

NEW ZEALAND  
**LISTENER**

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## The Law of Nations

IT is comforting to have the assurance of a Cambridge professor of the subject that the law of nations still exists. But it is a little surprising. What most of us expect from international law is international order, in short peace, and when we look about us we see not merely no peace, but no respect for those things on which peace is based—the sanctity of treaties, the customs and conventions of civilisation, the freedom of the human body and of the human mind. We may not have moved so rapidly into anarchy as some of us expected when the war began, but the few rags of decency we still cling to are retained with difficulty, and it was international gangsterism that exploded the powder to begin with.

But in spite of all these signs Professor Winfield insists in *The Foundations and the Future of International Law*, a little book that has just reached us from the Cambridge University Press, that although there is no prompt and certain punishment at present for breaches of international law, the law itself still holds, and is widely observed. He of course points out before he commits himself too far that international law, like the law of individual States, is concerned primarily with peaceful pursuits. Just as life for most of us is not "one long orgy of crime," so the life of nations is not one long story of war. International law prevents the outbreak of war to some extent; it regulates war once it does break out; and even in the present relapse into barbarism it has retained its influence more than most people imagine.

So far as we are concerned in New Zealand international law has been most successful in securing reasonable treatment of prisoners. But Professor Winfield makes it clear that it has also operated with some success in protecting the property both of belligerents and of neutrals, that Prize Courts still decide the fate of merchant vessels captured at sea, that it has so far kept gas out of the war, and given status to home guards and guerillas. His real purpose, however, has been to convince ordinary men and their rulers—but ordinary men first—that international law is so necessary to civilisation that even the brigand states do not dare to flout it altogether, and that it will one day be as effective relatively between nation and nation as internal law normally is between citizen and citizen.

## 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.

### THE CAPTAIN RAMSAY CASE

Sir,—In your admirable leader of October 31, you quote from the astonishingly sound article from *The Economist* the statement that the lamentable Ramsay is a Member of Parliament because "he came of the right sort of family, married a peer's daughter and the widow of a very rich man, went to the right school, and joined the right regiment." You did not add, as the *Economist* article does, that "the selection of trade unionists by seniority also filled the scanty benches opposite with mediocrities." Happily, we do not in New Zealand, to any great extent, select candidates because of their

debates from Parliament without the feeling that there are a good many members on both sides of the House who are very ill-equipped for their immensely serious task. Might not the franchise itself be open only to those who have been certified as attending satisfactorily a course—either at a secondary school or at night classes—in, say, elementary economics and the science of government and democratic principles? And should not a more advanced course on similar lines be a prerequisite for candidature for parliament?

*The Spectator* recently had some correspondence on a proposal of the Master of Rugby that promising boys from the ordinary primary schools should be dumped, at State expense, in the English "old tie" schools, because only so could they be fitted for leadership. You will remember, perhaps, that our men who returned from the last war held a very different view of the leadership of English Public School men? Our blacksmiths, tally clerks, dentists, and sheep-farmers proved at least the equals of the de Veres, the Cholmondeleys, and the Majoribanks.

Happily, English common sense is not likely to allow these poor little devils of no family to be the victims of snobbish snubbing by the scions of our old—and new—rich—aristocracy in their scholastic preserves. But in this country, we ought to see to it that our children have some education for leadership, and our legislators some qualifications for making our laws, other than their personal acceptability to those who run the party machines. F.A.C. (Mapua).

(As *The Economist* article was printed in full on another page of the same issue, we quoted no more than was necessary for our purposes. But it is misleading to put *The Economist* on record as saying that the selection of trade unionists by seniority has filled the Labour benches with mediocrities. What *The Economist* really said was that the mediocrities on the Labour benches did not justify the presence of so many fools facing them.—Ed.).

Sir,—Your correspondents of last week demand proof that Captain Ramsay is, in fact, a fool—I suggest you demand that they produce evidence to show that he is not. If they say that Ramsay is not foolish, they regard as wisdom his association with doubtful characters, and his admiration of Mussolini, Hitler and Franco. If they maintain that it is unfair to doubt his common sense, they doubt the judgment of the court that heard his foolish action for libel against the *New York Times*.

And if they criticise *The Listener* or *The Economist* for hanging on this peg their stories of "the right people," then they forget that a British Air Minister said not long before Dunkirk that we were as strong as Germany in the air; that a British Prime Minister said before Poland was wiped off the map that our strength had become great enough to frighten aggressors; that the Admiralty was so slow and so late with its preparations that the entrance to Scapa Flow was wide enough to let a submarine in to sink the Royal Oak. These and a hundred others, who were all "the right people," though they were not guilty of treason, were certainly guilty of great foolishness, which itself is treasonable in high places, whether they are occupied by the right people or not.

Who but "The Right People" left Gordon at Khartoum, sent the Light Brigade on a stupid charge in the Crimea, supplied our soldiers there with left-foot boots and kept the right-foot boots at home, fought the Boer War by the methods of Agincourt, sent barrack-room troops against the Maoris in the New Zealand bush, and maintained an army of thousands of unemployed for a least a year after Dunkirk?

AORANGI (Wellington).

### "IT IS DARK IN THE BUSH"

#### SERIAL BEGINS NEXT WEEK

WE announced in our last issue that we were about to print a serial. Now we can add that the first instalment will appear next week. Don't be one of those foolish people who intend to be there when the hunt begins but have to strike across country to join in. Give yourself the pleasure of the whole run.

The number of good serials available to New Zealand readers is at all times very small. The number of good New Zealand serials—stories written in New Zealand about New Zealand—is so very small that we have had to wait two years for something that we could confidently recommend. But we have it at last.

Listen to the title: *It Is Dark in the Bush*. It almost makes you nervous in advance. For bush still covers twenty per cent of the land surface of the Dominion—one acre in five. It still provides cover for real crimes and the setting for crimes of the imagination. You will find both in this book.

But you will find more than mystery, and far more than crime. You will find the normal, as well as the abnormal, New Zealand—hiking students and working farmers, lawyers, doctors, and the policemen you see every day if you live in town, every sale-day and race-meeting if you live in the country.

So once more. Make sure of our next issue. Tell your bookseller that you want to be sure if there is a risk that he may be in short supply.

families or their schools, nor, probably, does our Labour Party select candidates by seniority. But always some one or two officials from the Whips' office will, in effect, make the selections, and personal considerations may weigh more or less strongly according to the strength of character of these officials. Is it too much to hope that in the democratic millennium to which we are looking forward, when the Hitlers cease from troubling and the Ramsays are, we hope, at rest (permanently, if possible), some definite qualifications will be expected of candidates for Parliament?

The State insists on qualifications for doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, and even for some very humble civil servants, but we are content to place the health, wealth, and happiness of our whole population, and the educational and political future of our country, in the hands of men and women of whom no educational qualification whatever is demanded. No one can listen to the broadcast