

JUNE 28, 1946

## Men and Machines

THE resignation of the Bishop of Wellington has in itself nothing to do with *The Listener*. We take notice of it only because it emphasises a fact to which we have more than once referred—the physical cost of office. The Bishop is leaving New Zealand because the weight of his work here has broken his health. Whether it would have been the same story in another Dominion we do not know, but he is the second Bishop to resign for health reasons in a few months, and it is difficult to avoid the impression that it is dangerous in New Zealand to be important. We have pointed out before that only one Prime Minister this century—if we except those who merely filled a gap for a month or two—has retired in good health. The others have died in office or immediately after resigning because of sickness: Seddon, Massey, Ward, Savage. Democracy will have to learn to be more reasonable than that; more humane and more sensible. We can't go on killing off the burden-bearers or we shall find ourselves reduced to men of wood. One difficulty in the political field is the length of the road to office—making a leader wait so long that he is tired before he arrives. There is no easy answer to that, though it would often be safer to risk the inexperience of youth than the weariness of age. But it is not a problem of age alone, or even of age primarily. Our leaders do not often break down because they are too old, but because we are too unreasonable in our demands upon them. Instead of hedging them about with understanding, accepting their limitations as human beings and taking worries away from them, we press in on them at every opportunity and jostle one another in a selfish scramble for their attention. So four Prime Ministers die on our hands in 30 years, and a long list of other leaders in Church and State break down. It is time we used men as sensibly as we use machines, attending most carefully to those we most need.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## BROADCASTS FROM DENMARK

Sir,—I am pleased to inform you that the Danish National Broadcasting Service have now again started broadcasting on their shortwave sender after this service had been discontinued during the occupation—by technical reasons. The broadcasts take place every night from 6.35 to 11.0 p.m. (Danish time) and the wavelength is 31.51 m. (9520 kHz). So far only a 6 k.w. station at Skamlebaek is available, but it is intended to build a new 50 k.w. station at Herstedvester as soon as the necessary materials can be had.—KARL I. ESKELUND (Consul-General for Denmark).

## LILI KRAUS

Sir,—Perhaps there is no need for me to write this letter. Very soon she will be bowling you off your feet, as she has been doing to us all in Auckland.

But in case anybody may be thinking of Lili Kraus as just another fine pianist, I should like to offer the opinion that no greater artist has ever been heard in this Dominion. I may have no right to such an opinion. What I will say, without fear of denial, is that here we have an interpreter of music (and a re-creator of music) of such luminous power that it is difficult to find words to speak about her—a pianist of quite transcendent genius. Let nobody miss hearing her, even if he has to crawl on his hands and knees for ten miles.

There is more to it than that, even. I venture the prophecy that the effect of her impact on New Zealand music will be something quite without precedent. But the fire is in the heather and I shall say no more.

A. R. D. FAIRBURN.

## "DEGENERATE" CARTOONS

Sir,—The opium of the people used to be religion. Now we have "Humanitarian's" solemn assurance that it is humour. And since he quotes the British Minister of Food to support his argument he may permit me to reply with the words of the British Prime Minister. This is what Mr. Attlee recently told foreign correspondents in London: "There is no man so great that it is not sometimes good for him to be laughed at, no situation so serious that it may not be improved by a joke." It is no accident that Mr. Attlee gave John Strachey a portfolio that will develop his sense of humour or break him.

"POPPY" (Wellington).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Sir,—I subscribe to *The Listener* mainly for what is contained in pages 4 to 33 and do enjoy browsing over them, knowing full well that nothing appearing within those pages is likely to disturb unduly the bovine mental quietude of simple country folk like myself. This evening, however, the Boeotian satisfaction was severely jolted on reading the article "From Iona to Limehouse" when the word "whomits" loomed up like a cow on a dark country road. I mentally ruminated for half-an-hour, consulted the kids' school dictionary after they'd retired, and rang my neighbours on the party line, with the result that I'm more confused than

ever. One farmer suggested that it was a measure for saving electricity, another that they were certain types of State houses, while my nearest neighbour told me that it had "something to do with artificial insemination." Please, Mr. Editor, shower enlightenment on a rural ignoramus by giving full explanation and the etymology of this philological atrocity.

"ABRACADABRA" (Gisborne).

(If our correspondent will return the missing "d" he will find the world self-explanatory.—Ed.)

## SUB-ANTARCTIC WATCH

Sir,—As a "coastwatcher" at the Auckland Islands in 1942-43, I was an interested reader of the account of an interview with J. H. Sorensen published under the title of "Ultima Thule" in *The Listener* dated June 14. It is good to know that the wartime activities at the Sub-antarctic Islands, so long shrouded in official secrecy, have a certain news value, now that the lid is off.

I would, however, like to question the statement that "No ships except enemy vessels had called at either Auckland or Campbell Islands for ten years when H.M.S. Achilles went there in November, 1940." The disclosure of many secret war activities at present tempts me to invite some reader of *The Listener*, with more precise knowledge of the matter than I can claim, to comment on the statement quoted above. Where, for instance, was H.M.S. Leander on the last few days of September, 1939?

C.A.F. (Wellington).

(H.M.S. Leander visited Campbell and Auckland Islands on September 29 and 30, 1939, and was at Auckland Island again on November 15, 1939.—Ed.)

## FAT FOR BRITAIN

Sir,—May I comment briefly on Dr. Muriel Bell's note in *The Listener* on the question of English point-rationing of cereal breakfast foods.

(1) "Scotch" oatmeal is not rationed, but is exceedingly hard to find in the ordinary grocery.

(2) The English just don't like it anyway. If they make what they call porridge it is cooked with milk and sugar and eaten with more. Consequently, the milk ration being usually two pints a week and sugar 8oz. this would consume a hopeless quantity.

(3) Those English who like the genuine article either get it from the stores or Harrods, or send to Scotland for oatmeal.

(4) Breakfast cereals, being packaged goods requiring labour and paper, are on points. However, expensive as they are in that way they take little preparation, and with fuel, gas, electricity always in a state of uncertainty . . . or worse . . . preparation in the home counts heavily. During war, with families demanding meals at weird hours and all different times for shifts, a breakfast any fool could get by shaking it on a plate was worth a lot. True, the milk and sugar question is acute there too, but does not seem to absorb as much as porridge. Various "porridge oats" are on

points, but mostly are of the quick-cooling type.

I served from February, 1940, to the end of the war in the British Army as a hospital cook and spent most leaves in hostesses' kitchens wrestling with civilian ration—a very different matter from Army issue.

May I beg Dr. Bell to use her influence to urge on the sending of *ordinary tinned fat*. . . That is far more urgent than fussing over butter coupons. One ounce of cooking fat a week means around half a teaspoon a day—and that doesn't help much. I've used New Zealand dripping sent from my people to relations when it was nearly a year old, and good as the day it was packed. The tins I save and send now evoke far more enthusiasm than any other item.

It is hard to make the average New Zealander realise that the average Englishman does not use butter, but when on the ration he feels "entitled" and with war wages can afford his 2oz. Margarine is far more important to the worker, being practically indistinguishable from butter and a fraction of the price. In peace he can use as much margarine as he likes. After the last war he learnt to prefer it to butter and New Zealand had much difficulty in selling her produce. We, in this war, had the 6oz. of margarine butter for so long that we learnt to manage quite well, but when the cooking fat was at 2oz. it was hard to fry things. And the 1oz. periods were misery.

One girl wrote recently "it's good-bye to pastry again," and with no fruit and not enough milk for the beloved milk pudding, pastry was a help, needing no or little sugar. And remember jam is rationed too.

BRENDA BELL

(Shag Valley).

(Dr. Bell's comment in reply to this letter was this sentence: "Every time I have fried potatoes, or fried fish, or fried bread, or white sauce made with cooking fat, or steamed pudding, or pastry or biscuits made with cooking fat, I feel for the British who can't have these things on their miserable fat ration.")

## BURNHAM CAMP CONCERT

Sir,—I very much regret the attitude of the National Broadcasting Service in refusing to broadcast portion of a Camp Concert being produced and given by the men of J Force, Burnham. It seems to me incredible that a Service purporting to represent national interests should be unwilling to encourage the professional artists of to-morrow. We did not ask that the whole concert should be broadcast; we did not ask for half of it. We would have been satisfied with half-an-hour over 3YA, all with the approval of the concert organiser, and were a little dumbfounded at the trepidations of the Department.

Might it not be that the public are a little tired of "canned" music, be it never so easy to broadcast, and that it would welcome flesh and blood artists for a change, though they might be a little immature! Most certainly many parents and friends will be disappointed at not hearing what their boys can do before they go away. — W. R. CUNLIFFE, B.A., L.Th., C.F. (Burnham M.C.).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT  
J. D. Parkin (Timaru): Inaccurate and grossly libellous.