

JULY 13, 1945

Mr. Curtin

THE sudden death of Mr. Curtin last week robbed Australia of one of its first statesmen—if not, as some have suggested, its very first. Yet he was almost unknown out of Australia five years ago. Even within Australia he was of unknown dimensions before Pearl Harbour. Whether there was a conspiracy on the part of the newspapers to play him down, or whether he had not then found himself, the John Curtin of the pre-war era was a pleasant, honest, harmless man who could never (the world thought) be a leader. The John Curtin who died peacefully in his sleep last Thursday was a world figure—bold, strong, patient, fearless—and was recognised everywhere as the saviour of the Pacific civilisation of which we in New Zealand are a part. It was his courage in places where it is not easy to be bold—the Cabinet rooms of other Governments—that brought relief to Australia before it was too late; and it is tragic to think that it was partly at least his courage in resisting his own friends that broke his health and finally killed him. For it is no secret that some of his decisions aroused as much opposition among his supporters as among his opponents. Once the war started his policy was to win it, whatever else had to give way. Once the enemy approached Australia's own shores the defence of Australia was his only concern; and while that seems an obvious enough simplification now, it was neither an obvious nor a simple course for a Labour leader committed by the struggles and promises of twenty years to social and domestic reforms. Very few out of Australia and not many there realised how many plans Mr. Curtin had to modify or drop, how many changes of direction he had to make, how often he had to say No where the party expectation was Yes, and how wearing all that was to a sensitive man whose foundation qualities were honesty and simplicity. We begin to realise it now when we see the result, but it is a melancholy thought that the day a man emerges clearly as a leader his friends begin helping his enemies to dig his grave.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

EGGS STAND ON END IN N.Z.

Sir,—May I make a claim to fame? On July 1, 1945, in the presence of four reliable witnesses (including a member of H.M. forces) I stood an egg on end. The historic spot was a smooth polished dining-table in a friend's home, and the feat was accomplished after about ten minutes of infuriating trials with more or less unco-operative and horribly smug eggs (I feel sure the one I stood on the table really *tried hard*).

I might add that I stood two eggs on the carpet (this requires little skill) and two on a polished floor (almost as difficult as the table). One of my friends, not to be outdone, stood one on the glass surface of a large hand-mirror, and by the end of the evening another member of the party was doing promising work with cork table-mats.

Yes, it is true, gloriously true, that eggs stand on end in New Zealand. I have stood them, and know the uncanny thrill success brings.

PATIENCE (Wellington).

"LISTENER" IN IRAQ

Sir,—Enclosed is part of a letter expressing appreciation for two bound volumes of *The New Zealand Listener*. The writer is an English soldier stationed in Iraq for over two years. You may publish the letter, and I trust that by so doing, others may be encouraged to send this magazine abroad.

JOAN HORWELL (Rotorua).

[“Very many thanks for the magazine sections of the *N.Z. Listener*. These arrived quite a few weeks ago and I must apologise for not having acknowledged them earlier. The books are very interesting, so much so, that I am still filling in my spare time with them. The broadcast reprints, articles, and film reviews are quite an education, and serve to show us of the old world that the new not only shares a common language with us, but a common outlook, too; a fact which we of the mother country are apt to overlook at times. One article tells the story of Durban's 'Lady in White'—a figure remembered by thousands of us who went round the Cape, en route for 'Heaven knew where.' She was on the Docks at Durban when I arrived there, and her fine rendering of many well-known songs brought tears to the eyes of many men, already homesick, and by this time, sick to death of it all.”]

A PERMANENT ORCHESTRA

Sir,—In the course of the interview given to a representative of *The Listener*, Dr. Sargent expressed his opinion that New Zealand should have a first-class permanent orchestra. He also suggested how certain difficulties could be overcome. Let us take up this challenge. Why shouldn't New Zealand have a permanent symphony orchestra? The establishment of the Centennial Orchestra in 1940 showed what was possible, but unfortunately the war caused disbandment. I think the time has come now to continue where we left off. Perhaps we start with a body of 40 players at first and make use of Dr. Sargent's suggestion to get wind players from overseas. Of course a really good conductor would be required to weld the different players into one uniform body.

The number of your journal in which the interview appeared contained the query of a correspondent about the proportion of New Zealand Rhodes Scholars who have returned to New Zealand within the last 20 years. The same question might be asked with regard to the number of young artists who have left New Zealand for studies overseas.

How many of them have returned? It rests with us to give them opportunities to display their talents. Wouldn't a symphony orchestra be an admirable opportunity? I think we should strive to prepare the ground for our New Zealand artists, that they may have an incentive to return after the completion of their studies abroad.

The war has caused a speeding up of the industrial development of New Zealand, but it has retarded the cultural development. We have to make up for it in the years to come. The earlier a start is made, the better it will be.

H.P.J. (Milton).

SHOCK TREATMENT

Sir,—While very pleased indeed to see that *The Listener* is concerned about the state of the Mental Hospitals, and being as keen as any one that the right type of girl should volunteer for the service, I was rather troubled at the idea of “shocking” people back to mental health.

Let me admit at the beginning that I don't know much about these matters;

Eye-Witness Story Competitions

THE results have been announced of the Eye-Witness Story Competitions recently organised by the Army Education and Welfare Service in conjunction with the NBS. These were open to New Zealand service men and women at home and overseas, and demobilised service personnel who have served anywhere overseas.

Competition No. 1

FIRST: “Smoke Laying at Casino,” by 17858 Tpr. D. G. Buchanan, Staff, N.Z. Forces Club, Bari, 2nd N.Z.E.F., C.M.F.
SECOND: “The Blitz of Ismailia,” by 28076 C/Sister E. M. Somers-Cocks, N.Z.A.N.S., Christchurch Hospital (No. 3 N.Z. General Hospital, N.Z.E.F.).

COMMENDED: “The Break Through,” by B. M. Robson, 75 Risselaw Rd., Caversham, Dunedin (H.Q. Coy., 23rd Bn., 2nd N.Z.E.F.); “The Treasuries,” by L/Cpl. S. H. Knowles, Masfield St., Howick, Auckland; “St. George's Day, April 23, 1941,” by Sister Ailsa C. Fleming, Public Hospital, Christchurch.

Competition No. 2

FIRST: “One He Didn't Get,” by 83028 Pte. H. Brennan, 6th N.Z. Field Ambulance, M.E.F.

SECOND: “The Break Through at Minquar Quaim,” by 63722 Gunner A. E. Burns, N.Z. Base Kit Section, 2nd N.Z.E.F.

COMMENDED: “Spartan Interlude,” by W.O. H. Vernon Parkinson, Sigs. Wing, A.S.I., Trentham; “Action in Kolombangara Gulf,” by D. F. Ackerley, R.N.Z.N. C.O. Mess, H.M.S. Philomel.

but after all in the last analysis the experts have to satisfy us ordinary folk. I must say that your description of the treatment gives me cold shivers. Electric shock strong enough to throw a patient into convulsions—well perhaps it's all right! To my untrained mind it rather looks like the well-known treatment of throwing a bucket of water over an hysterical girl. Or again it might be likened to giving a man a year for pinching socks. The girl won't turn on another fit within range of that bucket, nor will the convict perhaps revisit the sock counter; but is she less of an hysteric or he a more social being? Can Satan cast out Satan, and can a big

fear cast out a little one and leave the patient braver and stronger? No doubt if the patient has faith shock will often work—anything would.

I suggest, sir, that we are trying a dangerous short cut and that the real need of the Mental Hospitals is heavily increased staffing, so that proper analysis can be followed by proper psychological treatment. At any rate, would the Mental Hospital people give us some more information—so that if it is possible our faith may grow.

O. E. BURTON (Wellington).

4YA COMMUNITY SING

Sir,—I'm certain I'm not alone in feeling keenly disappointed when the weekly Community Sing from Station 4YA is broken into to relay the News from London. Elderly people and those in Hospitals as well as people in country districts, all unable to attend these gatherings in person, could surely be allowed this hour of unbroken enjoyment. For I can assure you these sings do bring happiness to a large number of people.

Would it not be possible on that one day weekly to have the 12.15 and 1.15 p.m. news broadcast by the secondary stations?

A turn of the knob brings in any of the other YA stations too. So I cannot see that anyone would be inconvenienced if my suggestion is accepted.

I would like to say that I agree with your correspondent “Hopeful” (Gisborne) in thinking the time would be well spent in announcing the name of each item after, as well as before, presentation.

DOWN SOUTH (Southland).

MAORI PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—And where, may I ask, would the normal man-in-the-street, who has hardly any Maori, find himself when, as suggested by “Ephesus,” the radio announcer reverted to the old and perhaps correct pronunciation of Maori place-names? To hear Wairarapa pronounced Wa-i-ra-ra-pa (with a long A) would be extremely baffling. “Ephesus” and other correspondents do not seem to realise that the pronunciation of words, whether from Maori or any other language, changes with common usage, and that it is the pronunciation of the man-in-the-street that counts. I, too, deplore the loss of the musical sounds of the old pronunciation, but I also realise that the announcers are catering largely for a population which wants to understand and not for the ears of the relatively few initiated.

OTAKI: LONG A (Lower Hutt).

Sir,—I heartily agree with Kia Tika (Ohariu) regarding Maori pronunciation. By all means let us have correct Maori, as well as other languages. If the announcers are not conversant with the Maori language, then it should be necessary for them to take lessons. Radio announcers are not the only offenders. During the filming of the New Zealand gazette recently the commentator referred to Pahiatus as Piar-tua, instead of Pa hi-atua. Maori names are simple to pronounce if a little trouble is taken to sound all the vowels.

HORI (Auckland).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Vita Brevis (Hamilton).—Our warm thanks. “Reader Pleader.”—No name or address.