

The More We Change

WITH this issue we return to the page-size with which we began five and a-half years ago. We chose such a size then partly because it was convenient for readers and partly because it was one of the sizes that could be printed on the machines then available to us. We departed from it later because the war left us no choice. Now selection is possible again and we return to a page-size that gives us two more columns at an opening. But we ask our readers not to suppose that we have again unlimited space. We have a little more space, but only a little more, and we are devoting it to those features that experience has shown our readers most appreciate — coming events, short-wave and BBC programmes, people in our own programmes, and fair and reasonable comment. There is nothing new in any of this, since the more we change the more we are the same thing, but it involves adjustments of emphasis as well as of space. We cannot go back yet to the spacious days of farm pages, sports pages, women's pages, book pages, annotated programme pages, or pages filled with summaries and charts. Those days will come again with peace. But we draw particular attention to-day to the considerable extension in this issue of the space devoted to comment. We do not call it criticism, partly because the only useful criticism is the higher criticism of detached and independent judgment, while our comment is internal and partial; and partly because criticism in such a young country must creep before it runs. But we emphasise the fact that it is comment and not gossip or chatter. To begin with our Viewsreel is being conducted by about half-a-dozen persons, all careful listeners, and all equipped to listen with knowledge. If time shows the necessity we shall add to the number of contributors; but the important thing from the outset is a continually increasing number of readers of this comment—guardians of our guardians of taste.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

RADIO QUIZ

Sir,—No one can object to American radio programmes given for American servicemen—presumably they know what their own people like, and it would be discourteous for us to criticise. What I do object to most emphatically are such things as *Easy Aces*, and the number of American items thrust into New Zealand programmes. America has evolved, mainly from Anglo-Saxon, a language of her own, and indeed, why not? But, equally, why should we not prefer to listen to our own? I dislike to hear my country called *Noo Zealand*; to hear American crooners miaowing, maudlin love ditties—like the dripping of treacle in a warm room; to hear the blare of tuneless instruments with a background of tom-toms. If we must have American records, let us have their better ones.

It is surely bad for our children to have poor music, and worse plays, continually blared at them. It gives them no chance to love good music and good literature. Our New Zealand speech is surely bad enough; it does us no good to hear worse American on screen and radio—for instance, why is "yeah" or "yep" supposed to be better than "yes"? England is our homeland; English is (or ought to be) our mother-tongue. So let us have good English programmes. And, may I add, let us have New Zealand announcers properly trained to correct and pleasant speech. Some of them are.
P. R. MILLS (Eli Bay).

LAWLESS IS AS LAWLESS DOES

Sir,—Modern children have created a demand for comics illustrating patriotic, honest, intelligent, athletic, fearless Goodies catching horrid Baddies and handing them over to the law for justice. Neither the New Zealand Educational Institute nor my grandmother should misrepresent these comics by describing them as "illustrating violence and lawlessness under the guise of adventure."
GOODIE (Auckland).

EIGHTY YEARS AGO

Sir,—May I quote a paragraph, which may well be applied to 1944, from an article by T. E. Cliffe Leslie in *Macmillan's Magazine*, September, 1860:

"The people of that great country (Europe) are even now unconsciously debating about its future institutions. And it is for us, above all Europeans, to provide that Europe shall finally be something nobler than a great shop, something less miserable than a great prison. Nor is there anything more certain than that the citizens of the future Europe will owe the measure of liberty they may enjoy, and the degree of public spirit and generosity with which they may be endowed, mainly to the exertions and example of the citizens of Great Britain in the present generation."

"READER" (Kaitaia).

RADIO SERIALS

Sir,—So many have written condemning thriller radio serials, some going so far as to say they are responsible for child delinquency, that I should like to point out that there are plenty of listeners who do not want radio serials watered down to the level of children's minds. It is time to protest against the selfishness of parents who expect exciting radio serials to be stopped. Are they

entirely lacking in parental control that they cannot command obedience in the matter of tuning in to serials they consider unsuitable for children? There are plenty of other stations available when items one wants to avoid are due: we don't ask for week-day church services and crooners to be eliminated, so it is but fair that we should have a continuation of thrilling serials, and these not too late in the evening, as many are early risers and therefore must retire early.

The children at any rate cannot do their homework properly with one ear on the radio and should be in another room. Parents should realise that the chief trouble is their own lack of control, and should cease trying to spoil programmes for other people who also pay radio licences.

"THRILLERS FIRST" (Auckland).

OVERSEAS PROGRAMMES

Sir,—It is pleasing to see *The Listener* publishing a list of World Shortwave News Bulletins again, and much more so to see the highlights from the BBC programmes for the coming week. But why only half a column, in a 48-page journal, for a service that is listened to throughout New Zealand? Could we have the full programme of the BBC Pacific Service each week; and also the highlights from the Australian National Programme for the week? Some of your articles are interesting, but others could well be dispensed with in favour of overseas programmes. *The Listener's* most valuable and essential service is to give listeners the programmes.

M. (Invercargill).

(We are grateful for our correspondent's opinion, but he does not see our mail.—Ed.)

FREEDOM OF THE AIR

Sir,—Your correspondent "Argosy" raised an important question in a recent issue. "The freedom of the radio," he says, "has still to be won." It is common to-day to read in reputable journals (such as yours) statements praising the democratic communities, their institutions, and their functionings. Indeed most people pay lip service to "democracy" and assume that it guarantees freedom of speech to all, but those people too easily confuse freedom of speech with freedom to be heard. It is the latter freedom we should be most concerned about. We cannot achieve it through the daily press. We can achieve it through the radio, but we don't. Does the radio fulfil its task in a democratic community? Does it assist in building an informed opinion? Can we hear important matters discussed and debated over the air, matters of politics, religion, education, social progress, international affairs? No. It is true that we can hear most of the churches on the air, and also the two major political parties wrangling over hen-runs in the Hutt; and perhaps those two parties and the churches confuse this with freedom of speech in a democracy. But what of the agnostics and the rationalists? Have they not a right to be heard? We talk plenty about what we are going to do for minorities elsewhere; what about starting in our own backyard?

Count out the churches, Parliament, and advertising, and everything else informative that comes over the air is so

completely but politely emasculated that it can serve no better purpose than to earn for its authors a few honest guineas.

The truth is that we New Zealanders do not regard politics or religion or any other serious matter as topics for discussion and debate; we regard them as matters for prejudice and bitterness.

W. K. McILROY (Palmerston).

BAND PROGRAMMES

Sir,—It was with great interest that I listened to the hour of overseas bands on Sunday morning. I wish band-lovers could have more opportunities of hearing such music. I venture to suggest that a programme such as this be arranged for Sundays, thus giving listeners a chance to hear our talented New Zealand boys.—EX-THIRD DIVISION BANDSMAN (Wellington).

WHY TOWNS ARE CROWDED

Sir,—Monetary recompense for labour is not the only way of measuring the treatment of city as against country. The cities are installed with up to four alternative broadcasting stations, the alternatives low-powered and obviously only for city coverage. Country folk therefore have to depend on main stations, the linking of which ensures no alternative, and what with propaganda, educational sessions, children's sessions, endless war news repetitions and commentaries, pleading, requesting, warning, announcements of future political talks, loan campaigning, advertising and racing, one sometimes wonders which are the Commercial stations. Southland, a province producing a high proportion of National wealth, has one station called alternative, but in reality linked for all health talks and only on the air a few hours a day. No wonder congestion and housing problems are a feature of city life.—UGLY DUCKLING (Waikaitia).

NEW ZEALAND SPEECH

Sir,—Concerning the discussion about the relative merits of the English and the New Zealand accents, may I submit the argument that the best accent is the one most pleasant to the ear? Let me add hurriedly that I am fully aware that this suggestion is not of much practical value because it immediately raises the unanswerable question of Who is to judge what is pleasant, and why? But I believe that it is not utterly stupid. First, the majority of Americans, who employ a nasal tone which is the big uncle of the New Zealand accent, comment upon the pleasant-sounding quality of the English "accent," whereas few Englishmen reciprocate. Secondly, professional speakers, especially actors, are taught what is known for no very good reason as "Standard English." In other words, by a process of experiment and elimination Standard English has been found the best accent to listen to, from the point of view of both audibility and pleasure. (Perhaps the two go hand in hand part of the way.) It must by no means be confused with the Oxford accent nor with what is usually confused with the Oxford accent—the affectations of pseudo-Oxonian. In New Zealand little Standard English is heard except from the BBC and the actors in British films. It is clear, audible, full, and unaffected.—A. J. HENDERSON (Canterbury College).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

Robert Allender (Wellington): Wrongly addressed. Try headmaster or choir-conductor.