

JANUARY 31, 1947

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The University

THE Christchurch "Press" last week printed a photograph of the University Senate in which not one face was clearly recognisable. That was an accident. But it was not an accident that it printed some columns of discussion by the Senate in which the fear of an intellectual black-out was expressed very clearly. It is a fear that all universities feel in greater or smaller degree whoever controls them, and feel acutely when their sole source of revenue is a Parliamentary vote. It is, after all, not human to give everything and expect nothing, but in the field of higher education anything less than that is a threat to the independence of thought. Universities are compelled to ask those who maintain them not to attempt to control them—an unreasonable request in itself but justified by the necessities of the case.

It is not therefore surprising or disturbing that the Chancellor should wish to see an independent authority in charge of University finance, and a full-time Minister expounding University policy in Cabinet. It is doubtful if either of those suggestions is practical politics in any democracy, but they at least emphasise the dangers of political control, and the weaknesses of the system under which our University is at present conducted. It is always a calamity when a University has to ask where its funds come from rather than how far they will go. But the best safeguard against that situation is the quality of the men who spend the money, and it is not quite true that this depends on how much we allow them for their own pockets. The honour bestowed the other day on Sir James Hight, for example, was in no sense at all compensation for his years of underpaid labour. It was recognition of the value of his labour—to his students first, the University next, but also to New Zealand as a whole. Bad as it is to pay such men inadequately, it is many times worse to believe that money means more to them than anything else.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

"POOR PEOPLE, POOR US"

Sir,—On July 26th, 1946, under the heading "Marching and Tramping" you were kind enough to publish in your paper a review of my book entitled *Poor People, Poor Us*.

Since this was published I have received a letter from the Mayor of Caramanico who had a very bad time at the hands of the Germans at Aquila, where he was brutally tortured, but in spite of this, refused to divulge the whereabouts of fugitives or the names of any Italians who were harbouring them. A copy of this letter is enclosed.

It is not necessary for me to say that the peasants are having a pretty grim time of it owing to the great scarcity of foodstuffs and clothing.

J. E. BROAD (Wellington).

(Enclosure)

Caramanico,

9th September, 1946.

Dear John,

I received a while back your gracious letter with the calendar and the copy of the preface to the Sig. Prime Minister has made to your book. I am most grateful and indebted to you, for the lovely words you returned, and for the good wishes to me and my co-citizens and I thank you again for that you have written of me in your beautiful diary . . .

I, in the limit of my modest forces, made all to alleviate the great suffering of you and of your many companions of misfortune, and the Signor God afterwards compensated me by saving me from sure death; for after my arrest the Germans wanted to shoot me instantly, and they tortured me to make me tell where you were hidden, and then they made a process to condemn me to death; but after about nine months, visited by the continuous fear of being executed, and amidst the greatest suffering and maltreatment, I was liberated by the glorious Allied troops where I was in the Aquila jail. From that frightening ordeal my health has remained very weak and now I am in need of continuous treatment, but my left hand has remained useless, because tightening it with irons the Germans have crushed several nerves, so I can only work a little, while here in Italy the cost of living is extremely high.

I am most happy though, that I have done my duty as a man and a Christian Catholic. I am certain that the Signor God will not forget me and aid me to support these hard moments, in which there is need for everything and nothing to be had.

I do not mind if everyone, excluding you only has forgotten me, that I have risked my life, and have suffered to aid them, but I would like news of them; to know if they are alive, and if they have returned to their family . . .

Accept, I pray you my most affectionate and fraternal wishes together with all your family, and with the hope to receive in the shortest time a reply from you.

Believe me,

Yours affectionately,

(Sig.) Nicola Nanni

WITCHES AND WARLOCKS

Sir,—There are two points in your commentator's paragraph "Aroint Thee Witch" to which I should like to reply. I can assure your commentator that I have come to "no easy conclusion that witchcraft no longer exists," and in my first talk (I know it is impossible for him to listen to them all) I quoted an extract from Bernard Newman's book

Balkan Background showing that belief in witchcraft was still in existence in those parts as late as 1933—and no doubt still lingers on in this year of grace 1947. I confined my talks in the main to England, Scotland, and the United States, where companies of witches—to the best of my knowledge—no longer meet in the depths of the forest at midnight, although here again I mentioned individual cases of witchcraft and black magic existing up to the present time.

I can also assure your commentator that I should dearly have liked to have made my talk more "meaty" and to have muttered dark imprecations to the accompaniment of bubbling cauldrons with their brew of

eye of newt and toe of frog,
wool of bat and tongue of dog.

but unfortunately I do not govern the hour of my talk, and I felt these "horrid fascinations" and the darker side of witchcraft generally were more suitable to the aftermath of an evening meal than to the sipping of morning tea at 11.0 a.m.

NORMA R. COOPER (Paekakariki).

FATHERS AND FAMILIES

Sir,—Regarding the short story "Family," please tell the author that I consider Alice to be an intellectual snob. I am reminded of, I think, Mark Twain, who is reputed to have said that when he was 20 he found his father

More letters from listeners will be found on page 16

so ignorant that he could barely stand having the old man around the house. However, when Mark Twain reached 30 he was amazed at the amount of knowledge his father had accumulated in the intervening 10 years. Perhaps in 10 years' time "Family's" author will give us a sequel.

"ANCIENT" (Takapuna).

CHIMES OR CLASSICS?

Sir,—The proper presentation and conclusion of a piece of classical music seems of secondary importance when it comes to the 9.0 p.m. chimes. A Wagner overture was recently blended into the chimes, a Beethoven symphony was interrupted for a relay from Parliament, and on Saturday, January 11, a Prokofiev concerto of six movements, presented by Station 2YC, was cut short half-way through the fourth movement without warning, and the chimes sounded as a compensation for one's surprised feeling of frustration.

One can never feel at ease at a musical programme when it may be prematurely ended at any time from any station. Could the sounding of the chimes not be restricted to the main national stations and the programme organizers be instructed to arrange their presentations more carefully, so that interruptions become unnecessary? It is better not to broadcast a sonata at all than to cut it short before its end.

H. SUSCHNY (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Tokanui (Southland): Let sleeping dogs lie.

"Puzzled" (Christchurch): Your complaint should have been sent to the organisers of the Conference.

Marje (Napier Hospital): Photograph has appeared over and over again. He is white-born in Pennsylvania, the son of a Methodist minister.

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