

Sir,—Professor Wood's article on Dr. Purcell's book about Malaya has the insight and impressiveness of presentation one expects from him. This new problem of West and East (or an old one in a new form) is one that we dare not ignore, and Professor Wood helps us to understand it. It may be pointed out, however, that in his strictures on General Templer and British policy in Malaya, Dr. Purcell has provoked some criticism in Britain, as well as receiving some support. He and others argued in the correspondence columns of the *Spectator* at length, I think, before the book was published.

In a letter in March, Vernon Bartlett, who knows Malaya, wrote, among other things, that General and Lady Templer had "encouraged every kind of organisation likely to bring the racial communities together." On June 4, Vernon Bartlett reviewed Dr. Purcell's book in the *Spectator*. His sympathetic attitude may be gauged from his comment that the book "could not have been more timely, for it contains an immense amount of material which will be useful to the increasing number of people interested in South-East Asia," but he again joined issue with the author on certain points. He suggested that "such bitter personal attacks on General Templer" might cause the ordinary reader to reject other opinions. Mr. Bartlett quoted this sentence from the book: "As a first step towards uniting Malaya, General Templer had riven it into nine splinter nationalities, surrounded each by a fence of legal barbed wire." Dr. Purcell, commented Mr. Bartlett, was fully aware that the decision to split Malaya into a number of small Federal States was reached nearly four years before the General became High Commissioner. Dr. Purcell was "deeply and passionately anxious that the British should get out of Malaya while the going is good. But that, in the opinion of many Malayan experts, is exactly what the British are doing." Mr. Bartlett cited an extension of political power to local peoples decided on within the previous few weeks, presumably shortly after Dr. Purcell had written his criticism of the existing system.

Also, I have read that Dr. Purcell's book, *Malaya: Communist or Free?* is openly on sale in Malaya.

LIBERAL (Wellington).

### UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Sir,—In your issue of August 13 you print some extracts from remarks made by Dr. C. P. McMeekan in a recent broadcast discussion on "Are We Spending Enough on Research?" It is a pity that Dr. McMeekan is in error in at least one of his facts and has made unwarranted deductions from this incorrect observation. The grant to the University of New Zealand for research purposes is, and has been for some years, £15,000 and not £10,000. Reference to the Estimates of the Department of Education would have revealed this. More important, however, is the erroneous deduction (or at least suggestion) that this is the only amount that the University and the colleges have to spend on research. The Government provides today something like five times the amount provided for the University and its affiliated colleges eight years ago. The better staffing and equipment made possible out of the £1.2M now available from the Government must surely allow a little time and energy for research. Indeed, Professor Slater's excellent article makes this clear.

Many years ago, when as a teacher I had to review geography textbooks, I

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# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

used a crude but useful method of checking for accuracy. If I found a book that stated, for example, that Dunedin was easily the largest city in New Zealand, and that the greater part of the North Island was volcanic desert, I concluded that the book was probably inaccurate in other matters. Dr. McMeekan will forgive me, therefore, if I am a little sceptical about some of his statements about research.

E.H.O. (Wellington).

### TALKS ON RUSSIA

Sir,—I have been waiting for someone to comment on the fantastic behaviour of the NZBS in inviting Mr. Norris Collins to broadcast seven talks on what he saw in Russia. Since Mr. Collins does not speak Russian and was obviously a sympathetic traveller, guided through a few Soviet "show places," his talks were little better than Communist propaganda. True, the Russian authorities allowed a few shadows to appear in the picture seen by Mr. Collins, but this would obviously help to make his story more plausible.

For some years, books have been appearing which paint a totally different picture of life in Soviet Russia. In 1952 for example, Tadeusz Wittlin, who worked in the slave labour camps, published *A Reluctant Traveller in Russia*, and this year Leon Maks, who travelled on forged papers, through such places as Irkutsk, Tashkent and Syktyvkar, has published *Russia by the Back Door*. Now there are a number of people in New Zealand with first-hand experience of this side of Soviet life. Will the NZBS seek out some of these people and invite them to broadcast seven talks on their impressions of Soviet Russia? Not likely.

Although the NZBS has allowed itself to be used as a medium for Communist propaganda, this is probably not due to Communist influence, for the fact can be adequately explained in terms of Liberal stupidity. Our open-minded Liberals will wake up to the menace of Communism about half an hour after their throats are cut.

G.H.D. (Palmerston North).

Sir,—I wonder where A.B.C. got the idea that Christianity has ever been the philosophy of the Western world. Surely, history and current observation prove that the Western world bases its patterns of action upon materialism and power politics.

A. ALLAN SHEARER  
(Wellington).

### A HORRID WARNING

Sir,—Mr. Harbord misjudges me. I intended him no ridicule, and I am sorry he should take it so. May I amplify my point? I believe the theatre in New Zealand will flourish only when a large body of persons is prepared to take it seriously as a living force. And an essential first stage in this campaign is the generation of strong feeling about it. Mr. Harbord by his passion and vehemence implies such seriousness and I must therefore regard him as an ally. If we do not agree, so much the better. Art thrives on controversy. I cannot claim Mr. Harbord's experience in four continents, nor do I claim to be right. Critics are often wrong in detail. Bernard Shaw did not care greatly for *The Importance of Being Earnest* when it was first produced, and he had a high opinion of the plays of Henry James. He was, nevertheless, the greatest critic

of his time by his wit, eloquence and passion. This passion Mr. Harbord shares with him, and I venture to suggest, with me. Would it be going too far to suggest that we are brothers-in-arms against the hydra-headed Enemy, Public Indifference? For that is our real adversary. Let us gird our armour on, poise our lances at the ready, and enter the lists together. True, we make our entrances from opposite gates, but the dragon is equally vulnerable from fore and aft. And though, to the gallery, we may appear poles apart, the long and the short-haired of it, the careful observer will see fluttering from both our helms, the favour of our wayward mistress and sovereign lady, the Drama.

BRUCE MASON (Wellington).

### DISUNITY IN THE CHURCH

Sir,—Listening to "What the Church has to say about its own disunity," I felt that the speakers had missed one very vital point. Some of our women's organisations use a prayer, one clause of which runs, "Grant that we may realise it is the little things that create differences, that in the big things of life we are one."

The various denominations are surely separated by comparative trivialities. In the one deep-seated, central part, the Holy Communion, we are indeed one, and yet the greater number of our clergy are so blind that they cannot see that if we began by making our Communion together the rest would solve itself.

If the Son of God stands at His table, His heart must ache to see His ministers looking down their ecclesiastical noses at the idea of serving His supper to fellow Christians who have the temerity to differ upon some points of order.

KATHLEEN CLAYTON  
(Ngongotaha).

### FLUORIDATION

Sir,—Your correspondents are all evidently having a good time, but they don't seem to be getting anywhere. Put the fluorine in the sweets.

C.J.B. (Stokes Valley).

### AN EYE FOR FALLACIES

Sir,—After reading G.H.D.'s letter in your August 13 issue I am forced to conclude that he is a competent philosopher rather than a competent philosopher. That I used "fallacy" in the sense of "a flaw that vitiates syllogism" was abundantly clear from the text of my letter. G.H.D. seeing the scholastic sheepskin of distinction interprets it to suit his own purpose, and uses "fallacy" in the vague sense of "error," thus wasting limited space contradicting statements I did not make.

In hinting that my verse is based on an erroneous philosophy of love, G.H.D. does me an injustice. I do not believe that in love the biological element is prior to the personal relationships involved. In fact, I agree that such an opinion is "poor philosophy"; but when G.H.D. goes further and intimates that its adherents *ipso facto* produce poor art

### CARE OF RECEIVING SETS

READERS with special problems in the care and maintenance of radio receiving sets are invited to send inquiries to the Editor of "The Listener." Names and addresses are required. Wherever possible, replies will be given, either in "The Listener" or by letter

there is little need to examine further his credentials as a critic of poetry.

In conclusion, still "standing proudly on my dogskin mat" (Peke?) I wish to point out that if G.H.D. had examined the "domestic animals" more carefully he would have seen wolves beneath their mild exteriors. As a "ranger" he is obviously in need of spectacles.

VICTOR O'LEARY (Whatatutu).

### BETTER RECEPTION

Sir,—Your reply to a Collingwood correspondent (July 30) cannot pass without comment. To many of us the radio is our sole means of entertainment, and of contact with voices other than those of our own homes, and we have a right to more consideration regarding better reception. At present, of an evening, our listening is practically cut out. We are not interested in Parliamentary broadcasts. Our listening has been mostly done through the YC stations, and these we cannot listen to at present because of interference from Australia. We particularly wanted to hear Andrew Gold's farewell concert recently, but it was hopeless because of this interference. Other concerts by visiting artists and the National Orchestra have been denied us for this same reason. Your reply that "New Zealand will continue to press for further clear channels" is just not good enough.

I would like those responsible for better reception to come and live out in the wilds, where radio is our sole means of entertainment. Then I guess something would be done about it.

COUNTRYFOLK (Upper Moutere).

### HEAD IN THE SAND

Sir,—In the session *It's In the Bag* on July 24 a contestant answered "No" to the question "Does the ostrich bury its head in the sand?" and her answer was rejected.

I was sorry for the lady, who may or may not have been just having a guess at it. But I'm even more sorry for the ostrich and the English language; because truth in this case has been prostituted to the convenience of idiom and seems likely to remain so. As a boy I lived on a farm in South Africa where we kept ostriches, and I never saw or heard anything to support this strange idea which people who wrote books and things apparently believed.

An ostrich feeding may stand for quite a time in one spot and peck at food on the ground without raising its head more than a few inches, or when sitting it may lay its neck and head on the ground—above the surface—and look like a bush or an anthill at a surprisingly short distance; and either of these cases may have given rise originally to the myth in question. But if you can find even one otherwise reliable authority to support the idea that an ostrich buries its head in the sand for any purpose at all I should be most interested to hear of it.

DICK SOUTHON (Auckland).

### LISPING IN NUMBERS

Sir,—I accept your ruling that the imputation of doubtful motives is the lowest form of criticism—who, having read your editorial on this subject, could doubt it?

LOUIS JOHNSON (Lower Hutt).  
(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS  
E.S. (Wellington): Thank you. The suggestion is being adopted.

Sheba (Auckland): There might be objections if a recording, the same or another, were used to introduce the rota services; but there are other possibilities, which will be studied.