

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

OCTOBER 3, 1941

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.I.

Post Office Box 1070.

Telephone 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

For Subscription and Advertising Rates see Page 40.

Thinking While We Fight

EVERY day now till the war ends more and more people will be asking how to preserve peace when it comes. All agree about some of the necessities—more justice, better security against sickness and unemployment, healthier and more dignified living conditions, and so on; and because the world will be very tired, very sick, and very sad before the fighting ceases, there is a growing fear that many of the causes of war will remain unless we commit ourselves irrevocably to their removal. So it is both healthy and encouraging that the number of questioners and protesters continues to grow.

It would however be a very disturbing sign if, while the fighting is at its height, we began quarrelling about our plans, or spent too much time formulating them. Plans, as distinct from principles, can be exceedingly dangerous. To begin with, they have a habit of going wrong. However sincere we may be when we draw them up, we may have to modify them, and the longer we have nursed them the more shaken we must be when they miscarry. And in the second place, the more precise a plan is—we are speaking of course of plans for new worlds—the fewer unqualified supporters it will have unless it is so simple that it is not a plan at all. What gives Mr. Churchill his power as a leader is the fact that he stands so firmly for those things on which we all agree, and avoids so shrewdly raising issues that divide us. His principles are clear enough, and his aims, but the only plan he allows himself at present is the destruction of the enemy.

This, of course, does not mean that we should not think while we fight. We should, and even if we should not, we would. It is not possible, and only a slave nation would think it desirable, to go through all the anguish of a long and bitter war without asking why we have come to this, where we are going, what we can do to save our children from the same black misery. But thinking as we fight is one thing, thinking instead of fighting another. The first is health, the second lunacy.

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 in 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.

FIGHTING WITHOUT FAITH.

Sir,—Your leader on "Fighting without Faith" didn't seem to me to have your usual clear-sightedness. You say it is the material struggle itself that counts most at the present moment. Nonsense! Of what use will that victory be if we have not also gained the victory over ourselves? Even to think of anything else is folly (you say) unless we are all the time thinking first of victory and fighting for it. I would rather hear you say that it is folly to think of material victory unless we are all the time striving for that other moral victory. Do you expect us to say, when victory is won, "Well, that bloody job is done. Now let's discipline ourselves and overcome our slackness, selfishness, laziness, etc." But we humans aren't like that. Don't you know that the majority of us have to be booted (or bombed) along the road to progress? If we slacken in the moral struggle then the boot and the bomb overtake us. Do you agree? Then what's the remedy? Moralists, my dear Ed., are never untimely. Think again.

—TIMELY MORALIST (Geraldine).

(If our correspondent is asking which comes first, the hen or the egg, we refuse to answer. If she is suggesting that moralists can win battles without guns, or that morality alone will give us guns, we must ask her if she has read the recent story of Crete.—Ed.)

FILM REVIEWS.

Sir,—Your amusing correspondent L. D. Austin deplored a film review which referred to a racy film as "bright, farcical entertainment." The plot of that film concerned the attempts of a husband to seduce his wife. I asked Mr. Austin if he would include Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* in his censure—an opera which is slightly more vicious than the film he criticised and in which two husbands try to seduce their wives. He replies that if the libretto is improved, as it has been in one or two instances, the opera is cleansed and still remains "bright, farcical entertainment." Is Mr. Austin going to tell me that the work is so well renovated that the two husbands do not try to seduce their wives? If it is, then it is no more *Così Fan Tutte* than the film is. If it isn't, and if the cleansing simply refers to dialogue, then his method of differentiation is not merely humbug, it is hypocrisy. In fact, using the phrase in a different sense, Mr. Austin, too, is —JUST CURIOUS (Auckland).

JOKES IN THE BIBLE.

Sir,—The letter from K.S. about "Jokes in the Bible" reminds me of what was said on the same subject by Dr. John Witherspoon, an 18th century Scottish clergyman who later went to America and was one of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon wrote a very pungent satire upon the dominant party in the Church of Scotland, and when charged before the Synod of Glasgow with having written "ironically" on sacred subjects, part of his defence was that "There are many instances of irony in the sacred writings. In Gen. iii. 22 we have an expression put into the mouth of God himself, which many, perhaps most interpreters, suppose to be an irony . . . 'And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' The conduct of Elijah, and his treatment of the prophets of Baal, I Kings XVIII. 27 is another example of the same kind: 'And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them, and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a

journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked?'" There are a good many instances of it in the prophets, which I omit, as the thing is undeniable, and only further mention an expression of our Saviour Himself, who though a man of sorrows and in a state of humiliation, yet in some places uses a language plainly ironical, as in John X. 31: 'Many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of these works do ye stone me?'" On the general subject of the compatibility of religion with humour, at least with irony, Witherspoon says, "There is, for ordinary, a pride and self-sufficiency in wicked man, which makes them deaf to advice, and impugnable to sober and serious reasoning; nor is there any getting at them, till their pride is levelled a little with this dismaying weapon. Many of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, both used this manner of writing, and asserted its necessity." He goes on to substantiate this statement by quotations from Tertullian and Augustine, and, turning to a period nearer his own, from "Monsieur Pascal, in his Provincial Letters, which are written almost entirely in the way of ridicule," though "all history testifies" that he was "as pious and unbiased to the world as any of his time."

—ARTHUR N. PRIOR (Dunedin).

WHEN LISTENERS LISTEN MOST.

Sir,—Under the above heading, in your issue of August 22 last, there appeared an article beginning as follows: "While there are no statistics to prove it, many broadcasting people believe that people do more concentrated listening on Sunday afternoons than in any other period of the week." And on the strength of this belief, which is a pathetic delusion, much valuable time is consumed in arranging special radio features that are mostly wasted on the desert air.

I have never been able to understand, sir, why, our broadcasting authorities put such blind faith in Sunday afternoon listening. My circle of acquaintance is fairly large and I can honestly affirm that I do not know a single person who makes a practice of listening at that time. Sunday evening, yes, but not afternoon. Most people prefer to go out, if weather conditions permit, otherwise they like to sleep or read, anything, in fact, but listen to radio features. For the past three months there have been crowded audiences at the Sunday afternoon Art Gallery concerts, who evidently prefer listening to good music at first hand rather than the radio variety in their own homes.

I have not the least doubt that if those concerts were established permanently we should find an ever increasing attendance, for their popularity is beyond question.

I feel sure that if a plebiscite were taken the result would confirm my assertion that the number of Sunday afternoon radio listeners is out of all proportion to the praiseworthy efforts made to entertain them. —L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

DOUGLAS SADLER (Turakina), suggests that in "Listeners' Own Sessions" one request only should be granted instead of three or four—partly to avoid delays, and partly to give more listeners a chance.

C. E. FORD (New Brighton) wants to know why Christchurch has no second auxiliary station when Auckland has 12M, Wellington has 2YD, and Dunedin has 4ZD.

"CONSTANT LISTENER" (Edievale) gets so much enjoyment out of Major Lampen's talks that she wants her husband to hear them as well. Could they not, she asks, be dove-tailed occasionally into the dinner music, or be put on during the lunch hour?

"UNPOPULAR HITS" (Napier) would like to know if there is anyone in Hawke's Bay who will say honestly that he likes 2YH's "Popular Hits," which she finds "worse than the railway workshops."

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTOR.

Would Rosemary Rees, winner of a recent literary competition in *The Listener*, please send us her postal address?