

JUNE 8, 1945

Unconditional Aid

THERE are people in New Zealand who are suspicious of the advances made by the British Council, and suspicion, if it disappears when its questions are answered, is a good thing. We are sure that Sir Angus Gillan, whose visit to New Zealand is very fully explained on pages 6 and 7, did not expect us to say Yes to everything he proposed the moment he proposed it. Those who met him know that he welcomed questions and answered them plainly; that if he came with gifts in his hands he was scrupulously careful not to thrust them on us; that his idea was to exchange rather than to sell; and that even on an exchange basis he was not much inclined to open negotiations. Therefore he made the very best impression possible on our necessarily and properly questioning minds. Every small community has to remain on guard against culturally expansive neighbours, and that is particularly the case with New Zealand which owes so much—has in fact once or twice owed everything—to the two great branches of the English-speaking race. We dare not allow ourselves to be drowned in one of those cultural streams or the other, and equally dare not become cultural isolationists. This the British Council fully realises and therefore offers us assistance with some diffidence. But we need not be afraid to be helped if we are willing simultaneously to help ourselves. It will not cramp the style of our own artists, for example, to see exhibitions of the work of modern British artists, or check our budding poets or philosophers to meet the Eliots and Huxleys and Joads. All that will be stimulus without any dangerous hang-overs, and it is such aids as these that the Council came here to offer. We are sunk very deep in our inferiority complexes if we do not accept the extended hand, and begin thinking what to offer in exchange; or rather how to offer the things we have that Britain cannot have, namely, our adaptations in a hundred years to a completely new and inverted set of external circumstances.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS**SOFT ANSWERS**

Sir,—I would suggest that your footnote to "Careful Listener's" letter in the issue of May 25 would have lost nothing had the first six words been omitted. There has been a regrettable tendency in many of your footnotes to display an arrogance and lack of good manners which are quite foreign to the traditions of good journalism and are the result, probably, of an overlong association with the members of the New Zealand Labour Party.

A. L. TAYLOR (Auckland).

[We take the liberty of suggesting to our correspondent (God bless him!) that the traditions of good journalism (all unworthy though we are to say it) do not demand of editors or contributors (more power to our correspondent's elbow!) that they should be donkeys or worms.—Ed.]

SEA SHANTIES

Sir,—Your commentator's remarks on Sea Shanties brought to my mind the pleasure I experienced as an emigrant to New Zealand. I was one of 346 who landed at Wellington from a sailing ship on October 18, 1879, after a voyage of 99 days relieved by the singing of Chanties. (I prefer to call them "Chanties" rather than "Shanties" and to say "Haul the main down," not "Blow the man down.") I took a great interest in the proceedings necessary on board in which the Chanties were used. The usual Jimmy Ductis found on ships had a very musical voice, and led off the singing. It was my first contact with the sea and I had my 20th birthday on board, and well recollect the strenuous and dangerous work necessary to be done by the sailors of those days.

I trust, sir, that you will not accede to the request of "Fed Up" re Dad and Dave. I look forward every week to the serial and even at my age derive great pleasure from it.

Surely the programme is big and varied enough to satisfy his mental abilities without taking the pleasure from hundreds of your listeners.

ZELANDIA (Rotorua).

SUNDAY LEISURE

Sir,—May I be permitted to endorse the sentiments of "Returned Soldier." At the same time I think he hardly realises the peculiar and sometimes medieval outlook of the clergy towards a free Sunday and the wishes of unbelievers of adherents of alleged pagap religions. Even in these comparatively enlightened days the alleged Christians yet have the whip-hand over "those of little faith" and such Sunday liberties as we now have have been obtained for us only by the strenuous efforts of those people who refused to spend their well-earned holiday in martyrdom and morbidity to satisfy those who through church-going call themselves Christians.

I am sure that these church-goers and the clerics who guide their thought will be "dog-in-the-mangerish" about further Sunday concessions, and my words are supported by the fact that in Auckland quite recently the representatives of one of our larger Denominational persuasions, in a letter to the City Council, requested the cessation as soon as possible of the Sunday screenings for servicemen and women; furthermore, their letter was accepted while another, from the Sunday Freedom League requesting the opposite, was rejected.

As the Rev. Liggett says, "the Church is a spoilt child." Its unreason has almost always been supported by the Governments in power. Not content with the gloom already cast over Sunday, the Church frequently clamours for more broadcasting time during the week. It is the long possession of official sanction, and the ease with which it is abused (in the interests of religious persuasions) that has so weakened religion. To mention but one example of failure, take the ignominious collapse of the much vaunted Christian Order Campaign. Yet still we have religion dictating Sunday activities not only for its own adherents, but also for those who do not want to attend church anyway. The Church is indeed a spoilt child, and if its doctrines were at all applicable to modern life, and provided something dynamic, there would be no need to force them upon the "indifferent and cold of heart" as occurs to-day. The remedy is to ask the candidates at the next election what they are going to do about it. "We're the majority, aren't we?"

"MAG" (Epsom).

BACKWARD CHILDREN

Sir,—Your correspondent "Student" raises the interesting question of youths who were below average at school yet subsequently graduated above average from Air Force classes. Though I think most people will be acquainted with the apparent anomaly in our education system he is emphasising, I respectfully suggest that he is not abreast with modern educational trends if he considers that the New Zealand Council for Educational Research or any authoritative educational body or official is not giving thought to this question.

There are numerous examples of world notabilities (including Churchill) who were nothing out of the ordinary in their school work yet who were a wondering success in some special sphere in later life; and no doubt any reader could quote comparable examples from his own experience. We all know, too, the "smart Alec" who passes school examinations with ease but is a hopeless failure at applying his knowledge in the outside world. The clue to this puzzle, put, briefly, is usually "specialisation," which for various reasons cannot be practised in the ordinary primary schools.

The Air Force youths, stimulated and encouraged by different influences from those encountered at school, and perhaps aware for the first time of the purpose behind their study, may have successfully exercised latent talents for mathematics and other Air Force subjects, or, on the other hand, they may always have been strong in those subjects at school, but because of specific backwardness in certain other subjects, say languages or history, their average grading in their class, for all subjects, has been lowered.

There are other explanations, such as better health, increasing maturity of outlook, removal from adverse environmental conditions, antipathy to a teacher or generally to school life, unusually high average academic standards at the particular schools attended, or increased self-confidence, any of which might fit the case, but it would take too long to cover them all. In my original review of Dr. Winterbourn's book I

had made reference to the problem of specific backwardness, but as the review had to be condensed for reasons of space, this reference was considerably abbreviated. I suggest that "Student" and others interested in this problem should read the book and should join a Parent-Teacher Association, if one exists in their district. Membership of such associations is not normally restricted to parents and teachers, and members can often clarify their own ideas and at the same time contribute something to the common pool and indirectly to the solution of educational problems by taking part in discussions on matters such as that raised by "Student."

L. G. ANDERSON (Whangarei).

OUR CROSSWORDS

Sir,—In common, I am sure, with many hundreds of your readers, I should like to express my appreciation of the excellent work of your crossword composer, R.W.C. To compose even one respectable crossword puzzle is beyond the powers of most of us, but to sustain such a high level of skill over such a long period is an achievement. In my profession I have had to acquire a fairly wide range of general knowledge, and I also have a good reference library. I find it takes me from fifteen minutes to about an hour and a-quarter to solve the puzzles, and I count it time well spent. R.W.C. is most ingenious in his clues and anagrams, but very fair, and on only two or three occasions have I been completely "stumped." Long may he prosper and also your entertaining journal.

PED AGOG (Westport).

Sir,—As a constant subscriber to *The Listener* might I suggest that you give us a "break" with the impossible Crossword puzzle issued. We are of average intelligence, and have discussed the problems with many others, who all condemn them as too tough.

G. SHORT (Christchurch).

[Others have complained that they are too easy.—Ed.]

PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATION.

Sir,—Though there are three stations in each of the centres, I am not able to follow the principle of co-ordination. Surely one should expect to have the choice of at least three types of programmes at any one time. The use of 3YL for broadcasting concerts by local societies makes it impossible for people at any distance to enjoy those occasions owing to the very low power of the above station. Could not 3YA take over on such infrequent occasions and 3YL broadcast the "news" to save interruptions?

One wonders too why such interruptions as we had from 3YA recently are allowed to go on when a singer was cut off to allow the American Commentators to talk and later Dr. Bradshaw's recital was ruined to enable one to hear the chimes. One must accept with grateful thanks an occasional programme which includes such great artists as Maurice Clare and Dr. Bradshaw in one evening, but surely the Broadcasting Service could spend some thought on the generally poor service offered at present.

L. C. POORER (Christchurch).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Pro Arte (Wellington): If you will give us the date of the issue in which the photograph appeared on our "People in the Programmes" page we shall be able to add to your pen-name *atque veritate*.

E. M. Turner (Grey Lynn): Record is not available in New Zealand.