work, radio and music generally to make his views well worth consideration.

A former resident of Christchurch, he will be remembered by New Zealanders as organiser and manager of the New Zealand tour of Henri Verbrugghen and the New South Wales State Orchestra in 1921. He also toured the world as director of publicity for the Commonwealth Band, and lectured extensively throughout the U.S. under the aegis of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 1936 he represented New Zealand at the 21st anniversary of the Conservatorium, Sydney, returning to Australia shortly afterwards to take up residence at Newcastle, N.S.W.

"Uncle Bert"

IN the coalfields district he has taken a very active interest in musical and cul-

tural work. He is "Uncle Bert" on the Macquarie station 2HR, being in charge of the Radio Club and children's session; for the past five months he has been conducting a large-scale radio and stage talent quest on behalf of 2HR; and as a registered adjudicator he

But a word about the Newcastle coalfields and their unique musical and cultural background. It is useful to consider this, as Mr. Hill claims that what has been done on the coalfields can to a large extent be done in New Zealand.

In the manner in which they have produced musicians and singers of international standard, the Newcastle coalfields constitute a district probably unique in the world. It is almost as though Nature, through some inscrutable compensation, has made up to these rough mining folk their loss of many of the beauties of life by endowing them with a super-normal love of music.

The fact that the majority of the miners are Welsh probably has a lot to do with it.

Coming Here

CERTAINLY Welsh aptitude for choral singing has been responsible for producing a Combined Male Voice Choir which is said to be the equal of any of its kind in the world.

It is of especial interest to note that this choir will be coming across to New Zealand to the Centennial Eisteddfod which will be held in Wellington next year.

One of the most important radio stations serving the thickly populated coalfields area is 2HR, which is playing an important part in telling Australia about the fine talent to be found in its district.

The radio and stage talent quest, of which Mr. Hill is adjudicator for 2HR, is not a publicity stunt for the station. It is the result of a definite and sincere desire on the part of the Macquarie broadcasting network to find talent which can be recorded and used to replace (not entirely, of course) imported records wherever recordings are used for public entertainment.

NEWTON GOODSON He Has Made Good Records

THAT New Zealand can produce singers well up to recording standard is a proven fact. Apart from artists of the calibre of Oscar Natzke, whose rise to fame has been sudden

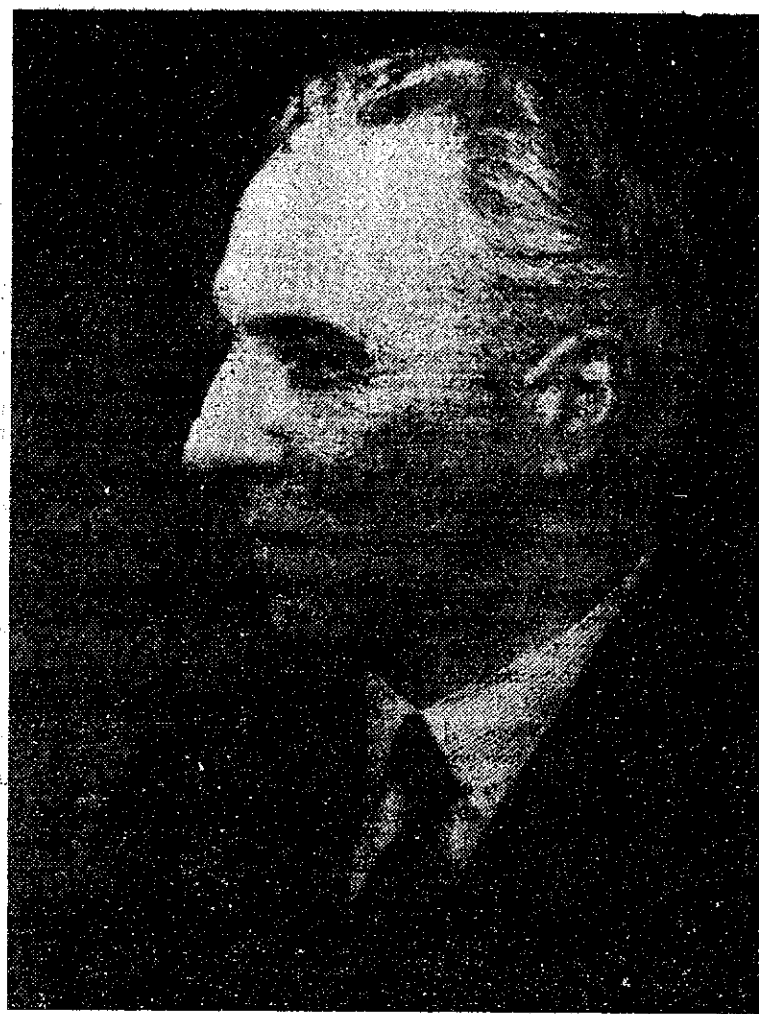


NEWTON GOODSON.

and sensational, there are several other instances. Newton Goodson, young New Zealand baritone who went to Australia last year, is one. According to H. Gladstone Hill, records which Goodson made in Sydney are of excellent standard, and stamp him as a singer of considerable promise.

has judged innumerable Eisteddfods and similar competitions.

He is obviously well qualified to give an opinion regarding development of local talent.



★ He's convinced New Zealand talent is worth recording. H. Gladstone Hill, New Zealander, who is conducting a big talent quest for station 2HR Newcastle. ★

As adjudicator, Mr. Hill has conducted elimination trials all over the coalfields district, and he has reduced the hundreds of original entrants to 80, who will compete at a big final contest in February.

Mr. Hill has been assisted in the judging by an expert from a recording company, and many entrants well worth while recording have already been selected.

Recordings

CONTRARY to general opinion, Mr. Hill states with emphasis that, with careful selection and thorough coaching, local talent can make recordings thoroughly acceptable, and quite up to overseas standard.

The Maitland Municipal Band, of which Mr. Hill is conductor, made a series of recordings which were played over the air without any announcement, and certain people were asked to name the band. All picked the Grenadier Guards. A little hard on the Grenadier Guards, observes Mr. Hill, but it proved an important point.

Again, records were made of the voice of a talented little girl, aged 11 years. Those, too, were broadcast without any name being given, and met with a wonderful reception.

The net result of this talent quest, Mr. Hill claims, will be that a still greater impetus will be given to the expression of local talent on the coalfields, that a large number of good quality records will be made and used, and that money which would ordinarily go out of the country will be retained; and that radio will become a

still more vital factor in the cultural life of the community.

The message Gladstone Hill has for New Zealand radio is this. There is no reason why something similar should not be done in New Zealand. Perhaps we have not the same amount of natural talent as he has on the coalfields; but surely to admit that would be indicative of an inferiority complex.

Not As Stunt

A DOMINION-WIDE drive for talent is what Mr. Hill suggests, to be conducted, possibly, by the National Commercial Broadcasting Service, not as an ephemeral stunt, featured just as long as an advertiser cares to sponsor it and then consigned to oblivion, but as a really serious attempt to use the great potentialities of radio to demonstrate the latent talent New Zealand possesses.

Elimination trials would be held in the main centres, finalists being brought to a central point, say Wellington, for the final contests.

And there is no reason at all, says Mr. Hill, why this country should not produce talent well up to recording standard. The recordings which are being made of a Maori children's choir are an auspicious beginning.

If the recordings could not be made in New Zealand, prizes could include cost of transport to Sydney to make them there.

"I am convinced New Zealand has a surprising amount of talent as yet undiscovered," says Mr. Hill. "Radio, I am equally convinced, can bring it out."