

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD.

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## Controversy

IT will be interesting to see if the demand for controversy on the air remains after November 27, and if it does, what kind of a demand it then is. *The Listener* will be glad if it remains, since the more arguments there are the easier it is to maintain interest in our talks pages. But it is worth pointing out in the meantime that there has never been a day since broadcasting began in New Zealand when it would have been correct to say that the programmes were non-controversial. It is controversial to say that the weather will be fine, since there is always someone who believes, and believes strongly, that it will not be. In this case too the objector is usually in a strong position in New Zealand, and always has been. But controversy goes far beyond the weather. If we pass over the religious broadcasts, which are controversial from the first hymn to the last prayer but a special case, we shall still find somebody saying something every two or three minutes to which somebody else strongly objects. If Beethoven is presented as a great composer, someone else is saying not so great as Handel or Bach. If a speaker calls Dickens a genius, there is a listener somewhere who thinks that speaker a fool. If the Health Department suggests the eating of brown bread, or of more apples or less meat, there are people who would like to have the Department silenced for business reasons and others who would do it in what they would regard as the interests of science. What people really mean when they ask for controversy on the air is more controversy, or controversy on a different range of subjects, or controversy presented in a different way. They want an argument—speakers contradicting one another and quarrelling in front of the microphone; propaganda for a particular cause—the cause they themselves believe in; attacks on other causes—the ones they hate; and so on. If they are now demanding disagreements they of course mean new and more violent disagreements with the dust rising on the studio floor.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## CRICKET REPORTS

Sir,—I would like to express my appreciation to the NZBS for rebroadcasting, from Australia, results and résumés of the touring English side on the occasion of the cricket matches played there. Many cricket followers in New Zealand and English people new to this country will listen enthusiastically to a sport much alive in our lives.

"BODYLINE" (Cambridge).

## INDIA—AND SOUTH AFRICA

Sir,—Having lost count of the many times I have read and tried to make sense of your Editorial of September 13 on India I become more amazed that you should couple in a short article the names of two such men as Smuts and Nehru. One is a Dutch soldier who, upon defeat, switched over to the winning side, and developed and exploited a rich country, together with its native population, for the benefit of Dutch and other capitalistic peoples. I wonder, can that be statesmanship. The other is an Indian who has spent many years of his life in punishment and humiliation for the benefit of his own people, in his own country. You say his work has just begun. That is not so. His work in the past has been underground, but nevertheless it has been real work. Now he can work in the open with the dignity that he deserves.

E.Y.S. (Auckland).

Sir,—J. L. Winchester seems to be of the mistaken opinion that Russia gives equality to her subject peoples. He should study the background of the Russian invasion of Sinkiang in 1935 and see how the Tungans were treated. The treatment of Indians and natives in Natal is due not to British democracy, but to the suppressive tactics of 60 per cent. of the white South Africans—the French, Dutch, German element (Afrikaners). British democracy was well displayed in South Africa in 1833 when natives were placed on an equal status in law with the whites, and in the Cape of Good Hope the natives were enfranchised on equal terms with the whites.

However, the problem to which Mr. Winchester makes reference is very complex. For the last half-century British rule has brought peace and tolerance to Africa. Now Indians are emigrating en masse from India to the East Coast of Africa with an idea of superseding the British and exploiting the natives. It is to prevent this catastrophe that the line of action to which Mr. Winchester refers has been taken. The attitude of the natives themselves is shown by the fact that when Mr. Bevin offered the British mandates for trusteeship, the natives of Togoland and Tanganyika demanded British rule only and none other. British democracy at work may be shown by the fact that in the last few years the number of trades union officers in one part of British Africa had grown from 30 to over 150.

It is important to remember that when Russia marches into a territory, that territory becomes an integral part of Russia. In regard to Britain and her colonies this is not so. Every Dominion of the Commonwealth except South Africa favours equality for the natives and this has been one of the controversial topics at the Round Table Conferences. Britain, which has established the

Native Authority in West Africa, has had much trouble with South Africa over this and the latter is also seriously meditating on the liberal policy (British) to the natives in East Africa. British fair play is proved by the fact that Julian Huxley, a great critic of Conservative Colonial policy, was sent to West Africa to report on conditions there by the Labour Party on its rise to the Treasury benches. P.P. (Auckland).

## ELECTIONS AND FOREIGN BAYONETS

Sir,—Your correspondent J. L. Winchester says the Russians "are sceptical about majorities obtained in Greek elections, supervised by foreign bayonets, and in which half-a-million dead men exercised the franchise." I don't know where he gets his estimate of half-a-million dead men from, but it is a fact that the British bayonets were originally invited into Greece by a Government composed of all non-Fascist parties, including the Communists. There are still a good many foreign bayonets in lands between the most forward Iron Curtain and Russia, and we know what nationality they are. Of course there are more ways of influencing elections than showing a bayonet. It was reported the other day that

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in one of the occupied zones the Russians, before an election, adopted the simple and peaceful expedient of allocating more newspaper to the Communist newspapers than to their opponents.

In a recent *Christian Science Monitor* supplement, an American correspondent, R. H. Markham, summarised his impressions of the set-up in Greece after a stay in territory dominated by Russia. Like most Americans, Mr. Markham doesn't like empires, but he has a sense of fair play. Here are some of the points he makes, beginning with the one I have just mentioned about the invitation. The British entry saved Greece "from being forcibly seized by a Communist-led, brutal, well-armed minority." Even the leaders of EAM don't claim more than 25 per cent. of the nation. The Greek people have shown that they don't want to be governed by this Moscow-controlled party, and it was the British who enabled the Greeks to express that opinion and implement it. The Greek elections were the freest in Eastern Europe, except Hungary and perhaps Czechoslovakia. The Greeks are not political saints, but "one of the largest, most representative, most disinterested election commissions in history said that, generally speaking, the results represented the will of the Greek nation." The Greek press is free; paper is equitably distributed; papers and periodicals from all lands can be sold. Any Greek anywhere can vilify Great Britain. "England provides freedom to people to defame England." It should not be necessary to stress the way Russia handles the question of free opinion in the territory she dominates. I have given one example.

Since then we have had the word of American supervisors that the plebiscite about the Monarchy was conducted satisfactorily. There were, of course, screams to the contrary from Moscow. These are

somewhat reminiscent of the football fan who abuses the referee from the bank. That the referee gives decisions against this barracker's side is proof that he has been squared. If we could look into this gentleman's history we might find that he was the victim of circumstances; he has never been taught the basis of good sportsmanship. The Russians don't understand free elections, because they have never held them. LIBERAL (Wellington).

## MENTAL BAD TASTE

Sir,—Mr. Welch has missed the point of my argument. I did not, as he says, "claim that people must believe the dogmas of my Church because so many great minds have done so." All I said was that because so many great minds have accepted Christianity, it is unreasonable for Mr. Wells or anyone else to dismiss it as mere superstition. That is, I think, a respectable argument.

And may I suggest that "a bad taste in the mouth" is sometimes due to sickness! G.H.D. (Greenmeadows).

## BBC "REFINEMENT"

Sir,—I'll make a third with "Gloriana" and G. C. Stevenson. Everyone knows how boring it is to eat a large salad all alone. But not on Tuesdays so long as *Gloriana* reigned at 1.30 p.m. Not that the eating process was speeded up. *Gloriana* had the same effect on me that Jane Austen has on E. M. Forster—I listened with my mind shut and my mouth open. The gusto of the acting along with the movement of the play made me forget all about culture.

Not so some BBC features. I've listened to scenes from *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet* and been so unmoved—except by Juliet—as to be compelled to write myself off as a barbarian.

Well, mayn't I be one more often? Must we have so much BBC refinement? If I tune in to *Blake*, *An English Eccentric*, at 8.0 p.m. to-morrow night am I to hear again what I heard some two months ago: "Oh dear me no, my good fellow, don't take that tale too seriously . . ." (or some such); and then the speaker discountenances the story of Blake and his wife admitting a friend into their summer-house while they were sitting there acting Adam and Eve (before the Fall) in character.

I bet that story's true. Or if it isn't it is in character. Who could read Blake and expect him to have the slightest qualm in going naked wherever and whenever he thought fit? Though I don't doubt he'd pay some respect to the 11th Commandment, the world being what it was.

I could name a few New Zealanders (but I won't) who in the heat of the day stage Paradise (also before the Fall) in their gardens. Maybe New Zealand could provide a few eccentrics? E.P.D. (Mt. Maunganui).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Lector (Wellington): Thank you. He has not been stifled, but this time discretion was the better part of valour.

Very Disgusted Listener (Lower Hutt): They are all doing it; and Joan Hammond, as you will now know, was unable to sing that night anyway.

## NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTOR

Would R. Hutchins, who wrote "The Path," please send us his address, which we have mislaid.