

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

MODERN MUSIC

To the Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—According to your correspondent, "R.J.H.," Tchaikovsky named Benny Goodman as the world's greatest clarinet player, but his opinion would have been more valuable had he not died sixteen years before Goodman was born. Perhaps "R.J.H." means Stokowski.

I should like to congratulate you on your excellent publication. Not even the BBC "Radio Times" sets out its programmes better, and unlike many similar publications, *The Listener* does not insult its readers by asking them to read cheap and sensational articles. A word of praise is due to Russell Clark, your artist, for his fine drawings.

Yours etc.,
ORPHEUS.

Dunedin,
April 24, 1940.

To the Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—In answer to Anzac (29/440), I also am an upholder of classical music, which I think is "food for the soul." I also would like less jazz and swing, but I do not begrudge other people their pleasure. I suggest to "Anzac" that he gives a little twist to his radio dial. As to F. C. Beckett, I heartily disagree with him.

Yours, etc.,
HIGHBROW IN MUSIC.

Wellington,
April 28, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—Your enthusiastic correspondent, R.J.H., is right to defend the cause of Jazz, but he will do it harm if he does not learn more about his own subject. It is amusing to read that someone has told him that Tchaikovsky nominated Benny Goodman the world's greatest clarinet player. Poor old Tchaik. has been dead since 1893 (God rest his soul). R.J.H. is probably confusing this composer with a modern Hungarian whose music he would undoubtedly loathe and condemn (it is good of course). This composer wrote a Rhapsody for Goodman to play with Szegedy, the violinist.

R.J.H. produces a very fine argument to prove the masculinity of male crooners: "Bing Crosby . . . was a law student in an American University." Has it occurred to R.J.H. that Bing Crosby might have been a co-ed? In which case his sex would remain undefined! But we all know what he means of course — that Crosby is the father of a large family.

Then he names executants of jazz as "regular going, intelligent people like their neighbours." I could name a few symphony orchestras, hundreds strong, made up of just those same ordinary going people, so what about it? His statement that "jazz has evolved into a very high form of musical art" can be exploded in two hot licks by anyone with just a smattering of musical knowledge, who can produce music from centuries back that is more highly evolved than even the music of Baline, Confrey, Livingstone, and other less picturesque composers of to-day, and just as exciting. His evidence that Stokowski's first fiddle left the Symphony to get "more fun" is awry. "More money" would be nearer the point.

However, R.J.H.'s resistance piece is his reference to the jazz orchestra's "orthodox trumpets," etc. May I say that we all have orthodox tongues; but some of us make rude noises with them while others talk pleasantly, with well chosen words.

Yours, etc.,
A.A.

Christchurch,
May 3, 1940.

NEWS IN ENGLISH

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—With regard to note about overseas stations in your last issue, I may state that I have taken particular pains with the following stations, which are permanent and always come through clearly. I was surprised to see that you had not included them in your last issue.

Berlin, 3.0 p.m., 25 and 31 metre band; Rome, 6.5 p.m., 25 and 31 metre band; Berlin, 6.30 p.m., 25 and 31 metre band; Japan, 9.25 p.m., 25 metre band (Tokio). These are all in English, New Zealand Standard Time.

I also notice that Japan (Tokio) has started a new station about 6.30 to 7.0 p.m. This station is for Honolulu, but comes through very clearly at Auckland. It is in English and in Japanese.

Yours, etc.,
MARTIN KELLY.

Ponsonby,
May 5, 1940.

ANNOUNCERS' VOICES.

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I am not surprised that my letter on the above subject should have provoked the criticism voiced by F. C. Beckett, in your issue of April 12. There must be quite a number who share his views, otherwise the type of emasculated English which one hears so much over the air would not have come into existence at all. That many may share his views, however, by no means proves their infallibility. My criticism, moreover, was directed at the system rather than at the announcers who are its victims.

It is not a question of what one has been accustomed to that governs the writer's tastes. I have not been brought up on beer, and I am willing to wager that Mr. Beckett was not weaned on champagne (as his rather erratic use of metaphor would suggest). In any case, G. K. Chesterton rated beer above bubbly and I consider his opinion worth having. Intrinsically there is merit in either beverage, each is, one might almost say, the expression of a national characteristic and therefore not lightly to be dismissed. If an announcer has a natural Irish accent, by all means let him use it. If he is Scots, then let us hear a rolled "r" occasionally. But in the name of all that is worthwhile in dialect, language, literature and culture generally, let us exorcise this demon of uniformity. In trying to please everybody, the BBC and all other broadcasting authorities which have tried to cultivate a standard accent have succeeded only in awakening the ridicule of the majority. Standard English as she is spoke by the orthodox announcer is neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring. And to that extent we are the losers. In any case, the accent employed even by some of our leading announcers is not always above suspicion, and if I am to be forced into a philological discussion, I might mention that time and again I have noticed the slurring of an intrusive "r" in such suffix-forms as "ia," "a," etc. And why should

the announcer not adopt an American accent when announcing such a title as "Boogy-boogy-boo"? It is an American title, is it not? And it is customary to use Italian, German, Czech and other pronunciations where the context demands it.

The subject of announcer accent is a rather more important one than perhaps Mr. Beckett realised when he first wrote. As for the NCBS, its chief virtue, in my view, is its common or garden humanity which is of more value to the community than the somewhat Olympian indifference of the NBS, so reminiscent of the gods of old Lucretius, "who haunt the lucid interspace 'twixt world and world."

Yours, etc.,
CIRCUMFLEX.

Auckland,
April 26, 1940.

FEDERAL UNION

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—In your issue of April 19 you quote A. P. Herbert as saying, "Last time, she (America), left us with a large baby called the League of Nations; now she is busily engaged in dressing up its poor little corpse and calling it Federal Union."

The only conclusion to be drawn from such a statement is that Mr. Herbert had not taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the principles of the proposed Union. When Woodrow Wilson made his proposals, although he was President of the U.S.A., he did not have the support of the people for his scheme. The Federal Union could only come into being if it were voted for by the people.

The League of Nations was a body of States with representatives nominated by the Governments of the member countries. Each country, while making promises to support the Covenant, was free to act in any manner which best suited its individual policy. This they all did, so the League is a corpse.

The Federal Union takes as its basis the "man"; each individual, be he English, French, American, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Belgian, Irish, Danish, Swiss, or Finnish, has an equal voice in the government of the "Greater Union." The governments of the now separate countries would continue to control their own domestic affairs, but each million, or major fraction thereof, of people, would elect one representative to the Federal Government, and two Senators for each 25 million or fraction. In both cases they would be elected directly by the people.

This parliament would have power to control the common defence force, common coinage, common citizenship, common, customs-free, trading system, common postal and communications system.

Such a union would have an almost complete control of all the necessities of war, and would be able to make aggression almost impossible — a thing which the League of Nations has never succeeded in doing.

Yours, etc.,
"FEDERAL UNION."

Maraekakaho,
April 22, 1940.

"ROOKIES"

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—With reference to the slang term "Rookies" used in the Army when speaking of raw recruits. Your contributor stated that the word was not used in the last War. I beg to contradict that statement. In 1915, the new recruits were nearly always referred to by us n.c.o.'s in Liverpool Camp, N.S.W., as "Rookies," and I also heard them referred to as such when in England in 1916.

Yours, etc.,
G. F. BURNSIDE.

Havelock North,
April 24, 1940.