

Cynicism of callers worries Bill Brady

(Continued from Page 1M)

are Mrs. Byrne, deftly juggling her own "capsule" show, from 6 to 6.30, and taking early calls for Brady, and the unflappable operator, Barry Rutledge. By now, the three have worked together long enough to know each other's reaction to almost any situation or type of call.

In the next four hours, in an average day, 300 calls pour in, to be answered by Mrs. Byrne. Most deal with "lost and found" items, and requests for information. Anita handles most of these. The calls being forwarded to Brady take their turns on four lines — a fifth is soon to be installed. Calls are taped, to give Brady control over calls from kooks and cranks, and to facilitate the calls' smooth insertion between newscasts, weather reports, and announcements.

To squeeze nearly all the calls — about 60 — on the air, Brady must be constantly on top, encouraging the nervous, urging on the wanderers, and seeking out the caller's point.

It worries him that many calls reflect cynicism and suspicion about government, but he thinks such disaffection is probably a natural result of expanding government losing its human touch. One of Open Line's functions, as Brady sees it, is to provide an airing that will help remove the sting from such views.

Of the people who get to Brady, the bigots bother him most. Sometimes their hang-up is youth (whom Brady happens to think a lot of); sometimes they are spouting a narrow religious or racial viewpoint. Brady puts such calls on the air, if he thinks some good will come of exposing the lack of logic in their argument. Sometimes he exercises his

prerogative as host, and refuses to air the call.

While his main objective is to draw out other people, he usually states his own view firmly, on contentious issues.

Children and old people strike an especially responsive note. He recognizes that pure loneliness leads many of his callers to phone him just to hear his voice, and perhaps hear themselves on radio. He jollies these people along, sometimes with a slightly naughty comment that brings a giggle from the other end of the line, and at the same time brightening visibly himself.

His standing rule is never to "put down" a caller, but he is sometimes criticized for sounding impatient with bumblers. Brady critics (who wouldn't know if they didn't listen to his show) periodically tell him he is opinionated, and again he agrees.

He has certain dislikes which he makes no attempt to hide:

Women's hats — "Women have such gorgeous hair and spend hours making it look nice. Why hide it under a hat?"

Parsnips — "I ate them once when I was a kid and they made my nose hurt";

Excessive eye make-up on women — "Those big false eye-lashes look like spiders sitting on their cheeks".

But he holds out hope: He has just celebrated his 39th birthday, and thinks he may be on the point of becoming more mellow and tolerant.

At 10:30, Open Line runs out of time. Officially, the work day of "air personality" Brady is just about over. Apparently, in the view of the Chamber of Commerce judges, the important work day of "private citizen" Brady is just beginning.

(Mrs. Linden, a former Free Press reporter, now does free lance writing.)