

MICROPHONES IN PARLIAMENT

Sir.—The measure of agreement accorded by your readers to your editorial of June 18, "Microphones in Parliament," will vary greatly, I imagine, with their differing tastes in listening, and listening experience. I can quite understand that many listeners who have been accustomed to such broadcasts for some time would miss them, although I am a little surprised at your use of the phrase concerning "much dismay." As far as I am concerned, Parliamentary broadcasts are an unmitigated nuisance, resulting in the complete loss of 2YC's programme (which is one of my favourites usually), the alternative wavelength being almost useless here, but I realise that I am probably biased through living in the United Kingdom until fairly recently. There, broadcasts from either House of Parliament are unknown, and not even openings of Parliament by the Sovereign or notable speeches by the Prime Minister or others have ever been heard direct (let alone everyday debates). Fifty million people do without them very well, and perhaps their reading or hearing of news reports is all the more careful, and the reports themselves fuller.

To me, the greatest single unsatisfactory feature of Parliamentary broadcasting is that, M.P.s being human, some of them are certain to "play" to the listening gallery when speaking, and interjections are often heard which are obviously made for the benefit of listeners outside, being more or less meaningless as far as those present in the Chamber are concerned.

DERRICK G. SOFIO (Whangarei).

WITHOUT DOGMA

Sir.—I agree with James Baxter that the points we have raised are hefty ones, but hope that we will not therefore stray from the main path of the argument, which is whether or not its refusal to formulate a creed to which individual members are asked to subscribe has led the Society of Friends into confused thinking. I maintain that this very refusal is a consistent and integral part of its essential doctrine of the Inner Light that lighteneth every man.

James Baxter's liberal and catholic exposition of the wording I questioned in the Apostles' Creed gives added point to my contention that any joint credal statement about God is necessarily symbolic and obscure. It seems a very grave departure from truth and respect for integrity to require the plain-speaking man-in-the-street Christian to subscribe with an "I believe" to an esoteric metaphor.

I regret I have not yet read the book he reviewed in which Quakerism is said to have become largely a religion of social welfare, but I am aware that this is a common criticism. I would be sorry if it were truly so. But as one who has come to the Society of Friends because I regard its position as the only logical and consistent outcome of the Protestant belief in the priesthood of all believers, I shudder from the implications of a formulated creed.

We must beware of any splitting of the personality into mind and body, thought and action. Confused thinking must mean confused action, and unity of thought unity of action. The creed of Friends derived from the silent communion of saints in worship is expressed in social action which, for all except the highly literate few, is possibly a safer

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and saner way than words. Words can divide us, but the spirit which unites is the only true test of faith.

JEAN IRVINE (Rawene).

FLUORIDATION

Sir.—Mary I. Stroobant (*Listener*, June 18), is partly correct in saying that poor teeth in New Zealand are due to lack of willpower to say no to sweets. I have spent years trying to persuade mothers and children in New Zealand and elsewhere to say no more often, but the instinct to seek sweet food cannot be eradicated. It is this fact, however, that makes so necessary the inclusion of adequate fluorine in the diet. Fluorine exists in water in the ionised state, and is exactly the same whether it has been removed from the rock at an aluminium works or has been leached out of undisturbed rock by percolating water, as in the case of some springs and artesian wells.

The American Dental Association is emphatically in favour of fluoridation and can be fairly taken to represent the profession there. There is nothing undemocratic in leaving experts to determine proper health standards for the water; on the contrary it would be a disgraceful bureaucracy that neglected its duty in deference to a noisy and ignorant minority. We are in any case obliged to use the water supplied, but why should the proper proportion of its various elements be decided by "Adit" and "Water Drinker?"

It is misleading to call fluorine a medicine since it prevents, but does not cure, disease, and a disease that is almost universal in civilised peoples. It is better regarded as a food; most foods help to prevent disease in some way, and many of them (including chemically pure triple-distilled water) are "poisons" if taken in great excess.

Just as they cannot say no to sweets, so most mothers cannot be bothered with doling out tablets to each child every day for 10 or 15 years. This method has been tried in Australia, but the cost of propaganda to make it reach the mass of children would be prohibitive. In places without a public water supply it may be feasible.

R. B. D. STOCKER (Sydney).

"SUBVERSION" IN THE SCHOOLS

Sir.—Your temperate article on this theme sets a standard of tolerance that could well be emulated by those self-constituted guardians and models of patriotism the Dominion Council of the R.S.A. It is certainly to be hoped that local branches will refuse to spy and inform on their fellow-citizens, many of whom are also returned servicemen. But the teachers in the Nelson district will not feel so happy. They will not know what secret reports are being made on them and sent to Wellington, what private grudges are being "worked off" against innocent men, who are without defence, for even to defend oneself leaves a smear.

The original motion would be laughable if it were not a sign of danger to one of our freedoms. Its sponsors are simple people if they think loyalty can be guaranteed by an annual "warrant of fitness." The loyal citizen resents the indignity of an oath; to the disloyal, an oath means nothing. I well remember the indignation with which I took the oath of allegiance imposed upon teachers after World War I by Sir James Parr, when I had already taken it on enlistment, served four years and re-

ceived a permanent disability as a result. You are right when you say that it is the innocent man that suffers. And you are to be thanked for your courage in doing so, for we are living in an atmosphere where to be impartial is dangerous and to be tolerant is "subversive." Hence I dare not sign myself other than

TEACHER AND EX-SERVICE-MAN (Invercargill).

THE ATOMIC DILEMMA

Sir.—In the *Question Mark* report, Dean Chandler says: "Man is incapable in his own strength to find a way out." Man has found the way in and can find the way out. The civilisation that is threatened is entirely man-made. It has been said that man lives in history by scrawling his autobiography in the margin of every page of the book of nature. No one outside of man has made civilisation as it is today. Even when he believes himself to be under divine inspiration, man is still just man, constructing his societies, developing his cultures, creating, modifying, destroying according to the architecture of his thought in any age.

Nothing that man does endures forever; none of his purposes are fulfilled for ever; none of his knowledge is final and imperishable. He thinks he can detect purposes or aims behind the natural processes of his environment. But his universe is man-made; as the philosophers assure us, each of us has his own universe revealed by the individual eye, ear, and sense of touch.

Professor Oliphant favours a central world authority adequately equipped to prevent the use of atomic and other mass destruction weapons. Mr. Dumbleton fears this might become a world tyranny. But this might be guarded against if the supreme authority were composed of representatives of all nations, holding office in accord with a kind of roster, and being in office for only one or two years at a time.

A hundred and fifty years ago Kant saw the necessity for such a central world authority as a means of securing what he called "Eternal Peace." Man has shown himself willing to surrender what he considers rights in order co-operatively to secure a wider security. World conditions seem to point to the advisability of the more powerful and enlightened nations agreeing on a plan, combining, and then persuading or compelling the rest to come in. There is risk of conflict this way—but conflict seems almost inevitable anyway. To wait for universal voluntary agreement, or universal spiritual awakening, is to dwell in a fool's paradise.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

Sir.—The remarks attributed to Professor Oliphant in the condensed transcript of "Atomic Dilemma" (June 18) may have lost something in being transcribed and condensed. "Great religions all teach morality in its widest sense, but not one of them has yet prevented war." May I suggest that the greatest of these religions, that of Christ, has never yet been tried? Christianity cannot and will not be successful in preventing wars—that is, in changing the world, until each individual allows it to change his or her own personal life. Moreover, God will not help those who help themselves when they seek that help outside of His supreme laws.

Dean Chandler's remarks about criticism of the Church are perfectly true. But the Church is made up of humans,

and is imperfect, whereas the religion of Christianity is made up of Christ, indeed, is Christ, the perfect one. The panel could not find a solution. Might I suggest that they by-passed the way that leads to peace and security for all men?

GORDON GREEN
(Lower Hutt).

BEFORE THE OPERATION

Sir.—I can't help thinking that "Delayed Flap" is writing with his tongue in his cheek. I have anaesthetised many hundreds of what I would class as brave people. They have exhibited a variable degree of fear which was perhaps associated with some knowledge of possible danger. Yet they have had the courage to go on. Sometimes they have spoken to me of their fears. Perhaps these are braver still. There are a few whose pulse is quite steady and who behave in a composed and assured manner. I have wondered if they were quite normal.

Is it possible that "Delayed Flap" is so unaware of the Christian belief as to make this astounding statement, "I am not a Christian, so I was not worried about the alleged judgment day." This is just what the Christian is not afraid of, for with St. Paul he can say "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ." If "Delayed Flap" is not a Christian he has just cause for worry.

DR. (Kaitangata).

Sir.—I have been much interested in the range of correspondence which you publish from readers and listeners on such an interesting variety of subjects. I also have had one or two operations under different anaesthetics. I never had any thought of the possibility of my not waking up or any thought of the hereafter, but went under with a confident assurance that all would be well under the skill of the surgeon and the care of the nurses.

I also well remember, during the old war overseas, in hospital one evening feeling sure that I was dying. I remarked to the very capable sister who looked after me that I felt something was going to happen. She quite understood, and, reassuring me with the remark that she would be back very quickly, left me to call the doctor. My recollection is still that it was a very pleasant feeling, like floating off on a cloud, and in no time at all they were all back round my bed, and I was given something to drink, and woke up next morning very bucked to find myself still sitting up and taking what little nourishment I was permitted.

I only hope that when the time arrives to depart, which should not be long now, the same pleasant conditions will prevail, and I do not see why they should not.

SHAW (Feilding).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Run No Risks (Gore).—It has been published elsewhere.

A.B.F. (Cambridge).—Publication not intended.

A.M.R. (Inch Clutha).—Outside our field. Interested (Motueka).—Details were given in the panels for national broadcasts. We hope later to print extracts from the talks.

Bill Brown (Auckland).—Sorry; letters should be confined to broadcasts or to matters raised in *The Listener*.

S.R.N. (Cotomandel).—Publication not possible.

M. B. Soljak (Henderson).—Both sides were represented, but there was not enough space for all the letters received.

I. Simon (Wanganui).—A letter sent to the address you gave us has been returned.

Shirley Child (Tauranga).—A similar programme is given, and has been given for more than two years, in "Kindergarten of the Air."