

EUROPEAN TELEVISION

Sir,—With regard to the excellent article on the European television links which appeared in *The Listener* of July 2, we should be glad if you would allow us the opportunity of correcting one slight error. Your article mentions that the television link across Switzerland was supplied by the "General Electric Corporation," whereas it was supplied by our principals, the General Electric Company Ltd., of England.

We are informed by our principals that the contract is the only one of its kind throughout the Continental system to have been granted to a British firm. One of the most important points was the very short delivery time required. Although the contract was only placed in January, the equipment was installed before the end of May ready for the tests in early June. The link operates in the 1700-2300 Mc/s band and provides a one-way reversible television channel handling 625-line pictures.

F. RICHARDSON,
Secretary, British General Electric
Co. Ltd., Wellington.

WHY ARE CHURCHES EMPTY?

Sir,—One always wants to applaud a poor show when the participants have done their best, but I am afraid one could scarcely accord such charity to the participants in the recent discussion broadcast from Christchurch, "Why are the Churches Empty?" However sincere the members of the panel may have been they were not competent to handle the subject. They dealt with incidentals, and failed entirely to get down to fundamentals.

We have all felt the discomfort of hard pews, but hard seats don't deter thousands of spectators from going to football matches. We all realise that a generation reared on magazines and newspaper articles as a literary diet must find the King James Version of the Bible difficult to grasp, but surely that is not an insuperable difficulty for the people of "a country that has the highest standards of education in the world."

A world survey shows that apathy is the root cause of irreligion, a want of interest in anything worthwhile. Religion, culture, and art are all similarly afflicted. In how many of our suburbs or provincial towns are to be found flourishing dramatic, music and art societies, and where they are to be found, the few always carry the burden. And again at trade union or political meetings do we find men and women crowding in? Perhaps they do on a special occasion, but so also do they crowd into Church on important occasions.

Apathy is the deadliest of diseases, in our religious and social structure. The motto of the apathetic is "we couldn't care less," they like being apathetic, to be otherwise would mean having to do something and pre-eminently that is what Christianity demands—doing something without expecting self-profit, and that has no appeal for moderns.

P. RYND (Auckland).

"SUBVERSION" IN SCHOOLS

Sir,—May I be permitted to comment on your editorial "Subversion" in the Schools, and particularly on the sentence, "There are no doubt teachers with extreme left-wing opinions; and in the university colleges there may be individuals who lean in theory towards Communism." This sentence, intentionally or unintentionally, gives the impression that it is more likely that in the university colleges one will find

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those who lean towards Communism, and if not more likely in a general sense, then at least more likely than in the teaching profession.

As a graduate of Victoria University College, which still suffers from a widely-held impression among the public that it is a "red" University College, I think your editorial will only serve to strengthen that ill-founded impression. The fact is that the very small, zealous and active minority which is known as "red" in any University College has had little real influence for years. The most influential groups are almost certainly Christian ones. Most students and staff members, almost without exception, are opposed to Communism.

I do not think it is fair or near the truth to imply that Communism is more likely to be active in University Colleges. It is, I think, worth pointing out that both in Wellington and Auckland many of the students are also Training College students and therefore future teachers. Some proportion of the left-wing organisations was usually made up of Training College students.

This does not mean that I think the R.S.A. proposal should be supported as wise or practical. Oaths of allegiance mean nothing to a Communist and are therefore ineffective. There is, as you point out, too great a danger that any individuals with different ideas or attitudes will be wrongly informed against, and that could apply to many patriotic and dutiful Christians.

The solution to the problem of Communism in University Colleges, Training Colleges or New Zealand generally rests with the members of those organisations they are trying to influence. In University Colleges increased facilities for a communal student life, good hostels and common rooms, for example, will ensure student interest, and when a fair number of students are interested Communism has very little chance of survival. Intellectually Communism has little appeal; it only stays alive because it appears to champion the underprivileged, and for that reason schemes like the Colombo Plan merit R.S.A. support to a much greater degree than resolutions like those which were the subject of your editorial.

M. F. MCINTYRE (Gisborne).

(Our correspondent must surely be giving words the meanings he wants them to have if he believes that "there may be..." is stronger than "there are no doubt..."—Ed.)

A HORRID WARNING

Sir,—Mr. L. Assheton Harbord revealed last year a passion for the theatre which I found wholly admirable. To this he now adds an interest in critical writing scarcely less powerful. New Zealanders need men who are prepared to court ridicule and perhaps make enemies to keep their standards flying. Mr. Harbord is clearly such a man, and I salute his courage.

BRUCE MASON (Wellington).

Sir,—As one of Bruce Mason's more persistent critics,—though on other grounds than L. Assheton Harbord adopts—I should like to get into this act. The agonised yell of the majority man who feels his standards attacked and has not the intellectual discipline to defend them by temperate reasoning is a familiar noise in civilised society, and always dangerous to it; and Mr. Assheton Harbord, as they always do, goes too far. If the world has really acclaimed *Outward Bound* as a master-

piece, then so much the worse for the world; if "thousands of playgoers on both sides of the Atlantic" have enjoyed some other dose of pap, then they ought to be ashamed of themselves; if "the modern playgoer in U.S.A. and England is just as mentally defective as he was 30 years ago," has anyone the smallest right to be surprised? We live in an age of the systematic debasement of standards; if this is to be resisted, the test of a play must be, not whether it has pleased large numbers of people, but whether it can satisfy the minimum demands of the civilised intellect. This question is one for the individual judgment, and to abuse the critic because he pits his judgment against that of others—especially on the grounds that the others constitute a majority—is a betrayal of the citadel to eunuchs and barbarians; it leads straight to intellectual tyranny and darkness. In our society, as a matter of fact, conduct such as Mr. Assheton Harbord's is less menacing than *trahison des clercs* within the minority. But Mr. Assheton Harbord would have poisoned Socrates; he would have lynched Athanasius; and he would have howled against Ibsen—or else he hasn't considered the meaning of what he says.

J. G. A. POCKOCK (Dunedin).

AN EYE FOR FALLACIES

Sir,—I have read G.H.D.'s letters concerning poetry in New Zealand, and *The Facts of Life*, and I should say they "provide no end of entertainment for the reader who has an eye for fallacies."

In the former letter, G.H.D., a competent philosopher, attempts to tell poets what we should write and why. His argument, a dogmatic statement, supported by an appeal to authority, is not only poor logic; it is bad rhetoric.

In the second letter, the fallacy of condemning a book one has not read needs little explanation. To borrow G.H.D.'s simile, it reminds me of a Pekinese barking furiously, not at an Alsatian, but at a brief description of one. VICTOR O'LEARY (Gisborne).

FLUORIDATION

Sir,—In a letter in your issue of July 9 dealing with "Fluoridation," two apparent authorities are quoted setting out the evils of fluoridation. In your editorial comments you quote two further authorities setting out the virtues. Personally, I am prepared to accept the opinions of all four "authorities." How then can these seeming irreconcilables be reconciled?

The answer, of course, lies in point 4 of your reply, which could perhaps have received more emphasis: "Fluoride content in the water on the level required for treatment of dental decay had no

effect on physique, heart, bones or liver." As every medico knows (and apparently fewer laymen than one would expect) many of our medicaments are poisons when used in greater concentrations. Outstanding instances are arsenic and strychnine as well as most of the barbiturates.

As is also well known, many of the "confessions" in Communist trials are effected by over-concentration of what are helpful drugs when correctly used. S.H. (Wellington).

THE AVERAGE DIET

Sir,—In *The Listener* for June 18, Mary I. Strobant stated that the average diet (presumably of a New Zealander) comprises 90 per cent of "sweets, white sugar, white flour goods and similar rubbish." If by "average diet" we mean the average annual civilian consumption of all foodstuffs I should like to point out that, according to the statistics published

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 26-27

in the New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1953, the quoted statement is not correct.

In the 1951-52 period these foodstuffs made up only 38.3 per cent of the average diet by weight. In terms of calories, in the 1950-51 period, livestock products, including meat, dairy produce, eggs, fish and fats, comprised 48 per cent of the average diet. This left only 52 per cent of the calorific value of the average diet to be shared between cereals, vegetables and sugar.

GRAHAM A. HARRIS (Wellington).

Sir,—I often wonder why some people cannot hold strong views without becoming dogmatic in voicing them. Mary I. Strobant writes thus: "The fact that New Zealanders' teeth are so poor is directly related to a lack of will-power in saying 'No' to all sweets, white sugar, white flour goods and similar rubbish which comprises 90 per cent of the average diet." Speaking only for myself, I am getting through life very happily on a diet of white sugar, white flour and as many sweets as I wish for. My health has always been good, and my teeth are in an excellent state of preservation. Why be so sweeping?

GRANDMOTHER OF SEVEN
(Feilding).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. L. Ross (Auckland): He has left New Zealand.

Arana (Wellington): The pressure of the crowd prevented the ceremony of welcome from being performed.

T.J.M. (Dunedin): Your suggestion has been referred to the Director of Broadcasting for consideration.

Eve Gray (Papakura): You are right in supposing that the restriction applies only to letters. Without it the correspondence would bear no relation to the journal's interests and character. A similar restriction exists in the *BEC Listener* and other journals.

T. R. Williams (Lower Hutt): These contests are rarely staged on Saturday; hence the repetition of the day. Thanks for your comments generally.

Race Fan (New Plymouth): Mr. P. Kelly, of Hawera. He is a relative of Mr. Clarkson. A. Fowler (Reefton): "The Racing Harcourts" has ended at 2XA Wanganui, and in the meantime is not being placed elsewhere. The story was written as an original radio script, and is not preactable in book form.

Food for Thought (Christchurch): It never has been and cannot be an object of the Broadcasting Service to provide listeners with a sequence of women's programmes, if their geographical situation and the quality of their receiving set enable them to hear two or more main National stations. To the extent that the previous arrangement of programmes has allowed some of them to do so, their advantage has been fortuitous. The change has been made in pursuit of the more effective organisation of programmes now possible.

PATEA BY-ELECTION

PROGRESS results of voting in the Patea by-election on July 31 will be broadcast as they come to hand from 7.15 p.m. onward by Stations 2XA, 2XP and 2YA. Summaries will be given by all YA and YZ stations at 7.30, 8.0 and 8.30 p.m. The result of the poll will also be broadcast following the 7.15 and 9.0 a.m. weather forecasts and the 8.0 a.m. News on Sunday, August 1.