

FEBRUARY 27, 1948

Legation Days

THE interview in this issue with Sir Carl Berendsen will surprise those readers who think that a diplomat is a man who dresses and dines well and occasionally gets involved in sticky negotiations. Even when allowance is made for Sir Carl's fanatical energy, the picture that remains is exhausting even to look at. And it is unfortunately not just a picture. It is a record of things done or to be done by men and women whose need of rest and desire for relaxation is as real as our own. It does not just happen somehow that when a man enters on a job of that kind all his human attributes and flesh and blood limitations suddenly leave him. They assert themselves as strongly as ever, often more strongly, since he is under constant, urgent, wholly justifiable, and often strictly necessary temptations to desert his desk for the dining table. It is all very exhausting, and in the end liable to confuse and irritate any man whose mind and body are not both resilient and tough. The man who sighs for such a life, or rather whose baser half sighs for it, should, if the cost to the rest of us were not so heavy, be condemned to it for five years without hope of escape. Sir Carl Berendsen happens to be one of the few men New Zealand has so far produced who are equal to the strain physically as well as mentally, and it is clear that even he at present sighs for nothing so much as a hut in the wilderness where no one can find him for a month or two. He may or may not discover it. Everyone with bowels of compassion must hope that he will. But duty or conscience will drag him back, far sooner than he wishes or can afford to come, and a plane will rush him back to Washington to be envied by those who don't know the price he is paying to serve his country. Pity is perhaps the wrong word to offer him, or even sympathy; but he does at least deserve understanding, and that is something with which most of us are not very generous.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WORLD HOPES

Sir,—While we all, I think, deplore sectarianism, not all will agree with Mr. Malton Murray's suggestion that we might get rid of it "if we could bring ourselves to accept the idea of an impersonal source of supernatural inspiration." The dispositions of tolerance and goodwill towards all men which are the death of sectarianism are much more likely to flow from the acceptance of Christ's teaching that God is our Heavenly Father and that we are all brethren and must love one another.

Mr. Murray's dislike of the idea of a personal God is based on a misconception. He says: "Immediately we begin to think of a personal Deity, we become unconsciously embroiled and befogged with our own personalities and our ideas of personal responsibility." The natural tendency to think of the Deity as a human person is easily corrected by a little reflection. When we say that the Deity is personal, we mean that He is not devoid of intelligence, like a piece of wood or a stone, but has intelligence — intelligence infinitely superior to that which man possesses. In fact, we can best describe Him as Subsistent Intelligence.

In answer to the question "whether the name of 'person' should be said of God?" St. Thomas replies: "I answer that 'Person' signifies what is most perfect in all nature—that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature. Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God, forasmuch as His essence contains every perfection, this name 'Person' is fittingly applied to God; but nevertheless, not as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way." Summa. I q. 29 a. 3).

St. Thomas was well aware of the truth that for the human intellect the Deity is incomprehensible. He says somewhere that we have a correct idea of God only when we realise that He far exceeds any concept we can form of Him. But we have to employ some concept to think of Him at all. The best concept is "personal" or, if you prefer, "supra-personal." But "supra-personal" does not mean "impersonal."

G.H.D. (Greenmeadows).

Sir,—J. Malton Murray's aim of eliminating factious dissension by "accepting the idea of an impersonal source of supernatural inspiration that it is beyond our capacity to define, which operates in some way beyond our comprehension," sets a boundary to religious development, which is essentially boundless. If we assume the reality of an unknowable, incomprehensible God, we deny the reality of levels of comprehension and insight. Cut off from outward expansion, our religion becomes turned inwards. "For the great, negation of religion is individualism, egocentricity become a philosophy; and it is inherently atheist, however much it says 'Lord, Lord!'" (Professor John MacMurray).

True religion is a complete denial of egocentricity, an emotional awareness of God for the sake of God. It can have no limit and it does not admit of barren, intellectual, dogmatic conceptions. It can be attained only by personal effort. It can be easily comprehended but only with difficulty apprehended. It is closely allied to artistic sensibility and the highest realms of human love,

where a loved person is loved for that person's own sake.

The whole process is essentially one of emotional development by the outward direction of an inward force; an individual problem. I cannot see that it is much helped by intellectual sermons heavily shackled by anthropomorphism.

With your correspondent's last two sentences I agree, but I submit that to attain the common communion of man with man and both with God, we must set no limit to our capacities for awareness.

W. B. OLPHERT (Napier).

PAYING FOR TALENT

Sir,—Your editorial of January 30 reveals a complacency which I am sure you cannot really feel. Some of the arguments advanced are also somewhat specious. You omit to mention that New Zealand's most outstanding men of science have not or would not come back to their homeland and there is still a steady flow overseas. Australia has seen the red light and I understand has very

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recently increased all the salaries of her University teachers to place them on a line with those in other parts of the British Empire. University Professors may not be academic innocents, but I think they rightly have reason to complain when salaries of their colleagues are raised elsewhere and the Government of New Zealand declines to bring the New Zealand salaries into line.

It is true that the academic worker may have joys denied to others, but the others have material joys denied the academic worker. Few University teachers can afford to run yachts or launches, nor have they the money to enable them to frequent racecourses, not that many of them would if they had. Further, the results already produced would be much more impressive if New Zealand had been able to retain her gifted sons.

No, sir, your editorial is far too complacent, and if your policy were to be followed New Zealand would have little to show from her University and scientific workers in the next 100 years.

V. J. CHAPMAN

(Auckland University College).

(University professors are paid at least £1,200 a year, Senior Lecturers about £800. It may be complacent to think that they will go on doing their best work on such salaries; but if it is, "looking after themselves" is making a pretty good race of it against "looking after knowledge and truth."—Ed.)

Sir,—It is very regrettable that recently your leading article, renowned in the past for its foresight and common sense, should show such ignorance and lack of understanding. Your readers undoubtedly are justified in expecting and receiving something more worthy of both your and their intelligence.

As you and the Public Service Commission describe it, the New Zealand Government's attitude towards its scientists is one of indifference. "It is immaterial what scientists think: if they don't like it, they can lump it"—sums up your opinion. "There are plenty of

secondary schoolboys coming on," says the Public Service Commission.

You further appear to realise that the scientists will not strike to obtain salaries commensurate with their qualifications and the time, work and expense given to their training in the Universities. What you do not realise, however, is that they will do something much more effective and dignified than that—they will leave the country. In Britain, America, or Australia good workers in science reach the £1200 a year scale in their early thirties—they are completely free from financial worry, and can devote all their energy and thought to their work. And in the next war these countries are where New Zealand will look to recall her good scientists—and look in vain. There will be plenty of time then to look back and regret the parsimonious attitude of to-day.

It is the men with years of practical experience in research work, men with perfected laboratory technique and analytical accuracy which comes only after years of experience—it is these men who count: it is these men who are the backbone of science in New Zealand: it is these men without whom research work in New Zealand will come to a standstill, animal diseases will recur, wheat yields will fall off, soil fertility will decrease, cancer research will cease, poliomyelitis victims will continue to die—these are some of the "benefits" that will result when the scientists leave.

It is small wonder that scientists are requesting the Government to make it worth their while to stay. Disaster can only result if they leave. Hence it might be advisable for the writer of your article, unless he be a Science graduate, and knows just how much a research worker actually does, to hold his peace, as no clear-thinking and intelligent person will agree with him.

"J.R." (Christchurch).

(It would be helpful if our correspondent would indicate in what sentence in our leading article we said or suggested that "it is immaterial what scientists think."—Ed.)

LOCAL TALENT

Sir,—I do not wish to take up a lot of your valuable space, but at the same time I would like to support David S. Sharp's letter about making more use of local talent. Despite the fact that New Zealand has ample talent in both singers and musicians, we find the Government sending Andersen Tyrer off to London to import both. In my opinion we have composers, writers, singers, musicians and artists in New Zealand who can measure up to any reasonable standard, but they are not given a chance to show their worth. As an example take Rosina Raisbeck. She was not good enough for the National Orchestra, but she was good enough to be engaged by the Covent Garden Grand Opera Company of London, as their principal mezzo-soprano. Another beautiful voice lost to New Zealand. She is only one of dozens I could mention who have been forced to seek fame and fortune outside their own country. When soldiers, sailors or airmen are wanted I notice New Zealanders are good enough. Why not give them a chance in civil life too?

A. J. PASCOE

(Lower Hutt).

(We believe (1) that Rosina Raisbeck came from Ballarat; (2) that she was broadcast from 1YA.—Ed.)