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## The Road

IT is not the fault of the Prime Minister if the San Francisco decisions are not yet fully understood by the public. It is not easy to grasp all that is involved when delegates from 50 nations talk almost without ceasing for 62 days. Apart from anything else there is the physical difficulty of reading such a mass of material as the reports now make; and if the Prime Minister himself and his colleagues overcame the vastly bigger difficulty of participating in every important discussion and sitting on every relevant committee, they were not confused as the New Zealand public have been by condensed, distorted, and sometimes deliberately coloured reports of the discussions as they progressed. It is not cynicism to say that the only New Zealanders who understand as well as know what the Conference did are those who took part in it, and that the effort of getting the rest of us to understand is comparable with the task historians have always had in explaining the Great Charter itself. But the Prime Minister has told us very clearly, and with moving eloquence, what they set out to do. It was not to give the world security, but to open a way to security; not even to remove international friction, but to devise ways of dealing with friction before it leads to war. But this meant, to begin with, trusting one another, and it was soon made clear that complete trust was not yet a possibility. Therefore compromises had to be accepted, and concessions made, that the New Zealand delegation found depressing, and the Prime Minister has not tried to rub those failures out. They are in all his speeches, and they are incorporated frankly in the Report presented to Parliament; but the solid body of achievement remains. The road has been surveyed and laid down—a very imperfect road, Mr. Fraser admits, a road that no nation should take blindly, but a road that 50 nations have now pledged themselves to use.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## SHOCK TREATMENT

Sir,—My attention has been drawn to a letter appearing over the signature of the Rev. O. E. Burton in a recent issue of *The Listener*. Your correspondent expresses concern over "shock treatment" as described by your representative in a previous issue.

In some ways perhaps the word "shock" is unfortunate. Actually, there are several forms of "shock" treatment; in some it is carried out by chemical means and in the particular method under review, by electricity. The idea behind all these treatments is to produce a sudden physical upset to the brain and not to create a state of fear or shock to the patient from the psychological point of view. Not all forms of "shock" treatment aim at producing a convulsion. Convulsive treatment has passed the experimental stage and is widely accepted as the treatment of choice in certain forms of mental illness. When the treatment was first used, the convulsions were produced by a drug introduced into the blood stream, but there was a delay of a second or so before the drug was able to reach the brain and during this period the patient experienced some unpleasant sensations. As a result some were apprehensive of the treatment, which was a disadvantage. The introduction of the electrical method made it possible for the patient to become unconscious immediately, with the resultant removal of the fear of the treatment. This is an effective answer to the suggestion that the patient is frightened by shock into getting better. Any fear of the treatment militates against success.

Combined with "shock" treatment, there is always psychological treatment, and in these cases the two are interdependent. Each form helps the other and many patients owe their short stay in hospital and their recovery to electrical convulsive treatment. This would not be achieved by a treatment based on fear. There is no one method of treating all mental illnesses and it would be quite wrong to lay too much emphasis on either the physical or the psychological methods of treatment. Separately and combined each has its place.

It has not been my purpose to go into technical details of the treatment nor its rationale (way it works), but to refute any suggestion that the treatment is based on fear or that it is a short cut. Readers may be assured that the electric convulsive method is a distinct advance in the treatment of mental illness.—J. RUSSELL (Acting Director-General, Mental Hospitals).

Sir,—I read with interest the comments of your correspondent O. E. Burton in a recent issue of *The Listener*, under the above heading.

As one who has just recovered from a severe nervous breakdown as a direct and immediate result of this treatment, I would like to assure your correspondent that the patient has nothing to fear and suffers no pain or discomfort from the shock. Immediately the current is turned on, the patient becomes unconscious and remains so for varying periods, and when he regains consciousness has no knowledge or recollection, pleasant or unpleasant, of anything that happened

from the time he got ready for the shock. At least that was my experience, and from what I have read on the subject since my recovery, I believe that is the general experience. In my case, I agreed somewhat reluctantly to try the treatment, and certainly faith in the treatment played no part in my recovery. I had been unable to attend to my business or private affairs for about six months before I consented to try the treatment, and after undergoing it for six weeks, during which time I received in all 12 shocks at the rate of two per week, and after resting for less than a week, I returned to my home and almost immediately again took charge of my not inconsiderable business affairs and of my practice as a Public Accountant, and have not missed a day at my office since then. That is now nearly two months ago and I believe my mental and physical vigour is at least as great as it was before my breakdown.

I shall never cease to be grateful to those good friends who urged me to try the electric shock treatment and to the doctor and attendants at the Home in Christchurch where the treatment was given. I feel that in my case almost a miracle has been performed, and it is in the hope that other nerve sufferers may be induced to try the treatment that I ask you to publish this letter.

J. MARTIN BUNT (Greymouth).

## FUNCTION OF THE FILMS

Sir,—I have read the article by Samuel Goldwyn in your issue of July 6. It is a commonplace now that the film is the most powerful conditioning mechanism in modern society. The power vested in Mr. Goldwyn and his colleagues is therefore plenary, incalculable. What qualifications has he for bearing this enormous responsibility? I say, unreservedly, none. His article is a piece of sententious humbug. "A picture's first function is to entertain." Mr. Goldwyn deceives himself. As it is, in Hollywood the first and last function of the film is profit-making. Entertainment? Certainly, because without it, no audience, no profit.

The film has a single problem: to render through its photographic technique a vision of life, and to render it truly. It sounds dull fare, no doubt. What of entertainment? I say simply this: that whatever is truly and artistically rendered through any medium, must of its nature be entertaining. The present limited meaning given to entertainment as something merely amusing or diverting is a debased usage. And Mr. Goldwyn's less than adroit rationalising about direct entertainment and indirect education does not bear close scrutiny. If the entertainment is true, it must be educational also, in the purest and most complete form.

But Hollywood, for the most part, is not interested in truth unless it pays dividends. Taken as a whole, its values are commercial and rankly materialist. Why, then, are they accepted with such avidity? Because society itself is commercial and rankly materialist. The film mirrors, though it rarely states, the great frustrations of our time, the spectacle of society in decay. I would like to believe in Mr. Goldwyn's eloquent plea for

"honest" films. But he states that Americans may learn about English courage from Mrs. Miniver and *The White Cliffs of Dover*, about history from *Wilson* and *Gone With the Wind*, and I therefore find it impossible to take him seriously.

And yet he must be taken seriously, for Samuel Goldwyn is a movie mogul, inheritor of the earth, a czar of the universe.

BRUCE MASON (Wellington).

## PAGEANT OF MUSIC

Sir,—The absurdly short time into which H. C. Luscombe is expected to compress his "Highlights from Musical History" renders his task unenviable; and, while he is doing his best to steer an overlaid vessel between the Charybdis of comment without sufficient illustration and the even less desirable Scylla opposite, passengers might well refrain from bothering him with complaints about the catering. Your Radio Viewreel of June 29, for example, objects to the abrupt changes of key in the Mozart selections; surely a secondary school pupil of average musical intelligence would take these in his stride?

Your commentator, or perhaps it is the composer this time, goes on to refer to an animal named Cerebus. This will give the well-informed pupil pause. Cerebos I know, he will say; it is a kind of salt; and Cerberus I have heard of, a kind of dog; but this Cerebus has escaped me. Is it perhaps a new variety of spam? As to the number of its heads: the earliest Greek authority—Hesiod—states that there were fifty. A few hundred years later Euripides reduced them to three, possibly for metrical reasons; but in any case he was a rationalist, Virgil, some hundreds of years later still, also favoured three, but his contemporary Horace raised the bid to a hundred. It would therefore probably be safer to refer to Cerberus, if at all, and as I understood Mr. Luscombe to do, simply as many-headed. Gluck, no doubt, knew better than to regard Virgil, pale imitator that he was, as any sort of authority on Greek mythology, but he probably felt unequal to asking any orchestra to perform more than three woofs at a time. Wagner, I imagine, would have had no hesitation in writing in the whole fifty; indeed, to my untutored ear, there seem to be several passages in his works where he has actually done so.

HOMER (Auckland).

## "BELOW AVERAGE" BOYS

Sir,—You published recently an extremely interesting letter signed "Student" (Invercargill) about Air Force passes by boys who did nothing at school and yet managed to pass into air-crews. I venture to think the reason may be this. Boys are growing so fast during the adolescent years that a great proportion are absolutely incapable of close application to study—in fact, mentally lazy, and may be graded accordingly. I have known it happen. The same lads, when they reach eighteen and are urged on by the determination to get in an air crew at any cost, apply themselves to the stiff study, and pass accordingly. Their period of rapid development and growth is nearly over, and so with the incentive, they succeed. The ability to use the mental powers was just dormant for the time being.

ISOBEL KEMP (Opoitiki).