

Politics And Morality

WE do not often print broadcast talks that have been freely reported in the daily newspapers. If we make an exception of C. A. Berendsen's recent broadcast from 2YA, the reason is that talks of such importance are rare. It is not rare to have public men saying that their policy is justice and truth or statesmen calling themselves the champions of Christianity. It is beginning to be rare to hear them saying less than this. But Mr. Berendsen's task for 20 years has been the study of Foreign Affairs. Ever since the last war he has been asking himself why there should ever be war again, and the talk reproduced on Page 8 is his answer. We have war again, he went before the microphone to tell us, because we thought it possible to teach conscience international tricks. The League of Nations failed to preserve peace because its members failed to preserve their honesty. They thought they were being clever when they were in fact being selfish and cowardly. They flattered and deceived and sold one another in the name of expediency when the proper name for some of the things they said was lies and for some of the things they did was treachery. Mr. Berendsen said these things "as a practical man," and practical men know that integrity is futile without common sense. They do not get entangled in foolish fanatisms. They do not suppose that they are bound by every idle or hasty remark they may once have made, or even by considered remarks that time "dates" or proves impracticable. It is not integrity to insist that promises made in one set of circumstances must be carried out in another set of circumstances whatever has happened in the meantime: for example, that Poland, or Albania, or Yugoslavia must be given the frontiers assigned in 1919 if Britain is not to be made a humbug in 1945. That is just fantastic nonsense. But integrity demands that what can be done should be done if it is still right, and forbids compromises for which the justification is our own advantage.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

FLUORINE

Sir,—A few weeks ago, a *Listener* correspondent asked certain questions about fluorine studies in New Zealand. As no one has so far replied to this question, it apparently devolves on me to reply.

As far as I am aware, studies on fluorine content of natural waters, etc., have been attempted in the past but not reported partly on account of difficulty with the chemical methods. If it is of any interest, I myself was anxious to see this done nearly two decades ago, but the methods were the deterrent. The Nutrition Committee have had it down on their programme for several years, but the wartime difficulties of getting the requisite apparatus, chemicals, laboratory space and highly skilled worker, have been baffling. Recently, however, a start was made on these lines; it is too early to make any generalisation as yet about the findings. Studies are similarly being made by certain other Government departments—into the fluorine content of water, soils and rocks.

In view of the magazine article which prompted the question raised by your correspondent, it is advisable that a statement should be made about the dangers as well as the benefits of fluorine in the diet. These will appear in a series on "Trace Elements in Nutrition" in the regular Health column.—MURIEL E. BELL (Nutrition Research Department, Medical School, Dunedin).

MODERN BEAUTY

Sir,—May I be permitted a few lines in which to congratulate "The Wag" on his "poem"? With all due apologies in the proper quarters I would word my congratulations thus:

"Never have so few words expressed so much meaning at the expense of so many!"

My grateful thanks for a good laugh.
M.F.G. (Marton).

AMERICAN PAINTERS

Sir,—In listing artists who may have influenced his painting, William Dobell made no reference to modern American painters. Yet to me, the reproductions of Mr. Dobell's controversial portrait immediately called to mind the work of Thomas Benton. Mr. Dobell's treatment of his sitter is mannered in the fashion of many of Benton's figure studies. Didn't Mr. Dobell want to acknowledge this American influence?

New Zealand painters also seem to be aware of the modern American school. Examples of its influence can be seen, for example, in some of the work of Russell Clark.—C.R.S. (Wellington).

COMMUNITY CENTRES

Sir,—Your leading article of April 21 encouraged one to expect much from Mr. Somerset's article on Community Centres. The result was rather disappointing. Had the introductory matter on the first page been cut to two paragraphs, there might have been space available to expand on the point which Mr. Somerset regards as "very important," and enable him to make it clear why he regards the R.S.A. Club as not the best means of providing for returned men. The reasons he gives are very vague, and suggest a bias.

Three more paragraphs, well worded, might have been sufficient for him to explain why a Community Centre has the advantage over other educational activities such as gymnasium classes

run by Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A. and other organisations, musical clubs, art societies, kindergartens, municipal libraries, and the large number of correspondence courses available on a variety of subjects. Does Mr. Somerset suggest that the Community Centre will supplant these? Or is there room for both? Or is the Community Centre to provide these facilities in localities where the response to individual efforts has not been encouraging?

The topic shows high promise, but it requires broader and more definite treatment than Mr. Somerset has given it—"GENUINELY INTERESTED" (Dunedin).

Mr. Somerset says in reply: "Let us provide club facilities for returned men by all means, but let us be sure, in the smaller centres, at least, that they will not be dead letters in 10 years' time. I think we need something more than clubs. The need to solve the problem of education for life in the post-war world is so urgent that I feel we must have centres that are open to the whole community—not merely to returned men—and that these centres must provide as well as some of the amenities of a club, facilities for reading, discussion, and learning along the lines indicated in my article. Returned men have much to contribute from their experience; they also have much to gain in classes and discussion groups devoted to social studies, etc."

"I do not suggest that Community Centres will supplant other organisations. Wherever a centre is established, I would design its buildings and programme to supply what is missing in the community. Feilding, for instance, had no Y.M.C.A., drama club, or kindergarten, while its library was too small to meet the needs of the borough. Every new Centre should be planned upon a careful survey of the community. It will be found in practice that the Community Centre can give considerable help to struggling groups of an educational nature. Obviously the greatest need for Centres is to be found in the smaller towns with populations of 2000 to 10,000."

"DON'T WAIT FOR PEACE"

Sir,—I enjoyed the Rev. Dr. John Henderson's remarks in your issue of May 5. He says we are to help those who presently will stagger to gain their feet. He says he definitely thinks this war has not disrupted Christendom. Good for him! Certainly it has not. It has stirred into enormous activity the minds and souls of all the peoples of the world. It has quickened evolution, and the forces that are working behind Nature and us all. If only we could use this tremendous mud-puddle to throw our shams and make-beliefs into; and if only we could re-create from them something good and strong. Don't wait for Peace. Let's start this recreation straight away. Every second is of value; every second is leading us on to something new. Let's fill these seconds with vital thinking and vital doing—and they will build the hours and years for us.—G.L. (Wellington).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"Stay-at-Home" (Hastings) asks that serials should not overlap, and that they should be more evenly distributed. "Some nights we have five or six, and on others perhaps one, or two, at the most."

"Hau-Kawa-Kawa" (French Pass) complains that an announcer "actually pronounced *miro* (the tree) as *mai-ro*—an inexcusable mistake for an educated New Zealander."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

M.M. (Masterton). Making inquiries.
P.C.W. (Wellington). Thanks for the suggestions. But (1) is done as often as is possible; (2) is done periodically; (3) and (4) are counsels of perfection.

G. Yarde (Tauranga). To distinguish Commercial from National stations.

"Satisfied Listener" (Palmerston).—A. A. Harrison.

"Opunake".—(1) European. (2) St. George's Hall, London. (3) St. George's Hall again (played by Reginald Foort and Herbert Dawson) (4) Leslie Woodgate.