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RADIO SESSION PROHIBITED: HISTORY BEHIND "HISTORY BEHIND HEADLINES"

Consular Interference Said To Prompt Prime Minister's Ban On 1ZB's International News Commentary

Radio sensation of the year in Auckland has been the ban imposed by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage, on the tri-weekly international news commentary, known as the "History Behind the Headlines" session, conducted over 1ZB by Kenneth H. Melvin.

"History Behind the Headlines" has been a regular session since the introduction of commercial radio; it has been on the air continuously for longer than any other NCBS feature.

It was devoted entirely to commentary on international news, New Zealand affairs, owing to several obvious difficulties, being left strictly alone. During the recent crisis in Europe Mr. Melvin was on the air six nights a week, supplying what amounted to exclusive behind-the-scenes additions to news received from Daventry and from United Press Association sources.

It is of interest to note that the ban is understood to have been imposed at the instance of the German Consul, thus climaxing a series of consular interferences in domestic matters which have led, to say the least, to surprise.

The organisation which enabled Mr. Melvin to make his talks sufficiently informative and exclusive to command the wide listener-interest they did is worth describing briefly, as is the sequence of events which culminated in Mr. Savage's ban.

Material for "History Behind the Headlines" was culled from a large number of carefully-selected periodicals which arrived at Mr. Melvin's office almost daily. He received most of them by airmail, sometimes three weeks and more before they appeared on New Zealand bookstalls.

In addition, Mr. Melvin has several friends overseas, some

in the very European capitals where history has been moulded during the past few months, and from all these sources a vast amount of newspaper clippings is regularly airmailed to him.

Result is, he has probably the best news service outside of newspaper offices, claims Mr. Melvin. No particular credit is due to him, he admits; it was just that he had the financial interest to go to that trouble.

REGARDING the treatment and presentation of news,

there must admittedly be a certain amount of controversy. Here are a few points Mr. Melvin emphasises.

The orthodox news services, including Daventry and the United Press Association, present, from their very nature, the orthodox or "Rightist" viewpoint.

The only other sources to which he could go for information were the unorthodox, or "Leftist" ones. Regardless of their political colouring, however, there can be no doubt that these

sources are unsurpassed for reliable, behind-the-scenes information and exclusive stories concerning the events of the day. From the point of view of sheer "news" their political colouring is an accident.

"Time," for instance, was the first periodical to tell the world the plain facts about Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. Palme Dutt, an avowedly Leftist writer, was almost prophetic on the subject of the European crisis. As far back as last March, the publication "Query" outlined with astonishing accuracy the major steps which would be taken regarding Czechoslovakia.

With all these authorities at his elbow, Mr. Melvin was naturally in a position to give 1ZB listeners some interesting information on overseas happenings, especially during the critical days of last September and October.

The BBC news commentaries, which were rebroadcast into almost every home in New Zealand during those months, were, in Mr. Melvin's opinion, "icily regular and splendidly null." At no time, not even through the plausible and superficial talks of Mr. Voight, did they add to or elucidate the cables received by the New Zealand dailies.

THAT "the other side of the question" should include some pungent criticism of Nazi politics was only natural. Also, that a point of view other than that of the official "Chamberlain" one should sometimes be presented.

But Mr. Melvin insists that criticism of Mr. Chamberlain was entirely party criticism. Mr. Chamberlain himself is proud of being a staunch party man, and in giving voice to the Liberal and Labour viewpoint, Mr. Melvin contends he should have been "on the side of the angels" all the way as far as the New Zealand Government was concerned.

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Hot Shots

WOULD Job have become so famous if he tried to read a book while the radio in the next flat was going full bore?

"IT'S a great mistake to keep a large sum of money in the house," a New Zealand magistrate remarked the other day. A mistake we've never made!

"WHY did no one realise that he was in a trance?"—"Oh, they thought he was listening to Eb and Zeb."

CHRISTCHURCH business man just back from overseas says he cannot understand how a Londoner was able to learn Hungarian in three weeks. Nor can the Hungarians, most likely.

THEY were listening to the new super-wireless. "Hasn't it a gorgeous tone?" asked the hostess. "Pardon?" said the elderly guest. "I said, 'Lovely tone, isn't it?'" "Sorry, my dear, I can't hear a word you are saying. That infernal machine is making such a row."

ANSWER to the problem of how to treat reporters is, "Treat them frequently."

THE modern home is one in which a switch regulates everything but the children.

THE world's greatest water power: woman's tears.

MOST people are wondering if the song "June in January" was prophetic. Written for 1939?

SCIENTIST now says no one lives on Mars. Bit late to tell our American cousins that.

QUEER habit in the south: removing front gates as part of New Year's Eve celebrations. Some people are still advertising for return of gates.

SO a new camping device cooks a five-course meal for five in half an hour. We would rather split the difference with a tin-opener.

CORRESPONDENTS to Christchurch newspapers are getting all worried again about beach girls with bare legs. "Are they smart?" is the main question. "Yes, they do!" say girls.

TWO amateur radio men were chatting the other night. Believing they were off the air, one said, "Say, fathead, where the — did you dump that screw-driver?"



★ STORM-CENTRE OF A CONTROVERSY which is growing in proportion and intensity.—Kenneth H. Melvin, whose "History Behind the Headlines" session from 1ZB has been banned by the Prime Minister. ★