

JANUARY 17, 1947

The BBC

BY the courtesy of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom we were able to give our readers last week a fairly full summary of the recent House of Commons debate on the BBC. It is probably safe to say, too, that most of them would be pleased with the result of the debate. There is no very strong desire in New Zealand for revolutions in the BBC, although criticism is growing in the United Kingdom itself. There is clearly a strong, and increasing, feeling that there are dangers in the BBC's monopoly, but the complaint is that this is bad for the BBC and not that the BBC has misused its powers. It was, however, a little strange to find Mr. Morrison meeting the demand for competition with the claim that there was competition now between light and heavy programmes. Competition to mean anything must be competition in the same field—light programmes against light, heavy against heavy, and so on. To call it competition when chamber music fights for time or listeners against jazz is like saying that you improve the breed of horses when you breed better cows. The BBC will not escape the dangers of monopoly until each of its services has to fight for public support against another service of the same kind simultaneously available, and it is extremely difficult to see how this is to be achieved in its own house. It is, however, not impossible to get competition going at low pressure between the different regions in Britain—and that is happening to some extent. But the kind of competition the freedom critics demand is a choice between the BBC and another service with the same power and privileges. Though it is safe to say that only a minority yet demand that, Parliament's extension of the existing system must not be misread. The last licence ran for ten years, six of which were war years. The extension for a further five years meant no more than that the BBC was given time to do what the war had prevented it from doing earlier.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS**WICKET AND PITCH**

Sir,—May I point out that, in the game of cricket, the wicket consists of three stumps and two bails. Therefore, when the announcer tells us that the batsman returned the ball to the bowler down the wicket, he uses an expression that is erroneous and indicates a feat that is impossible. The space between the wickets is the pitch. A batsman may return the ball to the bowler down the pitch and in most cricket matches this happens frequently.

In the earlier Test Matches the announcer used the expression "down the wicket" but, in the broadcast of the last Test Match I listened to, he substituted "down the pitch." The former expression grates on the ear; the latter is correct and satisfying.

This letter may be somewhat pedantic but, after all, there is something to be said for accuracy.

R. POPE

(Tolaga Bay).

(As much as is to be said for the man who refuses to ride in a bus if it is not called an omnibus; and no more. In any case, the M.C.C. does not support him! Rule IX (b) of the Laws of Cricket (1939 revision) includes this phrase: "In week-end starts the wicket shall be mown." (our italics).—Ed.)

EXCITING CRICKET

Sir,—I was delighted with the cricket broadcasts from 1YA and 1ZM last week. The announcer made the finish of the Auckland-Otago game almost as good to hear as it would have been to see.

70 YEARS OLD

(Morrinsville).

RADIO PLAY COMPETITION

Sir,—The Editorial comment on my letter published in *The Listener* on December 13 gives an erroneous impression of its contents. I did not say that plays submitted became the property of the NZBS without payment, but that the ideas contained in them could do so. Had you quoted further from the rules of the competition you would have found this correct, unless I misunderstood them after very careful reading a number of times.

With regard to plays with a New Zealand setting, I missed hearing the one quoted by you, but still contend that John Gundry's play is not of a type that should be encouraged by the NZBS.

M.D. (Whakatane).

(There is nothing in the rules which would in any way confer on the NZBS the right to take any ideas from unsuccessful plays.—Ed.)

FOSTER-PARENTS

Sir,—May I endorse your correspondent's statement that foster-parents do not care for children in order to augment the family income. When we had a four-month-old baby, the correct diet for him up to the age of six months was published, and the cost, at the ruling prices then, was 12/6 weekly. The State payment is 15/- weekly, so this speaks for itself. The work is done for love.

CHILD-LOVER (Hastings).

SUNDAY PROGRAMMES

Sir,—In reply to "Disgusted's" letter I would like to make a few comments on his second paragraph. Are not six days of the week quite a sufficient number to hear Crosby, Dorsey, etc.? I don't mean to say I don't like them; it's just that in my opinion the whole of Sunday should be devoted to God, and when

there isn't a service on the air, listeners should be provided with quiet, reverential music. There are, he also may not know, people in the country, some 15-20 miles from church, who enjoy listening to a church service on Sundays, and some who put up with jazz, etc. for six days.

JUST EIGHTEEN (Mania).

CONTROVERSY

Sir,—Before the election you refused to publish a very plainly spoken letter of mine commenting on your editorial titled "Controversy," the excuse given being that it was party-political. In any case, in the absence of a desire to dodge the real issue at stake (your editorial) one would imagine that an editor would blue-pencil any offending sentence or paragraph, and publish in edited form. But you cut it right out!

But now the election is safely over perhaps you can permit a few words to the effect that controversy is the one thing which is carefully barred from the air, and there has never been any attempt to discover what listeners want in that direction. Presumably those who do the paying have some slight right to a voice.

A. P. YOUNG

(Auckland).

(No letter is rejected because it criticises something we have said editorially. Every letter is rejected if it raises party political issues. A little reflection will enable our correspondent to see why.—Ed.)

OLD RECORDS

Sir,—I have a complaint to make which I am sure is supported by many other people who listen to the commercial stations—the fact that four out of five records played are heard far too often. Although a lot of the numbers are favourites, a few more less-known records would be appreciated.

R.B.R. (Raumati South).

M. H. HOLCROFT'S WRITING

Sir,—It is healthy that M. H. Holcroft's books should receive discussion, for we have passed the important stage where we have ceased to be emigrant Englishmen and can boldly assert ourselves as New Zealanders. Personally, I stand by the criticisms already made, while regretting the confusion that results from the omissions inevitable in letters. Mr. Holcroft deserves due credit for sincerely tackling a complex task, and the value of some passages in his books will be readily accepted. At the same time it appears necessary that his underlying theses should be challenged, for the way he points out to our writers is a blind alley. If there have been authors and poets whose powers wax and wane to a "biological rhythm" or who consider themselves the instruments of supernatural forces, there are insufficient grounds for a "natural law" of temperament or of mysticism. Creative writing surely has its roots in life itself, in the passion and compulsion of human experience. Divorce our writers from life, and what have we? A culture interpreting New Zealand must be bound up with our people. The subjective contemplations of the individual mind will be poor nourishment indeed.

In my opinion Mr. Holcroft is too far adrift from the current of life in our young country to enter into the spirit of it. He fails to perceive the positive

qualities in our character and our customs; or to view them with the balancing factor we call humour. (Note for J. Williams: humour is something broader than making people laugh). An exaggerated geographical myth, embraced by other writers also, serves to erect into "universal truths," what are merely the whims of a few. Agreed, we are influenced by our natural surroundings; but we have a distorted mirror if we minimise such other items as history, economics, and social relations. Although, as P.O.C. points out, much of it has been said before, Mr. Holcroft has certainly dealt with his theme more comprehensively than others. Does that make him right? Hard thinking is not necessarily correct thinking. If it were, all philosophers would agree—and do they?

Conflict of ideas will help us forward, provided always that their inspiration is fed from the life of our people.

ELSIE LOCKE (Christchurch).

INTERVENTION IN SPAIN

Sir,—A student of history may be struck by a curious omission in the reports of the discussions on what the United Nations should do about Spain. Nothing is said about the parallels of the French and Russian Revolutions. When Britain was helping the White Russians after World War No. I. it was pointed out by many commentators that the armed hostility of Europe towards France in the early days of the Revolution united Frenchmen, and the opinion was expressed that intervention in Russia would have the same effect. The fear was justified by events. Russia has never forgotten what Britain did, but in framing a policy towards Spain she seems to forget, or to ignore, the effect of that British action on her own affairs. Does no British delegate point that out at U.N. meetings? Or are they too polite? The Spanish people are exceedingly proud. They are also exceedingly obstinate and self-satisfied. They are quite certain that their civilisation is the flower of all the world. We had experience of them in the Peninsular War. Their guerillas did a great job in harassing the French, but their regular army, if it could be dignified by such a title, was a wash-out. The leadership was grossly incompetent, and the discipline bad. It let Wellington down time and again. Pride was largely responsible. They couldn't bear to take advice from a stranger. It was said of their officers that they would rather be beaten by the French. Spaniards are still proud. It seems to me as certain as can be that this pride will be wounded by the United Nations' handling of the case, and that numbers of Spaniards who have no great love for Franco will rally to him to some extent. The United Nations should either take more drastic action, which may mean war, or let Spain stew in the cruelty and corruption of the present regime. The policy adopted is a fumble.

A.M. (Wellington).

OVER THE EDGE

Sir,—Will someone please give an order requiring those responsible for the butchering of *The Dream of Gerontius* by a routine news bulletin the other night to walk over the edge of the nearest cliff. It will be entertaining to watch their red-tape-entangled legs obey it with the same promptitude and sheep-like lack of initiative which was displayed on this other occasion.

E. DE LACEY (Timaru).