

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

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EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:
115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.I.
Box 1707, G.P.O.
Telephone 46-520.
Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

School at Home

THE Correspondence School has made so much progress in its first 25 years that it would be bold to set limits for the next 25. No one would have believed ten years ago, when the roll number was already 2,700, that another decade would see it doubled, and it would have sounded quite crazy ten years earlier to say that the 600-700 pupils then enrolled would have been replaced by six or seven thousand before 1950. But the enrolment graph in the Silver Jubilee record shows only two slight checks between 300 and 5,300, and the steepest rise is for the period through which we are now passing. If there is a horizontal level ahead it is clearly a long way ahead, and the problem in the meantime is to organise fast enough behind the lines to keep this growing army fed. It is greatly to the credit of the Headmaster and his staff that the feeding is so well done at present—that no teacher is satisfied with the bare bones of education or thinks that it is not possible to do by correspondence what is everywhere done in the schoolroom. The balance tips slightly the other way; what it is not always possible to do in large class-rooms it has often been found possible to do in individual homes, and the result is that the syllabus of the Correspondence School is almost incredibly full and flexible. The School has in fact reached the point of peril at which everyone praises it, but there ought to be security in the contacts it maintains with its past pupils. Instead of keeping them dispersed, so that they can't put their heads together, the School assembles them as often as it can and encourages them to keep in touch. It is all an extraordinary development which it is no longer possible to call an experiment; but the bigger the School grows the more necessary it is to see that it grows like a tree and not like a snowball.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

FILM CRITICS

Sir,—I think that the answer to Mr. Hayward re the Disney films is not only unnecessarily tart, coming as it does from the Editor of a journal of the standard of *The Listener*, but somewhat illogical too.

To suggest that Mr. Hayward cannot judge a film honestly because he deals in films and shows them to the public, is the same as saying that a man who sells bread cannot recognise a good loaf, or that an Editor cannot recognise a good story when he reads one.

TOM BLOODWORTH

(Auckland).

(We expressed no opinion at all about Mr. Hayward's personal capacity to judge films. We said that disinterested criticism is safer than the criticism of interested parties.—Ed.)

HEALTH AND THE SOIL

Sir,—*The Listener* is to be congratulated on re-publishing Sir Stanton Hicks's views on soil and health, and on devoting a leading article to the question. But when you say that "the soil is a new religion" you impel me to point out that the idea of fertility is contained, explicitly or implicitly, in every religion in history. It is only the pseudo-religions (such as departmentalised "science") that try to dispense with it.

I find it reassuring that, amidst so much unreality and chaos, and in a country where Easter is celebrated in the autumn with race-meetings, the minds of the people should be turning to this question of soil fertility.

As for Sir Theodore Rigg, I have no doubt that his motives are disinterested, and that the Cawthron Institute is doing some very useful work. But I feel that, in their present context, its labours are akin to those of Sisyphus. If we rely on such activities to preserve for us the basis of physical life, rather than pursuing the positive principle of fertility that has informed the classical systems of agriculture, we shall be putting to sea in a colander.

A. R. D. FAIRBURN (Devonport).

MOVIES AND MORALS

Sir,—In his review of Mayer's *Sociology of Film*, G.M. quotes a passage which among other things says: "Films (to be more precise, feature films) exert the most powerful influence in our lives." After making allowance for what may be unconsciously assimilated and though I have not myself seen a film for seven years, I just don't believe that statement. People go to the movies as an entertainment and to escape from their humdrum lives into the realm of make-believe. They may wistfully think it would be grand if things happened to them like they do to the heroes and heroines, but they know very well that it is not at all likely. Adults are no more inclined to base their actions on what they see in films than they are to take their opinions from editorial writers. They know that the film has been concocted for their amusement just as the leader is written for the purpose of trying to influence minds, and they don't let either count for much in their daily lives.

The emergence of the schoolboy murderer makes one think that children ought not to be exposed to the cumulative effects of gangster and crime films and that their movie mental food should be intelligently selected. But there is the problem of parents who take their

children with them when seeing films not beneficial to young minds in the formative stage. The universal prevalence of "pitiful imitations" of screen glamour-girls need not worry us. This is just to-day's aspect of woman's age-old instinct for attracting attention, and it is aided and abetted by the cosmetic merchants. There are probably some who mar their lives—and perhaps the lives of others—by over-indulgence in this vanity, but by and large it makes for a bigger percentage of attractive females in any crowd.

I am by no means blind to the possible insidious influence of calculated propaganda on weak natures subjected to continuous suggestion and emotional attack through films, but I don't think we should become unduly alarmed about what everybody knows to be a money-making branch of entertainment, because this knowledge greatly reduces the possibility of vital moral influence.

J. MALTON MURRAY

(Oamaru).

THAT SHIRT

Sir,—After the transaction the draper has all that he had before, except eight shillings and a shirt. He also has a dud pound note, which is, presumably, worth nothing. His loss, therefore, amounts to eight shillings plus the value of a shirt. The value of the shirt is what anyone will pay for it in good money, so that if the buyer did not know that the note was a dud, it would have been 12 shillings, and the loss 20 shillings. However, if he knew that it was bad, the draper might not have been able to sell the shirt for 12 shillings good money and might have had to mark down the price. In any case, the loss is eight shillings together with the price the shirt would have brought in good money.

J. F. D. PATTERSON (Gisborne).

A LISTENER WITH A GROUCH

Sir,—I've got a grouch! On a recent Saturday night when 2YA took over at the interval from the Town Hall, Wellington, why did they put on four out of five recordings exactly the same as we had been listening to for over an hour and which we still further listened to for another hour and twenty minutes? From the station we had orchestral instruments, quite good, of course, but anyone with a knowledge of programme organising would, surely, have given us some variety!

Then again at 3YA to-night there is a band programme with Woolston Brass Band playing at eight o'clock and from seven-thirty there's a further programme of band music. Why? The average listener hardly knows the difference between a military and a brass band, and to the latter, I contend, it is most unfair to put half-an-hour's programme ahead of them, with voca! interlude it is true, seemingly to offer a comparison. From a listener's point of view one can have too much of anything... even the best the world can offer. Variety is the spice of life, we are told, and a radio programme should surely contain just that. Station 3YA has done that for years and it has always been a puzzle to me why.

Also, I've got a grouch at the technicians. I always understood that the monitor's job was to ascertain, and maintain, the levels of recordings, announcer, etc., of each particular station. So that, in a home, when the station is tuned in with, say, a couple of

recordings, and the announcer's voice, one can sit back and leave the rest to the monitor. Now is that contention correct? If it is, then my grouch is well founded. If it isn't, then I would like to know is it necessary for me to sit by my radio and spend the night twirling the knobs.

On Saturday night last I tuned in to 2YD. The announcer boomed in; I cut down, and the recording came from thousands of miles away. Then half way through it came up, although in the meantime I had "opened her out." Then when the monitor got to work plus what I had done, I got whatoh! Station 2YA is not faultless in this regard. I say without any hesitation that in 60 per cent. of announcements the level is not

More letters from listeners will be found on Pages 16 and 17

the same with announcer and artist or recording. In the Australian stations where there is a great deal of competition one would not get this sort of thing.

Now I am not writing this just for the sake of doing so. In the ordinary course of events I should have written to the NZBS and stated my case, but I've met so many people lately who have voiced the same opinions as myself, that I think it is in the interests of the Service that such should be ventilated. It will also give the Service an opportunity to state whether such contentions are correct, or otherwise.

—H. GLADSTONE HILL

(Plimmerton).

NEWS IN MAORI

Sir,—I note with pleasure that the Maori News Summary on Sunday evenings is being extended. This extension is appreciated by those who listen in regularly and by those who also appreciate the fine efforts of the announcer in speaking such correct classical Maori. May I, however, offer a suggestion in connection with this new session. The NBS has in its possession some hundreds of Maori chants and songs which Sir Apirana Ngata has only recently been annotating. Could not some of these very beautiful waiata and patere be incorporated in the Sunday evening broadcasts? Most scholars of the Maori people will readily agree that Maori oratory and Maori music are very closely allied; in many cases it is difficult to speak of one without referring to the other.

Such a suggestion, if adopted, would conform more to Maori custom than present arrangements, and would, in my humble opinion, be more acceptable to Maori listeners, whatever their tribal affiliations may be. J. B. PALMER

(Petone).

(Similar letters have been written by other correspondents.—Ed.)

"AN INTOLERABLE NUISANCE"

Sir,—With as much fortitude as I have been able to muster I have listened to the chiming of Big Ben at 9.0 p.m. every night, and I have also observed the minute of Silent Prayer. My prayer has always been the same: "Good Lord, how much longer have we to stand this?" I may be too late, but I hope the proceedings of Parliament will not be interfered with by what is now only an intolerable nuisance. The whole business is only a mockery and ought to be abolished as a lot of other wartime regulations and restrictions have already been abolished.

THE OLD CRONY

(Palmerston North).