

JUNE 18, 1948

## The Cost of Listening

THREE correspondents this week have asked us to tell them why they pay their licence fees. The first wrote because he gets jazz on the air when he wants classical music; the second because he gets classical music when his soul cries out for jazz. We are not sure why the third wrote, since he finds talks dreary, but says that he never listens to them. But each of these letters was wrongly addressed. Programmes are not prepared in *The Listener* office, or inspired or censored there, and if they were we could still not pretend to know why any reader pays a listening fee. We would know only what he gets or can get for his money, and that whether he pays more or less in New Zealand than the same service costs in other countries, he still pays so little that to complain of the cost calls for some daring. The cost of listening in New Zealand is a little less than a penny a day for a service that normally lasts 17 hours. For this ridiculous fee—not for each individual but for a whole household—the listener can hear what is happening overseas, what the weather is likely to be, what to expect as a buyer or a seller, what to do if he is sick and what dangers to avoid when he is travelling, how and when to cook his dinner, and why he should or should not have eggs for breakfast or sugar in his tea or wool next his skin. He is taken to church, to school, to the theatre, to the races, to boxing, wrestling, football, cricket, and a dozen other games and diversions. Only the newspapers give anything like the service provided every day by radio, and they charge a great deal more for a good deal less. It is open to any listener to complain of the content of the programmes. To complain of their cost is about as reasonable as to complain of the size, shape, colour, or conversation of the men who keep our postal and transport services going or provide the fuel to cook our meals and keep us warm.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## DUNEDIN TOWN HALL

Sir,—Dr. Finlay's statement concerning the acoustic properties of the Dunedin Town Hall takes me back a little further than 20 years.

Should it not be stated that somewhere about World War I the Dunedin City Council held a competition for designs for their new Town Hall? Was the competition not won by C. Fleming McDonald, of Dunedin, at that time one of the leading architects in the Dominion? Was the Town Hall not built on Mr. McDonald's prize-winning plan? You will find that this is so.

Mr. McDonald, who later, for health reasons, moved to Auckland, was recognised as one of the leaders of his profession in the Dominion, and there are several buildings and banks which testify to this effect. Mr. McDonald also designed and built several churches, in all of which the acoustic properties are everything to be desired.

To be fair to the memory of one who many citizens of Dunedin and elsewhere loved and respected, let us in this matter, give credit to whom credit is due.

LOYALTY (Invercargill).

(The Town Clerk of Dunedin informs us that a competition for the design of the Town Hall, held in New Zealand and Australia in 1913, was won by H. Mandeno.—Ed.)

## THE FINEST NEW ZEALAND VIEWS.

Sir,—If, as I think, your correspondent Guy H. Scholefield is a "literary gent" could he not persuade, say, the Tourist Department, to publish some sort of Travellers' Guide based on "Sundowner's" and others' descriptions? Lately I travelled through the lake district and loved it, but missed so much having no background and a dumb driver. Now I enjoy it again reading "Sundowner's" tours, but I would enjoy it better if I had such a description with me. Then if the delightful Mr. McCullough asked me or "Sundowner" as he did the Auckland Brains Trust, "which beauty spot shall I visit" we wouldn't shame our land. Let us make a test. Let *The Listener* collect suggestions from its readers and then we will vote on their merits, just like film stars. Here's mine—Mt. Cook seen over Lake Pukaki with the soon-to-disappear £5 island tinted with autumn colours.

SUNRISER (South Westland).  
(See page 6.—Ed.)

## EXPORT OF BRAINS

Sir,—I.B. is to be congratulated on the high standard of its panel of three that we heard recently discussing the subject "Is New Zealand losing its best brains?" However, I feel that there was an implied narrowness of outlook that was unfortunate. No speaker mentioned that it might ultimately be for the country's good that promising young men go overseas. There seemed to be a tacit assumption that they had no right to go. There is a tendency in discussions on this subject to over-stress the fact that the best brains leave the country, and to ignore the fact that many people, at least equal to our own, come to New Zealand to take high positions in science, education and kindred callings. If there was no export of brains then there would be no import—a state of affairs that would ultimately result in a decline of the cultural standard in this country. The immigrants—of the

"best brain" type—bring with them a far wider cultural background than can be acquired by staying in New Zealand, and this has resulted in a general raising of the intellectual level. Evidence of this is seen in the growing appreciation of the arts, the theatre, and the necessity of higher education.

One of the speakers, Mr. Griffin, referred to Dr. MacLaurin and Lord Rutherford, but entirely missed the most important point, namely, that had Lord Rutherford not left, or had he returned after a short time overseas, then he would never have had the opportunities

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 16 and 17

to develop and make the discoveries he did. This can be said of many well-known New Zealanders whose discoveries, in benefiting the world, have also benefited New Zealand. After all, New Zealand is only a small part of the world, not a self-contained unit. Too many people are smug and complacent in their attitude that New Zealand can provide everything any person should desire.

I would suggest that New Zealand should encourage her best brains to go abroad, temporarily or permanently, so that she can import better brains from overseas.

DUNSTANLEY

(Auckland).

## FOOD AND NUTRITION

Sir,—If any officials of the Plunket Society, A.C.E., or similar bodies listened to the United Nations broadcast on May 27, they must have surely moaned with despair. The listener was required to be moved to pity by the painful contrast of what a New Zealand child ate at his birthday party and what a European child was forced to eat on her birthday. The party hostess recited with smug satisfaction a whole list of menaces to teeth and health (in the shape of refined flours and sugars (such as rainbow cake, sponge cake, etc.), which she had made available for the fortunate New Zealanders, while the poor little European girl only had a herring and some black bread, both of which are unrivalled for their vitamin and nutritional properties in their respective fields.

V. DREGHORN

(Whakatane).

## HYMNS IN BROADCAST SERVICES

Sir,—There must be thousands of people in New Zealand who through old age or illness are obliged to stay at home on Sunday evenings, and who like to listen-in to the various Church services. For these I would like to suggest that the various ministers when giving out the number of the hymns also state in what hymn-book they are to be found, that is, *Ancient and Modern*, or otherwise. By doing this the family could join in and enjoy the evening and thus be encouraged to listen to the whole service.

E. LACEY (Petone).

## SINGING IN ENGLISH

Sir,—Judging by the applause which greeted Isobel Baillie after each of her songs one must conclude that her concerts gave immense enjoyment to her audiences during her recent tour. There is no doubt that this enjoyment was due

not only to the beauty of her voice and her artistry, but also to the fact that her complete repertoire, with the exception of the Mass in B Minor, was sung in English. There seems to be a tendency for local singers to affect the original language of songs (especially of lieder), but there are very few listeners who can understand their anglicised German. One is tempted to regard the whole thing as a pose on the part of some New Zealand born and trained artists when one hears a Schumann setting of a poem by Robert Burns rendered in the German translation!

LUSTIG (Timaru).

## RECORDED PROGRAMMES

Sir,—Apropos of a programme that professes to be "new," might one ask why most of the *Saturday Night Entertainment* from 2YA on May 15, was taken up by the recording of the British Film Festival of 1946? We are more or less hardened by now to two-year-old programmes, but this particular one was broadcast from the main stations only a short while ago. I will admit that one of the main stations left out a large chunk of the recordings, but that seems to be no excuse for including it in a "new" programme.

There seems to be in the New Zealand programmes a great lack of originality. By a conservative estimate I should think that 90 per cent. of the programmes we hear are recorded. But why are they so old? Surely there are plenty of plays and stories available in this country? As it happens a short play of mine was accepted by the NZBS a year ago, but it has never been broadcast. I am not suggesting for one minute that my play has any particular merit, but there are probably hundreds of such plays and stories that would at least have the advantage of being fresh and not second-hand from the BBC and many years old.

I find this lack of originality in the programmes the major fault in New Zealand radio. The listener pays enough, heaven knows, for his programmes. And growls enough. But that is as far as it gets.

STEPHEN LYLE

(Tokomaru Bay).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Interested" (Timaru): Not practicable.  
Emily Baiseen (Christchurch): Spare that axel.  
"P.S.C." and "D.G.C." (Dunedin): Space does not permit such publication.  
"I Want to Know" (Tinu): The subject has been dealt with extensively in the daily press.

J. Metson (Westport): Viewsreel paragraphs are accepted only from regular viewsreel contributors.

D.T. (Wellington): You should address your letter to a journal that has noticed this art exhibition. *The Listener* has not done so.

Venerator (Wellington): The ending of the broadcast at 8.0 p.m. was due to a misunderstanding on the part of the Control Operator. The agreement with the Church authorities is that broadcast services will end at 8.0 p.m., but that the broadcast will not be faded out until five minutes after this time if the service is still proceeding.

Dismal Dan (Auckland) and One of Many (Whangarei): Station 1YA advises that where wrestling matches are scheduled on evenings other than Monday, they are relayed by Station 12M, because it has been found that this does not upset programme commitments; and further, the wrestling authorities are quite happy about this arrangement. It has been the custom in the past for wrestling and boxing matches to be broadcast on Mondays, and from a programme commitment point of view this offers practically no difficulties. This year, on account of the large number of Monday night bookings for the Town Hall, it has been found necessary for the Wrestling Association to present a bout occasionally on a Tuesday or Wednesday; but now indications point to future contests being booked for Monday nights.