

NOVEMBER 19, 1948

**War History**

**A** FRENCH Mayor apologised once to a French King for not receiving him with cannon. There were, he said, a hundred reasons for the lapse, each better than the first; and the first was that he had no cannon. We are sure there were a hundred reasons why the first-born of the New Zealand war histories is a little volume of left-overs.\* What the hundred reasons were we do not know, but a safe guess for the first would be that no author had finished anything bigger, and if he had, that no printer at the present time could print it. But none of this means that what has been produced is an unconsidered trifle. It is the account of an episode in the Western Desert in 1941 that all these years (and excitements) afterwards brings a lump in the throat to read. The guns used against the tanks were light guns, two-pounders mounted on lorries, fought more or less on the move, and more or less in the open. There is no space here to follow the action in detail; but one troop of four guns fighting *en portée* held off an enemy column for many hours, knocked out 24 tanks and many unarmoured vehicles, and withdrew safely when night fell. It is the details of course that make the story and justify the publication, and in the handling of these the History Branch has shown judgment, skill, and taste. The text could have been, but is not, sentimental and florid. The maps could have been confusing, the photographs could have been blurred. None of these things has happened. The narrative is direct, simple, clear, admirably condensed and restrained. The photographs have been well chosen and well arranged, and the map and two diagrams are what such things always should be and seldom are—clarifiers of the word picture. Now that the standard has been set—in manner as well as in matter, since the typography is perhaps the best feature of all—the public will know what to expect, and it will not be possible to offer anything less attractive.

\*New Zealand in the Second World War: Guns Against Tanks. War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs.

**LETTERS FROM LISTENERS****EDUCATION AND WAR**

Sir,—After listening to the discussion from 2YA "Can Education Prevent Wars" I feel that none of the participants expressed what is, in my opinion, the most important aspect of the problem. Education, as it applies to the average boy or girl in New Zealand to-day, aims to give him or her a wide understanding of the other peoples and countries of the world, their history, and their environment.

It seems to me that as more people are given opportunities to learn the truth about the rest of the world, and so understand their neighbours, there will be more tolerance between nations and therefore less chance of further war.

YOUNG MOTHER (Picton.)

**THE NEW ART**

Sir,—H. M. Helm (*Listener*, November 5) says that "the more extravagant forms of the new art are\* the outcome of a childish desire on the part of some artists for public notice. . . ." If he would leave out the word "childish," used for emotive effect, I would agree; for his statement is mere tautology, and therefore not open to correction. But as criticism it is valueless. Even the most extravagant critics can't base their criticism of a whole movement on that portion on which they have already dismissed as "extravagant."

As for the suggestion that art and intellect are "to a large extent incompatible," I would refer him to Havelock Ellis rather than to Dr. Carrel. Artistic faculties tend to atrophy in an environment more sympathetic to reason than to revelation, but no one has done anything worthwhile in any of the arts without superior intelligence as well as more than ordinary sensibility. Your correspondent's insinuation that the artist is the production of arrested intellectual development is exploded poppy-cock. Distaste for the so-called New Art springs inevitably from the misconception that artists necessarily paint what they see with the outward eye. Every artist is to a greater or lesser extent a commentator as well as a recorder. He interprets a particular experience in the light of his own unique vision.

This leads me to a definition which explains a difficulty inherent in any work of art. Every work worthy of the name is a fresh exploration, and to succeed completely it must create an audience prepared to share in the artist's discovery of a new territory or technique. To share in the discovery we must be prepared to put in some effort: to overcome prejudice, and to follow the intellectual as well as the emotive pattern.

I don't need to remind H. M. Helm that because a work of art is an experiment an experiment isn't necessarily a work of art. There are plenty of failures now, as there always have been. But he would be wrong to assume that a work is a failure because it looks "ugly" at first sight. The important thing is to judge whether the artist has told the truth as he sees it. T. S. Eliot and Picasso have portrayed our Waste Land in their different ways, but to

the same purpose. They have demonstrated that we can get at the truth about ourselves only by a fusion of art and intellect, and that the truth is often shocking. But in the long run it is more aesthetically satisfying than the facile repetition of the pretty lie.

ANTON VOGT (Lower Hutt).

Sir,—In your issue of October 8 appeared an "ink drawing" by M. T. Woolaston, alleged to be a pictorial representation of his mother. If this is the best he can do, no doubt many other readers besides myself are wondering why a whole page of *The Listener* should be wasted upon an attempted extenuation of sheer rubbish. There is a small clique of misguided persons in this country which tries to impose upon the intelligent majority a perverted view of art, in the shape of sham music, sham drawing, sham painting, sham literature and poetry. *The Listener* could render a real service to the community by ruthless exposure of such charlatanism.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

(We gave our space because we are not quite so sure as our correspondent seems to be that everything had been said in literature, music, and painting, before the death of Queen Victoria.—Ed.)

**"THE BLUE DANUBE"**

Sir,—In presenting their new programme *The Blue Danube* the ZB stations are providing entertainment which will be appreciated by one and all. It would seem unfortunate, however, that such really good entertainment should be broadcast at a time when very few can be privileged to listen to it. As any mother or housewife will know, 5.30-6.0 p.m. is rush hour in the home, and most of the men folk are still finding their way home. Would it not be better if *The Blue Danube* was delayed till later in the evening when Mum, Dad and the whole family could listen and enjoy it instead of having to "dial twiddle" in order to find some suitable programme.

STRAUSS LOVER

(Grey Lynn).

**RADIO NEW ZEALAND**

Sir,—I was interested to read G. F. Holibar's letter, in a recent issue of *The Listener*, about the Shortwave Division. I, too, agree that this is a great step in broadcasting in New Zealand, and it will be most interesting to learn just how far afield Radio New Zealand is being heard regularly. Unfortunately, I have not had the good luck to listen on a night when the 31-metre outlet has been used, but I have been agreeably surprised at the reception from the 25-metre outlet. I should be interested to know from the NZBS whether we would be receiving a ground wave here in Marton or whether we are receiving a reflected wave—which seems more likely from the amount of surge accompanying the signal. On the other hand it seems rather unlikely that we should be picking up a reflected wave so relatively close to the transmitter.

The account of the trials and tribulations of the technical staff when they made the recordings of the tui for the identification signal were also most interesting. However, when I heard the signal broadcast, I was rather disappointed. Those of us who have been

fortunate enough to hear the tui frequently may feel that this recording scarcely does the poor bird justice. Perhaps, too, the bell-bird would have made a rather more characteristic recording for the purpose, one that would be more easily distinguished overseas when locating the ZL's. It is no doubt too late to do anything about it now, but should at any time a change be made, I suggest that the bell-bird be considered.

Now that we are on the air so much further afield, is it not high time something was done with the old Wellington Post Office clock to provide some alternative to the monotonous "pips" which have had to replace the once familiar chimes? Could not this clock be mounted in the Botanical Gardens, so that its characteristic notes can again be heard and also broadcast at home and abroad? Wanganui seem to have been successful with their chimes from Cook's Gardens, so why not the capital city? When I hear the Melbourne clock from Radio Australia, I look back with regret on past days when New Zealand had (I think) a much superior set of chimes to broadcast.

All the same, I am sure that any New Zealanders overseas must get a thrill to hear "Now is the Hour" when Radio New Zealand closes down!

M. F. GRAY (Marton).

(According to the Engineering Section of the NZBS, you are almost certainly receiving a reflected sky wave. A ground wave on 11 megacycles would become too attenuated to be received as far away as Marton.—Ed.)

**DIFFICULTIES ON THE WEST COAST**

Sir,—We live in a very difficult locality for radio reception, lots of high power lines all about us (and seven right over our house), and there are times when no programmes can be listened to, not even those of our own 3YZ, which is only five miles away. There are some things about reception that I would like someone to explain. First, what has become of the short-wave station ZL3? Before it was opened I heard it very clearly and at good volume, but not since. When it was being opened, we couldn't hear it direct, but it came over very clearly, relayed through an ABC station.

It often happens that we hear an amateur plainer than other New Zealand stations—why? When things are most difficult the best we can get is something on shortwave from the ABC.

J.C.H. (Paroa).

(The points raised in this letter were referred to an officer of the NZBS Engineering Section, who made the following comments: "Your correspondent appears to be especially badly situated for broadcast station reception. ZL3 is operating regularly between 7.0 p.m. and 9.0 p.m. daily, broadcasting the Radio New Zealand programme to Australia and the Pacific. Shortwave stations, including amateurs, achieve their coverage by a rather different form of wave propagation from that on which the normal broadcast stations rely. Shortwave coverage is achieved by 'skywave' reflection of the wave radiated from the transmitter. The waves are reflected from an ionised or conducting layer in the gaseous sphere and returned to ground level at a considerable distance, some hundreds of miles, from the transmitter. The 'ground wave' from shortwave stations dies out very rapidly and gives no useful coverage compared with the normal broadcast station. Thus there is a zone surrounding a shortwave transmitter in which practically no signals are received. The radius of this zone is commonly known as the 'skip distance.'"—Ed.)

**NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT**

Varian J. Wilson (Christchurch): "The fact that we 'reek of stuffy Conservatism' and traffic in 'utter rot' does not seem to damp your desire to grace our columns."