

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

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## Calling the World

IT is to be hoped that those who read the report on Page 8 of this issue will not read more into it than it is intended to convey. New Zealand is not yet calling the world on its own short-wave transmitters, and is not yet about to call the whole world. It has however called a considerable portion of the world experimentally, and the experiment has been successful beyond expectations. Now it is preparing to call the Pacific area regularly, beginning with Australia and its own dependencies. In other words, the technical problems involved have been overcome and the cultural problem begins. Or to put it another way: we now can talk to the world outside and must make up our minds what we want to say. It is the fundamental problem of broadcasting everywhere, and will not be easier for New Zealand than for other countries. But there is no reason why, if we are modest and sensible, it should be insuperably difficult. It would not be sensible to use our new powers to say things that other countries can say more effectively; to echo other countries; or to indulge in cheap advertisement. Those are all real dangers which it will require constant vigilance to avoid. But there is danger, too, in timidity and false modesty. We have a story of our own to tell, a picture of our own to present to the world, and the world will be interested in it as long as we present it honestly. We shall not make friends if we preach or serve up propaganda, but no country has a smaller need to do that. We are a British community working out our own destiny in physical but no longer spiritual isolation. We shall always have something to tell if we learn how to tell it.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### "LAUGH IT OFF"

Sir,—I did not hear H. R. G. Jefferson's talk "Laugh It Off," commented on in Radio Viewsreel, but I concur with the conclusion that one of our greatest failings is our diminishing sense of humour. It seems to me, too, that our Broadcasting Services have responsibility in this matter. The proportion of humour in our programmes is negligible, and for years I have felt that a greater amount of humour would not only improve the programmes, but have a salutary effect on our people. When British people begin to lose their sense of humour they are in danger of losing their spirit.

The Broadcasting Services were the first section to succumb to this regrettable trend, and, what is worse, they deny listeners the pleasure of sufficient humour in the programmes. Can anything be done to resurrect the dead sense of humour in programme organisers and so revive the dying sense of humour of New Zealanders?

"WOT, NO FUN?" (Grey Lynn).

### MUSIC AND WORDS

Sir,—It is a pity that Delius, having the whole of our literature to select from, did not choose something more worthy of a musical setting than the trash published recently in *The Listener*. I say nothing of the music itself, apart from the words, because I have not heard the composition; but even if the music has merit, and it may have for all I know to the contrary, its association with a text which, regarded as literature, is about equal to the banalities bleated by Bing, is as laudable as adorning a gutter-snipe with a king's robes. Let me here acknowledge my indebtedness to Shakespeare.

*Appalachia* evidently has its admirers. So, too, I suppose has rubbish like "Glory Road," "Mamma didn't know, pappa didn't know," and, I make use of a phrase taken from an estimate of a piece beloved by budding pianists of an earlier generation, "that most detestable of abominations" Moussorgsky's "Song of the Flea."

JOSEPH C. McEVOY

(Dunedin).

### GOOD WISHES

Sir,—We were very concerned to hear that "G.M." had received an overseas appointment, though I must confess our motives were entirely selfish, for he is going to be greatly missed in our home circle, now that the "Little Man" in *The Listener* has gone.

We have had not only really honest criticism—a rara avis where "box office" is the be all and end all—but cleverly woven entertainment in itself and since 1938, when we first discovered him, "G.M." has been our never-failing guide in film entertainment. Our very grateful thanks and sincere good wishes go with him in his new sphere of activity.

E. M. PERRY (Wellington).

### THE NATURE OF THEOSOPHY

Sir,—A great Scottish editor once wrote, "Opinions are free but facts are sacred." So that while your reviewer of Dr. Bhagavan Das's book *The Essential Unity of all Religions* is entitled to his opinions (and I am in entire agreement with him on many points—the practice of adding words to quotations or altering them to suit is one that cannot be

too strongly condemned), I cannot allow one of his statements to pass unchallenged. He describes Theosophy as a "highbrow form of Hinduism." Now, while Theosophy may be difficult to define it is certainly not "a highbrow form of Hinduism." It may be thought of as a synthesis of philosophy, science and religion.

As a philosophy it offers an intelligent explanation of life; as a science it examines and tabulates the laws governing that life and reveals to us something of our own essential nature and the nature of the worlds in which we live;

### CORRECTION

IN our Christmas issue we referred to the 2YA studio broadcast of Britten's "Ceremony of Carols" as the first "live" performance of this work in New Zealand. Mr. Claude Laurie, however, writes to remind us that this work was in fact first presented here by the Auckland Lyric Harmonists in the concert chamber of the Auckland Town Hall on December 13, 1945, and broadcast by 1YA.

as a religion it offers its students a way of life based not on belief, but on an understanding of certain great spiritual laws. It is no new panacea for the world's ills. It is sometimes called the "Ancient Wisdom" and is the esoteric or gnostic teaching to be found behind all the great world faiths.—MILTON THORNTON (Auckland).

Sir,—I write to protest against the review of *The Essential Unity of all Religions*, by Bhagavan Das. As a student of, and Lecturer upon, Comparative Religion and Philosophy, I find this book to be a most scholarly and valuable exposition of the subject. A study of World Faith reveals the following doctrines common to them all, despite difference of nomenclature:

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

The Unity of the Source of all Life.

The Evolution of Life and Form to a higher state.

The Immortality of the human soul.

Salvation, Liberation, Christhood as the assured destiny of every human being.

The Omnipresence of the Divine Life and Love.

The existence of a Way of Holiness or Path of Discipleship, treading which man may attain swiftly to Salvation.

The inviolable law of Cause and Effect or Sowing and Reaping.

Pandit Bhagavan Das, a deeply respected scholar, provides chapter and verse in support of his thesis on "The Essential Unity of All Religions." I fear that far less than justice has been done to him by your reviewer.

GEOFFREY HODSON (Auckland).

### MUSIC OF BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Sir,—I am an admirer of Benjamin Britten's music. On December 11 I heard his "Serenade for tenor, horn, and string orchestra" from 2YA, and I was very disappointed. How such music is published is beyond me. Yet, the fact that it is published proves that it must be a worthwhile composition. To me it seems that Britten placed his pen on his manuscript, closed his eyes and hoped for the best. Harmony seems a thing

of the past; the tenor, the horn and the orchestra disregard each other most of the time as though each were performing a different work. The result—terrible discord. Perhaps Britten is trying to create a sensation, as the music of Debussy and Stravinsky did, but to me he seems to fail. I would like to hear from someone who likes this work and the reasons why.

J.M. (Dunedin).

### RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS

Sir,—The collection of comments on Rhodes Scholarships by Rhodes Scholars that you print will remind some of your readers of what Sarah Millin said of Rhodes and his scheme in her biography of the man, which I believe is the best. After setting forth the conditions he laid down for the scholarships, Mrs. Millin writes: "It seems not to have entered his mind that he himself could never have won a Rhodes Scholarship. He was nothing of a scholar, he was nothing of a sportsman, he lacked most of the qualities he lumped under 'conscious rectitude,' and there is no evidence that he ever led or took an interest in his school-mates." Mrs. Millin goes on to say that "abnormal people are pathetically respectful of normality." Rhodes was abnormal, and his scholars were to be the pick of the normal; in her words, "decent fellows."

A word may also be said about the extraordinary allocation Rhodes made to America as compared with the British Empire. He provided that the United States should have two scholarships for each State, or ninety-six all told. There were to be sixty for the Empire. In an article on the scholarships in the official *Oxford Handbook* some years ago, it was asked if Rhodes knew how many American States there were. Mrs. Millin, writing later, says he did not. Rhodes was so ignorant of the growth of the United States that he thought there were still only the original thirteen States, which rebelled against Britain. According to Mrs. Millin, neither his man of business in South Africa nor the Chartered Company's solicitor knew better. She does not cite authority for these statements, but it is difficult to believe she did not make sure of her facts. The number of American scholarships has been reduced to thirty-two, chosen from groups of States. This must be one of the most amazing examples of ignorance in high places. It should be a little chastening to us when we are moved to complain that Americans are woefully ignorant about us.

A.M. (Wellington).

### PROTEST

Sir,—I wish to enter a protest against the manner in which the listening public have to submit to the elimination of the BBC Newsreel, scheduled for 6.45 p.m., in favour of the description of a football match on the other side of the world. I have no desire to suggest that the listeners who follow the details of football matches and other contests be deprived of an opportunity to do so, but that opportunity should not be at the expense of other listeners who wish to know what is happening in more serious matters, as expressed in the Newsreel. There would appear to be no reason why the sports talk should not be put over at some other time in the evening.

HANDS OFF THE NEWSREEL

(Orewa).

### ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

L.D.W.: Too long after the event, and "G.M." is not in a position to reply.