

NEW ZEALAND  
**LISTENER**

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

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## In The Air

**M**OST of us know and some of us remember, but none of us can be reminded too often that there is nothing finer in the history of our race than the story of the Royal Air Force since Dunkirk. He is a dull man who does not feel humble when he thinks of the Navy—by which we mean every man and every boy who fights at sea—who has ceased to feel proud of his kinship with the men who fought in France, who can forget the work done during the last three months in munition factories.

But magnificent though all those men and women have been, their efforts would now have been useless if the Air Force had lost the sky. And that leaves the story all untold. It is not half, not even the beginning, of the truth behind every pilot and observer and gunner. It is not possible to tell the truth in ordinarily possible language. We just know that without them Britain could not have held out, that London would now have been a smoking ruin, the Channel a German bridge.

So much we know, so much we glibly say but we have no sooner said it than we know that we have said nothing. We have no words for the deeds that lie behind it all, for the daring by day and the skill by night, the endurance and the self-sacrifice of a handful of men and mere boys holding the gates of civilisation. To call it an epic is as feeble in an age of screaming propaganda as to say that it is a miracle but in fact it is more than either.

And yet it does not matter much what we call it. We know that it is salvation and victory. Some of us will not live to enjoy the fruit of the victory, for the world is shaking on its foundations and the crooked will not be made straight again in a single generation. But our children will enjoy it, and their children. And there would have been nothing left for any of us but the bread of sorrow if the Air Force had failed for a single day or night.

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 Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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

## SOME QUESTIONS

Sir,—It is clear from the number of complaints appearing in your paper and the Press generally that the radio service is unsatisfactory to a large number of licensees. Of course it is not to be expected that any programme will suit all listeners, but would not the adoption of the often suggested idea (endorsed among others by an ex-announcer), of classifying the stations give a lot more satisfaction than the present method of mixing up high class and middle class music with "tripe" items from the same station?

Generally speaking, the voices of announcers are acceptable. Those who write complaining must recollect that the Director has not an unlimited choice. But the licence fee is too high. Could we not have a share of the profits, as in the case of the Government Life Insurance Office?

The programme from 2YA on Sunday evening (August 18) met with the approval of a large number of listeners, all sloppy stuff being cut out. Why not a Sunday morning programme of high class and semi-religious music before the churches come on?

Then some very interesting talks at different YA Stations clash as to time, and in my opinion many of these are too brief. For example, "Coranto" at 2YA and the Garden Experts, especially that one who speaks from 3YA—this latter has a range of listeners from Tuatapere on the south coast of New Zealand to the far north of Auckland. These contributors to our pleasure, and also some others who are interesting, seem to have a stop-watch put on them in the studio, while churches frequently wander on well into the time advertised for the next item. And does any competent official hear records played before they are purchased? Judging by some items that listeners have sprung on them it is a wonder how the artist got out of the recording studio alive.

For a final remark. Some announcers give the names of an item after it has been broadcast, while others omit to do this. Could not all give the final announcement?—"LISTENER" (Lower Hutt).

## SLANG

Sir,—I have listened to Mr. Sidney Baker's talks on Slang, and have read the extracts therefrom published in *The Listener*. The experience has been interesting, if not entirely edifying. I am left wondering why anyone should expend so much time, energy, and skill in an effort to preserve and classify a host of misbegotten verbal monstrosities that in a saner world would have been strangled at birth.

In saying this I am of course making a distinction (which Mr. Baker has not been careful to make), between the enrichment of our language by the addition of new words coined to express new ideas, and the adoption, to its hurt, of the uncouth and senseless inventions that are merely the offspring of vulgarity and affectation—two qualities that have much in common. Why should useful and necessary words such as radio, Anzac, stockyard, candy, and swagman be thrust into the same category as abominations like snorter, snitcher, wonky, beaut, and stagger-soup? These are a few of the words used by Mr. Baker in his talks, and used, it seems to me, with so little discrimination as between good and bad that he leaves the whole issue confused, and does himself less than justice.

Many listeners must have been uncomfortably astonished to learn how varied and how vicious are our habits of speech, but Mr. Baker himself seems unperturbed, and can regard with equanimity and

perhaps a little admiration the use by New Zealanders in London of the word "bush" to describe the suburbs of that great city.

Much that he has told us has no relation to slang at all, and some of that, under a different title, might have made a useful contribution to our knowledge of the growth of honest English words. But in the main Mr. Baker's talks have left the impression of a keen but regrettable desire on his part to "pay an ungrudging tribute" to the "delightful and inspired" souls who debase the current coin of speech in order to satisfy an urge to be conspicuously "different" at whatever cost of being noticeably objectionable. It is all rather pitiable.

Mr. Baker mentions the word "echelon" as now used in New Zealand. It is not slang; just a pleasant word with a definite meaning of its own, but no more descriptive of a contingent for overseas than would be the term "countermarch" or "right wheel." The complaisant acceptance of this innovation by the

More "Letters from Listeners" will be found on Page 24.

whole body of the press and public of the country is perhaps the sorriest surrender in our history. But in such ways, apparently, is our language "developed," and I suppose we must leave it at that.—J.W.B. (Kelburn).

(As Mr. Baker is no longer in New Zealand, we have had to decide between suppressing fair and intelligent criticism and publishing an attack to which there can be no immediate reply. We have decided that the second is the smaller of the two evils, but we shall not print further letters on the subject unless they are in reply to "J.W.B.'s" letter.—Ed.)

## RHYTHM MAKERS

Sir,—As there is a number of very interested and appreciative listeners to the Friday evening session of "The Rhythm Makers" in our part of the Island, would it be possible to give, on your "Letters" Page, the name of, and instrument played by, each member of the outfit. I feel sure that this would be greatly appreciated by a majority of Taranaki musicians, if not musicians throughout New Zealand.

We would like to express our good wishes for and appreciation of *The Listener*. The programmes are very clearly set out and give very little trouble when one is selecting items. — "TWO BLACKBIRDS" (New Plymouth).

[These are the particulars: 1, trumpets and trombone, vocals, R. Reid; 2, trumpet mellophone & sax, N. D'Arth; 3, trumpet, W. Pritchard; 1st sax. alto, vocals, R. Girvan; 2nd sax. tenor, R. Floyd; 3rd sax. alto, L. Paddi; 4th sax. tenor, trumpet & vocals, A. Rossoman (Art); piano, M. Howard; guitar & trombone, vocals, F. Gore; drums, W. Sinclair; bass, E. Hall; Esther Katene (Carry), vocals].

## INITIALS OR CHRISTIAN NAMES?

Sir,—To-night, at —, the Hon. Arr Semple will speak . . . etc., etc." So the announcement runs, but what a slapdash way to put it over! Why cannot the announcers say "The Hon. Robert Semple," or "The Hon. Walter Nash," and give the full Christian name? This *Doubleyou* Nash business irritates me; perhaps I am too fussy? But what would you think if the BBC introduced Britain's Prime Minister as Mr. *Doubleyou* Churchill, or left out the "Anthony," and talked of "Mr. Ay Eden"?

"TOUCHY" (Lower Hutt).

## PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—Might I reply briefly to the criticism of my pronunciation of the words "oral" and "choral" by your correspondent "B Natural." Despite "B Natural's" arguments that the pronunciation of "oral" and "choral" with short "o" is almost universal and that the correct pronunciation with long "aw" sound is old-fashioned and pedantic, the latter pronunciation is prescribed without alternative in the latest edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (which is not many years off the press), and is also recommended by Professor Arnold Wall in his excellent booklet "New Zealand English."

PHILRAD (Warkworth).