

"The time has come, the Walrus said,
 "To speak of many things,
 "Of shoes and ships and sealing wax,

"Of Cabbages and Kings"

A NEW period of W.E.A. history "on the air" opened in April last when, by arrangement with the New Zealand Broadcasting Board, the period 7.30 to 7.55 p.m. was allotted to W.E.A. talks on two nights per week at each of the four YA stations. Now that these talks have practically concluded for the year, to be resumed next March, it seems a good opportunity to review what has been done.

The talks were planned by each local W.E.A., co-ordination and liaison with the Board being maintained by the Dominion W.E.A. Broadcasting Committee—Dr. I. L. G. Sutherland, Wellington, and Messrs. W. H. Cocker and N. M. Richmond, Auckland, assisted at its meetings in Auckland by Mr. E. Blair. Looking at the situation in the light of reports from all centres, this committee feels that a good beginning has been made. The panel on this page showing the number of talks on various subjects broadcast from the YA stations shows that an excellent, well-varied programme of alternative talks has been at the command of listeners in touch with more than one station. Every effort has been made not only to present topics which are of interest, but to put these into the hands of speakers able to adapt themselves to the special conditions of the microphone.

It is at this particular point that the W.E.A. can probably be of most service. Writing in the current number of "Sight and Sound," a high broadcasting official in England points out the paradoxical fact that "a broadcaster speaks to a world audience, but the most successful broadcasts are conversational in tone and method." "A difficulty arises at once," he continues. "Listeners want to hear experts of established reputation, but experts are generally either public men with a platform manner, or university professors accustomed to the lecture-room, or writers, scientists, or administrators who may never have spoke in public. The tutor of an adult class has the experience which is nearest to broadcast conditions—a small informal group with whom he is in intimate contact. The microphone is an acid test—it is merciless to those whose voice does not carry at least something of their personality."

The W.E.A., then, as the chief agency of adult education in New Zealand, has special facilities for drawing to the microphone those speakers who are most likely to

A review by Mr. N. M. Richmond, B.A., Director of the Workers' Educational Association, Auckland District

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make a success of this new educational force.

The committee makes no extravagant claims. It knows that there is plenty of room for improvement, and possibly scope for greater freshness and variety in subject-matter and treatment. It feels that the Dunedin experiment of "Conversations" is one to be commended. Something similar was done by Wellington last year, and it is hoped it will be tried further in all centres. Such dialogues have formed a particularly interesting feature in the B.B.C. programmes.

The committee would also welcome a very much greater volume of criticism and suggestion than comes its way at present. Its means of knowing how the talks are received are so far comparatively small. There has been a considerable amount of favourable comment in the "Radio Record," whose critic is not in the habit of mincing words when he is feeling adverse. W.E.A. groups and members in various parts of the country are also known to have appreciated the talks. But the general body of listeners remain comparatively silent. This, of course, raises the whole problem of how best to organise the listening end.

The B.B.C. during the past season had well over 1000 listening groups, and ran more than one summer school for the training of group leaders. The B.B.C. is, of course, a wealthy organisation, with facilities that we cannot hope for—speakers of European reputation, the excellent weekly "Listeners" and its accompanying pamphlets, and so on. It has a special adult education section of its full-time staff, which not only arranges the programmes, but spends time and money on the organisation of listening groups, lending out receiving sets where necessary. It is to be hoped that ultimately (and before too long) time and money will be devoted to building up a network of listening groups in New Zealand.

A full-time man in each centre directing this side of things—travelling round to advise and assist groups as they were formed, keeping touch by correspondence, making available a library of suitable books, perhaps editing a section in the "Radio Record"—would probably have few idle moments.

Until such a man is available, however, we shall no doubt have to be content with the persistent pursuit of methods already at our

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Table showing the number of talks on various subjects broadcast from the four YA stations from April to November:

	Economics	Psychology	Science	Natural History	Public Affairs	Literature	Music	Art
Auckland ..	9	4	4	12	12	12	8	4
Wellington ..	—	4	4	18	20	14	—	—
Christchurch ..	6	4	14	4	16	18	8	—
Dunedin ...	37	8	3	—	16	1	—	—
Totals ..	52	20	25	34	64	45	16	4