

MAY 3, 1946

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

OI! OI!

Sir,—Your film critic in his review of *Waterloo Road* in your issue of April 12 uses the words "places like Waterloo Road, where the majority of really important people in the population live." This reveals either culpable ignorance or an attempt at some frightfully subtle form of propaganda and in either case it is utter drivel.

LAMBETH WALK (Timaru).

(It may help our readers' memories if we quote the whole of the relevant passage from the review: "Very effective use is also made of *genuine* local colour; which is something that has happened all too seldom in the past in British films, with their concentration on the Stately Homes of Old England rather than on places like the Waterloo Road, where the majority of really important people in the population live."—Ed.)

"WHEN THE WIND BLOWS"

Sir,—The wind blows up again at Wallace Gaitland's staggering remark that Frank Sargeson nourishes himself on modern American authors as against English traditional ones.

After his first collection of stories was published—*Conversations with My Uncle* (about ten years ago, I think)—I remember that Frank Sargeson acknowledged, in the pages of *To-morrow* the influence of Sherwood Anderson. This was in answer to critics who called him "Ernest Hemingway's younger brother." Only the other day I heard this comparison drawn again. I can't imagine two writers much further apart in style and attitude. The only point of resemblance is the ear both authors share with Mark Twain for precise local idiom applied to revelation of character.

Surely a most significant thing about *When the Wind Blows* is that a New Zealand author like Frank Sargeson, whose development obviously demands from him most careful selection and discrimination, has abandoned the American influence for the European—even if he still keeps to the small town of Sherwood Anderson tradition. The book cries out to be compared and contrasted with James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and in its episodal character, if in nothing else, shows the influence of *Ulysses*, with a very interesting adaptation—or development, however slight—of the stream-of-consciousness method.

And I'd pick from this novel that the author is pretty well read in E. M. Forster. I'd also be willing to take Wallace Gaitland on that for one modern American author that Frank Sargeson reads, he reads ten English plus some five other European ones, past and present.

I agree with him, though, that M. Holcroft's review in *The Listener* of *When the Wind Blows* inspires respect. It is admittedly tentative and if he missed a good deal at this first time of reading he at least gives us a study that is of value, whereas Ian Hamilton uses the review, the novel, and the character of "Henry" in it, to abuse New Zealand society in a loose prose style that suggests that he himself has not the creative ability—or stability—to adjust himself to its demands. It's because Henry does not abuse, but gets

on with the difficult but effective job of making his own place for himself in it—we realise in the final episode—that we see a decadent society so clearly and are so grateful for the book. And so eager for a sequel.

E. P. DAWSON (Mt. Maunganui).

Sir,—In my letter concerning Mr. Holcroft's review of *When the Wind Blows*, published in *The Listener* of April 12, you have printed the following " . . . for its study of the growth of a boy against the setting of a certain environment, rather than the growth of character, and with such a method the characters are ancillary. . . ." Checking this passage with that of my carbon copy, I find it should read, " . . . for

*More letters from listeners will be found
on pages 32 and 33*

its study of the growth of a boy against the setting of a certain environment. Actually, I believe, the novel is intended to express an environment, the growth of environment rather than the growth of character; and with such a method the characters are ancillary. . . ."

Would you be good enough to publish this correction?

WALLACE GAITLAND
(Invercargill).

NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE.

Sir,—The statement of policy attributed to me in *The Listener* of April 12 obviously needs clarification.

Where loans of books are offered to local authorities — boroughs, town districts, or counties—to help them to make their libraries free, there is no proposal to establish parallel or separate free library service if the local authority is not itself prepared to give free service.

Where regional distribution from a main city is concerned it would be desirable to have this done from the city public library if possible. This Service would then help with books, staff, and the provision of premises. It seems uneconomical to have one library service for the city and another for the country involving two staffs and two collections of books, since roads are becoming good and transport facilities are improving. If, however, the city library is not free or finds it inconvenient to become the regional headquarters, it will be necessary for regional distribution to be carried out by this Service. A separate building in the same city with a separate staff and book collection will then be necessary.—G. T. ALLEY (Director, National Library Service).

LUNCH HOUR ART IN WELLINGTON.

Sir,—I was not disappointed on reading the article by J.C.B. under the above heading in your journal. It seems that *The Listener* is the only paper which dedicates space to problems of culture and art, dealing with these matters with an understanding never to be found in the daily press, which with few

exceptions mentions such things with little heart and less conviction. Between this article and the letter by "One Who Wants to Run Away" (Auckland) is an organic connection, although J.C.B.'s article is only meant as an appreciative art criticism. But when one reads the letter and considers the title one finds the New Zealand tragedy in the words "Lunch-hour art in Wellington."

On seeing this one-man show, I was immediately reminded of the polemic letters published in your paper and in others about exhibitions of the "rejects" and also of the long letters pointing out what a loss to the nation it is, that so many New Zealand scientists and artists are going abroad or have to go abroad, for reasons known to all of us. In my opinion the arguments about exhibitions or "rejects" did not arise from those who were annoyed by being rejected, or from those who pretend to understand art—they were the result of the wish to escape from the utter boredom of walking around the walls of Academy exhibitions, and of looking at the eternal sugary still lifes, the photographic tight landscapes with no impetus and at pictures which do not show any aspect of the world in which we live.

As far as I could find out, James Bowkett Coe was not among those whose pictures were rejected — perhaps only because he did not enter his canvases. I can quite imagine that a painter who paints pictures of the horror of jungle warfare, who was one of those who lay in the foxholes of Vella Lavella, has not the nerve to stand such a rejection and prefers rather to have his pictures at home. I can only hope that one day a hanging-committee might start thinking about the deterioration of the art life here and find some new solutions, some new ways and ideas. One of these would be to encourage new progress in art, by asking artists not working in the traditional way to exhibit in the National Gallery, thus giving the walls new colour, and the visitors a real idea of art and its trends. Then might be awakened the clear consciousness that art can not grow in a vacuum but is dependent on and influenced by our life, our surroundings, social, economic and political.

RICHARD SCHACHERL
(Wellington).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

RADIO ROUND TABLE

Sir,—Your letter from "Discussion" in a recent number is timely. The Sunday night feature "On Parade" is one of the few worthwhile sessions on the air. It certainly is most provocative and deserves recognition by the people who write "Radio Viewsreel." The session has entertainment, colour, and character—qualities not often found these days.

JAMES CORRIGAN (Christchurch).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Mother Tongue" (Invercargill): Printer's error.

H.N.P. (Christchurch). and others: We do not publish unsolicited book reviews.

R. Crowley (Hon. Secretary Wellington Townswomen's Guild): On your own admission, you have "already had correspondence with the Director of Broadcasting on this subject."

Etacinshrdludludludlutashtsk (Thames Coast):
Your train ran off the rails because you failed
to notice the teakettle. But it's nice to know
we can write free verse without even trying.

"Grouser" (Auckland): Reference your "last and bright suggestion." Illegal, we reckon we must.

M.S. (Wallingford): Too dangerous. We should have dozens making similar requests.