

## Words and War

THERE was a half pathetic, half humorous incident in Christchurch last week when a member of the Canterbury Education Board declared that "language is the cause of war" and asked the Board to resolve "that a universal language be taught in schools all over the world." It is difficult not to laugh when so noble an ambition is expressed in such ingenuous words; and the Board did laugh. But it allowed the resolution to go before a special committee, and we shall perhaps encounter it again. In the meantime it is interesting to have it suggested that it is not exactly what they say that makes men fight but the nasty way they say it. We should have put the emphasis the other way round if that motion had not made us cautious; and it is certainly the case that the same words spoken in different ways can produce different results. It is not offensive in science to say that Mongolians have yellow skins; but it would almost have justified Pearl Harbour if Mr. Cordell Hull had said to the Japanese plenipotentiaries when they arrived in Washington, "Hallo, you two yellowbellies, what can we do for you now?" It may even be true that the Normans conquered England because Harold or one of his knights made a joke about William's waistband; and we can't doubt that it is true that forty and two children perished miserably on the road to Bethel for a less than respectful reference to the bald head of Elisha. The Board member may be right: not only bad language may precipitate strife, as the Chairman suggested, but any language at all if it is used offensively; and the trouble is that radio has brought the whole world's ear within reach of the whole world's tongue. Not so many weeks ago, for example, arrangements were made by which questions asked in New York were answered by a BBC brains trust in London, and the answers given were heard all over the United States. In short New York, and not only New York but Chicago and Kansas City and Los Angeles, could now argue with London and Birmingham and Glasgow, and the points made and the back-chat could be heard from the Pacific to the North Sea. Although a universal language would increase rather than decrease such possibilities of strife, the fact that such possibilities exist will perhaps restrain the world from rudeness some day, and justify the Canterbury resolution.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### GOOD CLEAN FUN

Sir,—A remark in *The Listener* about the radio programme "Home Town Variety" prompts me to add a word or two of my own. Every Thursday evening Fred and Laurie provide us with enough laughs to make us forget the daily grind and end the day with a smile. None of the jokes need dry cleaning. Never have we heard anything offensive, or suggestive, on this programme. "Laurie" is clever, and her cracks at "Fred" are so natural and spontaneous that we all enjoy them. His comebacks also show he is not resentful, but has learned one of life's most valuable lessons—to be able to smile when the joke is on YOU. Such programmes as this, not only afford pleasant entertainment, but they help make evenings in Radioland profitable to our family who, without good, clean fun in our home, would probably seek diversion elsewhere.

One small criticism in connection with "Home Town Variety" is this: that we think that three items by any one artist on the show is over-doing it a little. The local artists are, in the main, good, but not so acceptable when heard too many times in the one programme, especially if the items are inclined to be slow ones.

C.B. (Wellington).

### WHEN WOMEN SPEAK

Sir,—What do the opinions of Hindus, Moroccans, Church leaders and Commercial Service executives—all of whom have much in common—what do these opinions tell us about the listening taste of New Zealand listeners? Your feature should have been headed: "When ANY ONE Speaks—Do Listeners Reach for the Switch?" And then you could have obtained the answer to this by having your representative move among some of the listeners—the ordinary honest-to-God listeners—not the "intellectuals" who hover around the Capital. You would find that the bulk of all listeners do reach for the switch when anyone begins to speak, probably to switch desperately from station to station, hounded and pursued by endless "talks," "features," or "hours," and finally to get off the air as the only escape. Admittedly, it is still possible to find people who listen to the News Broadcasts, even to the end. Probably there are people who listen to the commentaries, but by doing so, they prove that they place no value on their own time, and they are not many in number.

The real truth is that people are becoming nauseated with talk. The day when a radio was a magic means of bringing a free and unobstructed stream of music into the home has gone. In its place has arrived an awful era in which we are given a little entertainment simply to encourage us to listen to the news, the propaganda, the chat, the feature, the sales talk, the appeal, and the political "explanation." Those who are responsible for the direction of our radio programmes must surely realise—must be blind not to realise—that the average listener, during his working day, hears quite enough of the human voice in discussion, rumour, and argument, more

than enough of it in the telling of untruths, to wish to hear it at night time as a form of relaxation.

So why could not the news session, commentaries, talks and some of the features be confined to one set of stations, leaving the remainder free to perform their proper function? If this were done, the authorities could rest assured that these "Talk" stations would be supported throughout New Zealand by literally dozens—perhaps hundreds—of listeners. Almost everyone would tune in occasionally. As it is, the Broadcasting Services should be thankful for the fact that most gramophones need winding, and that we are lazy when at rest.—EPIGNY (Auckland).

### "MUSIC-LOVERS"

Sir,—I should be glad to have from someone in authority a definition of the term "music-lover." On a recent Sunday afternoon there was broadcast from 2YA a recording of a Bach two-piano concerto. It was over all too soon (for some of us). "We will now," said the announcer, "commence our programme for the music-lover."

Bach can take these knocks and come up smiling, but it is time, perhaps, that his friends protested against his frequent use as a kind of musical purge—the little dose of liver salts that is taken with a wry but resolute face before a good meal. Let those who love Bach (and they are quite a multitude nowadays), play him, listen to him, and enjoy him for his own sake. And let those who don't, be absolved from any feeling of duty in the matter.—LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT (Epsom).

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

"BAND LOVER" (Christchurch), with (he feels sure) "thousands of band-lovers in New Zealand," would like to hear a "complete programme" by the band that broadcast recently from a military camp.

"DA CAPO" (Queenstown) expresses appreciation of a programme given recently by the Dunedin Music Teachers' Association in which "every composition was the work of a local artist and every rendering was given by a member of the Association." All these items she found "superior to the tons of recorded muck that come over the air."

"A LISTENER" (Ashburton) wants to know why the Commercial stations broadcast news at the same time as the National stations. Why, he asks, could the CBS not "broadcast the news at, say, 7.15 a.m., 8 a.m., 12 noon and 1 p.m. direct from the BBC and the NBS stations stay at their present news times?"

DISNEY FAN (Wellington), writes to correct a statement that *Fantasia* ran for three weeks in Christchurch. It ran for four.

"HAPPY FAMILY" (Waikato), asks for "a little space to praise 'Cinderella' of 1YA," whose sessions, she says, are followed not only by the children in her household but by the grown-ups as well.

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J.M.L. (Palmerston North).—No photograph available.

W.E.K. (Auckland). Has appeared twice already. Regret we cannot reproduce it again.

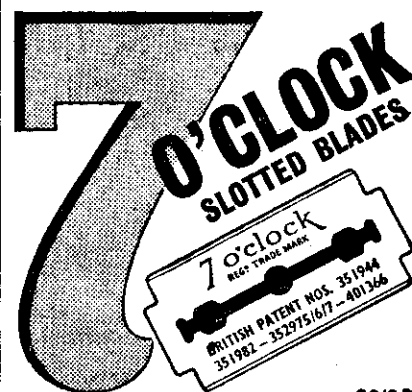
### CORRECTION

A mis-reading of a "k" for a "t" in the manuscript of "Vitamins Forty Years Ago" made us include the berries of *tutu* among the fruits eaten by children of that day. The word should have been *Tuku-tuku* (the fruit of the fuschia or konini).

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