

LISTENER

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Propaganda Limits

IT is all to the good if the continuing conferences and discussions on aid to Britain are the result of pressure by people eager to help. No such campaign can be directed without staff discussions and decisions, and committees are not merely useful but necessary in rallying local forces. But there is a limit to the amount of propaganda people will accept in print and on the air. Neither the newspapers nor the broadcasting stations should be asked to report every step taken in this campaign by every member of every committee, nor should the public be asked to read or listen to most of it. The moment a publicity story loses its news interest it loses its value as publicity and belongs to the waste-paper basket; every attempt to keep it alive is the beginning of a public nuisance, and before long becomes a public offence. We do not help Britain by shouting out every day that we are helping Britain, or should or must or will help her. We help by doing the things she has asked us to do—sending her more of the things she has asked for and asking for less of the things she finds it difficult to supply. We all know what we have to do, and the danger in talking too much about it is that talking sooner or later takes the place of action. We say talking too much about it—passing too many resolutions, issuing too many directives, writing too many reports, making too many exhortations and complaints. A dozen men perhaps in the whole Dominion require to be almost constantly in conference, but the rest of us should be working and not talking, planning and not listening. We are far more likely to be getting on with the job if our goodwill is taken for granted and our tempers are not ruffled by unnecessary advice.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE TRAIN

Sir,—In odd moments of quietness as I listened to the down-line expresses thundering through this city I have often thought of the little line in the South which K. E. Goulter has so accurately and whimsically portrayed in the recent article "The Train." On reading it this household has had a flood of nostalgic memories revived, and I would thank your writer and suggest that *Listener* readers would appreciate some portraits of those who nightly waited for "The Train"—the woman with the hurricane lamp and quaint push-barrow, the organising ability of "Robbie" as he doled out the evening papers so that if one subscriber missed being at "The Train" his neighbour carried home his paper for him, or lonely "German George." Incidents, too, are well remembered when the train pulled in—especially the hushed expectancy of the waiting crowd for first written news of the Napier earthquake disaster when the faithful train chugged in with the evening paper of that dreadful day.

A.M.C. (Palmerston North).

BOOK BINDINGS

Sir,—In two book reviews which have appeared in recent numbers of *The Listener* your reviewers have complained of cheap binding. As you will be aware, there are few publishers who deliberately and unwarrantably select inferior and shoddy bindings for the products of their presses, and we feel that criticism of such an uninformed character should not be left unchallenged. In one case the book was a "popular" book which has enjoyed a popular success. To have cased it in full cloth would have added to the price to such an extent that it would have ceased to be either popular or profitable. The other book, certainly of more permanent value and specialised interest, would have suffered in proportion. Apart from decisions of this kind which publishers must make in their own and their author's interests, the pocket of the potential purchaser must be considered. Surely it is unfair to criticise efforts made to keep the price to a reasonable level, and to effect a reasonable sale, when greatly-to-be-desired improvement in binding would invite financial disaster for the book.

A. H. & A. W. REED
(Wellington).

(A reviewer's duty is to his readers. If the cover of a book is unworthy of the contents, he owes that information to potential buyers.—Ed.)

SAVING CALVES

Sir,—In view of your paper's sympathetic attitude toward the "Aid to Britain" campaign, I was surprised that Mr. Armstrong's proposals were accorded so much publicity (*Listener*, September 5). Far from alleviating distress, a policy of saving more heifer calves this season would only serve to aggravate matters in what will ultimately be an over-supplied market. To-day, in every market affected by the past war the emphasis is on increasing production, and the logical conclusion is that by 1950, when the produce from these heifers would be marketed, the world food situation will have returned almost to normal. In spite of all well-meaning forms of subsidy, the old law of supply and demand still prevails, and before long we will be selling on a competitive market. Britain's need for food is

immediate, and if, in the future, surpluses necessitate the re-introduction of a quota system, our present rate of production will be used as a basis for negotiation. Every extra calf means approximately 40lbs less meat for British dinner tables and, while admittedly not equal in quality to England's traditional "Roast Beef," this would form a welcome addition to the British diet to-day. Furthermore, the normal allowance of whole milk to a calf in the first six weeks of life would make about 12-15lbs of butter, apart from the skim milk consumed which could be devoted to the pig feeding.

The solution lies not in increasing our livestock, but in better feeding of existing herds. A great number of cows are

TO OUR READERS

IT is still necessary to remind readers that they should order their copies of "The Listener" in advance. Pre-paid subscribers will, of course, continue to receive their copies in the ordinary way, but those who depend on booksellers and newsagents will avoid disappointment if they let their suppliers know in good time what they require.

daired on semi-improved land and are inadequately fed. To produce to capacity a dairy cow must be fed to capacity, not for a few months per year, but every day of her life.

R. A. ANDERSON (Okaihau).

(This letter has been abridged.—Ed.)

ORCHESTRA PROGRAMMES

Sir,—The use your correspondent A. C. Mudford makes of the word "high-brow" illustrates an all too prevalent modern trend. It is the custom for those who like what I believe to be inferior music to call the classics "high-brow," just as it is the custom for lovers of the classics to call other music "trashy." I do not think either side is justified, but there is, I think, rather more to be said for the "high-brow" music than for the other. People who have really studied music prefer the classics to any other form of music. In any case the classics have stood the test of time, which the lighter music has not. These points Mr. Mudford can hardly deny. Let him refrain, then, from using a silly mud-slinging expression like "high-brow."

Mr. Mudford's contention about three-quarters of the population preferring "lighter or more melodious music" is, I fear, correct. But I very much doubt his statement about the orchestra being supported by radio license fees. These are all used, surely, in supporting the broadcasting stations, and the orchestra is supported by subsidy from the Government, and by the admission money from the concerts given by the orchestra. Would Mr. Mudford and other lovers of "light" music be content to pay the present admission charges, to hear music of the standard of "Jealousy?"

In any case, the orchestra is a Symphony Orchestra, and should be given the job of a Symphony Orchestra. Let us keep our heads, and not insult some of the best musicians in New Zealand by asking them to give up the music that

satisfies, that lasts, and to start learning seven-day wonders like "Jealousy" and "The Warsaw Concerto."

JON FRANCIS (Christchurch).

Sir,—May I congratulate A. C. Mudford on his excellent letter concerning the programmes of our National Orchestra. We hear a great deal to-day of international democracy. Why not democracy in music? Our classical friends can surely find nothing wrong with the music of Strauss or Eric Coates or such modern compositions as the "Warsaw Concerto" and "London Fantasia." Why can we not, then, as taxpayers, hear our Orchestra playing the things the majority of people like? When they do this, we shall all be listening to them.

"MABEL" (New Plymouth).

WHAT CHILDREN LIKE

Sir,—I listened in to a Children's Request Session on a recent Sunday and was very disappointed at the way it had deteriorated from its former high standard. The appreciation of good music and the desire to improve seem to be gone and in their place we have an over-sentimentality and a taste for cowboy songs which have nothing to recommend them beyond amusement. The music is ordinary and the words, especially when of the love song type, are often not suitable. A little of this kind of thing should go a long way, but it seemed rather encouraged than disapproved of. Perhaps youthful lovers of good music have dropped out because of this lowered standard, as many adults have in their Request Session.

G.A. (Castor Bay).

CONCERT "CROWDS"

Sir,—Listening to the beautiful Isaac Stern concert in Wellington on a recent evening I was surprised to hear the audience being referred to, on each occasion, as "the crowd," despite the presence of their Excellencies, and probably many other distinguished persons. The word "crowd" applies to a number of people at a football or boxing match, but surely not to members of a concert audience. I hope the slip will not be repeated.

LISTENER (Waikato).

"KIT CARMICHAEL"

Sir,—Allow me to draw attention to a slight slip in A.M.'s review of Miss Scanlan's recent novel *Kit Carmichael*. Though quite reasonable in other respects, A.M. has nevertheless misjudged one of her characters grossly. Mrs. Annabel is described as "a masterful and thoroughly objectionable aunt." Surely not. She struck me as being one of the book's most delightful characters: masterful, maybe, but not objectionable. The synopsis on the jacket describes her as "charming, but exacting"—a much more fitting description, and more like the one Miss Scanlan intended to convey, I'm sure. A good deal of misunderstandings would be avoided if people would make certain they have not misread before they criticise.

Q.M. (Masterton).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"HOPEFUL LISTENER" (New Plymouth) expresses appreciation of the "beautiful portrayal of Melba's life" in "Queen of Song" and asks for "more serials on the lives of famous people."

"MELLOW" (Christchurch) thinks that two recent speakers from Lincoln College should spend "perhaps 10 years" consulting the archives of the Sorbonne for 1784.