

MARCH 29, 1946

## The Bread-Line

THE decision to launch a voluntary food-saving campaign for the hungry overseas is a decision to trust New Zealand's moral fibre. Cynics could indeed find some amusement in the fact that the Churches voted for compelling us to give and the Labour Unions for persuading us; but even cynics hesitate to make jokes at the expense of people who are starving to death. We sacrifice ourselves to save them, whatever we think of the procedure, or we sink into a destitution of our own that is worse than theirs. For the problem is moral from beginning to end. No one believes that we have no food to spare in New Zealand. We know that we have a great deal to spare if we are willing to surrender it—more every day and every meal than we require to maintain health; and that health is the only justifiable standard in a world facing famine on a hemispheric scale. Therefore the question is whether the people of New Zealand are sound enough morally to do their duty. The Government thinks that they are and has decided to trust them, but it has not made that decision lightly. Nor has the Federation of Labour made it lightly. It must know that success can be guaranteed by the Unions and by no other single section of the community. If they rise to the occasion—it means rising a little higher than other people since the most keenly felt sacrifices will have to be made in their ranks—food will start flowing to Britain in a stream worthy of so fortunate a country. If on the other hand we have a clamour for equality of sacrifice (which is achieved when a ship sinks with all hands but hardly ever by less drastic means) the campaign will fail as a voluntary effort and we shall find ourselves doing compulsorily and in shame what we were not big enough to do gladly and freely. So the question really is, Are the cynics and selfish humbugs right, or have we enough character left to make fools of them instead of forever allowing them to make fools of us? In other words, have we a moral as well as a material margin in New Zealand, or have we reached the moral bread-line?

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## THE "DARK" AGES?

Sir,—Mr. Harold Miller has attacked an article published in your paper about the History Serial for the Education sessions. Though I did not write the article, I am largely responsible for the ideas expressed in it. In spite of Mr. Miller's criticism, I think the works express the fact.

Mr. Miller asks was there no art in the Middle Ages? Every century has some gleam of light. But would Mr. Miller compare the stilted coloured lettering of some monkish illuminator with the works of Perugino, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Pinturicchio? Who were the great painters who lived in the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th centuries? Mr. Miller asks if there was no education. Does he suggest that the Universities were doing a great and progressive work in teaching the Trivium and Quadrivium? Mr. Coulton, in his *Mediaeval Panorama*, will tell Mr. Miller that there were 50 students at Cambridge. It is generally considered that the only learning lay in the minds of churchmen, that the greater part of the people were entirely illiterate, and that the Church did nothing to cure their ignorance. In fact, the whole policy of the Church was to keep the people in darkness. Had there not been some discontent with that darkness there would have been neither a Renaissance nor a Reformation.

I am responsible for the words "about 1400" being used as a starting point for the Renaissance. It still seems to me a good enough date. Admittedly, Dante comes a century before that time. Every movement has its outriders. Does Mr. Miller deny that there was such a thing as a Renaissance? The giving of names to abstract happenings is awkward, the use of dates still more so. But it is difficult to avoid landmarks in history. Mr. Miller may consider that there was no occasion for a Reformation. Yet it is not easy to put aside the strictures of Erasmus, and many other great men.

Finally, let me agree with Mr. Miller that there may be something to be said for living in the dark. But people get tired of living in a blackout, and there is usually trouble when they break out. What happened when the blackout of the Middle Ages lifted appears to me to make the period under discussion so fascinating.—C. T. A. TYNDALL (Wellington).

## SURNAMES ONLY

Sir,—Tuning in to "Give it a Name Jackpots" from 2ZB, on Monday, February 18, I was greatly surprised that two of the contestants were not called to order in answering two questions as Stout and Massey, and were not corrected. Surely two noted deceased statesmen were entitled to their full names, Sir Robert Stout and Mr. William Massey. How would those two contestants feel if they, or their parents, were referred to by their surnames?

One wonders what education and class of people some of the contestants are at the studio. I was teaching for many years, and had any of my pupils answered in the same manner, they would have been severely reprimanded.

In hospital the use of surnames has been called in, even the poorest of patients are addressed by Sisters and Nurses as Mr., Mrs. or Miss, as the case may be. Naturally I know there is a knob on the wireless to turn; which will eventually be done in the future when I hear so little respect paid to any person.

I am only one of many who have taken exception to the two contestants of Tuesday, February 18, 1946.

"RESPECT YOUR ELDERS"  
(Christchurch).

## A MUSICAL BROADCAST

Sir,—On a recent Monday evening there was broadcast from 1YA a talk on "The Pageant of Music," by Mr. Luscombe, who attempted to deal with Liszt and his compositions. During his talk he informed his listeners that the main divisions of music were into "Abstract" and "Programmatic" (however, he spells it). It would be very interesting to know Mr. Luscombe's idea in thus coining new words quite unnecessarily for the universally recognised terms, "Absolute" and "Programme."

We have any amount of aural proof of the prostitution of "practical" music; cannot these people leave even the theoretical side unadulterated?

J. D. PARKIN (Timaru).

## A SUNDAY SESSION

Sir,—Sunday evening is the one night in the week when I can have an uninterrupted period of enjoyment with my radio. I usually select my programme from favourable comments made in your columns, or by straightout choice from listed programmes. But your recommendations in recent months seem to have been loosely chosen, particularly for Sunday evenings.

I would like to commend "Off Parade: At Radio's Round-table" from 3ZB on Sundays at 7 p.m. This session is assuredly one of the highlights of all the programmes offered, and it is a great pity that it is not more widely known. From the discussions provoked in the homes of many of my friends after the session is over I know that a most lively interest is being taken in the subjects discussed and I would suggest that your columnist listens in on any Sunday. He will be well rewarded I am sure.

"DISCUSSION" (Christchurch).

## LINCOLN AND CROMWELL.

Sir,—On a recent Sunday afternoon 2ZB produced a magnificent programme to mark the 137th anniversary of the birth of that great statesman, Abraham Lincoln. Unfortunately the programme was spoilt by just one sentence. That was when the narrator suggested that Abraham Lincoln would have been "at home" marching with Oliver Cromwell, of all people. This absurd comparison absolutely startled me.

It is difficult to find a common denominator from Lincoln's and Cromwell's respective political careers. Cromwell led a rebellion against the state: Lincoln led his nation against the Southern rebels: Cromwell enforced his

religious creed upon the people: Lincoln stood for spiritual freedom. Cromwell and his associates were notorious money lenders: Lincoln opposed debt bondage as well as the other form of slavery. Cromwell was an absolute dictator: Lincoln's name will forever be associated with democracy.

The narrator also compared Abraham Lincoln with Wat Tyler. Now that was a good comparison. He might have added such names as William Wilberforce, Daniel O'Connell, W. E. Gladstone, or perhaps even R. J. Seddon. As for Cromwell, he might well be compared with Brutus and Stanley Baldwin, all three being responsible for dethroning their respective sovereigns. By contrast, Lincoln himself was assassinated. No doubt "Old Abe" would somersault in his grave, if he knew that 2ZB had compared him with that treasonable and rebellious scoundrel Cromwell.

B. H. PATON (Marlborough).

## O, TO BE IN ENGLAND

Sir,—Mr. Meek, prophet without honour in a country without culture, is fleeing the wilderness to the tune of some two thousand words and a nifty little illustration. Good luck to Mr. Meek and may he find what he is looking for. But will someone please break the news to him that he will never find the Abbey Theatre by seeking it at, say, Stratford-on-Avon or among the upper reaches of the Cam?—ISOBEL ANDREWS (Wellington).

(Mr. Meek comments: "I'm sorry I hopped over from Cambridge to Dublin too quickly for your correspondent to follow me.")

Sir,—I'm thinking R. L. Meek will be regretting his recently published emotional outburst. So! He imagines it more becoming for one of his mental calibre to retire into the rare atmosphere of University precincts, than to live a useful life among intellectual nonentities. Maybe he expects to find the short rations in England morally uplifting, or does he expect to live entirely on mental food?

The same mail brought a jubilant letter from a contemporary of R. L. Meek, who has been living in England since VE Day. He has made many pleasant contacts there and been offered lucrative employment, but his theme song is, "I'm coming home"—home to New Zealand, the only country where the dead hand of social caste and pretension is not dominant.

I rejoice in his return as much as I resent R. L. Meek's disavowal of his homeland and of his responsibilities to the land of his birth. To me, the organisation of a Community Centre at Nae Nae or at Whatuwhiwhi is of far greater value than the training of another economist in England.

S.J.M. (Whatuwhiwhi).

## NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Another Self-Exporter" (Wellington): You may be right or you may be wrong in your interpretation of the writer's motives, but since you cannot be sure you ought not to say "The truth is, and he is well aware of it, etc."

ADDRESS WANTED: If "Betrayed Wife (via Frankton)," who wrote in *The Listener* of November 23, 1945, will send us her name and address again we will forward her a letter.