

AUGUST 25, 1944

Millions If We Listen

LAST year the people of New Zealand were asked to lend 35 million pounds for war purposes and subscribed 41 millions—a great deal of it in response to appeals by radio. This year they are being asked for 40 millions, and whether they give more or less than that, radio will again play a big part in the result. We explain on another page how the radio campaign will begin, but if it is to be as successful as the cause requires listeners will have to do more than listen. They will have to dip into their pockets and then dip again, if there is any lingering doubt in their minds about their capacity to give a little more. They will have to organise themselves into collecting groups, and they will have to co-operate both as employers and as employees in plans for combined giving. They will have to do many other things if the millions are to mount as they should out of our relatively great abundance. But listening is the beginning of the story. Unless people tune in to this campaign they will be shirking their responsibilities as definitely as if they were service shirkers or fakers of income-tax returns. For if radio has its disadvantages as an agent of culture it is quite indispensable as a medium of publicity. The problem in culture is to know whose needs and standards come first; but in publicity (of the kind we are now discussing) the same message goes to all and is believed by all whom it reaches, and the problem begins and ends with reducing those who are not reached to the smallest possible proportion of the population. It is a mass appeal, and radio's is the best mass voice civilisation has so far discovered. It may not be the most persuasive voice sometimes, or the most convincing, but it is the loudest and the most penetrating, and where all hold the same opinion, carrying capacity is all that is required. That, and some receptiveness. Radio can't speak to us through switched-off sets. We must be willing to listen or we shall hear nothing at all; and in that case the name for us is not conscientious objectors but conscienceless evaders.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, AUGUST 25

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WIRELESS IN PRISON

Sir,—John Bunyan, Ernst Toller and new in lighter vein, O. E. Burton. I hope you will be inundated with congratulations on publishing his "I Discover Wireless — In Prison." Perhaps the sly digs of his rapier will accomplish more than the honest bludgeoning of A. R. D. Fairburn in *We New Zealanders*.

"We are a complacent people; and we love flattery." And Flattery, thy name is Summerskill.

Attaboy, Burton!—BLACK MARIA (Wellington).

Sir,—It is a pity that in an otherwise good article Mr. Burton writes as he does of war commentators. One thinks of E. Colston Shepherd, E. J. McWhinney and Wickham Steed, to name only three of many. These are the men Mr. Burton would like to "drag round noman's land through the mud and under the muzzles of machine-guns, etc." Most of them have seen as much active service as Mr. Burton. Mr. McWhinney began a recent talk with "In an hour I shall be at sea with the Navy."

I don't quite know what a "fruity" voice is, but if Mr. Burton means an educated English voice, not many New Zealanders share his complex. Part of the great appeal of the Dorothy Sayers plays recently broadcast so successfully was the good English voices of the actors.

COUNTRYWOMAN (Hastings).

INTERRUPTED OPERA

Sir,—I would like to express my disgust and shame that any New Zealander should express such sentiments as did "Miserere" in your last issue. Perhaps to "Miserere" the chiming of Big Ben and a minute of Silent Prayer is a "mere mechanical routine," but to thousands of others who have someone in the forces, or do really think sometimes of those who are giving the best years of their lives so that people like "Miserere" can listen to their opera in peace, Big Ben and all it implies means something which "Miserere" apparently can't understand.

If "Miserere" took two minutes at nine o'clock each night, or any other time, to think of someone except himself, he might realise what others are sacrificing for him and be thankful.—H. W. SCHOFIELD (Tinui).

CHINA AND THE WORLD

Sir,—Two significant things appear in your last issue (July 21). Your article on China and a letter by R.S.W. of Timaru. There is a connection between these. The economic power which R.S.W. desires for the League of Nations might well have averted the calamities which have befallen China. But this economic power is not even possessed by individual governments; it is possessed by large trading concerns, who may act entirely at variance with the policy of governments and the wishes of the people. Until this economic power is controlled by governments individually and in concert we shall have a repetition of the old story of material provided to keep the fire blazing and deluges of human blood to quench it.

J.F. (Christchurch.)

IYA GARDENING TALKS

Sir,—May I say a few words in appreciation of the splendid gardening talks featured by IYA, and in particular the one presented on the night of

July 24. On this occasion "Gardening Talk" was hardly the term—"Sermon of the Soil" would be more appropriate, inasmuch as it propounds a way of life, a creed, based on logic and supported by hard facts. The main theme, that of soil erosion, was dealt with clearly and concisely, so that for the first time, it became to me, not the vague nuisance afflicting farmers, and worrying a few Government officials, but my own problem. Now I can see it is a menace to the whole community, and the courageous presentation of this problem made by IYA's gardening expert, must have caused many to stop and think. I, personally, would like to see it published in your widely-circulated journal. Meanwhile, at least one person has been stirred to write his appreciation of it.—R.F.B. (Dargaville).

MORE BABIES

Sir,—I was very much interested in the article by "S.S." on Dr. Edith Summerskill. It expresses well what I've heard a lot of women try to put into words. The majority of women in New Zealand with families are tied to the wash tub and home until their families are grown up; it is not a question with them of bathing their babies and taking over their care to get the thrill of mothering them. We could all keep the cradles full if as soon as our babies were born we could hand them over to the care of an experienced "Nanny" in charge of a nursery, and feel our duty performed when we had gaily sailed in and kissed them good-night. I think that Dame Edith Lyons, who at least knows from experience what mothers of large families have to go through, had more right to lecture us. This is not very ably expressed, but I have tried to put into words what I've heard a lot of women in this part of the world say.—NONEYAL (Huntly).

DR. SUMMERSKILL

Sir,—I intended writing in appreciation of the article on Dr. Summerskill by "S.S." I had thought of making the suggestion that Dr. Summerskill spoke 20 years too late, but on reading a letter by a correspondent stating that she would enthusiastically lap up lectures on "Child Psychology" and "Woman's Place in a Changing World," I wondered.

It seems strange to me that in 1944 any New Zealand woman with a backbone could still wish to lap up the type of lecture radio is capable of broadcasting. Still, if your correspondent still desires lectures, I suggest some subjects:

"Man's Place in the Changing Home."

"How To Bring Up a Family of Four, Five or Six in a Community of One-Child Families."

"The Crime of Trying to Teach All Children to Read by the 'Look and Say' Method."

"The Psychology of Teachers, Preachers and Politicians."

MOTHER RAMPANT (Dunedin).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

"Sound Track" (Greymouth): We have the answer to your inquiry, but send us your address. A letter sent by us to the address in your letter has been returned.