

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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President Roosevelt

IT is impossible to dissociate the death of President Roosevelt, announced as we go to press, from the tremendous events in which it has happened. His place in history we cannot now fix, if by history we mean the events of centuries. But we can fix his place in the events of our own times, and it is an understatement to call it overshadowing. Throughout the whole period of the war he has been one of the three men on whom the hopes of half the world have rested. Even when the American people stood outside the struggle it was their President who saw most clearly that they would eventually have to come in, who made others see it, and who, when the day came, had the majority ready. It may easily be that posterity will be as grateful to him for the things he did before Pearl Harbour as for his momentous work afterwards. Many men can lead when all are marching the same way. It was President Roosevelt's great achievement, conceivably his greatest, to give a lead before there was unity—to head off the independents, rouse the slumberers, and bring back the wanderers—all before the madness of the enemy made isolation impossible. Then he became a dynamo. For a man with his physical infirmities his driving force was almost incredible, but the price has been his life. The world has lost him, not indeed when it most needed him, since that period is safely over, but when it is still a calamity to lose his courage, energy, wisdom, and friendliness, and his almost uncanny political sagacity. It cannot be doubted that his war policy will remain, since it was overwhelmingly endorsed by his people when he was re-elected, but it is a tragedy that he should have died before victory was finally achieved, and on the eve of conferences in which his presence would have been one of the guarantees of a good and enduring peace.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MUSIC AND HEALING.

Sir,—A member of my family is frequently very ill with asthma. On some occasions, when all other measures have failed, I have known him to be soothed by a programme of beautiful classical music that he has fallen asleep. I have often longed for an all-night station that would help us through the dreary hours after midnight. There must be many other sufferers who would be greatly helped through long and painful nights if they could tune in to lovely music.

ELSPETH (Wellington).

"MISTAKEN JOURNEY."

Sir,—I wish to say how much myself and friends appreciate the serial "Mistaken Journey." I know of at least two country schools in which the schoolmaster reads it aloud to pupils whilst they are occupied with their hand-craft work.

READER (Christchurch).

THE SHORT STORY.

Sir,—Just one, only one, witness for the defence: David Graham Phillips: "Writing is the result of thinking about things to write about and studying the details of contemporaneous life, so that you may set them down, not imaginatively, but accurately."—ONE WHO WRITES 'EM (Wellington).

SWING AND THE CLASSICS.

Sir,—To say that swing, jazz and crooners are all bunk just because one doesn't approve of them is an indication of a high degree of intolerance. Personally I don't like classical music, but because I don't like it I don't regard it as so much bunk. Let Mr. Lawrence see a physiologist and he will be informed that phrenology is discounted by a large majority of physiologists as so much hooey, and that the shapes of heads and the bumps thereon give no indication of the amount of intelligence inside. Concerning his remark about swing musicians standing up in groups and blaring forth discordantly, I have seen the same thing done by brass sections of classical orchestras and heard a terrific deafening clash of cymbals.

SWING FAN (Raetihi).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Sweet Young Thing" wants to know how many modern recordings last more than six months. Here are the first half-dozen I thought of: "Stardust," "Tumbling Tumbleweed," "Honeysuckle Rose," "It Had to Be You," "As Time Goes By," "St. Louis Blues." None of these are under twelve years old. All are immensely popular. Who says modern music does not last?

SWING FAN (Warea).

Sir,—So H. E. Lawrence has studied the "angry cries of baboons and apes," and the craniums of swing bandmen? Well, well. I can just picture him poking with a stick the unoffending ape at the zoo and then noting the resulting chords in his little notebook. As for the craniums of the bandmen and band-leaders, if he should happen to know by sight, say Messrs. James, Goodman, Dorsey, and Shaw, he would feel a trifle silly at making such inane observations. The views on swing of Stokowski, Lorand, and Elman would give H.E.L. some food for thought. They happen

to be not altogether unknown musicians who can appreciate more than one type of music. I believe the waltzes of Strauss were, at the time of composition, considered "not quite the thing."

BEIDERBET (Wellington).

Sir,—May I, without becoming involved in the jazz-classics controversy, ask whether it could be arranged, during Parliamentary broadcasts, for Station 2YA's scheduled evening programme to be relayed through 2YD instead of 2YC. I fully realise that such a change would deprive some listeners of serials and light entertainment from the former station, but compared with the greater part of the relays in general which cater for these tastes, lovers of classical programmes are given a pitifully small consideration without having it further reduced. Excellent broadcasts are tantalisingly advertised over other auxiliary stations beyond the range of the average Wellington receiving set.

If this alteration is practically possible it is surely little enough to ask, especially when we hear and read so much of the raising of cultural and other standards. CLASSICA (Lower Hutt).

[If "Arco," who began this correspondence, wishes to reply, he may do so briefly. For all others it is now closed.—Ed.]

THE LANGUAGE OF SONGS

Sir,—On opening my *Listener* I was interested and amused to read your paragraph on "pigeon English." I also heard the announcement of the "Dove Song." To my wife I said at the time, "No, do-vay!" If the song had been printed as sono, probably it would have saved the linguistic bacon of the poor announcer. I pity them with some of the lingual hurdles they have to surmount.

However, listeners also have their trials. One hears an announcement of a song with an English title; but, when the singer begins, the ears are assailed with unfamiliar words, and the suffering hearer must adjust his faculties to discover what language is being used, and, if one wishes to understand the words, it is necessary to put on, as it were, one's appropriate language mental receiving apparatus; or, perhaps I should say, one must begin to think in the required language, if it is a known one. Even with English words, especially if reception is not good, or if the singer does not enunciate clearly enough, it is often difficult to catch all the words. I find that it does help considerably to the enjoyment of the song if I know in what language it is being sung, even though I may not know that language well enough to follow all the meaning; a familiar word here and there gives a feeling of satisfaction. Of course, with many of the singers we know in what language they always broadcast; but even they do now and then surprise and delight us with a song in English; then, many sing in two or even three languages. Now, sir, I would like to suggest that if the language of the singer were announced along with the title of the selection it would be a great advantage to the listening audience. Would it be asking too much for this to be done?

I would like to take this opportunity of saying what a fine lot of announcers we have here in New Zealand. I listen

often to the BBC on short wave, and think that our announcers compare very favourably with them in all the requisites of a good radio voice and manner. Their Italian, French and German are usually quite good.

J. A. HODGES (Rangiora).

FARMERS AND THE OTHERS.

Sir,—I was interested in Pen Hill's article "Back on My Tracks," but surprised at his weakness in answering farmers who imagine they are the base on which all other sections of the community stand. The truth is that no class is independent: all are interdependent on each other. Farmers, as such, could not carry on without the co-operation of non-farmers. They could not even feed themselves. They would perforce, become hunters and fishers in order to exist at all; and that of course applies to all of us in a non-co-operative community. A little, a very little, ratiocination will prove this.

Farmers, in order to farm, require clothes, houses, furniture, implements, harness and what not, none of which they, as farmers, produce. Without these they would be naked, or half-naked savages and must become nomads in order to find food. When it comes to modern farming, such as is carried on in New Zealand, they must have, besides the above, the assistance of roads, bridges, fences, railways, transport workers, school teachers, foodstuffs (such as tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, flour), electric power and a host of other things that they get from outside.

Farmers, without the help of all the other useful members of society, would become a community of Robinson Crusoes.—ACCOUNTANT (Auckland).

Sir,—The finding of "Back in My Tracks" in this week's issue has revived my flagging interest in your paper. It is grand both in substance and presentation. I wish we could have more articles of such calibre instead of the messy, anaemic, superficial stuff we have been treated to sometimes.

But before your artist does any more country life illustrations could he have a look at some real New Zealand farmers? Anything looking less like three of them yarning over a gate (even a three-barred one) I have never seen. PEN ELOPE (Wairarapa).

INSULT IN THE WOODPILE.

Sir,—While realising that "Progress" has written an amusing letter on Wellington weather, I feel very strongly that it is about time people in this country learned to stop using idioms which have a deeper significance than is often thought. At the present time when racial equality is a plank on which any progressive-minded person stands, it strikes me as extremely incongruous that one who calls himself "Progress" can use such a phrase as "nigger in the woodpile." Not only is the term "nigger" one of disparagement, but the suggestion of racial inferiority of the coloured person being the obvious bad man should be erased once and for all. The answer to this, "Oh it never occurred to me—one just uses these phrases without thinking," is not good enough, just as the consistent use by Hollywood of coloured people as always representative of the servant or coolie class is not good enough. R.M. (Wellington).