

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD.

Every Friday

Price Threepence

MAY 2, 1947

John Hilton

WHEN John Hilton died half-way through the war there were probably only three men left alive who were more sure of an air audience no matter how often they spoke — Hitler, President Roosevelt, and Mr. Churchill. It is no doubt true that when he spoke to millions each of them spoke to tens of millions, but it is not quite certain that any of them, if he had remained a private citizen, could have done what Hilton did day after day for ten years. That, however, is speculation. What we know is that Hilton before he died had a steady audience of five or six million listeners and that most of them thought of him as a personal friend. Some listened because they liked the sound of his voice; some because they liked what he said; most because he had become a kind of lay confessor whose words warmed and released them even when he was condemning their sins. Inevitably, therefore, a book has been written about him, a very good book* which traces the story of his career from his first paid job as a boy in a bicycle shop to his death from overwork at 63. This is not a review of that book, or an advertisement for it, but it is fair to point out that it explains what most people so far must have found it difficult to understand, namely, the power of Hilton's voice as well as its extreme attractiveness. The secret all the time was knowledge, knowledge first and then conviction. Nor do we mean simply the knowledge that converted him from a civil servant in the Ministry of Labour to a professor of economics at Cambridge. That was important, but could have resided in his head only. The knowledge that made him so effective on the air was humanised knowledge — book learning applied to human experience and shared with common people. Radio of course made him; but we have not yet fully realised how much he did for radio, and it is necessary to read his story in full to understand what his achievement was.

*JOHN HILTON. By Edna Nixon. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., through the British Council.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

"PRISON WITHOUT BARS"

Sir,—The report of Caroline Webb's talk inspired warm fellow feeling in me, and it was therefore with some astonishment that I read the letter from "Pro Truman and Pro Bevin" who, I suspect, wears mutton chop whiskers and keeps a portrait of Mr. Barrett beneath the overmantel.

No man worthy of the name feels pleased that his wife is "too busily engaged in her little circle of domestic duties" to bother about outside interests. Rather, he would welcome any innovation to place housewives (particularly mothers) more nearly on an equal footing with her fellows who work a 40-hour week. It is neither fair nor logical to expect these women to be content with the status of Victorians in a modern world. After all, women are now educated (compulsorily) to take a very catholic interest in life, and because they marry and have children they do not, strange as it may seem to "Pro Truman," suddenly lose all interest in their former pursuits. Mothers like to read, have hobbies, go to concerts, and enjoy the converse of their fellows just as much as anybody else. Surely life should be more than cooking, cleaning, washing, bearing and rearing children, and the other multifarious duties of the housewife-mother.

Nor, to my mind, is housework particularly "feminine." Much of it consists of heavy and dirty tasks. Nor, again, do home duties partake to any extent of Christianity which, I understand, enjoins that the seventh day shall be one of rest. But for mothers Sunday still brings beds to be made, floors to be swept, meals prepared and babies to be attended.

Women do not seek alleviation of some of their many household tasks so as to become coalminers and train drivers. All they ask is a reasonable amount of freedom to enjoy life like intelligent human beings. Women's emancipation is still a mere phrase. Mrs. Pankhurst would, I fear, sleep very uneasily in her grave if she could see the lot of mothers to-day.

ONE OF THE PRISONERS
(Auckland).

Sir,—I wish to remark on the letter by "Pro Truman and Bevin" appearing in *The Listener*. I have read Caroline Webb's talk and, although I disagree violently with her suggestion for compulsory direction of girls for domestic service, I consider the remainder of her talk to be a sound, commonsense solution to many of the problems affecting the home to-day. From various other statements made in her letter, "Pro Truman and Bevin" appears to be living in the past, a state in which so many diehards find themselves to-day. In any country which recognises democracy as its way of life, women should have equal opportunity to engage in any undertaking or profession they desire unhampered by the prejudice and ignorance of the past.

E.A.S. (Brooklyn).

Sir,—In an admirable talk on "Home Life for the Married Woman," the following passage occurs. (It may not be the private opinion of the speaker, Caroline Webb, but it is stated simply as a fact, to be taken into account in our everyday life). "Personal service of any sort, such as washing other people's

dishes, waiting on them at table or making their beds, is felt to place the worker on a lower social level than those he works for." In exactly the same week, thousands of New Zealanders were either reading, or hearing, another passage: "Jesus knowing . . . that he came forth from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." New Zealand really is a Christian country, is it not?

MARGARET E. J. WALLIS
(Lower Hutt).

Sir,—Your correspondent who signs himself "Pro Truman and Bevin" struck an amusingly old-fashioned note. I happen to be one of those "wives at home" who work about 80 hours a week, and I say, send on the cleaning companies, home helps, and anything else that will give one a little more time to enjoy the company of one's husband and children, a little more leisure for books and music and friends, and even for one's personal appearance. I can think of nothing better than a competent band of workers to clean my house now and then, and give me time for all the little jobs which accumulate. And by all means let the scheme be communal, so that we can all share—we might even have time to think of helping to build a Christian civilisation. "Pro Truman and Bevin" apparently thinks it exists already.

PRO COMMON SENSE
(Taumaranui).

HAWERA SCRAPBOOK.

Sir,—I have just been listening to "Hawera Scrapbook" and greatly entertained by their most enjoyable and interesting programme. I am looking forward to what the Mobile Recording Unit has to tell us about New Plymouth. I hope some of these recordings are being sent to England. They would be a splendid medium for letting folk in the Homeland know something of how we live—good propaganda and good entertainment.

W. H. KING (New Plymouth).

CONTRASTS

Sir,—I should like to draw your attention to the session "Contrasts," which is apparently a weekly feature on Station 2YC. To-night we were treated to works by Tchaikovski and Grieg, played first for a few bars in the orthodox way and then (for a whole record, of course) "jazzed" by dance bands. This is surely bad enough, but to be invited, as we were to-night (April 17) to "listen next Thursday for a further selection from the annals of musical crime" is surely an insult to the intelligence of any listener. Isn't it about time that the criminals, or at any rate the accessories, were brought to book?

"BAKER STREET" (Wellington).

BAND CONTEST RECORDINGS.

Sir,—I would like to add my appreciation of the opportunity I have had of hearing the various bands. I would be obliged, however, if you would advise me whether or not it is the intention of the programme organisers to broadcast the recordings of our Wellington bands.

From 3YA we have heard the Christchurch bands, and on Tuesday, April 15, there is to be a programme by the Otago bands from 4YA. So then, sir, what about a programme from 2YA of the Wellington bands? This, I am sure, would be particularly interesting to all band lovers, as the Wellington Water-side Band, which were last year's champions, were unplaced this year. By hearing their recordings all followers of bands would be able to judge for themselves just where this band failed at Wanganui.

I would also suggest (if arrangements could be made) that the judge's comments be read before each item. Perhaps one of the Friday night broadcasts by this band could be replaced by its Wanganui recordings.

In conclusion I wish to offer my thanks and appreciation to the Broadcasting authorities for the opportunity given to lovers of band music of hearing New Zealand bands.

"BAND LOVER" (Kelburn).

(The programme section of the NZBS says that a series of band recordings will start on Sunday, May 25, at 5.45 p.m. During this session, which will run for some time, all the Wellington bands which have not already been broadcast, will be heard in at least one of their recordings. It is not possible to include judges' comments. Station 2YA has given Wellington bandmen who took part in the contest the opportunity of hearing their own recordings made at Wanganui. Recordings of pipe bands taken at the contest and not already broadcast will be heard in a series of programmes from 2YA, starting on July 11, and continuing each second Friday. These arrangements represent the final coverage of the band contest prepared by 2YA.—Ed.).

BAND PROGRAMMES

Sir,—"22 Disgusted Bandmen" state that ceremonial and traditional band music is not appreciated. I am only a youth of 20, but making so bold as to

More letters from listeners will be found on Page 18.

criticise only that portion of their letter I would ask them how they arrive at that conclusion. What is the matter with "Heart of Oak" and other selections? With the spirit we have prevailing to-day it is a pity we don't have more of such recordings in New Zealand.

P.M. (Kaingaroa Forest).

CROSSWORD 333

Sir,—The explanation given by the usually very alert compiler of your excellent crossword is only partly satisfactory. She suggests that either Benham has nodded or that a scene may have been cut from the modern editions from the play in question. The complete answer is that if Benham has nodded, R.W.C. has slept soundly, because the correct reference will be found not in *Measure for Measure*, but in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

R.J.L. (Christchurch).

Sir,—May I point out that the reference to clue 20 in Crossword Puzzle 333 should be to Act III, Scene 3, of *Much Ado About Nothing*, not of *Measure for Measure*. Curiously enough the two plays are mentioned consecutively under the word "Price" in the Shakespeare Concordance.

STUDENT (Dunedin).

(Other correspondents have made the same point.—Ed.)

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

H. Alexander (Wellington): Thanks, but controversy closed.

Ken P. Stace (Maketu): Not at present.

Kay Buick (Christchurch): Sorry, not available.