

JUNE 27, 1947

Lucky Auckland

IT is not Auckland's fault that 1YA is not always a pleasant noise in Wellington. It is the fault of the intervening mountains, machines, and unquiet air waves that break and distort and muffle the voice of 1YA as it comes. But it is Auckland's luck and the rest of the Dominion's misfortune—we shall not say sorrow—that more orchestral music will have been heard in Auckland this month than has ever before been heard in such a short time in any New Zealand city; and most of it has come from our own national orchestra. There can of course be no such thing as competition in music or even deliberate comparisons; but there can be variety in interpretation and differences in appreciation, and all that excitement will have been Auckland's in the narrow space of two or three weeks. The rest of us will have listened when and where we can, but it will not have been possible to hear what Auckland has heard or see what Auckland has seen. Fortunately it is the kind of blow we can all cheerfully take. We know that our own turn will come, and know, too, that what has just happened is an accident only in the timing. The opportunity to see and hear Mr. Goossens has come because of his appointment to Australia; but he would not have loitered in Auckland if there had not been an orchestra there worthy of his professional attention. Nor would Mr. Braithwaite be in New Zealand as a conductor if there were nothing here to conduct. Neither could risk his reputation on a mere fee-for-service foundation. When every allowance is made for the desire of the arrived to help others to arrive, the fact remains that the national orchestra has been heard so often and so soon because conductors of distinction are not afraid of it. Nor are they afraid of the New Zealand public. They know that most people can appreciate good music if it is presented to them in what Mr. Boyd Neel calls the right way—free from all pretentious rubbish about music being something apart from life and difficult for ordinary people to understand.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

UNITED NATIONS WEEK

Sir,—May I express the thanks of my Association for the splendid issue of *The Listener* devoted to United Nations Week. We are indebted to the Director of Broadcasting and the staff of the NZBS for a spectacular and at the same time serious exposition of UN.

The man-in-the-street may be surprised to know that the budget of the United Nations is something less than that for street-cleaning in the City of New York. There are some 2,000,000,000 people in the member states, whose lives depend on the successful working of UN; but UN cannot work successfully until a reasonable majority are prepared to vote for it, work for it, and pay for it.

United Nations Week was launched in New Zealand as part of a publicity campaign for UN. The broadcasting part of that campaign, thanks to the NZBS, has been splendid. Its effectiveness, however, will depend on the receptivity of listeners. May they be stirred to goodwill, study and good works!

ANTON VOGT

(Dominion Organiser for the United Nations Association).

PERFIDIOUS

SIR,—I was scandalised to-day

To hear a chap from 3YA
Describe with brio and dispatch
A most atrocious football-match.
Repeat, atrocious, since the teams
Were four in number, for it seems
That Marist played no less than three
Opposing sides. These proved to be
Olbiun
Awlbium
And Elbiun.

OLBIUN didn't stay so long
And Awlbium never looked so strong
But Elbiun didn't give two hoots
For Marist tries and Marist boots,
And Elbiun rucked and passed and bored
And Elbiun dived and Elbiun scored
And Elbiun had lots of fun
And, to be brief, the game was won
By Olbiun
Awlbium
And Elbiun.

ANOTHER foul injustice done
To Ireland. And was there none
To raise a cry of protest? No;
This worse than gladiatorial show
Was greeted, more's the shame, with
shrill and
Raucous plaudits, O, New Zillund!
O shame, embenkment and grand-stand!
O shame, all fens who thus commend
Olbiun
Awlbium
And Elbiun!

ELFRED (Christchurch).

WOMEN'S PLACE IN SOCIETY

Sir,—Your correspondents, "Contented Housewife" and "Bars of Gold," seem to be as confused in their thinking about marriage and housekeeping as the majority of women. There is great need for clear thinking on the subject of the position of women. It is assumed that, by some divine law, the job of housekeeping is an integral part of the job of being a wife and mother, whereas they are two separate types of activities. It is a natural confusion, especially in a young country where practically all classes of women have had to combine the two activities for so long that it is

difficult for the ordinary woman to accept the idea that they are naturally two quite different jobs. No one but the wife and mother can fill those two positions satisfactorily, whereas anyone of average intelligence can be trained to be a housekeeper.

To jump to the conclusion that because a woman wants to be married and have children she must automatically want to—or ought to—be a housekeeper is nonsense. It is taken for granted before marriage that a woman is an individual, with as individual tastes and capacities as a man, but as soon as she marries she has to drop all her individual preferences for certain activities and become a housekeeper.

No one would suggest that, because a man wants to be married and have children he should automatically be expected or compelled to fit himself into a job identical with all other husbands and fathers. Men keep their diverse jobs and interests. Yet in a woman it is counted unto her for wickedness and selfishness etc. that she should even want to do something besides housework. Should a man, by force of circumstances, have to work all his life at a trade or profession he dislikes and make even a fair success of it, it is counted as a virtue, and no one calls him wicked or selfish if he occasionally yearns for the activity he is best fitted for. But a woman who expresses a longing for something other than the boredom of housework is condemned.

I acknowledge that for most women marriage and motherhood means being tied to housework as things are now organised, and most of us love our husbands, children, and homes enough to make a creditable job of it in spite of boredom, monotony and frustration. But it is possible to so organise society that women can have the happiness and fulfilment of marriage and motherhood without the tie of housework unless it is desired. Those who are working to that end should be honoured, and strengthened by the support of their fellow women. And they would be were it not for the confusion in the minds of women themselves over their position in society.

MOTHER (Feilding).

CORRUPTION OF TASTE

Sir,—I should say that the blame for corruption of taste rests on both the artist and on society. On society because they patronise it, and on the artist because he lends himself to it. The idea of Vernon Brown, to establish an Industrial Society of Arts, is excellent. Such a Society could make a useful contribution towards preventing the corruption of art provided it would refuse to act as a figurehead.

Industry wields a tremendous influence on the arts because it is in a much better position to patronise sciences than individuals. It is the large industrial enterprise that can be expected to be generous towards the various branches of science and art, rather than the poor scientist or artist himself.

The corruption of taste is more often than not caused by lack of experience. A coal bunker may express beauty with mere simplicity of form following the lines of structural utility, whereas an overplastered edifice just does not convey anything. In fact it is abominable. There is, of course, no mystery in beauty, or taste. All that is required is to apply them in the right place and at the right time. There is no short cut to that realm

which aims at preventing corruption of taste. There is only one remedy for it: experience.

I think credit is due to A. R. D. Fairburn, who has taken upon himself the ungrateful task of persuading the people of this lovely land that there is not much scope in insularity and provincialism. I believe his intentions are honest and the suggestion by Vernon Brown of "the public being clouted" appears to me far-fetched. What would Mr. Fairburn achieve by it anyway? Certainly not popularity. If one considers the hard going G. B. Shaw had in trying to enlighten a much more advanced people than New Zealanders have shown themselves to be, Mr. Fairburn should have all the good wishes we can muster.

CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMA
(Abridged.—Ed.) (Auckland)

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Sir,—In the early 'nineties I was a member of the Canterbury Women's Institute, Christchurch. This organisation had a large membership composed mainly of women who had worked valiantly and successfully in gaining the women's franchise in New Zealand. Other Women's Institutes in country districts were connected with ours. Our work was the discussion of social and political problems, particularly those relating to the welfare of women and children, prison reform, the sick, and mentally afflicted. Our aim was for progressive reforms.

In those early days of women's struggle for the same rights that men enjoyed, the majority of the male sex were hostile to our advancement. Yet we held the respect, encouragement and support of quite a number of worthy men. Among others, I recall the friendly co-operation and personal interest in our movement shown by Mr. S. Saunders, then editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, the late Rev. O'Brien Hoare, and the late Mr. W. S. Lovell-Smith. Some, if not all, of the group of politicians known as "The Young New Zealand Party" were definitely interested in the operations of our Institute, giving us praise for our progressive ideas, and welcome advice. Sometimes they discussed parliamentary issues with our officers, and through them some of the suggestions and decisions of our Institute became embodied in the legislation of this country.

In 1897 I was elected as a delegate to represent the Canterbury Women's Institute at the National Council of the Women of New Zealand, which that year met in Christchurch, and was held in the Provincial Council Chambers, Durham Street. This Council consisted of its officers and women delegates from unions, institutes, societies, etc., from different parts of this country. (I have a group photograph of the members of that year's session.) Its purpose was to prepare and present to Parliament suggested reforms and progressive resolutions for consideration, and hoped-for acceptance.

In time I concentrated upon a different line of reform work which I still pursue, but about 20 years ago I was invited to attend a function convened by early members of the Canterbury Women's Institute, at which it was proposed to disband that movement. This probably closed a great and important era in the evolution of women's rights in New Zealand, and maybe formed a basis for subsequent Women's Institutes and Councils.

MARY ELIZABETH SIMPSON
(Christchurch).