

BROADCASTING AND DEMOCRACY

Sir,—In one of his recent talks Sir James Shelley spoke of broadcasting as a democratic instrument. He even likened it to meetings of citizens in Athens. Surely he overlooked the fact that the Greek people met its speakers face to face and could express its approval and dissent. In many countries experience has clearly shown that broadcasting may easily be the instrument of totalitarianism. Broadcasting is not democratic in its nature and can be made so only if all shades of opinion may be heard on the air. Before we reach this goal in New Zealand we have a long way to go. We have not forgotten the suppression of the series *How Things Began*. For hours each week opportunities are given to the different religious bodies to express their views on the air. But no time is allowed to those who wish to challenge the "truths" or dogmas so frequently heard. Apparently if Bishop Barnes came to New Zealand he would not be allowed to broadcast his views on these questions. This week in the series *Why Education?* listeners heard Dr. Gascoigne in a tirade against the secular solution in education. Will anyone be invited to expound the secular system established by law in New Zealand at the present time? I think not. Until all shades of opinion may be heard on the air the totalitarian character of our broadcasting system will remain.

T. A. HUNTER
(Wellington).

THE ROYAL ODE

Sir,—I have read the criticism by H. E. Gunter on the winning effort, and I am inclined to agree. The poem is difficult to follow or understand, and if it fails to appeal to the great majority of readers surely the purpose of the competition has not been achieved. But my main criticism concerns its suitability for musical purposes. Simplicity in expression and thought appears to be the main attribute of lyric poetry, and the finest examples of song-writing and also of literature are marked by simple, clear, understandable words. One of the best authorities on the art of versification and song-writing states that to awaken sympathy by the simplest words will go further in a song than pomp of language and elaborate polish.

X-RAY (Hamilton).

Sir,—Would somebody please tell me what the winning Royal Ode entry as published in a recent *Listener* is about? I really have tried to understand it, and have read it over so often that I almost know it by heart. If it is to be presented to Their Majesties from the people of New Zealand it would be nice to know something of its hidden meaning.

DENSE (Picton).

Sir,—Two previous correspondents on the Royal Ode show a niggardly pettifoggish lack of appreciation for a momentous saga of inspiration. Mr. Gunter settles back in his antiquated smug complacency, not deigning to give credit for anything youthful or invigorating which may depart from the age-old rigid style of Tennyson or Byron. His failure to understand the poem is a result of reading it too minutely, word by word. To truly appreciate the poem, one must read it as it is written—sweepingly, majestically, as the "North wheels into south." Mr. Gunter is not a poet, but as he admits, a "verse-writer."

LETTERS

Your other contributor also has a limited perspective in that he can not see in the poem any homage to the Crown. That is because he regards the Crown as some special object of veneration which we must gaze at respectfully from a distance, not presuming to approach or understand. Ruth France has dared to approach, and to understand. Consequently she is able to give us a personal, intimate glimpse into the life of our Sovereign; in "The Stream and the Discovery," this is done in such a manner that the depths of feeling and respect for the King and his gracious Queen are apparently beyond the stereotyped comprehension of "Also Perplexed."

May I sincerely compliment Ruth France upon her laudable composition. Especially do I congratulate her for seeing beyond the present time, to when the King of Kings will "... lead love, and in turn his one kingdom Will bring all men, all races, out of the low cave-mouths of war."

E. BEVAN WILTSHIRE
(Christchurch).

Sir,—This alleged ode, which 99.9 per cent. of the population do not understand, would supply an argument, if needed, in favour of basic English. I sincerely hope it will not be inflicted on Their Majesties, should they ever come here. I am told this ode is modern art. If so, I can only say, "Thank God for the Byrons, the Tennysons and the Kiplings, and again, Thank God."

BEACHCOMBER (Brown's Bay).

Sir,—While not depreciating the beauty of intellectual words in lines of *The Royal Ode*, I would appreciate a simple explanation of much hidden meaning. After frequent reading I am still wondering what this all adds up to. Perhaps someone with a higher power of perception than mine may enlighten the curiosity of a devoted poetry reader and verse-maker.

E. E. MANNINGTON
(Te Awamutu).

Sir,—I should like to say how much I agree with H. E. Gunter in his opinion of the Royal Ode. Like him I read, re-read, and sat back and wondered, though to one who has read *New Zealand New Writing*, of which one of the judges was editor, it is not, perhaps, so surprising that this strange piece of work should have been given first prize. One cannot help wondering whether the 312 entries were all of such poor quality. If such was the case I think it would have been better not to make an award at all.

I think that some of New Zealand's so-called intellectuals are doing more harm to our literature than can safely be estimated, and I believe that the handling of most of our talent is in the wrong hands. It is this factor which does so much to make us (and outsiders) believe that we have no worthwhile literature of our own.

J. DARKE (New Plymouth).

(Other letters are so numerous that space could not be found for them. Perhaps the subject can be closed most fittingly by quoting the last sentence from a letter signed "Sporting Competitor": "However it was adjudged a better effort than mine, and I congratulate the winner."—Ed.)

FROM LISTENERS

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Sir,—Mr. Mouat may prefer Russell's exegetical method to a plain objective history, but few will agree that such a method is desirable in a book entitled *The History of Western Philosophy*. The plain fact is that in this work the philosopher has run away with the historian, if, indeed, Russell may be called an historian. Russell's doubt about existence was not, as Mr. Mouat seems to think, about its ethical value, but about its metaphysical nature. He expresses a similar idea on Page 176 where

standards") why treachery to truth is morally reprehensible, I shall be much obliged to him.
G.H.D.
(Greenmeadows).

A DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Sir,—I don't think Dr. Beaglehole is assuming the Hitler role and denouncing a book because he criticises it as the second-rate writing of a first-rate writer. E. M. Forster (to whom no doubt your correspondents will all lift their hats) reviewing T. S. Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* in the *English Listener* said much the same thing as Dr. Beaglehole did. Why all the heat? A critic's job is to criticise.
R.P. (Wellington).

CONTEMPORARY SPEECH

Sir,—I read on page 4 of a recent issue that "Station 1YA will present in their Classical Hour" and that "the Variety Orchestra are ... exposed more ... than any other body." Surely an orchestra is, not are, a body? And still more surely a broadcasting station presents its, not their, Classical Hour? Such lapses are not, of course, confined to your columns—the *English newspaper* cutting quoted on Page 5 contains three striking examples—but they are more to be regretted there since a broadcasting magazine is by implication a model of contemporary speech. I trust, Mr. Editor, that you do not approve of the damage your staff is doing to the English language.

RICHARD DENNANT
(Auckland).

ITMA PROGRAMMES

Sir,—"Listener" of Hawera has a very reasonable grouse in his objection to old ITMA programmes. I have been an ITMA enthusiast ever since I arrived in England in 1942. A shipmate and I met That Man and Ted Kavanaugh at the Gaumont Studios once. The film *ITMA* revealed that the screen just wasn't Handley's medium of expression.

ITMA is not tremendously popular in New Zealand and the reason is not hard to find. The broadcast has always depended on topicalities and it probably hit its wartime popularity for that reason. Even the best-informed about English politics, etc., are bound to miss quite a lot when the programme is only a year old. But when the recordings are three years old it is surely a bit of a strain.

I hate the thought of having no more new ITMA programmes in a few months, but the repetition of old ones is perhaps harmful to the New Zealander's appreciation of English humour.

"CHINSTRAP"
(Great Barrier Island).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Sixty-nine": Passing on your request.
Mrs. J.A. (Rotorua): Radio Viewers is written by regular contributors.
S.S.A.: Afraid those psychological terms would not convey much to our readers.
M.R.B. (Thames): Many thanks, but we prefer letters to deal with only one subject.
"Green Fingers" (Auckland): Thanks for suggestion, but it would not be practicable.
"Listener" and "Regular Listener": Letters for publication should be sent in with the names and addresses of the writers.
"Gran" (Motueka): Perhaps you mean the Marlin Sisters, whose recordings are sometimes broadcast. No precise information is available, but they are not "just children."