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Weather Prophets

THE trouble with the weather, as the Prime Minister told the meteorologists, is that it refuses now and again to play up to the prophets. Prophecy has of course been a dangerous line since the beginning of history, but something is lost when its practitioners go out of business. If weather prophets have not given up altogether, they have sought safety in science, and that is the same thing. They have become gamblers in certainties, which is about as adventurous as going to the races when you know all the winners. A meteorologist is not so much a forecaster as a calculator, with hundreds of people watching him to see that he does not go wrong. By comparison with the prophet, who had little to go on but his corns, his rheumatism, and an active imagination, the meteorologist is a newspaper office and a university in one, with facts flowing in every hour from the ends of the earth, and several miles above it. It is amazing to think that he can in spite of everything still be wrong sometimes, and not altogether a comfortable thought that the day may come when he will always be right. But it has not come yet. The conference that met in Wellington last week was not at all assertive or over-confident. It was like the leader-writer who has written too many bad articles to have any satisfaction in a good one: so many of its calculations had gone astray, so many secrets escaped its utmost wisdom and prudence, that it was a little uncomfortable when the Prime Minister praised meteorology's accuracy in general. There may even have been a reason why it met in a country with a notoriously unpredictable climate. It probably felt sure of our sympathy at least if not of our full understanding. In any case it is not without significance that the picker of D-day was a New Zealander, and that the weather treated him as badly as it did everyone else.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE TOURIST TRADE

Sir,—Permit me to offer respectful and cordial agreement with your leading article, "The Tourist Trade." You have well expressed something which many of us have thought but none have previously expressed at all. The Tourist Trade can have a debasing influence entirely out of keeping with the dignity of man. Relationships with tourists are often a derisive caricature of hospitality, and thoroughly bad for both giver and taker.

But my own modest endeavours to tour this country have convinced me also that what is needed is less of the mock Grecian columns (in plaster) and a bit more of real honest service. This is something one never could buy, and it never even happens until one reaches the deep South or the far West, say Garston or Greymouth. In the North Island there is mostly an impudent travesty of service. Reservations in hotels are forgotten or denied, passengers on the ferries are kept hanging about on open windswept wharves without seating accommodation for an hour at a time. Meals are served anyhow and not at all after 7 p.m. Railway refreshment rooms and public bars are only for the young in the very lustihood of their powers. The less said about restaurants the better. Porters are not to be found when they are wanted on the railways, and taxis decide for and against after hearing your destination. You can't get a shower, a shoe shine, a shave, or a shampoo. I haven't much space left so I'll say nothing of the licensing laws which allow a drink when you don't want one and forbid it when you do.

The system of tipping has been criticised, but to those who service the New Zealand tourist is reserved the refinement of taking the tip and still not giving the service; as if the indignity of taking the tip were enough without doing anything absolutely menial as well.

This will do just now. But if any association or body of people feels it's not justly treated, I'll give specific cases.

HOME-LOVER (Wellington).

CLASSICAL REQUEST SESSIONS.

Sir,—I would like to express my appreciation of Station 12M's Classical Request Session. It is an excellent programme, and I hope that it does not suffer the fate of so many good features, and be suddenly discontinued. However, during the last few weeks, items have been announced only when about to be played. This means that anyone who is expecting a request to be played must listen to the whole two-hour programme, and while this is always enjoyable, it is not always possible. Could the announcer not continue to read out (as in the past) the name, or "nom de plume" of those who have requested items, and, at least, the principal works to be heard?

MUSIC STUDENT (Remuera).

McCAHON'S PICTURES

Sir,—I saw the exhibition of Colin McCahon's pictures in the Wellington Public Library recently, and I feel that the lyrical adulation of "J.C.B." must be contradicted. I considered that the whole exhibition was an insult to one's artistic intelligence. The British Exhibition of Children's Art, shown through New Zealand a year or so ago,

had better pictures, or attempts at pictures, by children of from six to 14 years. To boost McCahon in serious magazines is to give him an importance out of proportion to his ability. "J.C.B." wishes there were a church in New Zealand alive enough to buy the Annunciation or Deposition paintings. It is extremely unlikely. Perhaps it is old-fashioned to expect an artist to be able to draw correctly, or even to make a recognisable attempt at a figure study. If so, I am content with Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, and a few others.

P.W.R. (Timaru).

"PITY THE POOR PHOTOGRAPHERS"

Sir,—I would like to congratulate the photographer who took the Dunedin Town Hall flag-pole shot on the cover of a recent *Listener* (and you for putting it there, of course). In the Otago Centennial Issue you used another fine, story-telling photo of 42B staff doing

BACH'S B MINOR MASS

STATION 3YA's broadcast of the Bach B Minor Mass from Christchurch Cathedral this Friday, April 23, will begin at 7.30 p.m. and not, as previously announced, at 8.0. The Mass will be presented by the Christchurch Harmonic Society Choir and the NZBS National Orchestra, under Andersen Tyrer. The British soprano Isobel Baillie, Mary Pratt (contralto), Thomas E. West (tenor), and Bryan Drake (baritone) will be the soloists.

the parade in Dunedin. Both were eye-catching, well composed, and had excellent depth of focus, a hard thing for both subjects, and appeared to be the work of the same imaginative photographer. Good on him and you for doing them.

But (hoping I've softened your defences) here's the attack. Why no credits so we can see who's responsible for them, and plenty of other good photos you use? You credit the sources of all your literary contributions—why not the same for your picture-space? I think your illustrations are as interesting to some readers as the written columns. Although I am guessing this is some domestic affair of your own, I hope you won't mind me pitying the poor photographers.

The fact that I occasionally take a photo that finds its way into *The Listener* has had no influence in writing this. Oh dear, no.

R. HUTCHENS (Christchurch).

(The poor photographers are looking after themselves quite well.—Ed.)

GATHERING CLOUDS

Sir,—Your leading article of April 2 is in the welcome *Listener* tradition of having something important to say, and saying it in a thought-provoking manner. I would, however, like to comment on two points.

I am not sure of the implication of your reference to Henry Wallace, but from reports of his recent public statements, I should say he is far from thinking that war is impossible. I also wonder

how true it is to consider him a danger to his country. It is at least possible that posterity will see his seeming political naivete as true political realism on a long term view, and his willingness to forgo power for plain speaking as the stand of a man of principle. His rejection by his people may be an indictment, not of Henry Wallace, but of America's retreat from liberalism.

Again, although "resistance to preparation" for war is, like patriotism, not enough, and if at present practised by a State might well mean its disappearance as a sovereign political entity, there is a case for the presence of at least a minority in the tradition of Tolstói, George Lansbury, and Gandhi, to help keep the rest of us awake to the advisability of finding some substitute for war as the *ultima ratio regum*.

In conclusion, a bouquet for your emphasis on the little things "that in the end pile up," even though it is sometimes hard to have faith that, against the stupendous pettiness of world politics, we as individuals can do much.

NEIL SMITH (Otorohanga).

PARTIAL IMPACT

Sir,—The article on page 16 of your issue of March 12 describes the theory of Partial Impact as giving a view of a universe perpetually rejuvenated. Unless "perpetually" is read as "temporarily," this statement would seem to deny the ultimate applicability of the third law of thermodynamics. Is such a denial part of the theory?

E.C. (Wellington).

(Perhaps it depends on the point of view. If the universe is held to be running down, the word "temporarily" is correct. If it is not running down, but its energy is being continually renewed by the conversion of kinetic into heat energy, then "perpetually" may be held to be correct. Opinions about the state of the universe vary. Some experts consider it is expanding; others that it is contracting; others that it is just a mystery; in fact, as someone has irreverently said, no end of a cell.—Ed.)

CRICKET BROADCASTS.

Sir,—Now that the cricket (duck) season is over, I suggest for the next season that some variations be introduced by the sporting announcer from 2YA. If ornithological phraseology must be persisted with, then let us have say "out for a cuckoo; out for a warbler," etc.; a score of such can easily be thought out. On no account should dignified and clear meaning phrases such as "out for none," or "out for no score" be allowed. Meanwhile, would someone tell me what the announcer means by: "that ball was a dry one" and by "leg slips."

"FAILED TO SCORE" (Wadganui).

FLIGHT OF TIME.

Sir,—Here is an example showing how radio makes the time fly for lonely listeners. This morning I tuned in to 2YA and after a record had been played the announcer said "Time, almost twenty minutes past seven" and then repeated the words to make sure we should make no mistake about the time.

I immediately switched in to 22B, which was beginning a record, and after that was finished and a short trade announcement was made, the voice said "It is just 24 minutes past eight." Since I passed my 65th year, time has passed very quickly, but if I listen too much to the radio I'll be 100 before I can get my new suit of clothes.

"WATTY" (Karori).