

JUNE 22, 1945

## Other Americas

ONLY an American could have given the answers to our questions to Dr. Canby reported on page 10; but only, most of our readers will think, a special kind of American. No one but an American soldier could have made the "humble pride" speech attributed to General Eisenhower in the Guildhall; but again, only an unusual American soldier, after proclaiming his undying Americanism, would have claimed "basic kinship with the people of London." That is to say, such men seem unusual to those who judge America by motor-cars and movies. There are other Americas, not one or two but several, but it is worth pausing for a moment or two to think of the America of Dr. Canby. Firstly, let us remember that Dr. Canby came here to talk to us about books and the men and women who write them; not only American books, but books in general, and especially the books of England; even our own books to the extent to which they express a national culture. It was a new experience to have an American here selling nothing, buying nothing, borrowing nothing, taking nothing material away: just talking to us and listening to us in friendship. Well, there are thousands of Americans who, if they came to New Zealand, would behave in precisely the same way: scholars, artists, philosophers, poets, of whom most New Zealanders know nothing. America's is an older civilisation than ours, three times as old, and if the shoddier things of civilisation have found easy lodging there, culture's roots have driven far deeper. Dr. Canby, for example, is the biographer of Thoreau and of Whitman, and though one has been dead for 83 and the other for 53 years it is not easy to name two English contemporaries whose influence is still as wide and as deep. If serenity were the deciding factor, the confidence that is calm acceptance of human life and fate, Thoreau at least, with one other American, would have to be placed ahead of all modern philosophers who have thought and expressed themselves in English.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## "LOTS OF POETRY"

Sir,—I am in the habit of making allowances for the waggish ways of *The Listener*. Often it offers me material well worth adult notice, and if it chooses to convey it in baby talk, that is an idiosyncrasy which may irritate but does not altogether repel. But baby talk has its limitations. The page and a-half of inelegant horseplay entitled "Lots of Poetry" is an example. It saddened me the more, in that the judgments on these verse publications, weeded out from the mass of facetious by-play, the knowing winks, the girlish mincings, appear to be fairly well considered. These judgments could, I suggest, have been put, quite concisely and readably, in one column of your space, if not less. The rest is tedious, tasteless, a stupid affront to those who sent you publications to review. A paper such as the *New Yorker* which is more often than not really funny, knows how to handle its reviews. Clearly, one must think twice before counting *The Listener* a responsible paper in this respect. Guy poetry by all means; it amuses you and others, and hurts no one. But don't do it under pretence of reviewing. There's no argument, really. Either you see this, or you don't. And if you did, you would not have printed "Lots of Poetry."

ALLEN CURNOW (Christchurch).

[A very slight capacity to take himself less seriously would have saved our correspondent from such solemn nonsense. Either he can see that or he can't. But why shout out that he can't?—Ed.]

Sir,—Congratulations on the most refreshingly candid book review in your issue of June 8. The war years with their important restrictions have given many New Zealand writers an unexpected ease of publication; it is still early to estimate whether this has done our literature good or harm. Perhaps it has brought out writers who would otherwise not have been known; but perhaps that would have been better with some.

A vast amount of "poetry" has been launched on a sea of public indifference, and the quality of it has done little to change that indifference. One recalls with pleasure Denis Glover's "Arraignment of Paris" in which he dealt trenchantly with the type of verse selected by the too easily pleased Mr. Marris. But since then the bellbirds have sung, and the stalwart native trees stood, in endless profusion, year after year.

I am particularly glad to see *The Listener* questioning so vigorously the value of much of this girly-girly stuff; for *The Listener* may also take some of the blame for the prostitution of the Muses.

Healthy criticism is sadly needed if we are to have anything other than sheltered writers writing to each other. Give it to 'em.

GORDON INGHAM (Auckland).

Sir,—I regret the political bias in J.C.B.'s criticism of Clyde Carr's poems. I am no Party member rushing to the defence of one of my leaders. I merely feel that this province should be preserved from political mud-slinging. I feel also that Mr. Carr has been slated far more than is warranted by his verse, and as J.C.B. is wondering why the P.P.S. published him, I can only venture

the suggestion that it is probably because they realise their duty to their members, who aren't all so horribly highbrow that they are unable to appreciate true feeling and sincerity when it is presented in an unpolished form. Some of the poets that J.C.B. extols merit the verse of Roy Campbell's: *They praise the firm restraint with which you write.*

*I'm with you there of course.*

*You use the snaffle and the curb all right,*

*But where's the bloody horse?*

I feel that Mr. Carr has a "horse," be it somewhat unbroken.

HORSE LOVER (Remuera).

[We leave it to J.C.B. to answer this disturbing charge.—Ed.]

## DEATH OF A NEW ZEALANDER

Sir,—May I congratulate you upon your eloquent editorial in the issue of June 1. One would wish that it could go into every home in New Zealand.

It is impossible to over-emphasise the significance for New Zealand of these thoughts—"Talent can neither be found by looking for it nor, when found, forced. The most we can do is to treasure it when it comes, and pay for it, and that calls for imagination as well as courage. Instead of agreeing that we can't pay the price offered by bigger and richer countries we should realise that we can't afford not to pay it—and a little more."

Do our broadcasting authorities appreciate that we can't afford not to pay for New Zealand talent the equivalent or more of what that talent can earn overseas?—G. H. A. SWAN (Wellington).

Sir,—With the statement "it is not enough to have the material for a dull and flat decency. We require the inspiration of a high intelligence" in your article on the *Death of a New Zealander* most will agree. But unfortunately for this country the material for a dull and flat decency will never foster high intelligence, and hence the tendency of so many of our most promising young men and women who go abroad, like John Mulgan, never to return for more than a visit. For the fact is that not only is there little scope for talent here but there is precious little in the uniform dullness of New Zealand life to attract those primarily interested in things of the mind. What we certainly cannot afford is complacency over our uninspiring way of life.

R. SALMOND (Takapuna).

P.S.—It would be interesting to know what proportion of our Rhodes Scholars have returned in the last 20 years to settle in New Zealand.

Sir,—In your editorial "Death of a New Zealander" (issue of June 1) your leader writer lets himself go with the following inspiring words:

"Talent can neither be found by looking for it nor, when found, forced. The most we can do is to treasure it when it comes, and pay for it, and that calls for imagination as well as courage. Instead of agreeing that we can't pay the price offered by bigger and richer countries we should realise that we can't afford not to pay it—and a little more."

That is good meaty stuff—so good that it is almost convincing. But when one recollects the microscopic fees paid to

writers by the radio authorities in New Zealand, this editorial has a hollow ring. Your paper, as part of the National Broadcasting Service, must be aware of the miserable payments offered to writers by the Broadcasting Service—and you talk of the advisability of paying more than bigger and richer countries!

"AMAZED" (Christchurch).

[We are concerned only with what we ourselves pay, and it is more than any other journal in New Zealand pays. It is still not enough, or nearly enough, but national traditions are not broken quickly.—Ed.]

## SPORTS BROADCASTS

Sir,—For some time now I have been puzzled why 2ZB has not a Sports Summary. 1ZB has Bill Meredith, 3ZB "The Toff," and 4ZB Bernie, but 2ZB no George Edwards. Speaking as a racing fan, I think a racing session (or full sports) would be appreciated by the sports fraternity of Wellington, whom I reckon have been sadly neglected. Whenever I have heard George speak, he makes a good job of it. So I say, give someone a sports session and I think a sadly neglected "sports" public will greatly appreciate it.

SPORTS SESSION (Miramar).

Sir,—May I offer a suggestion regarding the sports results (6.45 p.m.) broadcast each Saturday evening? The announcer (a popular one too) has to race through long lists simply because he is allotted too little time. I'm sure many think his time on the air should be extended.—OBSERVER (Wanganui).

## ANTHEM FOR PEACE.

Sir,—It has been suggested to me that the enclosed words of a Thanksgiving Anthem might be of interest, if published to those who listened to the broadcast of the service from 3YA at 7 p.m. on June 3.

WILL HUTCHENS (Christchurch).

## THANKSGIVING FOR PEACE.

Words by Rev. D. O. Williams, M.A., D.Litt. Music by Will Hutchens, Mus.B.

*PRaise God for Peace! Praise be to God,  
For Peace comes not by martial might alone  
Nor is sustained by compromise or gold.  
Peace is of God, Yea, God's the Peace,  
And by His Mighty Power its joys unfold.*

*THANK God for Peace! Give Thanks to God!  
The garnered store of happiness unequal,  
With lift of song and laughter's joyful peal  
Peace is of God, Yea, God's the Peace,  
His vision's bright, its kindly ways reveal.*

*PEACE has a price in blood and sorrow paid,  
On battlefields its sacrifice is made.  
It comes to us through grief of hearts bereaved,  
To charm our hearts, of anxious fears relieved.  
Bless God for precious youthful lives laid down,  
For valorous deeds that won the victor's crown.*

*PEACE of God's Patience, Peace of man's  
sacrifice,  
Take it and value its precious rewards.  
Let life stand devoted to keep, to preserve it,  
Let sacrifice eager support and sustain it.  
Peace is of God and in its upbuilding  
Man's labours are needed, man's labours and  
God's.*

*O GOD of Peace now from Thy Hand  
We take the gift in trust for every land,  
We lay aside the lay of human fame,  
And give all praise and Glory to Thy Name.*  
(Broadcast from Methodist Service by 3YA, on June 3, at 7 p.m.)

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. T. Smith (Whangarei): Our warm thanks, but publication would embarrass us.

"Ratepayer" (Auckland): Should have been sent to daily papers in Auckland.

"Canny" (Wellington): We can't help those who will not help themselves.

Peter and Pat (Wairoa): Richard Tauben,