

Sir,—Most of your correspondents have failed to face the question: Is broadcasting in New Zealand democratic? In a recent issue "Ipso Facto" refers to the discussion *Speaking for Ourselves* from 2YA. I have a much more important point to raise in this connection. On August 1 this discussion was set down from 8.28 p.m. to 8.58 p.m. But when Professor Beaglehole raised the question of ethical systems not connected with the Christian religion, the discussion was closed down at 8.49, nine minutes before time. Why?

T. A. HUNTER (Wellington).

(*Speaking for Ourselves* is a half-hour programme. On August 1 it did not start at 8.28 p.m., but at 8.20. Moreover, 8.58 was not the time given for the end of the discussion, but was the time set down for station notices. It is the usual practice to play recordings between programmes. At 8.51 p.m. on August 1, *Speaking for Ourselves* had filled 31 minutes, and it came to an end one minute after the allotted time had been reached. This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

CULTURAL PROBLEM

Sir,—I read with pleasure your interesting leader "The International Mood," and the informative and delightful article "They Don't Do It Our Way," by Dr. Ina Telberg, on which it was based. Then I turned to the index, saw "Verse," and duly perused that. And the thought struck me that we have not far to go to find in our own country a problem of cross-cultural understanding. To many of us, the word-composition of the type of "The Long Journey" seems sheer prose decked out in verse form. It and its kind undoubtedly have a place in modern writing, but why call it verse or poetry or—er—an ode? It's all so confusing. Why not coin a new word to signify its classification and thus banish all heart-burnings and irate murmurings on both sides? Now, what about "Prov"? No, that's three parts prose and one part verse—a little too drastic perhaps. Well then, how about "Verp"? That swings too much to the other side. Ha, I have it—"Prover"—no, "Verpro" sounds more imposing and settles the proportion nicely. And the Verpro-writers can wallow in their Verpros, and the old-fashioned can cling leech-like to their verses and poems, and the dove of peace will flutter above the heads of all. H.C. (Wellington).

THE AMATEUR THEATRE

Sir,—Mr. Muir and others interested in amateur drama groups may be interested to hear of the existence in Dunedin of a group known as the Dominion Players. This group was originally formed in 1947 from active members of the Dunedin Training College Drama Club, primarily for the purpose of undertaking a holiday tour of Central Otago. The play selected was Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound*. On the 10 days occupied with touring six performances were given. Two Dunedin performances were also given before leaving. The play was well received and houses were good.

The tour was repeated in May, 1948, when the play chosen was James Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel*. Readers familiar with Bridie's plays will appreciate the staging difficulties involved. Four complete changes of set are required. That this was accomplished successfully, illustrates the point that set need not necessarily limit play selection when deciding on a suitable play for touring. Five

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

performances were given. An extra performance in Dunedin concluded the tour.

This year no tour was undertaken, but in January, 1950, a summer tour extending over 14 days is planned. The number of performances scheduled is 10. This will give a greater coverage, and will mean at least one town not visited previously. The number of persons involved in the tours may be of interest: 1947, 14; 1948, 16.

Since its inception in 1947, the membership of the Dominion Players has developed from being purely a teachers' group to something much broader. Included on the next tour will be members from Otago University Drama Club, and Dunedin Repertory Society. In view of the space devoted to drama in a recent issue, I hope this letter gives some additional information about an active small group. It may also interest your readers that a private group, financially unaided, has successfully planned and accomplished these two tours of country districts.

N. A. PARSLOE (Dunedin).

Sir,—Your September 2 issue, containing "My Rules for Play Producers," etc., has kindled a fire of enthusiasm. Could you keep it bright with more such articles—make-up, non-electric lighting and positions, colour of costumes and stage, and a list of suitable plays for amateur amateurs? Thank you, *Listener*.

ERSATZ HAYSEED

(Collingwood).

"THERE'S ALWAYS TO-MORROW"

Sir,—His eyes were an incredible cornflour blue
But his cheeks went a delicate carrot hue
And his mind became nearly completely "fou"
When he found out his nose was edible too.

SUETY SUE (Auckland).

(We don't like misprints, but "cornflour" can surely be forgiven when it arouses a poet.—Ed.)

GERHARD WILLNER

Sir,—Every musician is exposed to unfavourable criticism, but while your correspondent "D.M." is entitled to express his disapproval of Gerhard Willner's playing of the Mozart sonatas, I feel that such statements as "Mr. Willner shows a cheerful disregard for expression marks," are not only unfavourable but unfair. Without claiming a greater knowledge of Mozart or ability to criticise his works than "D.M." I am intimately acquainted with all his pianoforte sonatas and have followed most of Gerhard Willner's performances with the unedited Kalmus edition. While not disregarding the possibility of an unintentional omission of dynamic marks in the few bars of the G Major Sonata, K.283, as quoted, I have found that Gerhard Willner generally observes the composer's indications with meticulous care.

The unedited edition reveals that expression marks become fewer in the later sonatas and are almost non-existent in the last three—surely an indication of Mozart's growing tendency to allow greater freedom to the performer, in contrast with Beethoven, who went the opposite way. The fact that we find greater differences in approach to

Mozart among world-famous performers than in any other composer's works, shows that a convincing and inspired performance of his works depends on something more than hard and fast rules.

The impression I have gained while listening to the present Mozart sonata series by the pianist Gerhard Willner is that this artist's approach is not merely pianistic but reveals deep understanding and sensitive musicianship. The adagio passages are played with a devotion and reverence rarely heard, and at no time is the work marred by an intrusion of the performer's individuality.

I feel grateful for the opportunity of listening to all the Mozart sonatas made possible by the NZBS, and commend their wisdom in acquiring a musician of Gerhard Willner's calibre to perform them.

P. L. DARKE

(Paraparaumu Beach).

(Mr. L. D. Austin, who opened this discussion, has the right to reply before it is closed.—Ed.)

CHURCHILL'S DAUGHTERS

Sir,—A recent issue of *The Listener* contained an article by "P.R.McK." called "Sarah Churchill in U.S." The opening sentence of this article is apparently an error, in that it names Sarah Churchill as the youngest daughter of Winston Churchill. I would like to point out that Mary Churchill is the youngest daughter of Winston Churchill. Mary, although perhaps not as widely known as Sarah, became well known to all of us in England during the war years for her work as an A.T.S. officer, and also later when she travelled with her father on some of his famous journeys.

WHOSE ERROR?

(Invercargill).

CHURCHES IN RUSSIA

Sir,—In your issue of July 29 "C.V.B." quotes a clergyman "who has been there" as saying: "the Churches of the U.S.S.R. are not merely free, but active in the defence of their country." Let us test the truth of this as follows: If no member of the New Zealand churches could be allowed in the party now in power; if to be even the son of a minister of religion barred one from membership of that party; if until about 1943 all the New Zealand churches had been commandeered by the Government as storehouses; if all church vestments, altar drapings, and the like, were pillaged and used by State clowns to mock religious rites and ceremonies; if the official policy of the ruling party in New Zealand were actively anti-God; if all education in New Zealand was a State monopoly, with no place in the curriculum for religion, but only for anti-religion—would it not be a flagrant misuse of language to say that the New Zealand churches were free? Yet this is the actual state of things religious in Russia, according to Kravchenko, who was "there" for about 40 years.

Ever since the Revolution, gullible visitors have been persuaded into believing the Russian churches to be free. Why, then, did Stalin have to declare them so just then? Kravchenko says it was just a gesture to deceive foreign peoples, making them think the churches were now fully tolerated. About the same time Stalin officially disbanded the Communist organisation outside

Russia, yet every one knows that Communist activities have been very greatly intensified since VJ Day—so little does a Kremlin pronouncement mean.

Kravchenko's book reads far more probably than the books of Dean Hewlett Johnson, the latter's references to religion being very reticent indeed.

F.K.T. (Gisborne).

RACE RESULTS

Sir,—I should be glad to know why it is that every listener in the country has to have his or her Saturday radio entertainment broken into every quarter-hour or so by the announcement of race results from every corner of the land. I do not know what proportion of the population habitually gambles on the results of these events, but it surely cannot be more than one-third at the most. If this is so, why should the rest of us have to put up with these infuriating interruptions? If the gambling addicts cannot restrain themselves to hear the results after each broadcast of the news, as is done in almost every other part of the world, can the announcements not be confined to one station in each area, preferably the Commercial?

Having lived in other parts of the world before coming to New Zealand, I have had a reasonably wide experience of broadcast programmes; and I think that, even without making allowance for the limitations imposed by the small population of the country, programmes in general are very good indeed. It is a pity to spoil the whole thing every Saturday. As for having a football commentary transferred to another station in the midst of the game to make way for Trentham results—words fail me.

BLACK SATURDAY

(Plimmerton).

OLDER NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—The person who wrote the choice paragraph "Older New Zealand" describing a recent broadcast from 1YA by Earle Vaile, Keith Sinclair and myself is skilled in phraseology. Not often so much can be put in so small a space. The last sentence was a masterpiece of literary brevity. The broadcast was heard as far north as Kaitiaki and as far south as Invercargill, and a request made that it might be repeated over some of the smaller stations so that the "two proud elephants" which were "being gingerly sniped at by a youthful hunter" might be heard in pioneering districts where the pioneers are still held in the highest respect by their descendants. One thing should be mentioned, and that is that the two octogenarian broadcasters are very similar in appearance when they are sitting down. They both have a good head of hair and each has the same closely clipped pointed beard; there is nothing barefaced about them! Mr. Vaile has written two books, one on farming pumice land and the other one historical. My four books, the latest written in 1947, are all historical dealing with pioneering life; three of my books are out of print and classed as rare books.

W. K. HOWITT (Devonport).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

L.M.H.B. (Nelson): Letters should be signed even though pen-names are used.

J.F.W. (Wellington): Afraid the list would take too much space.