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## Palace and People

IT perhaps saved us from some dangers that the announcement of the Royal engagement reached us too late for immediate comment. There are many things we can't say now that it would have been appropriate to say a week earlier; but it is never appropriate to flatter or fawn. The message from the King himself was simple, restrained, and brief. So were the replies from our Governor-General and our Prime Minister. But the matter was not allowed to rest there. A flood of extravagant nonsense suddenly began to flow, and it has not quite stopped yet. One enthusiastic rhapsodist made the Princess a great linguist, a distinguished musician, and a dazzling horse-woman. Another thought to praise her fiancé by assuring us that he had always avoided his own country and could not even speak its language. It would be interesting to know what cause such sycophants think they are serving. If the Princess had become so many things in her brief life, the simple and sensible girl whom sensible people find so attractive would be a myth, and all the work of her public relations staff would have been wasted, fatuous, and false. But the less the toadies know the louder they lift their voices. What in fact do any of us know about these two young people that would bear examination? Of Lieutenant Mountbatten not much more than his age, his general appearance, and his very creditable war record. Of the Princess a little more certainly, but even in her case not nearly enough to justify us in making her already a figure in history. It is on the contrary her chief virtue and chief charm that she is not a figure yet, and does not wish to be, but the fact that destiny may make her a figure some day is a very strong reason why she should be allowed to enjoy her youth and her simplicity while she still has them, and her romance too before the cares of State cast their shadow on her path.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Sir,—One or two letters have appeared in *The Listener* lately about Women's Institutes in the early days of our Province. We quite realise we have not the monopoly of the word "Institute." A number of organisations use the term: the New Zealand Educational Institute, the Institute for the Blind, the Wesley Institute which used to be part of the social life of the old Wesleyan Methodist Church, to name only a few. The Women's Institute in its present constitution was formed in Canada in 1897, introduced into England in 1915 where the Government of the day voted a subsidy of £50,000 to help establish groups throughout the country. In 1921 after a visit to England Miss Jerome Spencer formed the first Women's Institute in New Zealand at Rissington, Hawke's Bay. There are now more than 900 groups in this country. The aim and object of the present Women's Institute is the development and improvement of country life. Handicrafts of all descriptions are encouraged and an active interest taken in public affairs.

"Our nation's fundamental need is for an increasing number of happy enlightened homes on farms and in the country villages, thus stemming the drift to the towns. This is the direction in which the Women's Institutes can continue to give unique and immeasurable service to our Dominion."—FRANCES L. TOPP (President of the North Canterbury Federation of Women's Institutes).

Sir,—In your issue of May 30, J.W.C. maintains that Women's Institutes were founded in 1892, "but the movement failed to secure the serious attention of the press." Naturally, proof of the statement was to be found (and suggested) in the written word and so far no written verification has been found. However, since the publication of my last letter I have received further evidence in a personal letter which confirms the statement of J.W.C. Evidently a women's social and political organisation was founded in the early 1890's in Canterbury and was called the Women's Institute. Its appearance seems to have coincided with the birth of women's independence. At this period various women's organisations were creeping on to the national landscape and this particular movement gradually crept off.

It was not to England that the founders of Women's Institutes looked for a name, but from England she brought an idea for the countrywomen of New Zealand. Great credit and respect is and always will be paid to our women pioneers, but one could not expect a present organisation to pay homage to a past organisation about which it had not heard until the start of this little discussion. **BARBARA HARPER** (Geraldine).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

## SIX MEN ON A RAFT

Sir,—Having just read your article "Six Men on a Raft" I am reminded of certain evidence I gained re Peru in the Polynesian contact. In the course of my enquiries re the various routes of the Maori to New Zealand I was in touch with the late Thomas Porter, the half-caste son of Colonel Porter. Mr. Porter told me that he had spent three months in hospital in Lima where he could converse with the local natives in his Maori tongue. Also he said that Peru was the only other place in which

he had ever seen the totara tree. An atlas I have, published 80 years ago, shows Peru to be full of Maori place names. I should say that an atlas of that date contained more original names than one published later, in commercial times. Surely nothing could be more Maori than "Titi-Kaka," though I notice a tendency now is to spell it with two "c's" instead of two "k's," which of course does not alter the original pronunciation. As far as I can see there is nothing to make anyone definite about one and one only route to Polynesia and New Zealand.

FRED C. S. LAWSON

(Matakana).

## BRITTEN'S MUSIC

Sir,—I listened in to the first New Zealand Concert of the Boyd Neel Orchestra. How fortunate we are to have music of this quality brought to our doors! The lovely, bird-like tone of the two first numbers was a fitting prelude to the terrific music of Benjamin Britten. Surely all of modern life is in that

## FREE SUPPLEMENT NEXT WEEK

WITH our next issue we are including a Special Supplement, giving photographs of all members of the present Parliament, together with a plan of the House of Representatives showing where they sit. This Supplement will be free and will be on the same lines as the one which we issued in 1944 and which then proved so popular with radio listeners.

To avoid disappointment, readers who are not regular subscribers should reserve a copy of next week's "Listener" with their nearest news-agent.

music—the grinding gears, the screeching brakes, the jiggling amusements, the thunder of bulldozers, the awful weight of material knowledge—and, above it all, the voice of the spirit giving its eternal cry.

I do not know what will be the response of those who are, in the musical sense, educated. I have not yet read or heard any opinion of an expert, but many untutored listeners like myself must have felt, I think, as I did, that Britten's music, as interpreted by the Boyd Neel Orchestra, was a release of something in themselves which calls for expression in this terrifying yet, in some strange sense, beautiful age in which we live. **MARY LOVEL** (Hamilton).

## SPOKEN ENGLISH

Sir,—Miss Ngaio Marsh's remarks on speech-habits in England are very helpful. Where I generalised, she was able to particularise. I agree with her about the long-drawn-out "eeeyes" as a fault of many New Zealanders, and am alarmed to think that I may have given some encouragement to it by analysing the "y" sound in "young" as "ee-oung." The "ee" here is, of course, as short as one can make it. When Miss Marsh says that the various shades of upper and middle class dialect one hears in England are the result of "environment and training," and that the users are "almost entirely unselfconscious," I think she may be beside the point. In our social actions and reactions our true motivation is often none the less real for being concealed under a layer of convention.

The use of a special speech habit to establish social superiority comes under the heading of group-behaviour: the individual may be unaware, or only partly aware, of what is being done.

As for the question of the Southern English "r," raised by Miss Marsh and also by Mr. Barwell, perhaps I cannot do better than quote from a letter I happened to read several days ago in a copy of the *English Listener* which Providence must have put into my hands. It is by Gerald Bullett, who is replying to a correspondent who is "distressed by the redundant 'r' which . . . is added by broadcasters to words like area, idea, India, and guerrilla." This correspondent had asked: "Is what was once regarded as a Cockneyism to be accepted as standard pronunciation?" Mr. Bullett goes on to reply: "For my own part I hope not, but worse things may happen and have happened. For it is this nervous (and snobbish) dread of falling into Cockney error that has led to the spurious and vulgar 'refinement' of never pronouncing an 'r' if it can possibly be avoided, and in particular of never joining a terminal 'r' to the initial vowel of the next word. That we of the south have difficulty in pronouncing the 'r' in 'corn' and 'morn' is no reason for leaving it out of words like 'moreover' or phrases like 'for ever' or 'after all.' I submit that 'the idear of,'

More letters from listeners will be found on Pages 18 and 19

though manifestly incorrect, is a hundred times less offensive than the equally incorrect, faw eva: maw ova; faw instance; afta all; ah troops opened fah; no maw waw; restawing; faw-inchi guns—examples all handpicked from comparatively recent broadcasts. If BBC official practice is a true index, these emasculate noises now pass for standard English pronunciation; which, I suggest, is part of the reason why any English-speaking Scotsman or Irishman speaks infinitely better English than the great majority of expensively-educated southern Englishers."

A. R. D. FAIRBURN (Auckland).

## "THE MODERN MELBA"

Sir,—For many weeks now, the listening public has been enjoying a fine musical feast from the ZB stations. The very beautiful voice of Glenda Raymond in *Melba, Queen of Song*, must have given pleasure to all lovers of good music. Her great range and technique cannot surely be far below that of Nellie herself, and it is to be hoped that, if she is not already booked for a New Zealand tour, arrangements will be made to give listeners the opportunity to hear more of this wonderful voice.

G. F. HOLIBAR (Titirangi).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Interested Reader" (Wellington): Stations 12B and 22B have already celebrated their 10th birthdays. There will be no network celebrations for 32B and 42B, who will have their birthdays on September 28 and October 12 respectively.

"Student" (Christchurch): Our information is that "Caesar and Cleopatra" is likely to be released in September, probably first in Christchurch.

A. Dore (Auckland): So far as we know, he is now an announcer at Station 2DE, Sydney.

## POINTS FROM LETTERS

J. ROSE (Auckland) wants to know if *The Listener* "cannot abide a breath of candid criticism" and if we really think that critics have no axes to grind. A critic, he argues, who is also an author, has quite a fair-sized axe to keep in trim, but confesses that he has not seen G.M. at the grindstone so far.