

JULY 17, 1942.

Conscientious Objectors

TO discuss the case of conscientious objectors is about as profitable in general as to argue with them. Among a hundred people there are usually a hundred different opinions about the function of conscience, the source of it, and its moral and mental content; and if we can't agree about the thing itself we are not likely to agree about its control. Until last week a prize offered for a really fresh note about conscience would have brought no competitors. Then the Mayor of Wellington made us all see suddenly that we never know how clever we can be till we try. He abolished conscience and its exponents in one simple sentence. It exists, its possessors exist, only when "appropriate tribunals" say so. Your mother bids you brush your hair. You ask why, and get a cuff on the ear. You are young and do not know about tribunals. Ten years later your country bids you bind on your sword. You are bold and do not ask why. You bind it on and rush into battle. But once in a thousand times you are a literal Christian or a Quaker or a Swed-enborgian or a Christadelphian and something inside you slows you up. It seems horrible to you to kill or it seems futile or it seems wrong. But you no longer take it to the Lord in prayer. You take it to the appropriate tribunal and are told whether what you feel inside is a prick of conscience or the jagged edge of default. We mean of course if you accept the Mayor of Wellington as an authority. If you cannot accept him—well, your only defence now is to remember that the Government does not accept him either, or it would not maintain a camp for your occupation; that Parliament does not accept him, or would not have made laws to cover your case; that neither the newspapers nor the public accept him, or you would get in New Zealand what you perhaps deserve, since you refuse to resist those who are trying to kill you as well as your neighbours, but what public opinion will not permit you to get anywhere under the Union Jack.

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 Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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

BACH AND AN "EXPLANATION"

Sir,—In your issue of this week your contributor "Marsyas," in referring to my recent performance of Bach's Organ Prelude in E Flat includes the following comment:

The prelude was preceded by an explanation which many listeners must have found distasteful; it was explained in the text-book terms of "A, B, A." If "A, B, A" is all there is in a piece, then it's not worth playing. If there is something more in it, then it should be possible to grasp it or else have it explained to you without this "A, B, A" stuff.

I do not intend to waste either my time or your space in argument with "Marsyas," but as some of your readers would not hear the "explanation" which I wrote for the recital I should be obliged if you will allow me to reproduce it here and leave others to judge whether the comment was in any way justified.

Programme note: Although originally included by the composer in a book of Chorale Preludes this work has no connection with any Chorale. It is a notable example of the Concerto type of composition of the early-eighteenth century and was probably intended for concert performance rather than for Church use. The work is based on two principal subjects; the first, with which it opens, majestic in character, and the second, with its rushing scale passage and fugal treatment, distinguished by fire and brilliancy. These two themes are announced and developed in the order A, B, A, B, A. In addition to being a masterpiece of musical construction the Prelude possesses the valuable quality of attractiveness.

JOHN C. BRADSHAW (Christchurch)

THE UNION JACK

Sir,—The following question prompted by a letter in *The Listener* of June 5 was shot at me by a student to-day: "Was not the Union Jack old enough to have been flown at Quebec after its capture in 1759?" My answer was "Yes, with 156 years to spare." Other students may be interested in "a few dry dates" of our Flag's history.

In 1603 King James VI. of Scotland became King James I. of England also. He combined the crosses of St. Andrew and St. George in a special union flag. This was flown by the King's ships as a "Jack." Some authorities suggest it was called "Jack's Flag" after Jacobus the King's name. In 1707 the Parliaments of England and Scotland were united under the name of the "British Parliament." The above flag was now called the "British Flag" but in the Navy it remained the Union Jack. The Imperial Parliament was so named in 1801 when Ireland was joined with Great Britain. The British Flag now had the cross of St. Patrick added to it and became the "Grand Union Flag." In the Navy it remained the Union Jack

and as such it has flown for 338 years. The Union Jack is 172 years older than the "Stars and Stripes," 244 years older than the (Napoleon) Tricolour of France, 257 years older than the (Garibaldi) National Flag of Italy, and 329 years older than the (Hitler) Nazi Flag of Germany.

ROB (Ahipara).

DEUS EX PIANO.

Sir,—In your issue of June 26, L. D. Austin surrenders his claim to be a competent newspaper correspondent (far less a musical critic) by the ridiculous attack he makes on "Marsyas" for the latter's statement that he was not fond of Chopin. "Marsyas," setting aside his personal feelings in a way which your correspondent seems temperamentally incapable of doing, was making a plea for more Chopin on the air. If Mr. Austin were as concerned with the welfare of his particular personal deity as he is to attack and discredit *The Listener's* critic he would have seconded "Marsyas's" appeal while regretting his personal taste. "Marsyas's" personal dislike—and that may be too strong a word—of Chopin in no way invalidates his worth as a critic. The Pole wrote little outside the range of the piano and the piano is by no means the alpha and omega of music. And as for "Marsyas's" choice of a pen-name, it suggests a humility of spirit which your correspondent might profitably imitate.

CHIASMUS (Auckland).

NBS ORCHESTRA.

Sir,—I should like to express my appreciation through your columns of the Sunday and Tuesday evening concerts broadcast by the NBS Orchestra under the conductorship of Andersen Tyrer. In New Zealand we do not often get the opportunity to hear the works of the great masters played by a New Zealand orchestra. Since these concerts began nearly all the greatest composers have been represented—Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, and the rest of them. But it would be interesting to hear them play some of Bach's longer works, such as the Brandenburg Concertos, and the Suites. The NBS orchestra has shown itself worthy of undertaking the world's great musical masterpieces, and the thanks of all music-loving New Zealanders are due to Andersen Tyrer, Vincent Aspey, and the orchestra. Might I express the hope that these concerts will continue while Mr. Tyrer is resident in New Zealand. Finally might I join with those others who recently expressed in your columns their wish that Beethoven's great masterpiece, the "Choral" Symphony, might be played at night from one of the main stations and not divided into two portions. I suggest Sunday evening after the commentary as a suitable time.

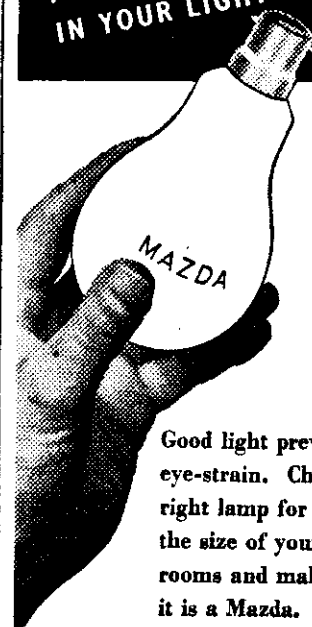
MUSIC-LOVER (Wanganui).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

SERIAL (Christchurch) suggests (1) that ZB serials should be "staggered" again in the programmes as they used to be, and (2) that YA serials should begin at least "thirty minutes apart". He also deploras the increasing use of smaller type in *The Listener*. (So do we—Ed.).

RUG-CUTTER (Ashburton) agrees that "awing, being a comparative new-comer in the field, has still a great deal of prejudice to overcome," but argues that "as the motor-car superseded the buggy, so the classics one day must awaken to the fact that swing as an art in itself is a much more vital, dynamic force, which pulses closer to the heart of modern progressive life than the classics will ever be."

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