

Sir,—If there is a "19th Century flavour" in Sir Thomas Hunter's remarks, there is a positively medieval flavour in G.H.D.'s. To defend the prohibition of "overt attacks on Christianity" is to ignore the fact that there are growing numbers of civilised people who are not Christians; and to silence their voice through one of the most widely-used media of propaganda is not such a far cry from the stake and the inquisition, or, in our own day, Dachau and the burning of the books. To express these sentiments in the same breath as attacking the Communists for want of "liberalism," when Rev. Stanley Evans (who has been there) says, "The Churches of the U.S.S.R. are not merely free but active in the defence of their country," surpasses the bounds of criticism.

G.H.D. forgets that what is good in Christianity is common to a thousand philosophies, and that what is peculiar to it has done much harm to civilisation. Among its fruits have been intolerance and persecution, and as a crusader against these, Sir Thomas Hunter has a proud record.

C.V.B. (Wellington).

Sir,—Some interesting observations on this subject are made by your correspondent Sir Thomas Hunter. Just why he should tie those observations up with the "suppression" of the series *How Things Began*, I cannot see. It was not the "religious bodies" who requested that this series be suspended. If by "religious bodies" we mean churches and church dignitaries, it might be said that the greater number of such would accept all that was said or implied in the series *How Things Began*. Like Dr. Barnes, these people are in such haste to proclaim themselves as being of modern thought, that they seldom take time to enquire into the effect of modern research on considered opinion. The religious bodies and the sponsors of the series are both slaves to the lamp—"popular authority." *How Things Began* was suspended because there was evidence that a substantial body of opinion among research workers in the fields of science had moved irrevocably away from the positions which the series took for granted. Such opinion claimed the right to be heard along with the series broadcast. As the programmes could not be adjusted to permit of this course being followed, *How Things Began* was suspended. Surely your correspondent, with his concern that "all shades of opinion may be heard," should not complain that the procedure followed was undemocratic.

OMICRON (Nuhaka).

LILBURN'S SONATA

Sir,—To persons who like music and who have trained their minds to like music, Lilburn's Sonata needs no defence; as a work of art it is satisfying and complete. To appreciate fully and to criticise adequately any new form of art would seem to demand in the critic certain qualities of magnanimity, a special effort to understand new and strange terms and to see them in their own light. He must possess a cultured sensibility and knowledge presumably superior to that of the audience he has in mind; and the knowledge, too, that by publishing his criticism he becomes responsible both to that audience for

guidance and illumination (an audience, incidentally, to whom anything approaching hysteria is distasteful), and to the canons of criticism which demand that any judgment to be taken seriously must be sane, reasonable and just. Silliness and pettiness have no part in criticism and rightly belong to the gossip-column.

But a word on L. D. Austin. As a music-critic he scarcely merits serious consideration; his letter displays much irritation, few if rudimentary signs of thought and certainly no attempt at true critical evaluation. His criticism depends for its effect on sarcasm, and presumably on the conviction that all men are either fools or knaves to be persuaded to his way of thinking by nothing more convincing than ill-expressed contempt and a display of execrable wit. As such it is worthless.

ALISTAIR CAMPBELL
(Wellington).

Sir,—Mr. Austin's latest letter is puzzling. One wonders whether he is sincere in condemning this sonata. I shall assume for the moment that he is, and examine the three main points in his criticism. The first is that the work is "very much like two cats upon the keyboard." I have picked out what I believe to be the most cat-on-the-keyboard-like episodes in the sonata; and I have been studiously experimenting with both our own and our neighbour's cats in order to reproduce sounds on the piano approximating Mr. Lilburn's work. I regret to confess, sir, that I have so far failed most miserably. I have still, however, not lost hope. Perhaps further research with strategically placed pieces of meat along the keyboard . . . but would this be cheating?

His second criticism is that there is "not one single bar of genuine musical inspiration." Mr. Austin may have switched his radio on late, and missed the remarkably smooth and beautiful chords near the beginning of the sonata, modulating from A Minor to the remote key of E Flat. There, anyway, are two bars containing genuine musical inspiration.

The Third Criticism (I feel it deserves capitals by now) is similar to the second, namely, that there is not "the slightest sign of creative ability in this composition." I am no master of logic, but surely the very existence of the sonata itself contradicts this.

Mr. Austin now has the temerity to accuse Mr. Lilburn of "pulling the public's leg (or ear?)" We shall have to

dismiss this suggestion, as it is simply not true. The roguishly alliterative hint about "mild musical misdeemeanour" we must also dismiss as unworthy. But if Mr. Austin's letter is not serious, then I indict him of writing in the worst possible taste, possibly harmful to the sensibility of an artist. Perhaps he does not understand or sympathise with this. If he had legitimate, serious criticism to offer, we should have welcomed it; I think that I have proved that there was no such criticism in the letter. The state of New Zealand music is precarious enough. We should all make it our duty to promote this music. It is good music, not yet great perhaps, but showing great developments. We must publish it, play it and record it; we are not else worthy of the name of music-lovers.

ANGRY STUDENT
(Wellington).

GERHARD WILLNER

Sir,—Allow me to voice an emphatic protest against the remarks of your contributor, "A.B." in reference to the above-named artist, which appeared in an article headed "Mozart for To-day," in *The Listener* of July 15. Legitimate criticism, from an accepted musical authority, is one thing, but irresponsible nonsense, such as "A.B." writes about Gerhard Willner's performances of Mozart's sonatas, seems out of place as a featured commentary in the official organ of the broadcasting service.

Mr. Willner was engaged by the NZBS to play the entire series of these sonatas because he is an artist of recognised standing, with an international reputation as interpreter of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms—most of whose works he knows by heart. He is the only pianist in New Zealand able, at a moment's notice, to play from memory the entire series of Beethoven's 32 and Mozart's 18 Sonatas—a feat which, among present-day virtuosi, has been equalled, I believe, by Artur Schnabel alone, between whom and Gerhard Willner there is little to choose in this connection.

Such being the case, it savours of sheer impertinence for "A.B." to query Mr. Willner's capability by alleging that he "monkeys round with the time"—a crude ambiguity, which of itself suffices fully to support "A.B.'s" own admission of limited musical knowledge. Earlier in "A.B.'s" article he says: "Unless one is much more highly educated than I am it is impossible to maintain a series of quite clearly defined categories in one's listening That is a matter for

the expert." Quite true, Sir. It is also a matter for the musical expert adequately to appraise the executive and cultural status of an artist so eminent as Gerhard Willner. Likewise, one has to be much more "highly educated" than "A.B." obviously is to distinguish between time and tempo. I suggest that "monkeying with the time" may be a sportive recreation for horologically interested Simians, but it has no apparent connection with faulty tempo, nor is it, in any case, a fitting expression to apply to an artist of Gerhard Willner's calibre.

At the moment of writing, this fine pianist has completed the first half of the Mozart series, but so far without appropriate recognition in *The Listener*, despite a number of eulogistic letters from a wide radio audience which fully vindicates the wisdom of the NZBS in engaging such a superb exponent.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

AUSTERITY IN BRAZIL

Sir,—Dr. Eichbaum's article on Brazil was useful, though short, but I feel that your heading, "No Austerity in Brazil," was misleading. Dr. Eichbaum would be the first to admit, I am sure, that there is very real austerity in Brazil, outside a very small minority of the people.

Perhaps your readers will be interested in some facts about life in Brazil. They are very easily obtained from any library. First, a survey which was carried out among 500 families of the labouring class in Recife, Pernambuco, in 1934, by Josne de Castio, revealed that the average daily intake of food was 1,646 calories, and that the diet was deficient in calories, proteins, calcium, iron, and vitamins. This survey is described in *Brazil; People and Institutions*, by T. Lynn Smith (Louisiana State University Press, 1946), which also gives a table showing the per capita monthly expenditure for food, and food costs as a percentage of total family expenditures, in various districts in 1940. The percentage of family expenditures taken up by food varied from 46.5 in the Distrito Federal to 87.3 for the interior of Alagoas State. The figures for Sao Paulo were 54.9 per cent. in the capital and 61.4 per cent. in the interior.

A British Government Overseas Economic Survey on Brazil, written by A. H. W. King, of His Majesty's Embassy, Rio de Janeiro, and published in 1948, estimated that pre-war wages were £3-£5 a month, and that they have since risen by 200-300 per cent. It remarks, "During the war years these increases in wages were of little moment to the industrialist, for in the absence of foreign competition they could, and did, demand exorbitant prices, and made extravagant profits."

The International Labour Review for October, 1948, shows that the cost of living rose by 184 per cent. in Rio from 1937 to December, 1947, and that food prices rose by 180 per cent. over the same period. Increases for Sao Paulo between 1939 and December, 1947, are given as 230 per cent. for cost of living, and 268 per cent. for food prices. For most people, Brazil is probably a good place to be away from.

W. J. McELDOWNNEY
(Heretaunga).

REFERENDUM RESULTS

THE referendum on compulsory military training which will be held on Wednesday, August 3, will be covered by the NZBS in the same way as the Gaming and Licensing Poll earlier this year. The YA and YZ stations will broadcast progress results on a national link at 7.25, 7.55, 8.30, 8.55, 9.25, 10.0 and 10.30 p.m., with 4YC taking over the 7.55 and 8.30 p.m. bulletins from 4YA. The YA stations will link for further broadcasts at 10.55 and 11.20 p.m., and 2YA will remain on the air until the issue is beyond doubt. Stations 1XH, 2XG, 2XP, 2XN, and 3XC will broadcast progress results at intervals during the evening, the four ZB stations will give results every quarter of an hour, between features, from 7.30 p.m. until midnight, and 2ZA will give results until it closes down at 10.0 p.m. As the voting will be on a clear-cut issue, some indication of the final result is expected fairly early in the evening.