

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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## Armistice Day

THE fact that we have not been able, for obvious reasons, to hold the usual Armistice Day observances this year has led to the suggestion that November 11 until the war ends should be a day of national dedication. It is a suggestion that will attract those who have a feeling for "occasions" and leave others embarrassed and cold; nor is it possible to say which group is the larger. It is sufficient to remember that it does not matter very much how we march—singing and praying or in dogged silence—if we all march in the same direction.

But there is one thing we must not do with Armistice Day. We must not convert it into a day of disillusionment or failure. We did not fail twenty-two years ago. We succeeded. We stopped, threw back, and finally crushed an assault on our independent existence. We succeeded because we endured, and it is blindness or weakness or both to suppose that we endured for nothing. However we used our victory afterwards, we did achieve victory; nor could the gloomiest observer of the years since 1918 argue that we had nothing left in 1939 but the memory of our sorrows and failures. We had lost much, but we had also learnt much, and we retained the moral and material strength to stand when all our neighbours fell. We are still standing.

To lose sight of these things is to surrender to weariness and foolish fears. And yet those people are right who argue that to beat off this latest danger is not enough. We must be ready, when we have beaten it off, to go on with the job—beating off the social and political jackals who will gather on the field of victory. That at least is a war aim which it need not distract us to remember.

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 Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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

### "LIGHT POPULAR VOCALISTS"

Sir,—There appears to be a campaign at present to slander light popular vocalists, or as they are labelled—evidently derisively—crooners. The chief offender against the ears of "Old-fashioned" and Co. is, I presume, Mr. Bing Crosby.

Perhaps it may interest these readers to know that in America Mr. Crosby is No. 1 popular vocalist year after year. His nearest rival is Kenny Baker, who won more bouquets than brickbats as Nanki Poo in "The Mikado." Also in the first five is Nelson Eddy, who is usually first or second among the classical singers. But perhaps "Old-fashioned" does not like Mr. Eddy either. Incidentally, request sessions usually show that these artists are popular here, too.

Of course "Old-fashioned" gives the show away by his nom de plume. He has not moved with the times. I admit that some of Bing's records are not worthy of him, but to characterise records as "El Rancho

### NEW MAKE-UP

Readers will notice in this issue some changes in the placing of our programmes. Instead of a National section and a Commercial section in different parts of the journal, all programmes, National and Commercial, now appear together. However, to meet the convenience of those listeners who do not change much from Service to Service, we keep National and Commercial Programmes separate on their pages each day

Grande," "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'" and "Sweethearts," to mention only three, as moaning, is ridiculous.

I am no opponent of classical music or classical singers. I am as great a lover of the classics as anyone, but I also like light music. Also, I realise that many people do not like classics.

One more point. What does "Old-fashioned" think would happen to his friends from Fullers' if they appeared on the U.S.A. networks? (N.B. If they appeared).—H.D. (Christchurch).

Sir,—Your correspondents seem very vindictive towards crooners. The Americans are a fine people and they put this fellow Crosby on the top for entertainment. I would like him for breakfast, but I'm afraid I get the wrong session.

To "Old Fashioned" I would say that most of our ideas are not ours: if he tuned in to Tokyo would he wonder what the Japanese appreciated in their singers?

Tolerance is thought to be confined to the older folk. "Another Average Listener" and "Old Fashioned" should try some.

—H.J.P. (Upper Hutt)

### ARMS FOR DEMOCRACY

Sir,—In your issue of October 4 you reprinted part of a statement to the "New Republic" in which Archibald MacLeish, Librarian for the U.S. Congress, said that several post war-writers had disarmed democracy. I wondered, if these men had disarmed democracy, who had armed it again, and

with what weapons. One answer to these questionings appeared on your Leader Page in your issue of November 1. You said: The time might come when we could fight two wars at once—Hitler's own and our most advanced thinkers—but it had not come yet.

We are rearmed, then, I take it, with fear for our hides.

There are many answers to MacLeish, and there are the same answers to your leader. However, since Mr. MacLeish started the argument let us consider an answer to him which appeared in a later issue of the "New Republic." If the questioning voice of the "average man" in New Zealand can be ignored, as you ignore it, it is possible that some one may heed Harold Laski, Professor of Political Science in the University of London since 1926. Both he and MacLeish, it must be remembered, confined their direct arguments to the American scene. I hope your readers realise how strongly they apply elsewhere.

Laski talks of "the general malaise of our time, the index to the collapse of a historic civilisation in which America shares." He goes on: "The war is an expression of that malaise and that collapse and the new generation, not unnaturally, has the sense that it is being asked to be its victims without any certainty that the sacrifice will bear fruit. I think it knows, just as much as Mr. MacLeish, that Hitlerism is ugly and evil. What it asks to be assured of . . . is that a victory over Hitlerism will be a victory for the things it cherishes . . . It suspects those, who, while they excoriate Hitler and all his works, are not disturbed by share-croppers and the infantile death-rate in San Antonio." He talks of the control of big business over American colleges, and the frustrated feeling it gives undergraduates to be forced to believe that they will leave college with no philosophy at all, or as worshippers "at the shrine of what William James called 'the Bitch Goddess Success'." He adds: "The students are not led astray by Hemingway, Remarque, and Walter Millis. Mr. MacLeish knows how much of what they had to report was true. I add that, if he does not, I should like him to see the men from Dunkirk I have seen, and I think they will be able to convince him that these writers had grounds for the analysis they made . . . Heaven knows that in this beleaguered fortress of ours the defeat of Nazism is the price of a tolerable civilisation. But I also know that this defeat depends upon our power in Britain to evoke the dynamics of Democracy . . . The readers of this literature about which Mr. MacLeish is so fearful are not . . . opposed to the real interests of democracy . . . It is by meeting their discontents with understanding and magnanimity that we shall give the younger generation the sense of a victory for freedom."

It may, as you suggest, be the worst sort of subversion to say that we do not know what we are fighting for. In actual fact we do know that we are fighting for the lives we are living now. But the more important fact remains that my generation has been disillusioned so much by its experience of the results of one war, that it goes into another without crusading enthusiasm. If you refuse to supply that crusading spirit then you are as much to blame as Hemingway or MacLeish, or Versailles, or the Saar, or Homo Sapiens in his entirety, if Democracy is still spiritually disarmed.

—WAR BABY (Wellington).

(We do not ignore the voice of the average man. We give it. The average man knows why we are fighting, and knows that those who pretend not to know are either not average or not sincere.—Ed.)

### SLOW DOWN THE ANNOUNCERS

Sir,—Can nothing be done to moderate the 500-mile-an-hour speed of the announcers from London? Per contra what a perfect and clear speaker have we in the lady speaker of the BBC! Surely she is model enough upon which they may reform! What about Shakespeare's advice to the players: "England Speaks. If so God help her."

—E. P. HULL (Devonport).