

NEW ZEALAND

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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## EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

93-107 Featherston Street, Wellington, C.I.

Post Office Box 1070.

Telephone. 46-520.

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## Escape

A CORRESPONDENT complains in this issue that some "gory stuff" was broadcast recently during an entertainment session. We get enough horrors, he argues, in the news, and, at other times, should have programmes that are "bright and cheerful." He suggests that the material will be found in the classics.

He will, of course, realise, if he takes time to consider the matter fully, that for every listener who wants brightness, there is another who wants reality, and that nothing jars more on some minds than misplaced levity. A Beethoven funeral march may depress people who have no music, or who want to forget death. To others, it may be so soothing, so ennobling, that it not only elevates the mind but braces the spirits. There is no standard by which we may gauge the effect of aesthetic things. "Full fathom five" is a meaningless jingle to some people, to others a perpetual delight. If it depresses you to read "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well," you are not likely to be cheered by "A Lover and His Lass."

The fact, however, is that the misery of the war is more than some minds can endure all the time. They must escape somewhere, into unreality by reading detective stories, or right out of the world through fasting and prayer. Work is a sufficient distraction for those whose work is their hobby; but they are the fortunate ones. Most must anaesthetise themselves more or less, and it is only by trial that they learn how to do it. Very long books work the miracle in some cases, nature study or scientific experiment with others. It is not possible just to shut our eyes and ears and forget, but we can occasionally, if we are lucky, lose ourselves in a new excitement.

If we can do none of these things—neither turn away, nor call what we see by a sweeter name—there is nothing for it but to maintain the "stronghold of the mind" whatever beats against it. In this case, our correspondent is right in prescribing the classics.

## 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.

### NO HORRORS, PLEASE!

The Editor,  
"The Listener."

Sir,—One thing that the whole family looks forward to from 3YA are the readings by Mr. Simmance. He is certainly good, but surely it is unnecessary for him to read gory stuff such as he put over last night (Wednesday, May 15). We get enough horrors now in the war news, and every effort should be made to keep the programmes bright and cheerful. There are plenty of classics that would fall in line here. But my thanks to Mr. Simmance for other enjoyable readings.

Yours etc.,  
HUBERT.

Feilding,  
May 16, 1940.

### FEDERAL UNION

The Editor,  
"The Listener."

Sir,—I do not agree with your correspondent "Federal Union" that Mr. A. P. Herbert has not taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the proposals. Rather would I say that he knows of the planning for a world state, and has read such statements as the following: Professor Arnold Toynbee (1931) "... we are at present working discreetly but with all our might to wrest this mysterious political force called sovereignty out of the clutches of the local national states of our world. And all the time we are denying with our lips what we are doing with our hands."

I now quote from "A Canadian View of Federation" by L. D. Byrne: "The democratic conception of society is based upon the fundamental Christian principle governing human relationships which is summed up in those inspired words 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' It envisages a free association of individuals who, because they collectively determine the results accruing to them from the management of their affairs, are able to live together as a nation in complete harmony with each other and with other similarly organised nations. The basis of democracy is sovereignty. Unless the people in a nation are sovereign they cannot determine the results they obtain individually and collectively from the management of their affairs and their relations as a nation with other nations—and, unless they do, it is not a democracy."

Yours, etc.,  
TRUE DEMOCRACY.

Dunedin,  
May 23, 1940.

### ANNOUNCERS' VOICES

The Editor,  
"The Listener."

Sir,—"Visitor" considers that "Daventry English" is clear King's English spoken to carry well over the wireless. He is entitled to that opinion, even if it is wrong and it certainly seems strange to claim that New Zealand speech is a corruption of pure English. I presume Scots, Irish, Yorkshire, Dorset, Devonshire, and other dialects are likewise degenerate. Philologically, however, it is "Daventry English" which is the bastard dialect, like the French of "Stratford atte Bow."

Yours, etc.,  
CIRCUMFLEX.

Auckland,  
May 31, 1940.

### FIGURE FOIBLES

The Editor,  
"The Listener."

Sir,—In R.W.C.'s article on "Figure Foibles" (The Listener, May 17) she says that the decimal form of  $1/n$  where  $n$  is a prime number greater than

13 will give a period of  $n-1$  figures. (Last paragraph in the section Sweet 17). This is by no means correct. The number of figures in the recurring decimal's period is either  $n-1$  or an exact sub-multiple of  $n-1$ . As far as I know, the next one which gives a period of  $n-1$  after 29 is somewhere in the thousands. It is very, very, very dangerous to make statements about prime numbers without absolute proof. They are like Irishmen; mostly agin' the government. Few laws relating to their properties are known, and they rank next to the concept of "infinity" as the most untameable things in mathematics.

R.W.C. has missed the most interesting thing about these decimals. The figures in the period of  $1/7$  are 12, 45, 78. In  $1/17$  they are 0, 11, 22, 3, 44, 55, 6, 77, 88, 9. Do you see the ones and two 8's, two 2's and two 7's, one 3 and one 6, two 4's and two 5's.

Similarly  $1/23 = 0.0434782608695652173913$ , first and last figures of the decimal recurring. These figures are when arranged:

00, 11, 22, 333, 44, 55, 666, 77, 88, 99. Notice how the three 6's correspond to the three 3's.

Yours, etc.,  
S.G.E.

Glenavy,  
May 24, 1940.

### SWING MUSIC

The Editor,  
"The Listener."

Sir,—Your correspondents who have been criticising Swing Music have shown such a lack of understanding of the subject that I feel bound, in the name of Swing, to answer them.

Swing is intended for dance music, and therefore its most important feature is a pronounced and not very subtle rhythm. But any dance orchestra can produce rhythm of a fashion by playing their tune over and over again, and the result is very dull indeed. I loathe this type of dance music, and also "light orchestral" music. They are both popular music and are purely unimaginative hack work. Swing musicians, however, take a theme and play variations on it. The individual is allowed to interpret the melody in his own way, and it is an absorbing study to see how he does it. To do this of course the player requires a subtlety of expression and perfect technique. Swing is therefore definitely constructive.

Perhaps some of the instruments used in Swing sound harsh to those who are unaccustomed to them, but they are a necessarily powerful medium to express a powerful rhythmic feeling. Your correspondent "Anzac's" comparison with "train whistles, grinding brakes, and the scream of tramcars" is far-fetched—just as far-fetched as comparing violins to squeaking slate pencils.

Swing, besides being "probably rhythmic integration" (Benny Goodman) is the classical music of dance music, and in that it builds up its theme and is a sincere attempt at musical expression it has something in common with the classics.

Of course, to those whose love of music goes no further than liking it as a background for their conversation neither Swing nor the classics will ever be intelligible.

Yours, etc.,  
IN TEMPO.

Wellington,  
May 26, 1940.

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. A. Collins: Your appreciation and suggestion has been passed on to the Programme Department.

"East Surrey": As you say, the big offensive was in March, 1918, not 1917. Our mistake as well as yours.