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members of the panel as inspired oracles, as Joad and Huxley would appear to have become in England. —J.C.R.

Noises On and Off

IT may have been Wellington's boisterous southerly haywiring my aerial but I have seldom heard anything so strongly atmospheric as the NZBS production of J. Jefferson Farjeon's *Three Men on a Raft*. On and off the record the wind howled, the principal characters spoke for the most part in the hoarse exhausted whispers of those whom excessive and unsuccessful competition with the elements has robbed of all desire to compete, and I was forced to sit with port ear covered and starboard in close contact with the speaker. And though I am an advocate of intimacy in radio programmes, I have never felt that the listener should be called upon to embrace the receiver as closely as a crooner his mike. But any discomfort endured was in this case well worth while, for I have seldom met a radio play packed so full of the stuff of drama. Each of the three men relates the story of his most frightening experience—the thriller-writer was pursued by a madman who believed himself a murderer of the author's own creation, the fireman narrowly escaped death by derailment at the hands of a demented engine-driver, the Irishman tripped over the Devil himself in a haunted potato-field. All three dramatic insets were deliciously spine-chilling, and the last was told with a tongue-in-cheek wryness (and in a brogue as cosy as Barry Fitzgerald's) which made it particularly good listening.

Echoes Dying

WE have recently had much to console us for the fact that Parliament is no longer on the air. And how different our Members appeared as they presented themselves for their brief half-hour at the microphone. As candidates, they were on their best behaviour. They came before the electors with clean faces and clean hands, their I's were dotted, their P's and Q's minded, their aspirates all in place. How different from the rough and tumble of the House, when the Speaker's shouts for *ORDER*, *ORDER* serve but as the report of the cannon bringing to the surface the primitive emotions which civilisation has almost succeeded in drowning. The broadcasting of candidates' public addresses gave us



something a little nearer what we are used to, but could the disarming "If my friend in the back row will ask his question at the proper time I will do my best to answer him" proceed from the same gentleman whose tongue in the House is trigger-quick and razor-edged? And a vague hint to technicians: Would it be possible to ensure that microphones at public meetings are placed during the singing of the National Anthem, immediately in front of those who sing in tune?

—M.B.

Getting Under Our Skin

SECRETS of Scotland Yard is a firmly established ZB favourite and the urbane Clive Brook has a long series of successful narratives to his credit. The

success of this series is largely due to the style of the narrative, which exploits ironic understatement and avoids the degeneration into the merely sensational or macabre which is the bane of this type of serial. Occasionally, however, the method fails. The excursion Clive Brook took across the Channel to examine the methods of the French police, as a contrast with English ways of outwitting the criminal, was a case in point. The Weidmann crimes were not a happy choice, for the cheerful even flippant manner of the narrator jarred upon the listener. The idea of murder, conducted cold-bloodedly as a private business, stirs uneasily the thin curtain of our civilisation. Crimes of passion, crimes even of the worst degenerates, we find more bearable than the thought that a man can comfortably and peacefully exist in our society at the expense of a little care and two bullets per person administered in the nape of the neck. Chaplin, you may recall, tried to bring out some of the deeper implications of this theme in his film *Monsieur Verdoux*, and was not wholly successful; Clive Brook was no more successful in trying to avoid them.

Home Truths

WARM Sunday afternoons are not the best times to listen to homilies, and I must admit to a certain mental drowsiness when I tuned in to Gordon Troup's talk from 3YA in the *Home Truths* series. If I say that I found the talk, though thoughtful and carefully delivered, rather too closely-packed for easy listening it will certainly sound like special pleading. But the speaker raised so many important topics in his brief fifteen minutes that the criticism is probably fair. One of the chief difficulties of a radio speaker on serious topics is to learn how to give his audience not only enough time to follow him, but time for the thoughts and mental comments his words provoke. And Mr. Troup was certainly provocative. As a student of languages he holds firmly to the view that, as we speak, so we think, and if a people's speech and language is harmonious, lucid and well-proportioned, so will be its thought and, ultimately, its civilisation. As you may guess, he did not rate New Zealand very high. But there is a great deal more to be said on this than could be packed into a bare five minutes of a talk. Mr. Troup also needed more time for another topic, on which as University Liaison Officer, he spoke with authority—the shortcomings of our educational system in training our most intelligent pupils, and our chaotic and illogical bursary system.

—K.J.S.

Maternal Atmosphere?

THE BBC broadcasts a daily radio programme specially designed for women called "Woman's Hour" and millions of women tune in every afternoon. Some men listen, too, and amongst them is Algernon Blackwood, eighty-year-old author of many distinguished books. Mr. Blackwood confesses that his listening to "Woman's Hour" is frequent but selective. Cookery recipes, household hints and how to bring up baby are avoided, but he has learned a lot of interesting things from the programme. He himself is a broadcaster of outstanding merit but he was, to use his own words, "surprised and flattered" when he was invited to take part in "Woman's Hour," and in the studio became aware, so he said, of "a soothing maternal atmosphere that was encouraging."—BBC London Letter.



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