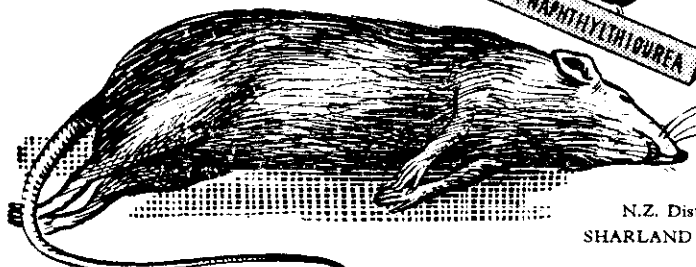


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FOR CONSTIPATION 47

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

SOCIAL JUSTICE SESSIONS

Sir,—How much longer has one to put up with our friends of the Social Justice sessions of the ZB stations? Who gives them the right to inflict upon unwilling ears year after year their outpourings of sentimental slush? Surely, in the language of the day, they've "had it"? In the world of thought and philosophy there are many and diversified opinions and theories, and I for one would like to hear them. The Rationalists, the Marxists, the Atheists, etc., have their recipes for the world's evils and six o'clock Sunday night is just the right time for all to hear. I appeal to the authorities to give the non-Christians (according to the last census their numbers are growing steadily) a break.

RATIONALIST (Wellington).

HEALTH AND THE SOIL

Sir,—For a thoroughly provocative and "tail-twisting" editorial, yours on the above topic holds its own. You pose unanswerable questions regarding health, and then by inference claim that politics could be relied on to apply the remedy. But the most objectionable comment in your article is the statement that "the soil is one of the earth's new religions."

As I type, it occurs that most likely that remark was made as a joke, but most readers will take it seriously as a sort of cheap gibe, though not intended as such. If the enthusiasm of those who see a danger in depleting the soil and toil mightily to prevent that, if that can fairly be called a new religion, then one might say that such a religion will be a national asset, especially when compared to the now prevalent religion of free dope to swallow, and never mind the rules of health. Huge profits from drugs, but the State gets its big rake-off, so why worry.

You comment on the failure of Sir Stanton Hicks to say whether the Japanese are healthier than the people of New Zealand, but would it prove anything if they were or were not. Are there not many other factors which go to make a healthy nation? For example, could not over-population undermine a nation's stamina and health, in spite of every other factor being right?

You conclude with this: "he is bold . . . who argues that nature never fails." Fails to do what? Fails to exact full penalty for short cuts?

A. D. YOUNG (Auckland).

Sir,—Sir Theodore Rigg, in his comments upon Sir Stanton Hicks's address to the Science Congress, seems to have fallen into the very error Sir Stanton warned us against, i.e., over-simplification and thinking in terms of quantity instead of quality. Sir Theodore advances the death-rate of the Chinese and the death-rate in New Zealand as a measuring stick with which to compare the effect on health of the manuring systems of the two countries. This is an extreme over-simplification, leaving out as it does the other enormous differences in conditions in the two countries. China is densely populated, and for generations has been ravaged by civil wars, invasion, floods, and dirt diseases with a consequent enormous loss of life unknown in New Zealand. Hence no reliable comparison of the death rates is possible. Sir Theodore then compares the money value of the goods produced per annum by the Chinese farmer and the New Zealand farmer.

Leaving aside the low exchange value of the Chinese dollar, Sir Stanton Hicks's argument is that it is not upon the money value of the food we grow that our health depends, but upon its value as food—its health-producing value. Of what avail is it to grow with chemical fertilisers two blades of grass where one grew before if the sheep that eat the two blades become diseased? What is needed is long-term feeding tests of foods grown with chemical fertilisers on the one hand and organic fertilisers on the other, carried right through from animals to man.

E. SATCHELL (Auckland).

Sir,—May I congratulate you on printing extracts from the address given by Sir Stanton Hicks. This will help to arouse general interest in one of the most vital problems of our day concerning the use of mineral fertilisers and the attitude of science towards it. I refrain from using the term "artificial fertiliser" as the application of certain pulverised minerals to the soil seems to me no more artificial than that of compost made in a pit.

Although many farmers are not quite aware of its importance, no present-day scientist will deny the value of compost. So the much debated question "compost or minerals" should be modified thus: can certain minerals be applied to the soil in addition to compost without harmful consequences to soil, plants, animals or men? After a careful study of Sir Stanton's statements it becomes evident that the problem cannot be solved in the laboratory alone or on miniature experimental plots. It calls for large scale experiments carried out over whole farm units for several years, each of these units worked in its entirety according to one or another of these various methods recommended. Then the farmer-scientist should have little difficulty in discriminating between a sound soil management and a faulty one and Sir Theodore Rigg will be able to arrive at the definitions of healthy soil and healthy plant, asked for in his comment.

To measure health in man by the death rate per 1,000, as Sir Theodore suggests, is but another example of over-simplification — though in a somewhat different sphere. It fails to consider at least one factor: the amount of hospitals, doctors, and medicines needed to keep the 991 alive.

F. H. HOFFMAN (Runciman).

HISTORY ON THE AIR

Sir,—In the Give-It-A-Name jackpot session on June 16 the question was asked which Pope opposed Henry VIII's plea for a divorce. The announcer explained that after defying the Pope, Henry passed a new law appointing himself as head of the Church, and thereby founded the Church of England. Announcers are human, and mistakes are inevitable, but when false history is broadcast over the air and heard by thousands of listeners, it is time that something was done about it.

Presumably the announcer acted in good faith, and repeated what he had been taught in school, but one wonders how such a farrago of nonsense escaped the vigilance of inspectors and others whose job is to educate, and not to mislead. Henry VIII. was no more responsible for founding the Church of England than the announcer was. There is ample secular and ecclesiastical proof to the contrary, which the announcer should study. Very briefly all that happened