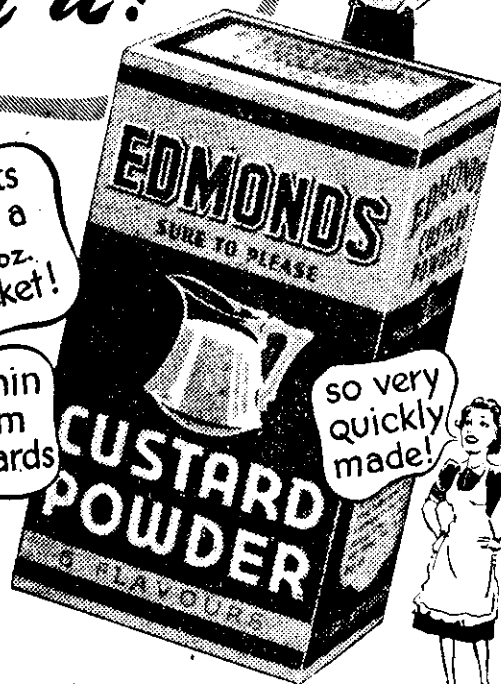


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T.3.10.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

ARE WE SMUG?

Sir,—Smug means absurdly self-satisfied and complacent. And John Green of the BBC says that collectively we are smug. He had a lot to do with our farmers, and certainly, they are smug; but then so are the watersiders, the Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Labour, etc., etc. But if Mr. Green had studied our press he would have noticed that inspired preachers of various kinds are continually pointing out that our economics and finances are incredibly stupid, that our relations with the rest of the world are a champion muddle, that our labour value is deplorably low and our costs deplorably high, that we spend too much time and money at the races, that even our little boys and girls are going to the pack, petting each other in the provocative gloom of the cinemas, and so on and so on. Can a community thus held perpetually in the dissecting room truly be said to be smug?

The New Zealander no doubt feels himself to be as good as the next man; and so does the Englishman, the Scot, the Irish, Scandinavian, Dutch, Belgian, French, Canadian, U.S.A. citizen and all the rest of the units in the various nations. Smugness is a sort of protective mechanism against the reforming urge, and it brings to naught much of the zeal expended in United Nations' meetings, which exhibit the quintessence of smugness, so to speak, where each delegate is complacently certain that his views, his nation's "way of life" is best for all if only the stupid all would see it. The world is so full of vocal smugness seeking to set the rest of us right that one murmurs dazedly:

If all the world was apple-pie
And all the sea was ink,
And all the trees were bread and cheese,
What would we do for drink?
It's enough to make an old man groan
And scratch his head and think.

J. MALTON MURRAY

(Oamaru).

PROTEST

Sir,—I wish to protest most strongly at the action of 3YA on Wednesday, May 26. The Brahms Violin Concerto was mutilated by the omission, except for the final record, of the whole of the Finale. To make matters worse, no word of explanation or apology was made by the announcer. Rudeness of that nature is an insult to listeners. Admittedly the work began a little later than scheduled, but surely the programme organisers are sufficiently experienced in their work to allow adequate time for a major recording. Where music is concerned, half a loaf is certainly not better than no bread.

JUNE Y. HUNT

(Auckland).

SINGING IN ENGLISH.

Sir,—While I agree on the whole with "Lustig" of Timaru, who so vigorously upholds singing in English, let me say something in defence of singers who use the original words.

A large proportion of our finest vocal compositions are translations, and originally they were poems set to music, the composer heeding the phrasing and meaning of the words in his setting.

These songs lose much in translation, and often a translation imposes difficulties on a singer, such as sustaining a high fortissimo note on an indefinite vowel. Translations are in use when the climax of a dramatic sequence, in the music, has to be rendered through a silly little world like "of."

It is not easy for a translator to make a convincing story and retain the strength of the phraseology of the original. Recently I made a close translation of Rossini's "La Danza" to sing to an audience of children, and found that the lilting "Mamma Mia" was ludicrously reduced to "Oh Mother-ER!"

"PHRASAH" (Wellington).

THE COST OF LISTENING.

Sir,—May I congratulate you on the hard-hitting commonsense of your editorial on the cost of listening? What you wrote has long needed saying. But in your comparison with the Press you might have said more. It costs just twice as much to buy a daily newspaper for 12 months as it does to license a radio set. True, other costs have to be added—the current consumed, which is a trifle, interest on the cost of the set, and repairs. But broadcasting gives an all-day service on all the 365 days of the year, whereas the newspaper publishes on 309 days. I have not observed any agitation for a reduction in the price of newspapers. Until fairly recently a lot of use was made of the fact that the BBC's licence fee was only 10 shillings. Many critics overlooked the governing fact that while the NZBS numbered its listeners (and therefore its fees) in hundreds of thousands, the BBC did so in millions. Some little time ago what remained of the bottom of this argument (if anything) was knocked out by the decision of the BBC to double its licence fee. Not enough has been made of this highly significant increase. The fact is a large number of people look on broadcasting as they have been accustomed to look on newspapers. Till broadcasting developed, newspapers were, for value given, the cheapest of all services, but comparatively few readers envisaged the amount of capital, the international organisations, and the various processes, involved in providing this service. It is the same with broadcasting. Many listeners listen and grumble, but don't think of the enormous expenditure, the extremely complicated technical equipment, the links with other countries, and the army of men and women, that go to provide their entertainment and instruction. One might say of a lot of people that if they had to pay five pounds a year for their licence, they would appreciate broadcasting more.

JOURNALIST (Wellington).

EARTH HOUSES.

Sir,—With regard to the building of rammed earth, *pisé* houses, some of your readers may be interested to know that this method is being investigated very thoroughly in Australia. Situated in North Ryde, Sydney, is what is known as "The Commonwealth Experimental Building Station" and there very extensive field research work is being carried out. On application to the Building Station a typed official article on the subject can be obtained.

PISE (Maketu).