

RECOGNITION OF CHINA

Sir,—The letter from "Lubber's Point" gives one the impression he has been in solitary confinement for some years, where new books, if any, were chosen for him all of a pattern. The points he brings up about cruelty and Korea are both debatable; there is a solid body of opinion on both sides and a big middle group that does not know what to believe, for the evidence seems so conflicting. But at least we know it was the Americans and South Koreans who poured napalm on women and children in villages. Who is most likely to give the plain unadulterated facts—politicians who represent group interests, or educated men like Rewi Alley, Professor Airey or Dean Chandler?

Does "Lubber's Point" think UN was formed only for nations with similar political systems? Was it not formed to prevent war, to bring nations of all political opinions together to negotiate and settle their differences? I do not agree with Margot Ross on many points, but we all need more of her Christian tolerance and fewer incentives to hate, which is one cause of war.

K. M. LUCKENS (Titirangi).

Sir,—The statements of your correspondent "Lubber's Point" regarding the foreign policy of the Peking administration are doubtless true, but still do not constitute a valid criticism of the points made in Mrs. Ross's broadcast or in your recent brilliant editorial. The significant factor of the present situation is that war on the nuclear level is not a practical means of settling differences between States, and that co-operation between oriental and occidental civilisations is not conceivable unless the West utilise all their more intensive diplomatic experience to heal any breaches that occur. This policy would be justifiable even if only for the purpose of detaching China from Russia, as it would surely be more satisfactory to deal with the Orient Powers separately rather than both at once.

Nothing is less likely to aid diplomatic processes than continual criticism by the West of the means by which the Peking administration elects to maintain order within its own frontiers, especially as it is hardly possible to conceive of any means by which we could compel them to adopt domestic policies more in line with the recent tradition of Britain and America. Further, the West is at the moment in a scientific position allowing us greater destructive potential than the East, and hence greater opportunity to compromise, placate and concede, provided only that we never betray any agreement undertaken with Powers hostile to Peking or Moscow. Righteous indignation is one of the many luxuries that patriotic men must deny themselves at all times, and at no time so much as the present.

G. BARCLAY (Takapuna).

DRAWINGS AND POEMS

Sir,—Exactly what purpose is served by the illustration of the story "Mum's the Word" in a recent issue of *The Listener*? In my opinion, this drawing carries distortion to excess by picturing a woman with a cretin's head, a chinless profile, and tiny claw-like hands, pressed over an enormous bosom. To me, these drawings are decadent. I know of other readers who hold the same views, readers who buy *The Listener* to read its contents and not merely as an aid to listening. Sometimes the artist concerned is happy in his sketches, as when he drew the illustrations

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

tions of Maoris in the District Nurse story of some months back.

Some of us would like to see the standard of the cartoons and the contributed verse raised considerably. Occasionally the verse is really delightful (Alan Mulgan's latest, for instance), but much of it is obscure. Surely we can ask for clarity even if the other rules are ignored.

B. OSBORNE (Hamilton).

(The work of our illustrator is discussed this week in an article on page 8.—Ed.)

FLUORIDATION

Sir,—Whatever the merits or demerits of fluoridation may be, the fact remains that most of the residents of Hastings and Havelock North are being compelled to use and pay for artificially fluoridated water without their consent and against the better judgment of many of them. And so, as individuals, they have been deprived of a basic right to choose what they shall not take into their own bodies.

Sodium silico fluoride (so named on the bags and marked poison in large letters) is the medium being used here to bring the fluorine content of the public water supply up to one part per million. If that proportion of fluorine is the answer to caries in children's teeth, there would seem to be an ample quantity of that chemical readily available in the tea beverage so commonly drunk in this country. For that arch-fluoridationist, Dr. F. A. Arnold, speaking at Hastings, said that dry tea (tea leaves) may contain up to 100 parts per million fluorine, 150 p.p.m. and even more, but that "tea as drunk did not contain more than one part in a million." Another pro-fluoridationist, G. M. Will, M.Sc., A.N.Z.I.C., writing to the local press, said that "an ordinary cup of tea will contain at least one part per million fluorine; that is the same concentration as is being added to the water supply. A strong infusion may contain up to 20 p.p.m."

With more than enough fluorine naturally present in tea (as distinct from the artificially produced sodium silico fluoride), the anti-fluoridationist is tempted to ask "Why not drop the compulsory mass medication and encourage the practice of cleaning teeth with tea minus milk and sugar?"

It is not at all certain that artificially fluoridated water will improve children's teeth under the conditions prevailing in this district. And when, as Drs. Arnold and Parfitt well know, the main causes of dental decay are wrong food, wrong combinations of food and wrong eating habits, it is scarcely likely that the ingestion of fluoridated water will at best do more than postpone the onset of dental trouble.

C.E.G. (Havelock North).

RADIO AND CHILDREN

Sir,—How much longer are we going to have to put up with the poisonous, sadistic violence that I have just been listening to from 2ZB—torture of a bound, tormented man—a screaming woman. "That's the stuff the boys at school gloat over," my twelve-year-old tells me. We blame our children for many things these days—we're too harsh. They're the result of the poison we're feeding them on in radio, films, comics and pulp magazines. It's time the adult world took a look at itself and sheeded the blame home to the real offenders—the corrupters of young impressionable minds. Is there not enough in our vast heritage of beautiful, worthwhile things that we should descend to

this sordid level to "edify" our children? Is it not time a censorship of our radio programmes was instituted?

C. MACKENZIE (Lower Hutt).

A HORRID WARNING

Sir,—Now that Mr. Harbord has put on his warpaint, we know which tribe he belongs to. But some points in his letter still merit a temperate—and, by the way, final—reply.

Mr. Harbord thinks I think the majority is necessarily wrong. I do not; but I think there are powerful forces working to make it so. These are the forces of commercialised mass-entertainment, which encourage the majority to take its pleasures mindlessly. If the majority is not to be corrupted, then its members must think and encourage one another to do so.

Mr. Harbord thinks the majority is necessarily right. But he can only make this claim by executing a complete divorce between the arts and thought, and making an appeal to the box office which is in the end nothing but an appeal to brute force. The intellect he hates; and I can understand why. But I do not understand why he also fears it. The world is on his side; vast engines of power and profit daily pour out an immeasurable flow of the kind of pleasure he likes. When then this terrified savagery at one or two lone questioners? Is it not, in the last analysis, that the man whose pleasures and values are founded on a repudiation of the intellect must always be, at bottom, insecure, frightened and resentful?

I thank him for breaking this lance with me.

J. G. A. POCOCK (Dunedin).

AN ENTHUSIAST IN CHINA

Sir,—Your reviewer of Margaret Garland's *Journey to New China* has written a nicely calculated mixture of sarcasm and faint praise. However, anyone who goes to China and is rash enough to tell an unbelieving world the truth on returning offers himself to just this kind of attack—as well as the other kind which is less subtle but easier to answer. I am sure Mrs. Garland expected no less. Independent political viewpoints are, of course, not quite respectable in New Zealand. Gad, Sir, the daily papers can't be wrong! So Mrs. Garland must do penance for her rash enthusiasm.

However, believe it or not, her book is a very fair account of what the visitor finds in present-day China: a united people hard at work pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, mighty keen about having a clear goal in sight after so many dark years of oppression and frustration; delighted with their great spurt of progress even if, as Mao Tse-Tung tells them, they have only taken the first steps on a march of ten thousand li; full of enthusiasm (dreadful word!) for the new life they are making for themselves; and moved by a spirit of personal dedication that is disturbing to comfortable bourgeois from more fortunate lands. The English journalist, Basil Davidson, in his *Daybreak in China*, gives a very similar account. Of course, the impartial visitor must have some criticisms, too, but I, for one, am not going out of my way to do Mr. Dulles's work for him.

There are two slighting references in Mr. Hall's review that cannot be let pass: to the Chinese peace movement (no inverted commas) and to Rewi Alley. Is it strange that a people so devoted to peaceful toil who have suffered so long from the bloody confusion of invasions and warfare should yearn

for peace and even make voluntary contributions to a movement which works to secure it for them? Is it strange that Rewi Alley, a big-hearted man who has seen more than enough of cruelty and suffering, should also so far forget himself as to show his enthusiasm for the new life and peaceful aspirations that now surround him?

H. W. YOUREN (Napier).

AN EYE FOR FALLACIES

Sir,—Since Mr. Louis Johnson has called me a sniper, and "sniper" is a word with sinister associations, I suppose he also has felt that his verse has been in the line of fire during the recent discussion on New Zealand poetry.

I still contend that it is not fallacious to criticise—or shall we say "comment on"?—a book one has not read, basing one's comments on the account given of the book by a reviewer. Actually, I had read *The Facts of Life* before I commented on it in my second letter, which

More Letters from Listeners will be found on pages 30-31

appeared in *The Listener* of August 6, I did not mention this explicitly, because I thought it would be obvious to the intelligent reader.

I'm afraid I must decline the label "intellectual" which Mr. Johnson has fastened on me. Let me pass for a *franc-tireur* in the realm of intellect—sniping calls for a precision that is not possible in newspaper correspondence—a *franc-tireur*, moreover, who will not be deterred from his sharpshooting by the cries of poets lamenting the castigation of their literary offspring.

G.H.D. (Palmerston North).

BETTER RECEPTION

Sir,—Since I am one of those mentioned in the letter published under this heading in the issue August 27, perhaps I may be allowed to say, as regards the last sentence of your footnote, that if I understand Mr. Chubb's very interesting letter aright, he is not suggesting that the Auckland transmitters should be increased in power "to enable them to be heard clearly at all times in the South Island," but that they might be sufficiently adjusted to be heard clearly at all times in their own province, reasonably free from interference from stations of lower power over 1000 miles away.

DERRICK G. SOFIO (Whangarei).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Two Food Eaters (Dunedin): Sorry; the scope of that discussion is already wide enough.

Alan Mister (Moutere): The recording is in a series of hymns issued for broadcasting by the BBC, and not commercially available.

Stanley V. Jennings (Christchurch): It is done whenever there is time; and that is frequently.

Dennis McEldowney (Upper Hutt): Thank you. It would; and to give credit to other sources as well. The omission has been repaired.

J.S.M. (Christchurch): The suggestion has been closely considered more than once, in relation to various possible times. It will be considered again in the near future.

L. Asheton Harbord (Lower Hutt): (1) One of your references is to programmes after 11.0, the other to programmes after 10.0. The latter is relevant to stations of the National Division, and of these the four YCs present much good music between 10.0 and 11.0 p.m. The request can hardly be understood to relate to the stations of the Commercial Division. (2) If "one station, just one," is to broadcast good music after 11.0, the only one that can do so effectively for the great body of listeners is 2YA (or 2YC). The suggestion is really to extend the transmission of the station. It may be possible to consider that later.