

## OVERFLOW OF INFORMATION

Sir,—If I may be permitted to say so, what an exceedingly narrow viewpoint is expressed in your editorial entitled "The Overflow of Information." By means of selected samples you give the impression that most, if not all, of the collections of data that are made "by private or semi-public bodies, State departments all over the world, and every agency of the United Nations," are so much wasted time and effort. Has it never occurred to you, sir, that just because your editorial staff sees little value in many of these surveys from a newspaper point of view, that is no justification for condemning them out of hand, labelling them as "cemeteries of facts . . . facts that nobody wants to know." You admit that there are, presumably, good reasons for these investigations, but imply that because the reasons are not easy (for the staff of the *New Zealand Listener*) to discover, therefore there can be little justification for their existence.

Too often, in a democracy, do we pay homage to the belief that one man's opinion is as good as another's. Unfortunately, the man who shouts the loudest and most often will be listened to; other voices are lost or silenced. A survey designed to discover the views of an accurate cross-section of the community should enable those who have the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the citizens in general to know what the average man feels about any particular issue. In this way the insidious influence of pressure-groups can be counteracted—but only if we are able to ignore the loud protestations of small groups and listen to the voice of the average man-in-the-street. You speak of wasted effort, but you give no space to the waste of time spent in arguments based on generalised interpretations of public opinion, expressions of personal opinion with no factual basis. If a State department spends several thousands of pounds annually on, say, accident prevention advertisements, is it not highly desirable that the department concerned *knows* whether the advertisements are being read, and if they are, by whom?

Perhaps my examples are also selective. The answer may lie somewhere between the two extremes. But your editorial as it stands gives the erroneous impression that the collection of facts is little more than a magpie habit, and therefore to be condemned. "It is depressing to think of the work that goes vainly into the preparation of so many documents" when they meet with such misunderstanding as to purpose and intention.

A. A. CONGALTON  
(Wellington).

(Our quarrel was not with fact-finding as such, but with fact-finding gone to seed.—Ed.)

## THE DESCRIPTIVE ATLAS

Sir,—As Mr. Nestor now writes, he telephoned to me following the publication of my previous letter to you to express his opinions on the problem of the atlas. Among other things he told me that the estimated cost of completion of the originally planned atlas was £65,000 spread over ten years. I fear that I remained at the end of our conversation in considerable doubt as to the basis of this estimate, and the authority on which it rests. Mr. Nestor would, I think, be performing a public service if he explained these things to us.

Mr. Nestor also expresses his enthusiasm for the proper preservation of our National Archives. The neglect of these archives and the perils to which they are still exposed are indeed deplorable. Any Government could at small

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cost win the gratitude of scholars here and abroad by remedying its predecessors' negligence in the matter. I cannot see, however, why the completion of a worthy atlas and the provision of an adequate archives organisation should be regarded as alternatives. It would appear to me that New Zealand could afford both of these civilised activities.

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

## BREAKFAST SESSIONS

Sir,—The Whangarei Turntable Club would like to express through your columns appreciation of 1YZ's Classical Interlude broadcast during the Breakfast Sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Before the National Breakfast Session was instituted at the YA stations, music-lovers in the North greatly appreciated 1YA's Breakfast Symphony, which brought them classical music at a specified time each morning. This service has, unfortunately, disappeared from 1YA's programme, but it is pleasing to hear 1YZ now providing, to a degree, the type of programme which was thought to have been lost so far as early morning listening was concerned. While commending 1YZ for providing Classical Interlude, my club feels that such a programme should be broadcast frequently, preferably every morning during the week.

R. INSKIP,  
Hon. Sec., Whangarei Turntable Club.

## BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY

Sir,—May I, in the interests of historical accuracy, be permitted to correct some minor details in the appreciative letter of "M.L." (Auckland) that appeared in your issue of April 9?

The first complete performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Christchurch was in King Edward Barracks on Tuesday, March 13, 1951, when the Royal Christchurch Musical Society (144 members) and the Temuka Choral Society (25 members), with the NZBS National Orchestra presented the work during the Centennial Celebrations of the Province of Canterbury. The Choral movement had been prepared by E. R. Field-Dodgson (conductor of the Royal Christchurch Musical Society) and A. L. Thomas, conductor of the Temuka Society. Michael Bowles conducted the whole work. The soloists were Phyllis Mander, Mary Pratt, J. S. D. Tizard and Stewart Harvey.

The second presentation was in St. James' Theatre, Christchurch, on Saturday, February 7, 1953, when the work was played and sung by the National Orchestra and the Royal Christchurch Musical Society. Michael Bowles again conducted, making his last public appearance in Christchurch before going overseas. The chorus had been trained by the conductor of the R.C.M.S., E. R. Field-Dodgson. The soloists were Linda Parker, Mary Pratt, Ronald Dowd and Stewart Harvey.

L. F. DE BERRY (Christchurch).

## A GREEK WORD FOR IT

Sir,—I wish to support P. Wiltshire in your April 15 issue, regarding the misinterpretation of words used by the ancient Greeks. It is nothing short of idiotic to take words straight from an ancient language and attribute to them meanings they have acquired only after centuries of development and specialisation. As Eric Partridge says in his *World of Words*, " . . . degeneration of meaning is a conspicuous phenomenon in semantics." What did the two Greek

words in question mean originally? Politics are the affairs of the "polis" or city. To understand it involves the whole question of what democracy was to the Greeks, of how the city was also their State which was actually governed by the people, for every citizen in it was a member of its Assembly. This literal form of democracy was possible only because their States were the size of what to us would be no more than fairly small towns. Under these circumstances it was natural and easy for every citizen to take an interest in the affairs of the State.

Now for "idiotes" (hence idiot). Liddell and Scott's lexicon says of this word "a private person, one in private station—an individual—one who has no professional knowledge—(also) an ill-informed, commonplace person." It comes from "idios," "one's own—personal, private—peculiar, separate, distinct, hence strange." The Greek idiot then was merely a private person who might be ill-informed but not necessarily so. It may be that the word was used by the Greeks to denote one who took no interest in the affairs of the State, but I have not been able to confirm this. If they did it would certainly not be in the modern sense of the term, but merely designate someone who lived to himself. The distinction would be merely that between private and public. Only by long development has one of the minor meanings of "idiotes" come to be the main meaning and that meaning itself developed and exaggerated out of all proportion to its original significance.

To return to the original quotation: as the bases of the argument have been shown to be unsound, what of its conclusions? The same situation no longer holds. We cannot all take an active part in politics, though it is natural for one himself so interested to think that we should. Likewise, in this scientific age we should all be interested in science: in this age of much music, via radio, etc., all interested in what passes for music, and so on. What walking encyclopedias we would need to be if various people had their way!

C. FRANCIS THOMPSON  
(Christchurch).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

## GLENN MILLER'S BAND

Sir,—On reading *Open Microphone* in the latest *Listener*, I was surprised, if not taken aback, by "Swarf's" information on the late Glenn Miller and his band's personnel. For instance, no mention was made of the first tenor-man, Tex Beneke, who was Miller's deputy-leader and principal solo instrumentalist. After Glenn Miller's tragic disappearance in 1944, it was Tex Beneke who stepped into the breach to lead the Miller band for the rest of the war years; and indeed, it is only within the last three years or so, that the name "Tex Beneke and the Miller Orchestra" has fallen into disuse, due to the fact that Tex Beneke reorganised the band, and began recordings for other well-known companies. Jerry Gray was first trumpet and arranger, and after the Beneke reorganisation Gray took to scoring and baton waving for his own band. During the war years, other famous jazzmen graced the ranks of the Miller band. Men such as Billy May and Ray Anthony on trumpets, pianists Ralph Flanagan and John Guarnieri, drummer Alvin Staller, and clarinetist-cum-baritone saxophonist Ernie Caceres are just a few of the many musicians who have played in the Miller band,

and have since made names for themselves as band leaders—some even carrying on the Miller style and swing traditions.

ANOTHER GLENN MILLER FAN  
(Ashburton).

## BROKEN ENGLISH

Sir,—Mr. Fairburn's able plea for a more progressive approach to the radio characterisation of people who have had the misfortune to have been born in countries other than those of our Commonwealth will find many supporters among your readers. That he has been able to make most of us smile broadly while he makes his point strengthens his case for the moderation with which it is put. Might I add a plea for equal consideration for the members of that large nation which my son has mentioned to me as "Chinks," "Chows," or in the singular, a "Chinee." Why in radio serials, are these friendly, sane, quiet people always portrayed as cruel, sinister, or just plain idiotic? Of course, I allude to those I know, not to the forces of Communist China, which by all reports must be pretty tough babies. It's time we looked a little harder at these radio characterisations.

R.B. (Nelson).

## KOA NEES

Sir,—For the second time in her career the above artist has made musical history in New Zealand by her broadcasts of Chopin's Preludes and Etudes in their entirety, the first occasion being in 1949 during the Chopin centennial observance. No other pianist, native or foreign, has achieved the feat in this country, and, as far as I am aware, it has been equalled overseas by only one artist in all musical annals—viz., by Madame Berthe Marx-Goldschmidt, formerly soloist and accompanist to the famous violinist, Sarasate.

In June, 1907, at Bechstein (now Wigmore) Hall, this lady devoted a whole recital programme to the complete sets of Chopin's Preludes and Etudes, a performance which excited the admiration of a large audience, of whom I was one, but which, I can honestly assert, did not in any way excel that of Koa Nees. New Zealand generally, and Dunedin in particular, should be proud of this superlative native artist, whose playing is a delight to all lovers of Chopin's music.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

## BROADCASTING HUMOUR

Sir,—There have been many attempts by various groups to broadcast humour, and unfortunately the only result is to display our complete lack of this element in our national life. We cannot yet laugh at ourselves. I doubt if we will until our population is trebled.

*One Minute, Please*, while trying so hard to be humorous, merely repeats the impromptu speech of 30 years ago. The result is that chatter remains supreme. There is one humorous feature one is apt to overlook—its description in *The Listener* as "a battle of wits."

ORRRIGHT (Wellington).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

D. (Waimate).—Correspondence closed.  
R.J.T. (Auckland) and A. A. Bensley (Tauranga).—Sorry, the correspondence had been closed before your letters arrived.  
B. Hopkins (Auckland).—Many thanks.  
June P. Remmers (Auckland).—Started from 12B August 28, 1950; from 22B September 4, 1950; from 32B September 11, 1950; and from 42B September 18, 1950.  
A.R. (Auckland) and Gnashene Thru.—You did not give name and address.  
Ian Hamilton (Auckland).—Too long; it would fill three columns.