

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

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Time-Lag in America

IT is natural for anyone in a corner to look round anxiously to see if help is in sight. But it is not sensible to look too long. Some of us have been looking too long at America.

Great help is in fact coming from America. Much greater help will come soon. But the President himself does not know whether armed men will come, and it is weak and foolish to get hot and bothered in the meantime. It is weak because we can and will defend ourselves whether help comes or fails. It is foolish because America has never promised to come in, must itself be the judge whether it *should* come in, and began with many good and deep reasons for keeping out. It is true that these reasons become less good and less deep every day; but it is also true that although America speaks our language it does not think our thoughts.

We have not even begun to understand Americans if we think of them as British people living in the Western Hemisphere. They are not British, and an overwhelming majority of them are glad that they are not. Millions are Germans and Italians; hundreds of thousands are Russians, Poles, and Jews. Even when they are British in origin, they have ceased to be British in outlook, except in politically unimportant ways. They are Americans; and the fundamental fact of Americanism is that it is not Europeanism. Vast multitudes in what we now know as the United States went there to escape from Europe. As a Presbyterian minister put it the other day in a letter written from Pittsburgh to the *Manchester Guardian*, they wanted to "put three thousand miles of ocean between them and the class distinctions, autocracies, military services, and economic dead-ends of Continental Europe." To forget these things is to get the whole picture unrecognisably out of focus.

We must not sit sighing for help, being so strong ourselves. But we may, and should, be aware of the fact that for every American who thinks coldly of England a thousand think angrily of England's enemies. They have problems of their own, hates, rivalries, and jealousies which no administration can ignore. But they are turning our way with increasing purpose, and they will not turn faster if we forget who and what they are.

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.

BETTY'S DIARY

The Editor,

"The Listener."

Sir,—I am a single man, I earn something more than £250 a year, and I cannot be expected to know at all fully the trials of a wife who has to spend carefully, to live at all decently. Nevertheless, I sympathise with your correspondent "£250 a Year."

If your diarist "Betty" isn't a snob, she ought to be, for consistency's sake. But snob or not, her unpleasant reply to "£250 a Year" certainly indicated a shallow mind. "Betty" reports but does not preach. Who said anything about preaching? And if "Betty's Diary" is reporting, I think your columns would be better used recording the day-to-day life of

More "Letters from Listeners" will be found on Page 55.

a Tuatara Lizard. From the average housewife's outlook, they would be hardly less useful.

A sense of humour, normally a valuable asset, can sometimes be developed only at the expense of a sense of responsibility. Big minds can accommodate both in any quantity, but judging from her reply to an understandable complaint, I doubt whether "Betty" has either.

And a Dry Martini as a softener of feelings may be the artificial method of an artificial intellect. Nor would it occur to "Betty" that it's expensive — to most people.

Yours, etc.,
THE BORE.

Wellington,
June 19, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I agree with "£250 a Year" in her criticism of Betty's Diary. Betty, in her reply, says that she reports but does not preach. She could add that neither does she help, inspire, instruct, nor even entertain. After all to cultivate a sense of humour one must feed it on something, and I can't see how any sense of humour, however frail, could find any appetite for "Betty's Diary." If Betty had ever cultivated a sense of humour herself, she would never have written such piffle.

Doubtless I too will be invited to cultivate charity on a Dry Martini, but it is not Betty herself who is most deserving of criticism, but you, Mr. Editor, for printing such stuff. Surely the space could be used to better advantage.

No domestic diary can be a success unless it rouses sympathy, understanding, in fact fellow-feeling. Betty doesn't do that; as you can see she irritates, antagonises. The domestic diary simply isn't her dish no matter what writing talent she may have in other directions.

Yours etc.,
EDNAMAY.

Papatowai,
June 21, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I am glad that a protest has been made against Betty's Diary. I do not feel that Betty represents the majority of New Zealand women, and I myself object to having a dictatorship of a small professional class foisted upon the average New Zealander. I must confess that I rarely read a line except perhaps to glean a few hints and recipes.

However, I don't so much mind that Betty represents a minority section. My complaint is that she is not interesting enough, too full of clichés of

thought and statement with nothing whatever to offer to women who have to live on small incomes.

Betty's defence showed her own lack of humour. "I report," she says, "and do not preach." Why not wait till she has something to report, instead of spreading nothings over a whole page? A Dry Martini will not do anything more for us than it does for her. We refuse such slick escapes and prefer to face our realities; and they are not contained in peche Melbas, refrigerators, and bridge parties. With the world topping about our ears, let us certainly have a little lightness. But no trivialities.

Yours etc.,
J.W.

Auckland,
June 23, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I was surprised to read in a recent issue a criticism of Betty's Diary. To me there is something very sweet and human in it, and I thoroughly enjoy it. No snob would confess to a renovated evening dress as Betty did some time ago. We can't all have servants, frigidaires, etc., but we can get along without envying those who have, as life is mostly what we make it. So let's have more of Betty, Jim, and Bill-Jim.

Yours etc.,
£130 A YEAR.

Gratuity,
June 24, 1940.

[A reply to these letters will be found on the Women's Page.]

EACH HIS OWN PROGRAMME

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—Would it be possible to have a different classification of radio programmes, especially from the four main centres? Could we not have one station for light music, popular songs round the camp fire series, bands and orchestras and all music of a bright nature; one station for classical music; one station for talks, serials, sports etc; and one station for dance music for the young people (10 o'clock is too late for a house party)? Everybody, every night, would then get a programme to his or her own taste. Individual tastes differ, and it is very hard night after night to be compelled to listen to a programme in which one isn't in the least interested.

Why not give classifying the programmes a trial? It would soon be discovered if it were popular or not, and programmes could easily be changed back again, if the method proved not a success.

If this course is not practicable, however, would it be possible to have a continuous musical programme of popular songs, etc, from any one of the stations, say 12M, from about 7 to 10.30 or 11? I feel sure this would become very popular. The bright music seems to have been cut right out of the programmes lately, and most of us are not educated to appreciate the highbrow classical music we seem to get so much of.

I hope you won't take me for a grouser, as I certainly am not. I'm simply suggesting a course that I think would meet every possible taste and allow one to have a whole evening with the type of entertainment one likes best. Those of us who like a bright musical programme don't get a hearing till it is bed-time for most of us. Is this fair?

I realise that the task of pleasing everyone is not easy, but wouldn't this classifying of the programme be a way out of the difficulty?

Yours etc.,

WILLING TO BE REASONABLE.

Auckland,
June 10, 1940.

(If the change were practicable, it would be unnecessary, since each listener would turn to the items on all programmes that most interested him. It is because it is not easy to listen to any station with any set from any centre that listeners are not asked to do this.—Ed.).