

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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## EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.I.

Post Office Box 1070.

Telephone, 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

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## Cup Week and Coventry

**A**LTHOUGH it is unpopular in these times to tell stories with a moral, the newspapers managed to tell one indirectly on November 16. In one column the cables said:

Correspondents declare that there is nothing in Madrid or Finland, and that there was nothing even in London, to compare with the devastation of Coventry in the all-night German raid. . . The spire of Coventry Cathedral to-day stood like a sentinel over the grim scene of destruction.

In the same issues, the newspapers reported:

The heaviest betting since 1922 was recorded by the two electric totalisators at Addington and Riccarton in Cup Week.

The real meaning of this incongruity is hard to come by. It surely does not mean that New Zealanders are insensible to the wreckage of lives and property that is going on over most of the old world. It certainly does not mean that New Zealand is richer now, spending £458,352 on the results of horse racing, than in 1932, when all we could manage was £196,315. It surely does not mean that all New Zealanders have forgotten their obligation to the future when they spend all this on nothing at all but pleasure while "thousands of weary children trudged from the city . . . laden with their meagre possessions." It surely does not mean that we fail to understand the meaning of war because we have not yet ourselves been bombed. It surely does not mean that New Zealand is still busy getting and spending while the youth of New Zealand marches into the dark years at seven shillings a day.

No patriot would like to think those things of his own people. No one, most definitely, will believe it is the duty of a democratic government to command its people to be serious if they still want to be diverted from unpleasant thoughts.

Perhaps the Cup Week balance-sheet only meant that the world is still going round, bringing the sun with it every twenty-four hours.

But we must remember that we have not yet experienced our own tragedy. It would be a shocking commentary on human nature if it found us on the racecourse.

## 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.

### ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE

Sir,—You are improving very fast. Your articles on the first six or seven pages are really very good. I'm glad to see you got some from John Guthrie. . .

You have had some valuable notes on the pronunciation of Maori by the Rev. R. T. Kohere, valuable because the true pronunciation is almost lost. The young Maoris are hopelessly at sea, just as the young Scots are with their tongue. Probably there were local differences among the Maoris as there were in Scotland where the Forfarshire accent gave *fat* and *far* and *fan*, while Ayrshire said *what* and *whaur* and *whan*, and an Englishman said *w'at* and *w're* and *w'en*. It's impossible by any spelling to express to an English eye the sound of *what* and *whaur* and *whan* for they are sounds unknown to him. He can't say *wh*. He says *w'en* without the slightest touch of an aspirate and doesn't know it. Thackeray, when he wished to represent the Irishman's emphatic grip of the *wh* in *what*, spelt it *phwat*. That's not correct, but it's a good attempt at the impossible task of representing to English eyes a sound unknown to Englishmen. The fact is that the *wh* in Maori was the same sound as the *wh* in an Irishman's *what*, and the Scottish *what* was almost the same. It was neither *f*, nor *fw*, nor *phw*, and no English letters can represent it to English eyes. The English don't know the sound, just as we can't see colours beyond the ultra-violet. The sound of a *wh* in Maori is also a stumbling block to an Englishman, and no trouble to an Irishman or a Scot, because the pronunciation of English has changed since the time of Chaucer, while the Scot, the Irishman, the Yankee, the French, Germans and Maoris have endeavoured to preserve their pronunciation unchanged. English pronunciation is now completely different from that of any other people, while a Scot finds himself at home in French or German or Maori much more than he does with English. The trouble is that young Maoris are learning to speak as their pakeha neighbours do and the true Maori is almost lost.

—THOS. TODD (Gisborne).

### WHEN THE MOVIES WERE YOUNG

Sir,—I have just read the article by Rudall Hayward and it was interesting. I remember "The Bloke from Freeman's Bay." Was not "Darkie Bestic" in it? I also remember "My Lady of the Cave" and my former headmaster (H.T.G.) in the laughable scene where he tripped. Yes, they were good pictures. Honours must go to Mr. Hayward. I would like to hear from "H.T.G." if this should catch his eye.—STANLEY DEVERELL (Kati Kati).

### SPORTSMAN'S LANGUAGE

Sir,—As the words quoted by "Thid" in your issue of November 8, do not form a pentameter, he should "take to bowls."

"In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column. In the pentameter aye falling in melody back."—Coleridge.

I spent some years on Greek and Latin verse and would not have dared to call "Thid's" verse a pentameter!

I hope "Thid" enjoys bowls!—"JOHN DOE" (Auckland).

### THEY'RE NOT FAST, REALLY

Sir,—Your correspondent E. P. Hull grumbles about the speed of London announcers' voices. Perhaps he is not used to English voices. Strange tongues always sound fast until we are familiar with them. I have been carefully listening to the speed of the 6.15 p.m. news, which is the news sent out especially for the Pacific, and can find no 500 miles per hour about it. Because our radio gives us relays of news all day long, it does not mean

that England directs the lot at us. The head-line news has an appearance of speed, but that is directed to America.

However, I recommend E. P. Hull to listen to talks telling us how these same announcers dodge from shelter to shelter on their way to the studio again, home and family will be in the same condition as it was left, and then re-read his little letter in *The Listener* of November 15, and afterwards turn to page 28 and stare hard for a few minutes at the bottom right hand picture, and just think a bit. Then, I am sure, he will admit that all criticism of announcers' voices might be left for less strenuous times.

—D.M.G. (Auckland).

### MODERN MUSIC

Sir,—In your issue of November 1, "F.B." made a desperate attempt to draw me out further upon the subject of Modern Music, concerning which I have already expressed my unaltered views in no uncertain terms. However, to dispel, once and for always, any possible doubt about it, let me tell "F.B." that, in my personal opinion, the greater part of modern musical composition, including all

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jazz, is an unspeakable abomination; and my dearest desire is that I might be dictator of music publishing just long enough to sweep such rubbish out of existence. And that's that.

I should have ignored "F.B.'s" letter, Mr. Editor, but for the fact that most of it consisted of a stupid tirade against "L.D.A." who has no more to do with this controversy than the man in the moon. Can it possibly be that "F.B." imagines "L.D.A." and L. D. Austin are one and the same person? I repudiate such a gratuitous assumption with the strongest prevarication. Where would we all be, Sir, if allegations of synonymous identity were accepted on the flimsiest of evidence?

Let me quote a parallel example. If "F.B." is familiar with Thackeray's works he may recall the following passages in "The Newcombes":

"F.B. was the son of a gentleman of most ancient family and vast landed possessions, which he, F.B., invested in a large amount of wild oats. . . . We are glad to learn that F.B. is a good deal altered and has now mended some of his ways."

On the strength of these quotations, would I be justified, Mr. Editor, in drawing unwarranted inferences regarding "F.B.'s" identity—especially as you have his gracious permission to disclose it?

Of course not, and equally certain is it that the question does not interest me. — L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

### NBS NEWSREEL

Sir,—Your space is valuable and my time is limited, but I would like to place on record my appreciation of the NBS Newsreel. The main point is the announcer. His voice comes through so clear, brisk, correct, and full of meaning. After a long day of toil in a lonely area his voice gives one a mighty lift up, a good night salutation, of very good cheer. People in isolated areas are always eager for news before retiring early. He is the right man in the right place. Carry on, Mr. NBS Newsreel announcer—carry on.—"EDUCATED COUNTRY BUMPKIN" (Lake Wakatipu).

### ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"Oliver" (Te Awamutu): We've got enough fights on our hands at the moment without going out of our way to start one with the Irish. Anyway, generalisations such as yours about any nation are ridiculous. As for your letter on Churchill's ancestors, it is at least something that a radio serial inspired you to read up your history. But we think you have done so with one eye closed.