

THE REFERENDUM

Sir,—There are many things in your editorial of July 29 which should be contested, but I will confine myself to one point — one which will not be affected by the result of the vote. You write: "... a referendum is being taken because the Government requires an unequivocal indication of public opinion." But does it?

You instance the radio to show that both sides are being presented. The ratio is six speakers for conscription, to four against, if we include the Prime Minister's original Sunday night broadcast. And it is still an open question whether even this disproportion is due to fair-mindedness. Further, all stations have advertised pro-conscription public meetings. Again, public funds have been spent on advertisements in the press, and upon huge hoardings. A pamphlet distributed through householders has been printed at the Government Printing Office. Finally, a new phenomenon has entered our politics: a Government (as a Government, using public funds) has seen fit to attack a rival political party.

These facts lead me to believe that the Government does not want "an unequivocal indication of public opinion." It seems more concerned to mould public opinion in its own way. This is hardly a referendum we are having; it looks more like an official plebiscite on the Napoleon III model. There is no legal check upon the Government; but there would be a moral one if democratic precepts meant anything to-day — if, in your own words, we lived "in a country where thought is free." Perhaps the democratic way is anachronistic. If this is the case we should have dropped the outdated phrases when we discarded the social realities which once they reflected.

W. H. OLIVER
(Wellington).

GERHARD WILLNER

Sir,—I have just read "A.B.'s" article, in the issue of July 15, on the subject of the revival of interest in Mozart. I entirely agree with most of his remarks on the subject, but I do think he is being unjust to Gerhard Willner. Like "A.B.," I do not pretend to be an expert on the subject of Mozart, nor indeed on any musical topic, but I feel that an artist of the standing of Gerhard Willner is a real acquisition to the musical life of the Dominion, and that he is the last person one would accuse of "monkeying round with the time."

It is possible that "A.B." is not aware of the debt owed by many New Zealand servicemen to Willner, for his work as Director of the Music for All Centre in Cairo during the war. He has come to New Zealand with an international reputation, and after many successful recitals in Australia, with the intention of settling down here. Since his arrival he has performed many works in public, including all 32 of the Beethoven sonatas, and all the Mozart sonatas. I believe that such a performance is unique in the Southern Hemisphere, and I don't think there are many artists now living who could duplicate it.

"A.B." suggests that Willner is not the right man to perform the complete series of Mozart's sonatas for the NZBS. Perhaps he could suggest another artist in this country who is capable of duplicating Willner's performance, let alone of surpassing the vigour and insight of his interpretation?

For my part I look forward to hearing more of Willner, and I congratulate

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

the NZBS on having been fortunate enough to secure his services. Too many of New Zealand's own outstanding musicians leave the Dominion to seek wider opportunities overseas. It would be a pity if an outstanding European like Willner should also be forced to leave for lack of encouragement.

K. R. MILLER (Wellington).

"TO-DAY IN NEW ZEALAND HISTORY"

Sir,—Permit me to send through your columns a message of congratulation to the compilers of *To-day in New Zealand History*. The choice of subjects is excellent and the elimination of all superfluous words makes each broadcast a real gem—perfect examples of craftsmanship in the still new medium of radio. Such an excellent series is well worthy of far greater coverage and better times. Instead of being confined to 2YA at 1.25 and 2YC at 6.0 o'clock they deserve a place in the national link. The ideal time, I suggest, would be 7.0 p.m. immediately following the BBC radio newsreel. In the majority of homes the evening meal (and washing-up) is finished by then, the younger children are in bed (and the older ones should certainly not miss this series), the evening programmes are about to begin—and for those going out it's not yet time to leave.

I venture to prophesy that a daily broadcast of this series at this time would do more to make New Zealanders conscious of their country's nationhood and its growing responsibilities than any other single means could possibly do.

YOUTHFUL NATION
(Christchurch).

LILBURN'S SONATA

Sir,—It is as well that no one takes too seriously L. D. Austin's numerous letters—professing an unerring knowledge on a diversity of subjects—which appear in print at frequent intervals. His latest effort, appearing in your issue on July 15, is in such bad taste, however, that I feel a gentle urge to remind Mr. Austin of the old adage concerning the danger of people in glass houses bathing with the blinds up! Having heard Mr. Austin's broadcast, some months ago, of his own somewhat undistinguished efforts, written in a pseudo-Chopin-esque style, it is easy to understand why Mr. Austin's ear fails to appreciate any developments since the days of the Romanticists.

In like manner, no doubt, and in their day, the undiscerning have rushed in to criticise all fresh harmonic and constructive developments made by composers in the long line from Bach to Schonberg. The fact remains that there is an increasing number of people who appreciate Lilburn's work and look on him as one of the foremost of New Zealand composers.

BEN BOLT (New Plymouth).

Sir,—Your issue of July 15 contained a very unpleasant letter from L. D. Austin, commenting on Douglas Lilburn's recently-broadcast piano sonata. Might I use a portion of your columns to make a suggestion on this matter to Mr. Austin? The apt appreciation of a new piece of music is difficult enough

in any circumstances without the additional encumbrance of unpleasant and unmusical abusiveness. Mr. Austin's letter constituted such an encumbrance; it contained no real reference to the musical qualities of the sonata, but merely attempted to lead us away from the music with certain gross images and metaphors. Such a letter, when let loose among people trying to evaluate a recent work, can make havoc of their efforts. Accordingly, might I ask Mr. Austin if he would please, for all our sakes, desist from such extravagances?

AGGRAVATED (Wellington).

Sir,—Having listened to the above, and having read L. D. Austin's abuse of it, I am convinced that it is the latter who is the "Kitten on the Keys." (He seems much better at alliteration than criticism.) After listening, I wanted

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 20 and 21

the opportunity to listen again, many more times. That is what I still want, if the broadcasting service would make it possible. (How else can we understand a piece of music, especially if we are not already expert?) Of what use are premature pronouncements unless one uses them (as, in this case, one does), for inverted signposts to the things one already suspects are really worth while?

LET US HEAR MORE

(Upper Moutere).

THE MIND OF INDIA

Sir,—Recently you reviewed two books under the heading "The Mind of India." In reviewing the first, your critic quoted a fragment from the Bhagavadgita, while the second book was a new translation of this ancient Hindu poem. Some of his remarks suggest that he was unable to penetrate far beneath the surface of "the mind of India." It is difficult to see, for example, how he could write of "the sheer inconsequence" of the fragment he quotes from the first Discourse of the Bhagavadgita. The Blessed Lord speaks of man's essential nature and reminds Arjuna that although, in the battle about to commence, he may slay or be slain, the Spirit or Self within man, is not affected by the death of the body. This concept of man, as an evolving spiritual being is so revolutionary that it surely cannot be dismissed in such terms, while to Arjuna, about to enter a conflict in which loved friends and comrades stood on both sides, the reiteration of this teaching must have seemed significant and timely, and probably brought him a little comfort in a most difficult situation.

Your reviewer asks: "What was Arjuna's duty?" The duty of the soldier has always been the same: to fight those declared to be the enemies of his king or country. In Arjuna's case his task was to vindicate his brother's title, and to destroy a usurper who was oppressing the land. "Why do it," your reviewer also asks, "if all would be the same in the end?" This question also reveals a failure to understand the passage under discussion. The fact that the self is unborn and undying, and cannot therefore be "slain" does not mean that

we have to sit with folded hands and take no action against the Hitler of the world. They are a cancer in the body politic and must be destroyed just as a surgeon must remove a cancerous growth in the body, even though the self (as distinct from the body) is unaffected by its presence. So far as our every-day lives and human affairs are concerned, a great deal depends on our actions, for we all have a unique contribution to make in the great cosmic drama, one that no other individual can make.

Your reviewer states that the idea of non-attachment (the main theme of the Gita) awakens in him an "unshakable antipathy." This is a personal reaction, to which he has every right, but it is only fair to add that many Western thinkers, notably Aldous Huxley, Gerard Heard, Christopher Isherwood and others see in this philosophy a solution to many of our problems.

H. M. THORNTON (Auckland).

CHOICE OF STATIONS

Sir,—Reading your current issue, I note with envy that Hamilton listeners are to have the choice of five programmes. Good luck to them, but I would be intrigued to hear an official decision as to what is considered to be the official station for Pahiatua listeners. Stations 2YZ, 2YA and 2YC all suffer from phase distortion, while the field strength of any other National station is so low as to preclude listening except on nights when conditions are ideal.

Reception of 2ZA is of course perfect, but this station offers no music of any depth, consequently the only worthwhile broadcasts to be heard during the week are those on the daylight hours of Sunday.

FRUSTRATED
(Pahiatua).

BACK TO DIXIE

Sir,—May I endorse the remarks of Errol J. Rae in *The Listener* of June 10, when he commends the presentations of the Dixieland Seven. This group, in my opinion, is as good as, and in some cases much better than, a lot of overseas artists. We would be pleased to hear them again, and hope they will be back on the air soon.

JOHN M. DAVIES
(Taumarunui).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Serial Fan (Epsom): Your complaint is being investigated.

Brian Bell (Palmerston North): More suitable in one of the papers which use those methods.

D.B.S. (Paeroa): It is suggested (a) that you fit a wave-trap; or (b) that you consult your district radio inspector.

E.G. (Epsom): "Quires" is the archaic and poetic spelling. The full heading, "In Quires and Places Where They Sing," may be found in the rubric after the Third Collect in the Church of England Prayer Book.

Rugby (Takapuna): Five-minute summaries are broadcast over the main National stations at 6.0 a.m., 7.0 a.m. and 8.0 a.m., and a 15-minute review is broadcast at 9.0 a.m., after the weather forecast. The 15-minute review is repeated at 9.15 p.m. on the days of mid-week matches and on Sundays at 1.40 p.m. The full commentaries at 11.20 p.m. are an additional service to listeners. Because of the time that elapses between the playing of the match and receipt of the tape-recording by airmail, these broadcasts are presented at a time which does not interfere with normal programmes.