

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD.

Every Friday

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EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

G.P.O. Box 1707.

Wellington, C.1.

Telephone 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Message From Milford

MANY of those who read Mr. Parry's statement last week on the Milford track must have felt that now at length we are back to the ways of peace. Having Milford closed was like having Pelorus Jack dead—the loss of something so distinctively our own that to be robbed of it made us feel a little queer. Now after seven summers we are going to get back to Milford by land and see again with fresh eyes what a natural glory it is. But we are going to see something else too. It has been explained by the Minister that to have the track open for Christmas will be a race against time, that gigantic earth, rock, and tree avalanches have obliterated miles of path and buried or swept away a whole series of bridges, and that it will require much labour and considerable engineering skill to restore all this damage in so short a time. So the visitor will not see Milford only. He will see what nature does to about a third of New Zealand as soon as man turns his back on it. We are apt to think of our country as small, quiet, sunny, and comfortable except for the prevailing winds. In fact it is an extraordinarily wild country with a few tame patches. At least a quarter of it will remain for ever a wilderness of mountain and forest which we shall not conquer or, increasingly, wish to conquer. It is not a silent wilderness, but much of it noisy and savage and it will always be as it is now—a place to enter for exaltation of the spirit and to shun if our goal is gain. A year or two of enforced neglect and the Milford track almost disappears. A year or two away from the mountains and gorges and something in us disappears too. It is good to hear Mr. Parry calling us back to the wild.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WATER DIVINING

Sir,—In your water-divining correspondence so far published several points need rebuttal.

First, Mr. Sutcliffe's letter: (1) I fail to see how I am biased. I merely described the results of experiments done with any and every diviner who was willing. The diviners themselves produced the damning evidence quoted in my article. (2) The chance of striking water depends on the type of country. In many districts (e.g., Waikato and Canterbury Plains) water would be hard to miss. So much for Mr. Sutcliffe's one chance in 100. It is significant that, while diviners are thick as blowflies—and objects of veneration—on the plains, in hill country, where skill or shrewdness is needed for success, the rare diviner is an object of derision. (3) Mr. Sutcliffe's stories count for nothing. I might tell of the successful well on a site rejected by five diviners, or of the Education Board which, on its diviner's advice, drilled through rock to 50ft. below sea-level without success. I could also list the many successful borers who have disproved divining. What would be useful is a comparison of diviners' and non-diviners' successes. Australian records of this type kept over a period of ten years were not exactly creditable to water-witching. (4) Two wells 10ft. apart! Two possible explanations: (a) In drilling it is possible to pass unknowingly through a water layer. The second bore, after the first failure, would be sunk much more carefully. (b) If the slope of the water-table is not that of the surface, one hole would need to be deeper than the other. (5) This running water: while some diviners claim to find only running water, others can allegedly find any water. (Incidentally if the object to be divined must be running, how are minerals divined?) I tested all diviners on what they allegedly could do. If a member of the British Society of Dowisers says he can divine any water, who am I, without testing him, to doubt it? May I ask Mr. Sutcliffe carefully to re-read paragraph 1, column 4 of my offending article.

Now Mr. Livingston's letter: (1) I am fully aware of the existence of the British Society of Dowisers, half of whose New Zealand members have been tested (the others would not co-operate). If he would explain some of the articles in "Radio Perception," I should be very grateful. We could start with this extract from the March number he quotes (p. 316):—

"The complete set of Tativa currents, their names and colours are:—Akash Black Void; Vayu Blue-Green Intellect; Tejas Red Physical Health; Prithvi Yellow Religious devotion; Akas White Intuition ecstasy." (2) As for the South African mining journal quotation, in science it is not authority, but facts that count. My facts are indisputable. (3) Geophysical testing is different from divination in that it uses known physical phenomena—a use proved by the successful results. The alleged physical interpretation of divination as given in Franklin and Maby's *Physics of the Divining Rod* has been disproved. (4) Because an odd geologist has agreed with diviners is no justification for Mr.

Livingston's bland assertion "the geologists in Great Britain" have "fallen in with the diviners." They have not!

I shall make Mr. Livingston an offer. I am willing to try him out at Takanini on condition that tests are agreed on beforehand, and that should he be unable to substantiate his claims, he pay my travelling expenses. Should any South Island diviner able to be visited from Dunedin within a week-end wish to accept, this offer is open to him also.

P. A. ONGLEY (Dunedin).

Sir,—The mystifying and theatrical performance of water-divining has a hold on the popular imagination in New Zealand, but except for vague pseudo-scientific references to "electricity" or "radio" dowisers do not define the nature of the external force that is supposed to act on the rod. Physicists apparently regard it as highly improbable that such a force exists, or even if it did that it could act on the rod, or that the force due to any particular substance could be selected from those due to other substances. It therefore rests with the dowisers to demonstrate by their results that there is such a force or that they have extraordinary powers; but in many tests such as those carried out by Mr. Ongley in New Zealand they have been unable to do so.

All over New Zealand there is a good rainfall and a percentage of it sinks underground until it seeps out to keep up the flow of water in perennial

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streams; so in many areas the gambling chance of finding water is not low, and consequently in the divining of water dowisers can be expected to have a certain measure of success. However, with a substance such as oil, the occurrence of which is difficult to perceive from surface features, the record of diviners is unsatisfactory—so much so, in fact, that oil companies (which to survive must discover producing wells) find it essential to employ large geological staffs but do not use the services of diviners. This is because geologists work by laboriously and scientifically unravelling the story of the earth's crust and then are able to apply an established body of knowledge in the detection of economically valuable substances.

There is, however, nothing theatrical about a geologist at work, nor does his study pander to the delight that men have in a display of occult control of nature, so it is hard to discredit a widespread, naive acceptance of diviners. Especially is this so when there is only a handful of geologists. But there are hundreds of people, who, upon experimenting, have discovered the knack of making a forked stick twist strongly in their hands when they force out the inner sides of the prongs in a grip in which the palms of the hands face outwards and upwards. Following this discovery and a certain inevitable success in the finding of underground water, it is easy for many of these people to acquire a sincere belief in dowsing. This belief may not be particularly harmful

ELECTION BROADCASTS

BY the time this appears in print the broadcasting of election speeches will already have begun; and it will continue throughout the campaign. Speeches given by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are being heard through all the main National stations, and those of party speakers through Station 2YA and one other National station chosen by the party. There will be studio broadcasts of 15 minutes each for the Government and the Opposition this Friday, October 25, and on November 1. There will also be studio broadcasts of half-an-hour each on Friday, November 8, as well as half-hour broadcasts on November 9, 16, and 23. During the election period many of the scheduled programmes will be liable to alteration because of the speeches. We shall try to keep our programmes as accurate and up-to-date as possible, but readers will appreciate that election broadcast arrangements are necessarily made at short notice, and they should therefore listen themselves for station announcements of amendments to the published programmes.

when restricted to the matter of water supply, but if it is extended to the field of detection of disease it becomes a menace. H. J. HARRINGTON (Kaitia).

REPORT ON RUSSIA.

Sir,—Your report on Russia by Bruce Atkinson, in a recent *Listener*, is most interesting. Atkinson has done a splendid job for the Anti-Soviet campaign. It is all very disturbing, because I have just read two books, written by people who have lived in Russia. Violet Lansbury in *An Englishwoman in the U.S.S.R.* speaks highly of the country and people. So does Quentin Reynolds in his book *Only the Stars are Neutral*.

Atkinson refers, rather scathingly, to the worship of portraits of Lenin and Stalin. Every time I attend the pictures here, everyone in the theatre stands, while a picture of the head of the British Empire is thrown on the screen. The same sort of hero-worship, I presume, Zaslavsky was pretty tough on Atkinson, but perhaps he (Zaslavsky) remembered how a leading English politician once referred to "bolshivism." Thanks for the interesting and enlightening article.

M.S. (Rangiora).

RADIO ADVERTISING

Sir,—To whom are we indebted for the ironical situation which persists concerning the radio programmes from Commercial stations. The management obviously caters for the public taste and on the whole, the programmes appear to be well accepted and appreciated. But surely something can be done to improve the standard of radio advertising which one is forced to hear, if one wishes to listen to any of these programmes? The endless repetition of some insipid voice extolling the virtues of its patron's products is as painful to the listener as is the obviously-forced jocularity and enthusiasm of others. As for the ridiculous doggerels and parodies, they are surely the essence of childishness. BETTER LISTENING (Auckland).