

NEW ZEALAND

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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Fear Crosses The Atlantic

THE most sensational result of the German invasion of the Lowlands was not the speedy capitulation of Holland, nor the loud whoops from Italy, but the alarm, rising in places to panic, in the United States. Some of it was, of course, political, and much of it stage-managed by the fighting services, but a great deal of it was real. In spite of their numbers, wealth, remoteness and industrial efficiency, Americans felt suddenly afraid.

Fear may, of course, be misplaced. There are people in New Zealand who ask themselves, every time they see a strange ship enter port, if it is friendly or hostile. They are the people who saw German 'planes hovering over the Dominion in 1914, and are not normal. America has them, too, and some of them own newspapers. But the people who came suddenly into the news when Rotterdam fell, included tough old warriors like General Pershing. They sit in Congress and they have contacts with generals and admirals. They go to Europe. They have talked with kings.

Yet they are afraid. They have seen space vanish and decency die. They know, now, that the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, and that they are neither swift nor strong. They lack experience on the sea, they are years behind schedule in the air, they are weaker on land than Belgium or Finland. If the Allies fell, the enemy would be at the gate.

For neutrality has suddenly become nonsense. You may resist a thug, or you may run away from him, but you cannot, unless you are a thug yourself, retain an open mind about him. The excitement in the United States means that Americans have closed their minds but realise painfully that they still have open coasts. It is a depressing spectacle, but one that we have all seen before, and no one needs to be told what the moral is.

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 Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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.

SCANDINAVIAN PROTEST

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—Being a semi-Scandinavian, I beg to lodge two protests on behalf of my fathers' countries.

One is against the persistent way in which one or two of the announcers pronounce the word "Copenhagen." Spelt with a C it is an English word and should be pronounced in English. It is neither German nor Danish. Spelt with a K, it is German. The Danish spelling is København (to rhyme with "down").

My second protest is, I am afraid, not likely to have much result. But why must all Norwegian songs be sung in German? Even Kirsten Flagstad sings Grieg in German! If translations must be used, why not the English translations? I have several English editions of Scandinavian songs in Norwegian and English, but I am sure that most people would prefer to hear them in their own languages. After all, those were the words to which the music was fitted by the composers.

Manurewa,
May 5, 1940.

Yours, etc.,
M.J.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMMES

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—With every radio station in New Zealand attempting, separately, to please about 350,000 listeners whose every taste is different, it is not always possible to listen right through one programme without (1) going to sleep, (2) going to the dogs, (3) going berserk, or (4) going for the set with an axe. I am still waiting for something to happen to the suggestion advanced several times in your columns that the two or three stations in each centre should co-operate more closely to provide alternative programmes.

However, if we must bear what we have until our shouts for something better penetrate the fastnesses of the State ear-drum, we can at least enjoy the element of surprise created in programmes which switch so indiscriminately from symphony orchestras to mandoline medleys. One of the surprises came to me the other day.

It was the discovery of very definite entertainment possibilities in the feature "Tusitala, Teller of Tales." I heard the story of the workmen who were fitting a large piece of machinery into a prepared emplacement. A block of wood fell into a deep but narrow hole, and jammed. All efforts to get it out failed until an old-timer joggled it with a crow-bar, worked it loose, and floated it to the surface.

This was a simple enough plot for a story, but I'll wager that few listeners guessed how he would remove the piece of wood until the last few words of the broadcast.

The whole interest was in the telling of the story. It was marred, I thought, by accents which not even American-mass-produced serials have yet been able to impose upon the New Zealanders' speech; but as an item, in spite of that defect, it held the attention of one whose urge to destroy his radio set rises in geometrical progression, and is only stifled by the correlative advance in the cost of living.

If there is anything new in radio that literature has not supplied it is the ability of spoken words to do things and play interesting tricks which visual perception has to forgo. These spoken short stories have something that is missed in writing, just as writing, of course, has something that is missed in broadcasting. But I suggest that this special advantage could be used to much greater effect. Station 3YA, I believe, is experimenting with short stories

written specially for radio. Was it not Jefferson Farjeon who wrote something they broadcast a month ago?

With no imagination of a visible personality behind them, many of the NBS and CBS talks are poor dull things. Unless the speaker has that sort of radio personality which gets out through his voice, talks at their best are only interesting through their narrative value. Narrative value, added to the virtues of a good story-telling voice, put short stories far ahead in broadcasting entertainment value.

I should like to hear O. Henry over the air, given by one speaker, with no frills or silly effects. And there are others. New Zealand writers at present wasting their time on the complications of radio plays might find themselves more adept at this simpler and so vastly more interesting medium. There is the suggestion. Will someone please do something about it?

Yours, etc.,

Cave, South Canterbury,
May 20, 1940.

E.W.M.

FRENCH LITERATURE

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,

So Pascal never wrote a thought
No essays wrote Montaigne;
Voltaire with wit and fact ne'er fought
To make the mad world sane.

Rousseau, of course, did not confess
Nor Moliere write a play—
So knowledge grows from less to less
LIVE AND UNLEARN TO-DAY!

F.M.

Mangere,
May 13, 1940.

NEWS IN ENGLISH

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—In regard to overseas news bulletins I should like to add to your correspondent Mr. Kelly's list of stations omitted in your last issue. The following I always listen to regularly and all come through very clearly (all New Zealand Standard Time):

Berlin, 10.30 a.m.: DJB 19.74 metres 15.20 mc/s.
DJZ 25.63 metres 11.79 mc/s.

From Paris the usual 4 p.m. and 4.45 p.m. bulletins appear to be replaced by one at 4.15 p.m. TPB7 25.24 metres 11.88 mc/s. TPC 31.50 metres 9.52 mc/s.

Boston: 5.25 p.m. on the 25 metre band, call unknown.

Yours, etc.,
D.C.

Cashmere,
May 18, 1940.

ANNOUNCERS' VOICES

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—It is rather hard that the English language as spoken by any well educated person in England should come in for so much adverse criticism. The language as pronounced by the BBC announcers is neither affected nor unusual but clear King's English spoken to carry well over the wireless. If people in the Dominions prefer their own rendering of the language they have a perfect right to do so, but in fairness let them remember that it is a corruption of pure English speech.

Yours, etc.,
VISITOR.

Geraldine,
May 19, 1940.