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LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)
COMPULSORY DOMESTIC SERVICE

Sir,—Your correspondent L.L.H. takes exception to Caroline Webb's suggestion for solving the domestic help problem, i.e., "making all girls serve a period of domestic service equivalent to a period of military service called for from boys." To paraphrase L.L.H.'s argument, I wonder would she object equally to any proposal of enforced military training which would interrupt our young men eager to follow their desired goal? Imagine a potential Oscar Natzke or Douglas Lilburn giving up the year or two necessary for military training at a time when every day is important to his future career! I would most certainly object to this for my sons.

Equality of the sexes if you like—but we mothers must be consistent.

R.M. (Wellington).

OUT OF PRINT BOOKS

Sir,—Recently I decided that I would like to read *Tutira*, but was informed that it "has been out of print and unobtainable for some years." The same remark applies to other New Zealand classics. Last week I sent away for the catalogue of a firm specialising in New Zealand literature. Back came several very interesting lists, but they were nearly all marked: "Mostly out of print." Even the excellent Centennial Surveys are now unobtainable.

This is a bad state of affairs. Surely it should be part of the New Order in New Zealand to make these books available to those who want to read them. A southern bookseller says that second-hand copies of *Tutira*, which is greatly in demand, sell for as much as £12 10s and that Robert McNab's *Murihiku* sells at from £3 to £4. These are just two of several New Zealand classics that would make suitable school prizes if they were reprinted in attractive editions and made available to the public at reasonable prices.

TUTIRA (Frankton Junction).

(A new edition of *Tutira* is, we believe, in the hands of the printer.—Ed.)

MODERN ART

Sir,—M. Mrkusic (Auckland) has a liking for public psychological criticism of art theories, which no one should deny him, but he has also used my argument, so I hope you will publish my use of his. He defines a "dead art" as one "which has no social relevance or meaning," supporting, I think, the opinion that artists are public servants, and so should be criticised in general social terms. Yet he also scoffs at the "philistine public." In my opinion these views are inconsistent. If those of the public who try to understand works of art find tone values consistent with their own theory of art in Picasso's work, then they will applaud Picasso. That most of them do not applaud this modern art shows the generality of the human mind. It is only the generality of the human mind that distinguishes great art from other art. But M. Mrkusic writes as though artists exist only through working at popular art, reserving their creative theory for something the general public will not understand.

I readily join anyone in condemning cheap commercial "art" which has an appeal from the bottom up to the top of society, but great art is yet a social

conception, chosen from the rubbish by an intelligent and educated section of society, distributed among all classes. Each in his own mind makes a psychological estimate of the art-work, which is individual and may be general. That is why I dislike public criticism of the arts which seeks to thump the critic's psychological opinion into the minds of his public. The business of a critic of art, the business of the socially-conscious artist himself, is to emphasise his appreciation of the universal aspect of the human mind. There is nothing easy or dull in that. The human mind is wonderful in its generality. An original note in his description will "make" an artist as it will "make" a critic. Peculiarity, however, often takes a minority form. And why not? I praised Picasso in my first letter and I do not regret the fact. I sought merely to explain that "artists are only public servants after all," and that no one, not even Picasso, need be dismayed at that fact.

P.O.C. (Auckland).

BROADCASTS IN MAORI

Sir,—I would like to join myself to the number of your correspondents in the matter of more frequent Maori broadcasts. I would like especially to endorse the remarks of J.D. (Okato), who

(continued on next page)

WHY WAS I BORN?

"*WHY was I born?*"
Six steps from the wings to the centre,
The New Thought Lecturer stops,
Raising a hand to open the show with the question.
(To the entrance, the flower-set stage,
The rose-dim lights, the faint suggestion of incense,
The flowing mystical gown, and the coiffure expensively simple,
A deal of old thought had been given).
Two steps down to the footlights, another pause,
And the question again from under the searching eyes —
 "Why was I born?" The raised hand is commanding,
 And the wide-eyed audience stiffens to interest.
Another two steps and she's ready again.
She has them; she's sure; she's drawing them into her circle.
 "Why was I born?" The silence vibrates.
And then from the back a voice answers: "Give it up, Emma!"
And that is the end of the show.

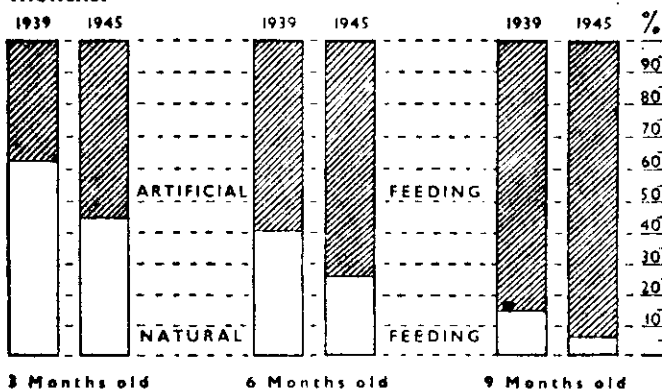
"*WHY was I born?*" sighs the poet.
 "Why was I born?" moans the poet.
This odious world of stupidity:
This sickening world of the Philistine:
Nothing but sorrow and sin and corruption;
This world that won't go as I want it!
 "Why was I born?" so the plaint wanders
Through quatrains and odes and free versing.
And the little man resting from labour,
Full of his job and his wife and his children,
In the press of his problems catches the strain.
 "Give it up," he replies with a shrug to the whining,
 And, lighting his pipe, turns to the racing.

—Alan Mulgon

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