

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

Price Threepence

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Inspector's Day

NERVOUS teachers will sleep better now that surprise visits by inspectors have ceased, and worried reactionaries will be more firmly convinced than ever that education is going to the dogs. The official view of the matter is that "teachers are professional people, entitled to be treated as such"; but aren't we all? If a professional person is insulted by a surprise visit from an inspector, what should be the reaction of a railway-guard or a tram-conductor, or of a car-driver of any occupation who has forgotten to renew his licence? What is the reaction of those people? If it is not mild resentment kept in control by a secret awareness of other sins, it is at least a feeling of resignation to an annoyance that they know to be necessary. There would be no public sympathy at all for a lawyer who refused to produce his warrant of fitness on the ground that he was a lawyer, a gentleman by tradition as well as by Act of Parliament, and it is surely the wrong defence to say that teachers, because they are teachers, must not be suspected of the weaknesses of ordinary mortals. But the teachers themselves make no such demand. They want notice of the inspector's visit, they say, "to avoid, where possible, clashes with other visiting staff" (medical officers, physical education and art specialists, and so on); and although that is not a very good reason either, since inspectors ought to see everything that goes on in a school and not merely what goes on the day it is known they will be present, it is a better reason than the claim of professional privilege. But surely the best, and sufficient, reason is that an inspector is an inspector and not a policeman—a higher-grade teacher who makes suggestions for correcting what he sees to be wrong and gives encouragement to what he thinks is right. The policeman-inspector, if he ever lived, is dead. There is no reason why any teacher should make special preparations for his successor.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WOBBLING SINGERS

Sir,—In your issue of May 21 your correspondent F. K. Tucker writes of Isobel Baillie's freedom from "the eternal wobble" indulged in by so many singers. Does this refer to the species of suppressed hiccups so frequently heard, particularly in church (e.g., "The Lo'hords myhy she-epherd, I'll no-hot wa-hant") apparently with the object of imparting additional fervour? If so, can nothing be done about it? Why is it allowed in "quires and places where they sing?" Can the answer be that it is as much as any choir-master's life is worth to allude to the subject?

I should like to endorse the writer's reference to Santley. He was an old man when I first heard him, but his singing never failed to arouse enthusiasm.

INQUIRER (Dunedin).

BUILDING WITH EARTH

Sir,—Having built two places approximately 20ft. by 30ft by the *pisé de terre* method, I was interested in the two articles by R. Ammer. My limited experience may be of interest to others. All my information for my building came from a book written by Clough Williams-Ellis, *Cottage Building in Cob, Pisé, Chalk and Clay*. The book is well written and illustrated in a simple enough style for any average person to follow. The author holds that *pisé* is undoubtedly the best method of building in earth. *Pisé de terre* means rammed earth. R. Ammer says the minimum width of wall would be six inches of best quality *pisé*, but I am rather sceptical. With the best quality this might do for internal walls, but I should say emphatically that unless the builder had had a lot of experience 12 inches was the minimum, and that for internal walls only. Outside walls should be at least 15 inches, but preferably 18. That is the opinion of Williams-Ellis also.

I think my first place is very good for a beginner, but the second not so good. With the first I went to particular trouble to follow instructions. I took care the earth was free from lumps, and had sufficient moisture to bind it properly. I put in the necessary amount of work. With the second I wasn't so careful. I skimmed the work a bit, and there were too many lumps of clay mixed in. I wasn't careful enough with the foundation ground, with the result that the ground sank and one of my walls fell over. I say, don't use clay unless it has been reduced to a powder, and then mixed with sand. Don't skimp the ramming, and take care that the water content is right. If a ball of earth is pressed in the hand and no wet earth adheres, or appears on the surface, and the ball retains its shape without crumbling, then the water will be about right. If the earth is too wet, it won't settle under the blows of the rammer. If it's too dry it won't bind. The ramming work required is tremendous, and unless the builder is strong he shouldn't undertake the job. I recommend fine earth, preferably silt, rammed hard between forms, 10 feet long two feet high, and at least one-and-a-half inches thick, with end pieces. The forms are held in place with bars going through the walls and pinned on the outside. This method of building is

not for anyone with a quarter of an acre section unless supplies of earth are handy. There are a good many cubic yards of earth in a building, and contrary to the usual experience of getting earth back into a hole, if the ramming is done as it ought to be done, the earth goes into a smaller compass.

W.A. (Auckland).

(This letter has been abridged.—Ed.)

Sir,—In the article on *pisé* in the issue of May 28 an error has occurred in which the would-be builder is told to "next ram the forms." Ramming the forms will not consolidate the earth in them. The advice should have been "ram next the forms," the idea being to get a smooth surface on the wall by the use of the rammer mentioned. Perhaps I was in error in trying to condense by using "next" instead of "nearest"; a poet would have got away with it, but an earthy individual must mind his *pisé* and queues.

R. AMMER
(Wellington).

BURNS NICHT

Sir,—Station 2ZB's Robert Burns programme must have made every Scot in the country writhe. The actor who took the part of Burns did his best, I am sure, with the Ayrshire accent, but what a best! Is it quite impossible for those born outside of Scotland to pronounce "Auld Lang Syne" as it should be pronounced? "Old Lang Zyne" is the favourite way seemingly. The "old" is excusable perhaps, but why is an "Z" always put in place of the "S"? Last night's actor also seemed to have great difficulty with his consonants, "t" in particular. Surely someone could have told him that only in slum areas of Glasgow are the consonants dropped, and this is due to slovenliness of speech.

"Robert Burns" may have been a grand programme in other respects, but it was spoilt by the poor dialect attempts of the leading actors.

KILMARNOCK LASSIE
(Blenheim).

COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Sir,—I would like to comment on your editorial, "Democracy and Dissent" and an article on "Christianity and Communism," in which Dr. John Coleman stated he did not think Christianity and Communism were so completely incompatible as they appear and implied that a Christian could be a Communist. In my opinion the objective of the Communist philosophy is common ownership, and common ownership means common responsibility, and here comes the difficulty, for some people do not want others to have responsibility, and many do not want responsibility though they may long for the amenities that ownership appears to give. So some seek to dictate and compel others to give either of their labour or their goods. Communism is concerned solely with material things, Christianity is concerned with the spiritual, that is, the spirit which motivates us in the things we do; in our attitude to, or the way we treat, our fellow beings. Communism teaches fear, hatred, resentment, envy; Christianity teaches love, friendliness, respect, and consideration. So

how can a professing Christian claim allegiance to Communism?

In your editorial you say that in the British communities Democracy's problem is not one of survival but of survival in a reasonably pure form. I contend that if we want Democracy to live, then we must allow all who live within its bounds the right to form their own opinions whether they be Communist or Capitalist, Jew or Gentile, Christian, Agnostic or Atheist, Rationalist, or anything else. We must give them the freedom to express their opinions publicly when and wherever they may feel the urge to do so, so long as their actions do not deprive anyone of their basic social needs.

If a part of human society would faithfully accept the principles of the doctrine of Christ, it would be a challenge to Capitalism, whose system makes money, possessions, property more important than human needs, and is therefore entirely opposed to Christianity. It would be such a challenge that those who believe and extol its virtues and seek to make Communism a bogymen would recede to a minor position of importance, taking the threat of Communism with them.

F. H. ENGELBRECHT (Oxford).

HAS CIVILISATION IMPROVED?

Sir,—Listening-in to the 2ZB *Citizens' Forum* on a recent Sunday evening I wondered how the speakers defined "civilisation." If by civilisation we mean "improvement in the refinements of life and living" (i.e., behaviour), then the answer must be an emphatic "No." In an age where children push and hustle, scream and yell in buses and trains; where girls and young women wear, smoke and drink, claiming equality with men (until it comes to standing in a tramcar or carrying a parcel); where young men loiter and lounge, allowing elderly women to stand in tram, train and bus, can we honestly claim an improvement? The drawing-room of the past generation has disappeared, giving place to the lounge, and with it has gone the gentle, courteous behaviour, the graciousness of the past and we have the "lounge" manners, the too free and easy behaviour of to-day. The *Citizens' Forum* and the *Brains Trust* sessions give me good lessons in "How to talk ROUND a question" and how to talk with my tongue in my cheek.

H. HARMAN (Pinehaven).

POSERS, PENALTIES, AND PROFITS

Sir,—May I congratulate your correspondent J. I. Slater, of Dunedin, on his reference to the "rewards of ignorance" in the *Posers, Penalties, and Profits* programme. Few programmes have been so much vaunted and few could be so trivial. After listening to the first broadcast from Christchurch and one from Auckland it seemed to me that it had been arranged beforehand who was to get what. What may be screamingly funny to the audience—and obviously was—left the average listener completely cold.

S.L. (Tokomaru Bay).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Grandad (Oamaru): You are probably generalising from particular examples of pronunciation, so the comparison you make may not be quite fair.

E. Jones (Palmerston North): You could make your point in 50 words of basic English; why wrap it up in five pages of ponderous Latinity?