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LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(Continued from page 5)

CREATIVE WRITING IN NEW ZEALAND.

Sir,—David Hall's review of J. C. Reid's querulous little book is good within its limits but is not otherwise adequate. Where so much pretence is made with so little justification, it is the duty of the reviewer to hit hard and in detail.

Writing in New Zealand has been very well covered from E. M. Smith's *Short History of Fiction in N.Z.* through E. H. McCormick's *Letters and Art in N.Z.* to Alan Mulgan's *Literature and Authorship in N.Z.* Mr. Reid has acknowledged these writers and their works, and has referred also at length to Mr. Holcroft's essays in which he has picked up any loose threads. In such circumstances Mr. Reid, who complains that "in general New Zealand writers lack imagination; that they are better at recording than at creating," has offered us only a digest of his predecessors' works. And it is a digest remarkable chiefly for the extreme naïveté of much of the comment, particularly in the first 30 or so pages and for the almost uniformly destructive tone of the whole survey.

Mr. Reid denies that his book is intended as a text-book or a comprehensive survey of our literature and claims as its purpose the tracing of creative forces. Yet any value that might have resided in the book would have been as a record of writers past and present—had it made its appearance before others' works made it redundant. As an assessment of origins and determination of creative values, judgment has been too partisan; influences have been strained enormously to fit particular writers into appropriate categories. Mr. Reid has accomplished a masterpiece of wishful thinking.

GORDON INGHAM (Auckland).

HOW TO SPEAK

Sir,—"Homey" (Christchurch) or any other person who gets the urge to kill a fellow man because of his pronunciation should be locked up. The trouble

with "Homey" is that he still has the "Exile from England" complex, and if his intention is to live here, the sooner he identifies himself with New Zealand life the better. I wonder what he thinks the New Zealander feels like when he first visits the United Kingdom and listens to the mutilated speech talked all over the country and still called English. I do not object to this multiplicity of pronunciation and dialect personally, but I always wonder why English people who speak with so many assorted tongues have the hide to come here and criticise unkindly New Zealand English speech. Standard English, talked by what is called "the best people" is really an artificial speech, learned parrot-fashion, and patterned in the same mould, until its exponents are letter perfect, but it always retains a ram-rod quality, easily identified. As a boy I was taught to say ate, so much disliked by "Homey" and that was not in this country, so New Zealanders are not the only persons who pronounce after this fashion. Has "Homey" never heard ate (to rhyme with gate) in the U.K.? New Zealand is not England, and here the English language is bound to develop on different lines, influenced by spelling to some extent, and environment.

"Homey" seems to imagine that father is always pronounced fahdher, and lather as ladher, whereas they usually rhyme with blather, and I suspect that the "inventors" he talks about really meant it to be faeder or fahder. Co-vent or Covent do not matter much. If a corruption of convent, the pronunciation with -vent seems in order, but would "Homey" seriously suggest that Magdalen is correctly pronounced as Maudlin, and that New Zealanders should say Hahford, Kezzik, Marrilibun, Grinny, Hahdn, Hobun, etc.? Probably the laziness or slovenliness of the local inhabitants set the standard. Anyhow, they may call them what they like, others will continue to do likewise. The English language is not the sole possession of the people born in England.

"ARGOSY" (Te Awamutu).



Spencer Digby photographs

H. C. O'LOUGHLIN (left) and **JOHN REED**, who recently went to Greymouth to take up their jobs as station manager and programme organiser, respectively, at 3ZR. Mr. O'Loughlin has been chief announcer at 4YA since 1939. Before then he was at 2YA. He served in the R.N.Z.A.F. during the war and returned a year ago. Mr. Reed has been presentation officer at 2YA since 1944. Before the war he was programme organiser for 2YC, and during the war was with the Kiwi Concert Party in the Middle East