

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday

Price Threepence

JANUARY 22, 1943

When Soldiers Ask Why

ARMY Education is starting so quietly that few realise what it involves. It could achieve a revolution — so complete a change in the average soldier's mind and outlook that he would never again be the same man; it may fade out when the war ends and leave hardly a memory behind. It is of course unlikely to do either of these things, but the second is a bigger risk than the first. Army education can succeed only if the soldiers want it and the army really gives it. Or to put the case another way, it will be education if it answers the questions the men in the army are now asking themselves and one another. To some of their questions no one knows the answer, and no one therefore should pretend to know it; but it is not always the case that the blind lead the blind into a ditch. The blind who know that they are blind walk warily; feel their way; ask questions; sometimes indeed discover and keep to the path. It is in fact the chief hope of army education—in those fields in which it is not mere instruction—that it will be education on both sides. The teachers will learn as much as the taught; as of course good teachers always do. We must also believe that New Zealand soldiers are not less reasonable than the soldiers of the United Kingdom, who have now had a considerable experience of the question and answer method, with great advantage to all ranks. Discipline has not been weakened in the British army by discussion of current affairs, but strengthened. Officers and men have gained a clearer understanding of the issues of the war, the mistakes that preceded it and the risks that lie ahead, and having gained this in a common school they have been drawn closer together in a common danger. We must of course not be sentimental and expect changes of heart, sudden surges of brotherhood, a great new light in which they will all see the way to the promised land. It will be sufficient if every soldier sees more clearly where he is now, why he is a soldier, what he is fighting, and especially what he is fighting for.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

OUR FILM REVIEWS.

Sir,—What really matters in the film criticism controversy is not whether Tom, Dick or Harry may agree with G.M.'s opinion on this picture or that, but the fact that in 1942 for the first time a single New Zealand paper has shown enough enterprise and independence to criticise the films. When the research sociologist of 1990 has completed his study of the great social movements that swept New Zealand in the 80's and 90's he will be puzzled to explain the complete abdication of the national conscience in face of the sinister invasion of the film and the talkie. How will he explain the action of the press, which never uttered either opinion or criticism of the character of this new weapon of domination? Even the news columns have been surrendered to fulsome praise of the films, written by the people who were selling them. Any thoughtful person must welcome *The Listener's* courage and independence.

A.B.C. (Wellington).

BEST WISHES.

Sir,—Let me wish you and your staff a bright and prosperous New Year, and thank you for all you have done individually and collectively to brighten and cheer the daily round of your listeners. In the country we get very little save work now-a-days, and I find much both entertaining and instructive in the pages of *The Listener*. All those who assist in the presentation of programmes of music deserve a special "thank you," for it is a never-ending joy to be able to hear music whenever one so desires. I really can't understand the grumblers. After all there's always "the other fellow" to consider, and his tastes differ from ours. Tolerance is the keynote of happiness—so let's be tolerant! But meanwhile my best wishes for the New Year. —D.G. (Miko, West Coast).

(We thank our correspondent very warmly.—Ed.)

"HIGHER PURCHASE."

Sir,—I wouldn't know if the woman who cradled her child in a manger had taps, tubs, benches and other non-elaborate amenities in her stable, but I do know that in their absence a washing machine could be a useful substitute. "J.E.S." may think Hire-Purchase evil, but many a poor woman does afford a weekly deposit when she could not afford the cash price, and even those clothes that she has would be all the better for having seen the inside of a washing machine.

A.M.H. (Hastings).

AN EXAMINATION PAPER.

Sir,—I was pleased to read your spirited defence (in this week's *Listener*) of the progressive examiner who set the Matriculation history paper. This much maligned gentleman apparently has the misfortune to be more modern than his critics—and, I am afraid, some of his colleagues—and must therefore submit to a flood of adverse criticism both from those who have for many years been teaching history as it should not be taught and from those who are opposed to any change or de-

parture from tradition. To the latter class we need not reply, since reason will not convince them; to the former class I should like to point out that even the poor wretches whose heads they have filled with dry-as-dust, "orthodox" 19th century history had a very fair chance of passing: questions 2(b), 3 or 4, 5, 10, and more than half of question 1 can be answered without any knowledge of present-day or Pacific history (other than our own).

But the main point is: why should an examiner who enjoys the confidence of the University Senate be forced to interpret a syllabus in the "orthodox" way? Why should he be attacked for not setting the questions that generations of schoolboys and schoolgirls have answered by quoting other people's views? I was educated at the Christchurch Boys' High School, where the history teaching includes "Current Events" and where social problems are not taboo. This modern and sensible attitude is, I am sure, adopted by most schools in the Dominion. The examiner should therefore be thanked for rousing those "superior" schools, which, in defiance of the syllabus, have so far deemed present-day problems beneath their notice. —E.B. (Christchurch).

Sir,—Damme, sir, emphatically I must protest. What's the BBC coming to—doing a programme commemorating that dreadful Socialist, Keir Hardie? And what's *The Listener* coming to, drawing attention to the New Zealand broadcast? It was bad enough polluting the minds of the young by asking a question about the fellow in that confounded Matriculation history examination. I hope that those who protested about those history questions will join me now in protesting about this broadcast. We heresy-hunters must pull together. —BLIMP (Wellington).

Sir,—The history paper for the 1942 Entrance Examination was certainly informative. It reveals unhappily, that our universities are still bent on teaching history along narrow nationalistic lines. There is a pressing need to-day for the development of a world outlook in the ordinary citizen, and the first and essential step towards this aim is to teach world history in our schools and universities. —D.H.H. (Invercargill).

HITLERISM AND THE GERMAN PEOPLE.

Sir,—One of your correspondents on this topic, after saying that the legacy of hate this war is going to leave, particularly among the Russians, will last for centuries, signs himself "Never Again." Never again what? Never again any peace with Germany? Never again any end to reciprocal hatred and reprisals? Or never again any war? I can't work it out.

CLEMENCY (Wellington).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"Tread Gently" (Riccarton).—No name or address.