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PREPARED and PRESENTED BY: Jim Ruxton

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Bro. JOHN SINCLAIR LUMSDAINE (1895-1948)

**Songwriter, Vaudeville Artist and Entertainer.
(Known as the Whispering Baritone)**



The New South Wales Freemason of June 1st 1933 reported under the heading, "Our Brethren on 2GB" that 2GB, The Goodwill Radio Station, is well represented in Lodge Integrity No. 449, UGL of NSW. Members include Bros. George Saunders, (Uncle George), Jack Lumsdaine & Len Maurice, (The Gilbert and Sullivan of 2GB), Gil Dench, William Dick, (Organist), George Brown, (Pianist) and Les Shipp, (Comedian).

Jack Lumsdaine was born on 18th November 1895 at Casino, the son of Herbert Sinclair Lumsdaine, Bank Manager, and his wife, Edith, nee Bentley, a music teacher who taught her son to sing and play the piano. In 1905 Jack attended St. Andrew's Choir School, also studying music and playing the organ. In 1909-1910 he attended Sydney Grammar School. He was, for a short time, a bank clerk before, in 1911, joining a vaudeville company, "The All Blacks", touring Australia for two years singing and playing mostly impromptu numbers. The show was called M'lle Mimi and its success was undoubtedly due to Jack Lumsdaine who directed the orchestra.

In September 1915, Lumsdaine enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. He served briefly in the Middle East and, for a year, in France where he was reputedly gassed hence the sobriquet, "The Whispering Baritone". In 1917 he was evacuated to England where he was a paymaster and unofficially an entertainer. Shortly before his return to Australia he was promoted Temporary Warrant Officer. Class 2, and on 7th June 1919 he married Dorothy Rosina Staley at Pimlico, London.

Demobilised, Lumsdaine worked for music publishers, Allan and Co. Pty. Ltd. Of Melbourne and later J. Albert and Son of Sydney, advising them of what overseas sheet music to publish. Tours of Australian and New Zealand theatres with Lumsdaine performing before the main film, was one way of promoting this music as well as his own. He composed hundreds of songs, some of which he recorded. One of the most popular was "Every Day is a Rainbow for Me" with Don Bradman at the piano. Many, recorded by Peter Dawson, were sung all over the world. Lumsdaine also conducted orchestras and played the organ. On the vaudeville circuit he began as an accompanist to imported acts and he had a record run of 11 weeks at Sydney's Tivoli Theatre.

In 1923 Lumsdaine began working in wireless. "Music While You Wait" was an instant success in 1926. Listeners would telephone 2FC with the title for a song and within half an hour Lumsdaine would compose the words and the music. He had been working for 2FC for a few months in 1926 when the idea came to him. He sat at an ordinary telephone in a room just off the studio and simply answered the calls as

they came through. There was often a queue of listeners waiting to get through to him. He would hum snatches of songs and tinkle notes on the piano scribbling hieroglyphics on the score, tapping his feet on the floor and always concentrating on his objective, the song.

On one occasion when he was singing in a hotel a maid asked him what he was playing. When he replied, "One of my own compositions", she responded, "My goodness that must save you a lot of money, not having to buy music."

In 1932 he joined 2GB, undertaking announcing and other duties and appearing every Friday night as the "Radio Rascal". Later he teamed with Jack Davey in a song and joke show, "Daffy and Dilly" and from 1926 as "Two Jacks and a Piano". Lumsdaine was also a commentator on the Fox Movietone newsreels, directed a weekly variety show, "Radio Pie", and did musical work for the Colgate Palmolive radio unit. While mostly associated with 2GB, he also, during World War 2, worked with 2UE. Generous and tolerant, Lumsdaine was ready with laughter and rude jests. He liked a drink but never let it affect his work, followed the horses, played golf and sailed. He died of cancer on 28th August 1948 at Rushcutters Bay and was cremated with Anglican Rites. "Policeman and tramguards saluted", Kenneth Slessor wrote, "and the traffic was stopped by the crowds in George Street" when his funeral set out from St Andrew's Cathedral. He was survived by his wife and their only child, Thora, whose work on radio included plays and the "Radio Pie" show with her father.

Among other songs of the time he either wrote and performed or just performed were such gems as "Our Don Bradman", and "Kingsford Smith-Aussie is Proud of You". The last named was written by Jack O'Hagan. Another was "Our Phar Lap has Gone Across the Sea" and one worth reading in full as it brings a real sense of Déjà vu. This was called "Banish the Budget Blues" and was copyrighted in August 1930 in response to a horror budget introduced at the time by James Scullin. It is almost applicable again today. It was available on a Mastertouch Piano Roll for singing around the piano at home. As we know the Mastertouch Piano Roll Company was established in 1919 and manufactured piano rolls until 2005. Jack Lumsdaine and Len Maurice, also a freemason, did comedy routines as "Quip and Quirk", one called "Colonel Campbell and Mr Lang" mocking the debacle of opening the bridge in 1932. He was also involved in singing advertisements for Sydney Flour, Goodlands. Granose and the Weetbix music.

John Sinclair LUMSDAINE, a radio announcer, was initiated, passed and raised in the three degrees of Freemasonry on 9th May, 1933, 12th September 1933 and the 10th October 1933 respectively in Lodge Integrity No 449. He was described as a radio announcer living at the Grand Hotel, Hunter Street, Sydney. He was struck off on 14 July 1938 for non-payment of dues. This was probably as a result of the great depression of that time which affected so many entertainers.

“Banish the Budget Blues”

Introduction

For years we've sung about the blues, since ragtime first began
The blues for old Kentucky and the Blues for Alabam
But a brand new blues is with us, if you read the daily news
Mister Scullin wrote it and it's called the budget blues
But here's an antidote so let us sing.
This little chorus till the rafters ring.

Chorus

Banish the budget blues, spread the happy news
Good times are coming, keep on humming
Whether you win or lose, put on your running shoes
Give it a smile, get over the stile and banish the budget blues.

Patters

There's a tax on hats, a tax on boots, a tax on women's clothes
A tax on all the little things that only a married man knows
Tax on pictures, tax on punters when they back a winner
And now they're going to tax the bookies when they get a skinner
A tax on bags, a tax on fags, a tax on wooden legs.

To provide the old age pension for the grocer's new laid eggs
There's a tax on whisky, a tax on beer, but by the heavens above
What will the taxis do if they put a tax on love?
So let us all be happy and we won't care a jot
If we sing this little chorus they can take the bally lot.

Chorus

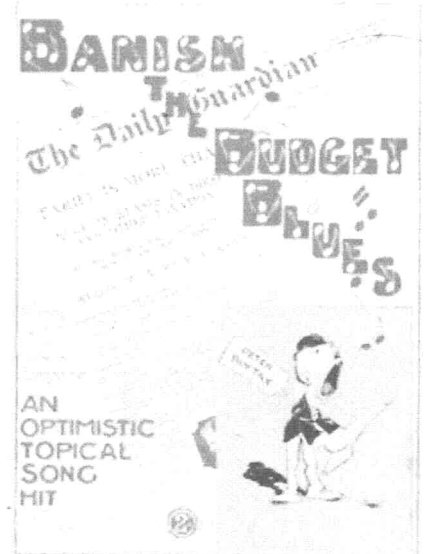
Banish the budget blues, spread the happy news
Good times are coming, keep on humming
Whether you win or lose, whether you're on the booze
Give it a smile, get over the stile and banish the budget blues.

Ref: Murray Goot, Aust. Dictionary of Biography on line edition.

National Archives of Australia (on line)

Wireless Weekly, October 18, 1939, July 23, 1926 and September 3, 1937.

Records of UGL of NSW and ACT.



Jack Lumsdaine's popular song 'Banish the budget blues' was a humorous response to Prime Minister James Scullin's 1930 budget.
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