

DEBATING IN THE OCEAN AIR

Listeners in America and England Vote on Yale-Cambridge Debate and Offer Solutions for World Problems

By ORRIN E. DUNLAP Jr.

YALE debaters on the eastern edge of the American Continent recently contested with Cambridge students who faced a microphone in London. They talked about the cancellation of war debts. A bundle of the listeners' comments forwarded by the British Broadcasting Corporation gives American broadcasters an insight into England's radio mail, and incidentally an idea of what some of the public over there think about the war obligations.

The New Haven team in a New York studio heard the Cambridge arguments for cancellation as the words were short-waved across the Atlantic. Likewise, the English collegians listened to the voices from New York, and rebuttal was possible through the two-way radio circuits. On both sides of the sea an unseen audience eavesdropped. Some were stirred to write letters both to Yale and to Cambridge.

A Listener's Panacea.

One who listened in at Leeds sees only one way out of the difficulties of the world, and that is an international parliament and a world exchequer. He calls attention to the fact that radio, the airplane and other scientific instruments of communication and transportation have knit the world into a kinship hitherto unknown and, therefore, the old barbarian idea of a lone nation struggling for existence and arming to protect its possessions is obsolete.

"Nations are no longer isolated or self-contained," wrote this Leeds listener. "Frontiers and barriers have proved the greatest bugbears of humanity, and this embraces tariffs, forts and defense lines. National governments as such are totally inadequate to adjust present-day demands. They each cling to the old threadbare meaning of patriotism, and have no remedy for world needs. The only way for world adjustment of distribution and return to prosperity is to form a world parliament with its centre in London, New York, Paris, Berlin or some other convenient place. Each country could send its representatives. This is a simple extension of the principle of the county councils."

A listener in Aberdeenshire wrote: "The speakers on each side persisted in seeing their own original views. When doctors disagree it is the patient who—?"

A Londoner wrote: "Judging by the merits of the speakers and not upon

private opinions about the subject, I unhesitatingly vote for the American opposition. They answered every question. They put forward a plausible theory and spoke with conviction. It was a great debate."

"I vote the U. S. A. case," said one who listened at Weybridge. "We talk as if the U. S. A. had no case at all. The debate showed they have a strong one."

One Good Reason.

Here is another London listener's view: "I must admit that the Americans won hands down. A man who owes me a few pounds has shown just as good reasons for not paying me."

From Sowerby Bridge came a vote for Cambridge "both on matter and manner."

An auditor at Northwich said that, though it must be admitted total freedom from war debts is desirable, the Yale debaters had the advantage of the argument.

"Logically and equitably, all nations should bear a burden commensurate with their benefit," he wrote. "There is no more reason why America should bear the whole debt than Great Britain should bear the debts of her allies. There is good reason for reduction of the debts owed America and still better reason for lowering or even abolition of tariffs. This is not for America alone, but for the whole world. Universal free trade is the cure for all the trouble, and the sooner this is realized the better for everybody."

War-Debt Stamps Proposed.

After lending ear to the Yale-Cambridge arguments one Briton wrote: "Pay by all means, because it is honorable and just. It is doing as we would be done by. America came in at the most critical time of the war, and we may even owe to her our own existence. Tell that to the younger generation who want to shirk our responsibilities. Let us issue war-debt stamps so that each and all can buy."

"We borrowed the money," wrote an Essex listener, "and in good faith, on the strength of the word of Englishmen. So be British, and pay up."

"The Cambridge style was more directed to scoring debating points—even at times it merited the description 'taunting,'" wrote a Birkvale listener. "The Yale style was more statesmanlike. Although I am not accustomed to hear American voices, the delivery of the American speakers was as pleasing as those of the English, or more so,

despite the more rapid speaking of the former."

Members of the American radio audience responded to the debate with the same fervor as did the English listeners. While the opinion in England seemed to be evenly divided in regard to the payment of the debts, the American opinion seemed to be against cancellation, and the listeners wrote accordingly to the British Broadcasting Corporation.

"I and many other American citizens object to larger taxation because the European allies do not want to pay their debts," wrote a listener in Delaware. "When the debts were funded, a great reduction was given to all European nations by America, therefore Americans feel that the remaining part should be paid and paid cheerfully."

A Toronto listener wrote: "My vote goes to Cambridge because the fundamental arguments of Cambridge were not met by Yale. And Yale's counter-arguments constituted a veiled admission of the soundness of the British view."

Other American Opinions.

An Oregonian who lives in Portland regretted missing golf on account of snow, but hearing the debate almost compensated; and he added that not only were the words heard but also the breathing of the debaters, although New York and London were many miles to the eastward. This group that listened in Oregon thought Cambridge had the better of the argument—but "not by much."

A Texan who cast a vote for Yale confessed: "As an American, I am probably a biased judge. Academically, I should say that the American argument was more convincing, and not a little disarming. On the other hand, I believe that the delivery and elocution of the Cambridge team far outshone Yale."

Many who tuned in expressed the hope that more international debates would be staged in the space between the hemispheres because the intercollegiate words exchanged across the Atlantic help each nation to catch a glimpse of "the other fellow's viewpoint."

Columbia University debaters in New York will discuss whether or not "Democracy Has Failed," when they contend with a debating team of Oxford University, which will uphold the affirmative. This two-way international broadcast is scheduled for April 8 from 6 to 6:30 P. M., Eastern Standard Time, with WABC as the New York outlet.