

THE DESCRIPTIVE ATLAS

Sir,—I find your article on the New Zealand Atlas, as published on March 19, seriously disquieting, although I have never had any personal association with the project.

1. It is clear beneath your courteous phrases, that the major enterprise launched by Sir Joseph Heenan has been abandoned in favour of a minor project which can only take slight cognisance of the vast amount of research already carried out, and carries no suggestion of completing the fundamental research still required.

2. This revolution has been carried out under the auspices of a committee containing no single representative of the University (whose status in historical and geographical studies stands high) or of the devoted band who worked intensively on the original project.

3. There is no suggestion that any of those previously engaged on the work has been consulted about the new plans, or that their skill and knowledge will be called upon. None of them has been appointed to the new committee, and according to your report those commissioned to do the new work do not appear to have had any special training or achievement in this particular field.

One is driven to the conclusion that a fine and well-conceived enterprise, which would have produced a work ranking high among the world's scholarly productions has been destroyed without any step having been taken to consult New Zealand's own experts in this particular field. The result is a waste of knowledge and of skilled manpower which I cannot believe is in the public interest.

F. L. W. WOOD, Professor of History,
Victoria University College.

WOMEN'S SESSIONS

Sir,—This year I had hoped the Women's Session would return to the excellently controversial discussions which prevailed on Wednesday mornings before 1953. Surely the present documentary programmes could be broadcast on some other day—replacing some of the uninspiring travel talks, indifferent personal reminiscences, and tit-bits from North America, which are used as fill-ups (from 2YA, anyway).

Wednesday morning was once the week's highlight for many of us housewives. However, last year, controversy crept out as self-complacency slipped in. Where, oh where, are Mrs. Garland, Miss Campion, Mrs. Sutherland, Mrs. Lilly and the rest?

J. M. ROWBERRY (Pohangina).

DIVIDED HOMES

Sir,—I have just heard a 1YA panel discussing the all-too-recurring problem of the child of separated parents. They agreed that there was no general solution to such tragedies, so liable to repeat themselves in future generations. Certainly no one mentioned the only possible solution, i.e., reduction of the number of separations. I have yet to hear of any organisation officially adopting any positive measures to do this. They can't get beyond the negative "make divorce more difficult." The churches, which should be taking a lead in such a serious problem, seem resigned to the present state of affairs, in spite of the excellent work of individual clergymen.

Is it more noble to make frantic efforts to bolster up an already tottering marriage, or to take some measures beforehand to see that it's less likely to totter? Inspiring exhortations, or threats, or even prayers for happier family life,

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

are just empty words. Prayers aren't answered by miraculous divine intervention, but by the agency of human effort. Surely there are people with sufficient experience and knowledge to formulate a positive policy which could be agreed to by a united body, and acted on, as an example to the rest of the community. What a wonderful change it would be to hear of a church conference discussing, not divorce (abolish the word completely!), but happy marriages, and how to build them, from advice on early childhood training likely to produce more emotionally stable adults, to a sound course of preparation for marriage. The press recently reported the case of a clergyman who "guarantees" marriages at which he officiates. We'd have many less cases of broken homes if many more did so. J.B. (Opotiki).

"ADVENTURES OF CLARA CHUFF"

Sir,—I was surprised to read "Forty-Fifty's" criticism of *The Adventures of Clara Chuff*. The programme is surely intended for children. My three children, whose ages range from ten to four, listen spellbound to each episode, and await with interest each new adventure. Is this not the true test of a children's programme — that it should interest children?

J. E. PLUCK (Shannon).

"THE SEEKERS"

Sir,—I wonder if Helen Taylor and Margaret Ward, when in England, protested against the many absurdities in films made in the U.S.A. about England. Or did they wait until arrival here to express their parochialism? After all, this film is not a documentary and is made for more important markets than here.

L. D. Austin's ideas of absurdity and discourtesy seem peculiar to me. He also seems to display a very parochial outlook. Why on earth should a New Zealander write the score? There is no moral or any other obligation involved to make it desirable to employ a New Zealander.

S. BURBRIDGE (Auckland).

Sir,—Typical of New Zealand insularity are the letters in *The Listener* criticising the producers of the film *The Seekers* for (1) not having a real-life Maori in the role of the Maori girl and (2) not having a New Zealand composer for the background music. Great heavens, what would film producers all over the world do if they had to follow the wishes of everyone in whose country a film was made? Personally, I didn't like Laya Raki's glamour leg pose on the cover of *The Listener*, but millions of people in other parts of the world who see the same "still" will be attracted by it. After all, the picture is to cater for film fans and not students of anthropology. New Zealanders should be pleased that a British film producer has come here to shoot scenes for world release. It will be wonderful publicity for this country.

NEWERA (Wanganui).

PRONUNCIATION OF FOREIGN NAMES

Sir,—I hope P. S. Ardern will not mind if I criticise some points in his letter in *The Listener* of March 12. First, the Maori "t" is not "tay;" the vowel is the indefinite one that phoneticists sometimes represent by an inverted 'e'. It is like the first 'a' in "carouse."

Secondly, his phonetic spelling suggests that 'a' and 'u' are sounded separately in "au." Thirdly, he gives 'f' as the sound represented by 'wh'. This is contradicted by his own words, "Maori spelling . . . is completely straightforward." It was so when the language was reduced to writing. At the time, one of the learned gentlemen concerned mentions the 'f' sound as "an affectation springing up amongst the younger Maoris." This affectation has been spread by pakehas who, knowing little of the language, seized on it as a means of impressing others with their own superior knowledge. It may be permissible in ordinary speech (Maori usage will settle that point) but in place-names, given long before pakeha times, it is definitely out of place.

I can add a few to his list of atrocities. Ripapa Island is "Ripper;" Kohurau has been fixed as "Kuraw;" Paraparaumu is always Parra-parram, with the 'a' as in "eat," a sound unknown to the Maori but much favoured by the pakeha; Petane is locally Pateney.

I agree that our announcers should give us correct pronunciations; but it would be good, too, if people who take an intelligent interest in the Maori language would keep to what they know to be right; they would be understood, and though they might sometimes be laughed at, there is the consolation that the laughers are only exposing their own ignorance.

If I may be permitted to change to the allied subject of place-names; I was told in seriousness that Paihia was given that name because when the first Maoris arrived there and found it a good place, lacking a word in their own language for "here," they said "It is pai here."

KOTUKU (Christchurch).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—I hope it is not too late—for Auckland at least—to inaugurate a Society of Friends of the National Orchestra for the 1954 season. It is an idea which has long been in my own mind, and which was mentioned by our visiting music-critic, Mr. Arthur Jacobs, towards the end of last year.

I am not sure whether such a society should concern itself with providing or offering accommodation for visiting orchestral players, as Mr. Jacobs suggested; but I am confident that it could be the means whereby the orchestra would play to more enlightened and informed audiences. Meetings to discuss and learn something about the programmes to be played could accomplish a great deal to this end. I trust our local radio authorities will consider the question and give us a lead.

A. C. KEYS (Auckland).

(This object has been considered for some time and a plan of action in the four main centres will be completed later this year. It will be discussed, before it is finally shaped, with Professor Keys and others interested.—Ed.)

KITCHENER IN INDIA

Sir,—The talk on Kitchener from 2YC on March 9 recalls an incident which occurred some years ago when I was engaged on a survey in India. In company with a little jungle man I had climbed a high grassy peak at sunset in the hopes of getting a shot at a sambhur stag, and as we sat in amongst some rocks, he commenced speaking in the quiet manner of these folk. "Does the sahib see that tree down at the head

of that small jungle? That was where a big bison bull came out, and the sahib I was with, fired and knocked it over. Then I, being then young and foolish, ran down to it, but the bull chased and tossed me, and then fell dead. The master came down, and seeing me wounded and covered in blood, took me on his back, and carried me all the way back to his camp, and looked after me until I was well."

"And who was this sahib?" I said.

"How can I say? His name was Kitchen sahib. But what a fine man!"

That night I related the story to my planter host.

"Oh, you had that little fellow, did you? Yes, his story is quite true."

"But who was the sahib?"

"Why, Kitchener of Khartoum. When he was in India he was very keen to get a bison, so they built him a camp and your little man accompanied him as shikari up on these hills. Kitchener carried him two miles, and all the jungle people round here still have a wonderful opinion of Kitchener of Khartoum."

PHILIP FOWKE (Plimmerton).

FRONTIER TO METROPOLIS

Sir,—Congratulations on publication of the note on the development of New Zealand literature by Professor Joseph Jones. It was like a breath of fresh air to have our progress marked by a critic so modest yet penetrating, urbane and yet exact.

F. J. FOOT (Eastbourne).

TRAGIC DESTINY

Sir,—Mr. C. L. Saunders claims to know that the God of the Bible is "working out a plan of salvation." The first God in the Bible is that invented by Abraham when he discarded the pantheon of Sumerian gods that was his youthful heritage some four thousand years before Christ. Abraham's God was a friendly human sort of being with whom one could walk, talk, make bargains; one who did not lay obligations on one. He was a Family God specially favouring Abraham and his seed. But this relatively kindly and human being became later transformed into the distant and terrible Jehovah, laying down commandments, demanding implicit obedience, threatening dire punishments, jealous of other gods and demanding the "sacrifices" common in all primitive religions. No man might see Him and live. But by the time we get to Isaiah, this same God has become the One God and source of all good. The New Testament presents the evolution of the Family God into the Father God, and the plan of salvation involves the sacrifice of the first-born (a Canaanitish abomination)—God sacrificing His first-born to appease Himself.

The Bible enshrines Babylonian and Sumerian religious myths and traditions adopted and adapted by the Hebrews. It has no more validity than the Veda, the Koran or even the Book of Mormon. Abraham's deity was a mental conception, as all deities are. These conceptions lead to action, and judging from the behaviour of mankind — more especially the Christian section of it — and the state of the world today, one sees no evidence of any plan of salvation. On the contrary, whether a mythical deity is racked with "inner tragedy" or not, mankind seems to be approaching nearer and nearer to the climax of its tragic destiny—if destiny it be.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).