

DECEMBER 15, 1944

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Wars Within Wars

IT was inevitable when the war became world-wide that it would bring other conflicts with it. This it has done. Greece and Belgium are with difficulty suppressing civil war. France escaped it by a miracle. Poland is escaping by enemy occupation. If all the points of friction were spotlighted one by one the effect might easily be a spreading wave of depression. But setbacks must be seen in perspective. Instead of asking ourselves what we are fighting for, when civil war seems to be liberty's reward, we must remember, first that these explosions pass, second that although they are pitiable they are almost negligible in relation to the events that have brought them to a head, and third that the price the Greeks, for example, are paying for their liberty is less than they paid every day for four years at the command of Germans and Italians. On the other hand it is childish to avert our eyes and refuse to look the facts in the face. They are unpleasant facts — as unpleasant as the pettiness, meanness, duplicity, folly, and fanaticism with which the best of us are so adequately endowed; but they are not the whole story or its most important part. Nor have they anywhere come as a surprise. If we were not ready for them it was our own fault — a temporary lapse in our vigilance. We should have been ready for them, and months ago we were; but postponed fears are like deferred hopes — the day comes when they disappear. Let us not, now that they have returned, be stampeded by them. Greece is free. Belgium is free. France is free. Poland and China will be free. In every case the external oppressor is gone or going. The internal conflict will end too — no one knows yet how painfully; but everyone knows that what has been achieved already had to precede what has yet to come. The order must always be freedom first, then wisdom to use our freedom.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

FREEDOM OF THE AIR

Sir,—Your correspondent W. K. McIlroy asks why agnostics, rationalists, and presumably atheists are not heard on the radio. May I point out that what a man does not believe or know is not of the least importance to himself or anyone else. If a man has anything true or useful to say, he may have a right to be heard, and for all I know, the talks on science, books and other subjects which we hear on the air may be given by agnostics and others. But the radio does not include in its functions the opportunity for scoffing at other people. The churches tell us what they believe, but they waste no time on the air in attacking each other; apart from differences in the form of service they all seem to be saying much the same thing. Only what a man believes or knows is of any value.—J.F. (Christchurch).

Sir,—Many of your readers will feel grateful to W. K. McIlroy for his trenchant remarks on this topic. It is generally accepted that the majority of our population are not church members, therefore it is not unreasonable to ask that one station each Sunday should broadcast a service or lecture which would be of interest to those who are not in sympathy with orthodox doctrines. A broadcast period on these lines from 3XY Melbourne, which commenced recently, has had a most remarkable and sympathetic response from the listening public of Australia. G. B. Shaw says that in regard to these matters, New Zealand is well behind the times. Our authorities should see to it that we are not debarred from discussion of controversial thought on the air. Let us hope that our future Sunday radio programmes may contain something of interest for those who may be Rationalists, Humanists or Unitarians.—A. T. SMITH (Whangarei).

Sir,—In your issue of November 24 you published a letter of mine on freedom of the air and gave no indication that you had omitted a passage. I wrote: "What of the other political parties, what of the minor religious sects, what of the agnostics and the rationalists? Have they not a right to be heard?" By leaving out the references to other political parties and to the minor religious sects you left my letter open to being regarded as a plea for the agnostics or the rationalists.

W. K. McILROY (Palmerston).

(The line was dropped inadvertently. Our correspondent will see why if he looks at his original typescript.—Ed.)

A MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM

Sir,—Some time ago, in an article about Hendrik Van Loon, someone made the following statement: "If everybody in this world were six feet tall, a foot and a-half wide and a foot thick, then the whole of the human race could be packed into a box measuring half-a-mile in each direction."

Now I understand that prior to this war, the population of the world was approximately 1,700,000,000 people. This being so, it seems to me impossible that they could all be packed in a box half-a-mile square; but as I am no mathe-

matician, the problem remains unsolved for me. If it is not asking too much of anyone, would some kind person who is clever at mathematics say whether Van Loon's assertion is correct?—ANTICIPATION (Christchurch).

RADIO QUIZ

Sir,—P. R. Mills (24/11/44) is very sure of himself and certain of what is good and what is bad. It is refreshing to find someone so very confident about the subject that has puzzled wise men for countless generations. I am led to the belief that his only criterion of judgment is whether he, personally, likes the music, song, or pronunciation. If he likes it, it is good; if not, then it is very bad. Does he forget that others may have different opinions, and be just as entitled to them as he is?—D. G. STEVENS (Wellington).

ADVICE FOR GARDENERS

Sir,—We have been asked time and time again to "Dig for Victory" or (as the new slogan goes) "Grow Your Own," and I'm sure lots more people are now doing so. But the average gardener wants advice. An excellent garden talk is given from 1YA on Tuesday evenings, but, I ask you, what can a man cram into 15 minutes. It seems ridiculous to me that music that can be played all through the day and every night should cut into this piece of instruction that we really need. I ask those responsible to extend this session to 30 minutes. Thank you!—H. THOMSON (Te Awamutu).

SCIENCE AND FAITH

Sir,—May I point out to your correspondent A.R., of Dannevirke, that if the scientists had not had faith, they would have performed no experiments to discover what was true and what was not? Science is concerned with Faith. Not only science, but religion, too, is "That body of organised knowledge which can be tested and verified by experience."—A. F. HALL (Gisborne).

DANCE SESSIONS

Sir,—While appreciating the difficulties of arranging radio programmes, I would suggest that something should be done about dance sessions. Ten o'clock is too late an hour to commence a dance session. Why not earlier, in place of some of the studio recitals, of which there are a superabundance lately. A programme of good dance music would be appreciated equally well.—JAMES ROWE (New Plymouth).

PREVENTION NOW

Sir,—Your editorial describing the arrival of the Polish refugee children ends with the query whether each and all of us are doing our best to prevent the recurrence of similar catastrophes in the future. Only a Nazi-hearted minority in our community can regard war as a necessary phase of the evolutionary progress and therefore as inevitable and unpreventable. But the would-be peace-making majority have no idea where to begin the task of re-making the world. Our educational leaders have,

however, had the wisdom to call an education conference, where the thoughtful and earnest put forward suggestions about the future education of our children. I had no share in these discussions, but there is always a danger of the people involved losing sight of the wood among so many trees. Certainly we must not be sentimentalists like E.W.W., but if we are not kind soon enough someone has "to be cruel to be kind." Hitler would say that this time it had to be himself, Adolf Hitler! A generation which had built its house on the sand has certainly shared his nervous breakdown and has to find the road back to health and stability. Surely the fundamental cause of war is the selfishness that comes of ignorance and misunderstanding? If so, surely it is the chief purpose of any scheme of education in any country to teach people to understand other people. Not even indirectly can this be the result of schemes of education which accentuate caste and raise barriers which teach the fellow-citizens of a country to misunderstand one another. Such has been the effect of public school education in England, and our own private schools may be similarly damaging to the spirit of community. How can we expect to establish right relations with other nations if we do not make right relations one with another a first principle? Do we fear that by understanding too much we may forgive too much and lose our individual quality? There would be no danger of any such effect if our values were really Christian, and wise means employed as they could be, first in the home country, and then by the interchange of workers, students, and teachers with other nations, so that international understanding may be achieved.

This is not an airy ideal, but a stern and crying necessity. It may be our own children orphaned and homeless in the next war. We are a small country, but we could be a missionary country. Without forgetting our faults or being unduly self-righteous we have achieved, by purely democratic methods, a high standard of social equality and justice. Being all of a type, mutual understanding is relatively easy here. Could we not more consciously and universally pursue the ideal of the familial state? This is a question for the women's societies, and I would like to see it taken up and debated by them.—MOTHER (Christchurch).

ORATION OR ORATORIO?

Sir,—I wish to protest at the manners of somebody in 1YA who interrupted Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at its most interesting portion. In the middle of the double bass chorus, "The Lord is a Man of War," the announcer broke in to inform listeners that we were about to listen to a political speech by the New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia. Could anything be more ridiculous than to be suddenly switched from music at its best to an oration from anyone, political or otherwise? I cannot imagine that anyone would be disappointed by the curtailment of a speaker in order that listeners could hear the finish of such a noble conception as *Israel in Egypt*.—A. BLACKMAN, J.P. (Te Kuiti).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

K.O.T.F. (Auckland): Kut Out The Fifth!