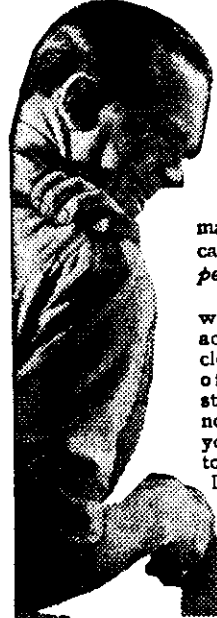


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YESTERDAY-TODAY-TOMORROW

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

UGLY BUILDINGS

Sir,—In his article arguing the corruption of taste in New Zealand, Mr. Fairburn used as a yardstick, the results of a competition in the English literary journal *Horizon* which awarded prizes for photographs of Ugliest Buildings. "The winning snaps were bad enough," he said, "but one could find a hundred examples that were much more horrifying around the suburbs of Auckland." Before we meekly brand ourselves as being unfit even for adult audiences, it might be as well to be certain that we are listening to the right oracle. I enclose three other opinions on the subject of what Astragal in the *Architects' Journal* (January 30, 1947), calls "the staggering results of the Ugliest Buildings Competition." One of these protests is made by Gropius, one of the most famous of modern architects.

Mr. Fairburn's key words are "simple" and "honest." Let us, he says, aim at a nation-wide taste in architecture and the applied arts for the simple and honest, and let us abandon pretentious and vulgar snobbery. As a simple, honest soul, I have applauded these excellent sentiments ever since I became aware 20 years ago that these were the sentiments that the serious, the cultured, the up-to-date should applaud. But I have never been able to still a perverse small voice telling me that I prefer the unconscious snobbery of the pretentious and the vulgar to the conscious determination of the cultured to be strenuously simple and honest.

I suspect, in fact, that there is something very complicated about being simple and honest, but being a simple and honest soul, I wouldn't really know.

NORMAN BLOOD (Wellington).

ENCLOSURE (1)

It seems to us absolutely absurd that the building of Wells Coates, erected in 1934 as the first modern building in England after the sleep of three decades, is brought in that kind of relation, and completely inadequate with the literary and artistic line of your highly estimated magazine.—S. Gledion, Secretary-General to "Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne" in *Horizon*, April, 1947.

ENCLOSURE (2)

The photographs are bad, the captions incomplete or inaccurate, and the decision of the Editor may have been final, but it is certainly not right. The visual quality of the winner, for instance, is surely an inept wilfulness rather than downright ugliness, and since an element of fantasy is never out of place in a country retreat, this would seem almost a virtue. The Isokon Flats (second prize) are admittedly—like most buildings in London—in need of repainting, but to call them ugly is to imply that their form is distorted and that their shape has been conceived by an untrained and insensitive mind. This is a ludicrous misjudgment of a building which, for all its faults, is generally considered to be a minor milestone in the history of this country's architecture, and expresses in all its dimensions the control of an imaginative and purposeful mind. . . . As for the "Group of 1870 Buildings Maryport," they are certainly dilapidated, but they are not disordered or malformed, any more, if the sash-windows are any guide, than they are 1870. It may be argued that there is no such thing as an ugly building—just as there is no such thing as an ugly colour. It all depends on where and how it is placed. But most people would agree that there are buildings—perhaps a reader would like to suggest one or two?—whose appearance is so actively offensive to the eye that they can genuinely be called ugly. The readers of *Horizon* do not seem to have found such buildings, nor would it appear that the editors of *Horizon* would recognise them if they saw them.—Astragal, in *Architects' Journal*, 30.1.47.

ENCLOSURE (3)

Reading the December issue of *Horizon*, I was baffled to find the Lawn Road Flats near Belsize Park, London, brandished under the caption "Ugly Buildings Competition."

I lived in these from 1934-37 and remember the building, which I know very well, to be cheerful and good to live in. Its design—by Wells Coates—is a result of careful study of contemporary living. If the colour of the building should be unattractive at present this cannot veil the basic soundness of the handsome building of which I thought London could be proud. I fail to understand the point of view of the jury making this derogative award.—Walter Gropius in *Horizon*, April, 1947.

WRESTLING BROADCASTS

Sir,—Your correspondents A. T. Bailey and A. Binnie seem to have missed the main point of my letter on wrestling broadcasts. I maintain that professional wrestlers, who, after all, are merely earning their living like anybody else, should not benefit by free publicity over National Stations but should, if they so desire it, go to the Commercial Stations for their advertising. Why should this one class of entertainers be privileged?

Professional wrestling, in my opinion, is not a sport in the sense that we class cricket and football as sports, but is merely an exhibition of brute strength designed to entertain audiences in the same way as do entertainers at a circus. In order to convince Messrs. Bailey and Binnie of some of my remarks concerning this so-called sport, I have examined the newspaper reports of wrestling contests over the past few weeks and in almost every bout there was at least one incident which could hardly be described as sporting. In one recent bout in the South Island, police aid was required to break a stranglehold; in another in the North Island, to quote the words of the paper, "X, after being subjected to numerous illegalities throughout the bout, tied Y up in the ropes, and after throwing the referee across the floor several times, refused to release his opponent and was disqualified." A fine "sport!"

Mr. Bailey, among other remarks, accuses me of "not understanding what sport is." My answer to this is that it is my knowledge of the principles of good sport that has caused me to rebel against such lack of sportsmanship as is so characteristic of wrestling. I agree with him in his statements about "the rigorous self-discipline and strict training" which wrestlers have to undergo. But I would point out that some of the genuine sports require a little training and occasional self-discipline too.

HAMISH G. HAY (Riccarton).

TOO MUCH KILLING?

Sir,—H. Wendell Endicott's moving and almost convincing article in *The Listener* is very interesting, but does he realise how small our country is? That we have no wide prairies over which four-footed creatures can roam? Being a visitor only, he can't know that the depredations of the four-footers are doing as much to denude our country of its forests as those of the two-footers.

Has he seen the floods with their damage to life and property, which seem to be getting more frequent and widespread and are caused chiefly by the stripping of the hills of all trees?

At present it seems impossible to convince man of his stupidity; his insane frenzy seems to be the cutting or burning of all timber within sight; but there is always the hope that, some day, New Zealanders may come to their senses and begin to plant instead of destroy. One can't hope the same for the four-footers. Were they allowed to increase at the alarming rate they have been

(continued on next page)



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