

SEPTEMBER 28, 1945

On Record

THIS week we all go on record, and are reacting like raw recruits called on to strip for medical examination. We dare not say No, but we linger as long as we can before we say Yes, and end by being half ashamed and half resentful. Man is a shy animal naturally. Though he sometimes develops a front of brass, he is more likely to be blushing and inhibited outside a narrow range of experiences. Many of us start at the sound of our own names even in expected places—in school or army roll-calls, for example, or as litigants or witnesses in a court of law—and to hear them in unexpected places takes our breath away. It is interesting at an auction sale to notice how many successful bidders resist calling out their names even when there is no business, social, or official reason for reticence. Not only do we withhold facts, but we make mysteries where none exist, and where publicity can have no serious consequences: about our addresses, for example, our occupations, and even our ages. Few men ever lost a job and few women a husband by being honest about their ages, yet many of them would sooner surrender a tooth than that secret. And records unfortunately mean nothing when we tear great gaps through them. If we don't tell the whole truth we tell no statistical truth at all, and make it extremely difficult for anyone else to arrive at a useful approximation. Consider, for example, how successfully farmers and stock-breeders lie when they leave all the poor performers out of a registered family history. So if workers are accurate about their earnings but not accurate about their hours, or the other way round, the consequence may be a strike in which each side honestly and bitterly believes that the other is lying. It is to be hoped therefore that we have all had the courage this week to confess the whole truth about our wives, our wages, our homes, and our modern conveniences, and that we have not even concealed the peccadilloes of our hens.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sir,—I wish to point out a slight error inadvertently made by you in your leading article recently under the heading "615 Into 457." You stated that there were 615 members in the House of Commons. The number has been increased to 640 owing to the addition of 25 new constituencies.

C.K.S. (Lake Tekapo Hydro).

(We thank our correspondent for this correction. Our figure was taken from Whitaker 1945, but he is right in saying that 25 new constituencies have been added. We are also delighted to find him slipping into error himself. Our caption was "615 Into, 437"—not 457.—Ed.).

THANKS TO 2YD

Sir,—As a constant listener of music programmes, I would like to express, through your splendid magazine, my appreciation of a current 2YD series, Mendelssohn and His Music. It is the first time I heard over the radio the whole of the incidental music to "Midsummer Night's Dream." The half-hour or so programme, with its brief and intelligent annotations, with its beautiful music, was a real delight to me. And so, for that matter, have been the Station's previous series on different composers. The idea is sound, and to give the whole of the composer's available music, interpreted by the world's greatest virtuosi, is worthy of the highest praise.

So I overcome my usual reluctance for writing letters to pay a tribute to those who made the programme possible, and who provided many listeners with a pleasure-giving half-hour.—"CONSTANT LISTENER" (Seatoun).

HOW MANY LISTENERS

Sir,—With regard to the reported statements of Mr. Scrimgeour as to the percentage of listeners who listen in to Parliamentary broadcasts, boxing matches, etc., I would like to ask if there is any method of ascertaining these facts? I have often wondered if a lecturer, preacher, or entertainer of any kind has any idea whether he is addressing thousands of listeners or talking to empty air. I cannot think of any way in which he could find out. In any case, I think Mr. Scrimgeour's estimate of the percentage who listen to Parliament is much too high. My husband and I listen in, but we know few others who do. Certainly very few young people do so.

"CURIOUS" (Gate Pa).

(Inquiry provides some information; tests of various kinds a little more; but percentages are invariably bold guesses.—Ed.).

DUNEDIN R.S. CHOIR

Sir,—I am sorry the Dunedin Returned Services Choir should have misinterpreted my paragraph entitled "Onward." I had absolutely no intention of "damning with faint praise." I have listened to this choir with interest for years, and if I did not consider its performances a worthy contribution to Dunedin's music I should not have mentioned it at all. But the choir already has in its library some music by masters of song-writing and it was the remembrance of some splendid performances

in the past which led me to criticise the music selected for the broadcast under discussion. I cannot agree with Mr. Harre about the standard of the songs which I mentioned as being hackneyed, namely, "Mandalay," "Excelsior," and "Smilin' Thru." The composers of these songs may be, as Mr. Harre says, world-famous. So are Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Vera Lynn, yet I prefer Oscar Natzke. And I maintain that no "difficult," or "modern" arrangement of "Smilin' Thru," whether by Doris Arnold or anybody else, can make that song anything but a sentimental ballad. However, while we can agree to differ on the sort of music we prefer, there is another matter on which we are in hearty agreement—the high cost of music. One and sixpence per copy for choir music which used to be fourpence is appalling.—DUNEDIN VIEWSREEL COMMENTATOR.

EDITORIAL MANNERS

I could hardly believe my eyes as I read I. D. Campbell's letter in a recent issue because I almost invariably enjoy, and support the point of view of your replies to correspondents. It takes a lot to surprise me in the way of human behaviour, but as already intimated, I. D. Campbell can claim that

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 24-25.

distinction. While I do not always hold with the point of view expressed in the editorials, I think that I. D. Campbell's praise regarding them applies perfectly to the replies when he or she uses the words "wisdom" and "eloquent sanity." And were you the easily-annoyed side-stepping cavalier he says you are, your replies would be far more frequent.

"SUBSCRIBER" (Patetonga).

"BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE"

Sir,—We enjoyed the broadcast "Bonnie Prince Charlie" from 4YA, but why was it so short? There are many of us who belong to families who were out in the "45" and have heard stories handed down to us. After all, two hundred years is not a long period for those of us who have a long line of Highland ancestry. Had the broadcast been for an hour perhaps they would have been able to include more of the familiar Jacobite songs. Why, though, were Prince Charlie and his father, James VIII. of Scotland, referred to as the Old and Young Pretender? Nobody at the Glenfinny gathering would think of them as such. In an otherwise delightful broadcast that was the only jarring note, and it did jar.

MARY M. MITCHELL (Mosgiel).

NO JAM

Sir,—When I read Mr. Fairburn's article I am afraid I was not in sympathy with the gist of his remarks. It was on the point of my pen to retort that Mr. Fairburn ought to know that there is no jam for anybody connected

with journalism in New Zealand. I could not see that the free lance journalists had any squeal coming in view of the fact that the prizes for regular journalists are lean indeed. Now I read the letters of "Saturation Point" and M. Moody. I can only say that I hope the first correspondent is not serious when he suggests it may be possible for a free lance journalist to turn out three articles a week and have them accepted. As to M. Moody, I must say that his is a negative attitude. The free lance journalist has as much right to exploit public depravity in writing "vapoury nothings" as has, say, a man of very humble rank to aspire to political fame and get away with it.

Well, I have given much thought to the subject dealt with by Mr. Fairburn and your correspondents. I think they all miss the main point, and that is, that the good name of journalism has been sullied by money-grubbing practices, notably the prospects in the advertising field. Newspaper production is a commercial undertaking. Newspapers are not brought into being to serve the public good, but to pay profits to the directors and shareholders. While this condition remains human talent in the literary sense will have to beg for a crust. It's a sheer waste of time asking anybody to pass the jam. Jam is a delicacy which the working journalist does not see, except when he lays hold of the mercantile gazette and—well work it out for yourself, sir.

"H.A. DIT" (Mangatainoka).

Sir,—In answer to A. R. D. Fairburn's "Pass the Jam Please," M. Moody infers that the writer is a fool if he cannot see "the limited horizon clearly defined by popular taste," implying that if the free-lance journalist writes down to that level he will get his jam. He then finds fault with writers in women's periodicals who do just that. "Vaporous nothings" pay, as Bing Crosby among others has found out, and I notice that M. Moody finds no fault with Bing for doing so.

I uphold free writing and free reading and M. Moody and I are free to leave alone what we don't like. It is usual though, isn't it, for the exclusive few to pay more for exclusive goods.

I.B. (Kelburn).

2YC DANCE SESSIONS

Sir,—I noticed "Gentle Annie's" letter in a recent *Listener* and although I say that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, I think most people reading this letter will agree that her footnote about 2YC's announcer was quite uncalled for, as he was but doing his job; and doing it well, too. Why should he, to please "Gentle Annie," announce these records as if he was in a morgue?

"Gentle Annie" would like Beethoven between 6 and 7 in the evening because "she" prefers it. I prefer the dance music, so why should it be changed just because she wants it?

HEP-CAT (Hawera).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT
R. W. Cavell (Tauranga).—Name not given on record.