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Who Owns The British Empire?

MOST of us know, and some of us remember, but none of us can be reminded too often that the British Empire of foreign propagandists is a political and economic myth. Britain does not own Canada, or Australia, or New Zealand, or South Africa. The parliament of the United Kingdom does not control the parliament of any overseas Dominion. Mr. Churchill has no more authority over Mr. Fraser than Mr. Mackenzie King has over General Smuts. Each Dominion makes its own laws and all are free to make and maintain associations with other powers. Eire, for example, still maintains diplomatic relations with Germany.

We have said that most of us know these things; but many of us forget them, and when enemies lie about them we assume too carelessly that the lies are nowhere believed. They are believed almost everywhere by foreigners who are not students of politics. Sir Norman Angell declared a few weeks ago that they are believed by "large and powerful sections of opinion" in the United Kingdom itself. In an article in a recent *Picture Post* he pointed out, not only that our propagandists do little to correct these lies, but that "eminent British officials" since the war started have announced them to the world as the truth. They are also, he argues, announced to the world in most British maps, which show dominions, colonies, protectorates, and mandates all equally red, and convey the impression to friends and enemies alike that Britain owns Canada and Australia and something like half of Africa.

All those careless splashes of red are fuel for the enemy's fire. They help him to beat up hate at home and circulate lies abroad. They obscure the fact that Britain has been de-imperialising most of that territory for three-quarters of a century—"unconquering her conquests; de-annexing her annexations; turning what used to be an Empire into a group of sovereign states."

It is largely our own fault that the world thinks of us as possessors of a quarter of the globe, has never realised that the Empire is not an "estate" owned and controlled from London, and has not even a dawning consciousness of the reality of the Statute of Westminster. Sir Norman Angell's article should be reprinted in pamphlet form and exported to America and Russia by the ton.

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.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. FORD

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I have just seen the interview with myself published in your issue of June 30-July 6. Though I have more than once been mis-reported, I have rarely experienced such a distortion of my remarks as appears in that interview.

To begin with, my remark on Nationalism was not made in criticism of the Colonies. What I said was that "Nationalism is the curse of the world, and is, to a large extent, responsible for this awful war."

As to musical ability, I stated that it was my experience that New Zealanders were as apt as in any other part of the Empire, but had unfortunately not enjoyed the advantages of an orchestra which alone could really supply a cultural background.

May I say, also, that I feel your representative should be more discriminating in what he writes for publication. Over a cup of tea one often relates an incident (e.g. the Beecham pyjama story which may or may not be a fact): but with no intention of its appearing in print.

Yours etc.,
C. EDGAR FORD.

Auckland,
June 28, 1940.

(We are glad to give Dr. Ford this opportunity of telling our readers what he meant to say. We cannot agree that we told them anything he did not say.—Ed.).

BETTY'S DIARY

The Editor,
"The Listener."

Sir,—I heartily agree with your correspondent "£130 a Year," but am not surprised as she is, at the criticisms of "The Bore" and "Ednamay," etc. I am sorry for them. Poor things, especially "The Bore," who apparently knows more about a Tuatara Lizard than about a young married couple; their sense of humour is strange. Betty has only one page, and I, an invalid of years, as well as many of my friends, and my family, always turn to her page as soon as *The Listener* comes home. So let's have more of her Diary, please, and if it is possible, more pages.

Yours, etc.,
REGULAR READER.

Wellington,
July 8, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—Here is another kick for Betty, but for a different reason. Kicking Betty seems to be a favourite pastime at present for *Listener* readers, but my complaint is that Betty, or you, Mr. Editor, have surrendered to the kickers. This week's diary by comparison with those so many of your readers were rude about is flat and lifeless. Even the recipes are dragged in formally. Surely Betty is not going to let them get her down! Where's her fighting blood. Up, girl, and at them! Waterloo and all that.

Here is something for Betty to remember. Five hundred people like a thing and not one will say a word. Ten won't like it, and nine of them will write to say so with variations. People are always quicker to complain than to give thanks. I remember when I was very young other people's ideas used to worry me. One day I was reading a book and was greatly perturbed by some of the opinions expressed. Then the thought came—no matter what he writes it is only one man's opinion. I felt happy after that because I realised that my opinion could be as good as his.

Betty's diary has become very real to me. I am a solitary person and have more time to read than most people. I read a lot, and I enjoy immensely what I read in Betty's diary. Yet I get a mere £175 a year (less this and that) and should therefore

be 75 times more angry with Betty than those on £250 a year. If I enjoy her diary on that salary there are hundreds and hundreds of others who enjoy it too. I will be very sorry if Betty ceases to be Betty.

Yours, etc.,
M.B.

Whangarei,
July 12, 1940.

The Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—Having read in your paper some very unkind and uncalled-for letters about Betty's Diary, I feel I would like to say my little word. After the dry-as-dust serials and the boring drivel we get over the air from some of our Parliamentary speakers, Betty is a pick-me-up and a relief. Her diary is fresh, clean, and useful in her little hints on how to do different things. It may not be high-brow, but it is an example to many. In her way, she is keeping her home fires burning and her own family happy. Good luck to her.

Yours, etc.,
GERTRUDE M. PALMER.

Pictou,
July 15, 1940.

"OUT OF THE SILENCE"

The Editor,
The Listener.

Sir,—Now that the serial "Out of the Silence" is almost finished, I would like to say how much we have appreciated it. I have listened in keenly each week from the beginning.

Could you tell me the origin of the play? Is it written as a radio play only, or has it been adapted from a story or play, and who wrote it?

Earani and Alan were especially good; in fact the whole cast is to be congratulated on the way in which the play was rendered. The diagram of the Sphere in this week's issue is a great help — and most original! Many thanks.

Yours etc.,
PEMBROKE.

Lake Wanaka,
June 23, 1940.

(This serial was dramatised by an Australian company from the Australian novel by Erle Cox. In our issue of June 14 our correspondent will find, on Page 23, a photograph of Honor Sim, the actress who played the part of Earani, and who recently toured New Zealand with "The Women" Company.—Ed.).

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The Editor,
The Listener.

Sir,—I feel I would like to send you a note of appreciation. We look forward all the week to "Wandering with the West Wind." The Wanderer (and John) with their quiet friendly, yet dignified and educated conversation are such a relief from the roar, din and clash of so much that disturbs what little peace of mind we have left us in these distressing days. The humour is subtle, the thoughts and words refined, in fact they are real gentlemen. Couldn't you give us a photo of them in *The Listener*? Or are they too shy and retiring to give us that pleasure?

Dad and Dave, too, give us humour of a different kind. We feel they are neighbours of ours just over the fence. Their acting is so absolutely natural.

To Bindle and Fairy we waved a sad farewell. We shall miss them these wintry evenings.

The things we do not like, we turn off, so why worry? But please leave us the "Fourth Form of St. Percy's." Don't stop that for years.

Yours etc.,
"WEST WIND."

Onehunga,
June 30, 1940.