

## N.Z. BOOKS IN LONDON

Sir.—The whole question of New Zealand books in England, raised by Mr. Brash in a recent letter, is of great importance to us: and I should like to enlarge his suggestion that we should at last have a properly organised bookshop—and perhaps a proper library?—when Carlton House becomes our official headquarters.

New Zealand books are notoriously hard to come by in England unless you are scouring the second-hand bookshops in London and the provinces for pioneering matter. They are also maddeningly hard to borrow. In 1949, when I was representing the Society of Authors on the Council of the National Book League, I suggested that it was time we had an exhibition of New Zealand books at the Society's headquarters in Albemarle Street. Despite the raised eyebrows of the more hoary-minded English publishers, most of whom appeared to be still in the 19th Century in their conception of the Antipodes, and none of whom knew anything of the Caxton Press, I borrowed what I could from friends and showed it at the next meeting.

On the strength of these few books (mainly the Centennial Surveys, with some examples from the Caxton, Pelorus and Pegasus Presses), I was deputed to sound both New Zealand House and Australia House on the project. At Australia House, where there is not only a well-arranged bookstall on the ground floor by the entrance, but also a magnificent library under expert guidance on another floor, I was made free of the place in order to see what was available. At New Zealand House an equal courtesy prevailed when, after wandering in murky corridors, I at last found someone who had any idea where books were to be found. But the "library" was a mere clutter of volumes, some still unpacked, some lying on the floor bloomed with dust waiting to be put away; and instead of a trained librarian with a competent staff there was only one harassed young man whose obvious interest had led the burden of this "library" to be put upon him as an extra. The general apathy was such, that I came away feeling an exhibition of the New Zealand books then in England could not represent one half of the books available, and might do more harm than good.

It therefore doesn't surprise me in the least to find that the difficulties stressed by both Mr. Brash and Professor Gordon have led, five years later, to New Zealand's first book exhibition in London being a muddle. A muddle, because it was left to a few enthusiasts to spare what time they could from other work, in order to assemble it; and because they plainly experienced that same apathy about which I have complained above. Nor will any later exhibitions be much better unless we all, New Zealanders by birth or adoption, here or overseas, constantly stress the need for the whole question of New Zealand books to be taken seriously. In this, as in so many things, we must abandon our amateur status and turn professional—we are good enough. Not only are our writers being published widely overseas, but some of the work put out by our presses is as fine as could be found anywhere. We should take pride in these remarkable facts, and insist on establishing a show window in London to display what a little country of two million people can do. We can no longer afford to disregard books, or push them to one side in favour of butter and mutton. Now, at this time, when a magnificent

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

new centre for New Zealanders and New Zealand's best is being established in London—now is the time to press for the recognition of books as a national asset.  
SARAH CAMPION  
(Auckland).

## UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Sir.—It would be ungrateful of anyone connected with the University to quarrel with Dr. McMeekan when, as he says in his recent letter, his main contention is that the University should be better supplied with funds for research. It is better to be known by one's deeds than one's words, and I had not intended in any way to suggest that the work of Dr. McMeekan and his associates at Ruakura lacked depth, quality, or quantity, all of which are manifestly present. Nor could my statement be fairly taken as advocating "that any man has the right to expect his fellows to maintain him permanently in relative comfort and security (without) reasonable service in return." My view on this point was simply that the lesson to be read from the history of science was clearly that it pays handsomely to regard the completely unfettered investigation of freely chosen topics as reasonable service.

I suspect, as a matter of fact, that Dr. McMeekan is not really the grim inquisitor he would have us believe, since in so strongly supporting the case for an increase in funds for University research he must know that these will often be used for investigations which fall outside the fold within which he would, if we believed him, confine supported research.

In short, let us have our Ruakuras and our All Souls and recognise the peculiar contributions which each may have to offer the world of today.

S. N. SLATER (Wellington).

## CHILDREN AND MUSIC

Sir.—Please accept the hearty applause of fingers 5001-5010 inclusive for David Lyons's article, and to you for printing it. I hope that you are wrong, however, and that parents will take heed. As one who was never forced to learn music as a child (though I wish that I had) I am for ever indebted to my parents who realised the limitations of my talents.

While I wholeheartedly agree with David Lyons's remarks I would suggest that, wherever possible, children should be given the opportunity (not compulsion) at a reasonable age, to hear and learn to appreciate music. Beethoven as well as Be-bop. That way only can they know whether they wish to learn music—and, having decided to learn, apply themselves to the task.

T. HEYMANN (Foxton).

## TALKS ON RUSSIA

Sir.—I was somewhat ironically amused to see that Mr. Brian Bell contends that G.H.D. is a bigot because he is presumably so unwise as to criticise the talk given by Mr. Norris Collins on Russia. Mr. Bell, of course, destroyed his whole argument by committing the logical fallacy of arguing ad hominem. Surely the point at issue is not G.H.D.'s bigotry or otherwise, but the fairness and correctness of the views presented by the broadcaster. Mr. Bell has not answered this.

As for his contention that the general public has been deafened by an anti-Soviet cacophony, to a consistent mind

it has become increasingly manifest that the evidence of the thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who have fled the Soviet and satellite tyrannies since the end of the war is more than sufficient to establish that the Soviet system of government is not to our liking, even if Mr. Bell and one lone New Zealander may imagine otherwise.

Truth is not based on discussion but on reality, and the facts of the case are clear writ across the pages of our times. Further, a bigot is he who blindly attaches himself to any opinion, system or party. G.H.D. presumably on this definition is blindly attached to the opinions and system of the free world and at least it is an advantage that he can say so. I can publicly agree, and Mr. Bell can disagree. But to call this bigotry is the first step in the denial of freedom and I hope that your correspondent does not intend taking this step.  
A.A.N. (Wellington).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Sir.—After listening to perhaps half a dozen recent quiz session broadcasts, of one kind or another, I have been impressed by the number of wrong answers that were supplied by those who set the questions. For example, one question included an inquiry for the name of the highest waterfall in New Zealand, and the answer supplied was "Sutherland Falls." These falls descend about 1900 feet, in three leaps. Above Doubtful Sound is Lake Browne, close to 4000 feet above sea level, and the outflow comes down in one leap of about 3600 feet, or possibly more.

Another questioner asked what library in England receives a copy of every book published. Actually the British Museum, Bodleian and Cambridge University Libraries get a copy of each book published in England (and, incidentally, a library in Dublin does the same), but the only answer acceptable in this case was "The Bodleian," although the first contestant mentioned the British Museum. Another question was about the river upon which Oxford is situated, and the only answer acceptable was "the Thames," the familiar name of Isis being ruled out. Even in New Zealand we have an example of a river that has a change of name for part of its length. The question "What is a periwinkle?" was to be answered by reference to what the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* describes as "Gastropod mollusc much used for food." I did not hear this question, but am told that a reply about a genus of plants with light blue flowers was ruled out, though obviously correct.

One of the worst mistakes was on the air some years ago, when someone who evidently knew nothing about hydraulic shock absorbers asked, "What liquid is compressible?" apparently believing that a liquid had been obtained that would compress like a spiral spring.

Probably many other listeners could quote examples of incomplete, misleading, or wrong answers being supplied for these competitions, although in some cases very valuable prizes may be involved. What is the position if someone challenges the answer? I do not think that the quizmaster should be bound by incorrect answers supplied. I suggest that anyone who sends in a question should guarantee the answer, and if his answer is challenged by a contestant who also offers the correct answer, the questioner should pay this contestant the sum of five pounds. This should do

more than remove a cause of dissatisfaction: it should also add a good deal of interest and amusement to the quiz session.

ARTHUR LUSH  
(Christchurch).

## THE FIRST PHONOGRAPH

Sir.—Your article on the above subject (September 10) and your reply to Helen M. Chalmers (October 4) may tend to confuse the issue. If, as your article states, "the phonograph which had been invented in France" was the first device to record sound, and as Edison's claim to the gramophone invention also depended upon this sound, "many inventions" certainly "result from the contributions of many minds." In short, the French must have invented the record before Edison invented his gramophone.

Even if Bell did patent his gramophone in 1885, seven years after Edison, that does not preclude the fact that the idea may have been conceived, or even experimented with, long prior to that date. Edison may have been the first person to capitalise on the idea by taking out a patent which appears to have been granted in America. His efforts to "keep them within the bounds of the U.S.A." may be understandable. His claim to have been the "true and first inventor" may have been disputed outside his own country. In fact, I think it still is.

Many minds certainly do contribute toward "most modern inventions," but with the qualification of "only after they have been invented." Whittle with his Jet and Baird with Television are classic examples—I am excluding Watson and Radar. Whittle and Baird were lone, and true and first inventors of their respective devices. It was only after their ideas had been originated and found practical that "many minds" and officialdom contributed further suggestions and long withheld experimental cash and facilities. From now until the end of time, probably, there will be further contributors to the ideas of Whittle, Watson and Baird. There must always "be a first."

If Whittle at one time contemplated a visit to the U.S.A., and if that visit was to further exploit the possibilities of his invention, could not Bell have done the same thing in 1885 to exploit his gramophone, which may have been originated in England, but not patented, long prior to that date?  
A.E.S. (Mangakino).

(Bell was in the United States long before 1885. He went to Canada at the age of 23, and was in Boston in 1872. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes him as "an American inventor." Incidentally, the instrument he patented in 1885 was not a gramophone, as printed in our earlier footnote, but a "graphophone."—Ed.)

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J.O.H. (Outram): Sorry; just too late.  
D. F. O'Brien (Matangi): Afraid there are practical difficulties. And it would upset people who file their copies.

Interested (Taihape): (1) "The Marines Hymn." (2) No information about a recording.

F. White (Dunedin): The N.Z. Music Society series will be repeated by 4YA on Sunday mornings at 10.30 from October 24.

A.M. (Timaru): All that's available, and there's much more than you seem to suggest—with cruel indifference to a long string of popular comedians: but that, perhaps is your own little joke.

A Dunedin Listener: (1) The programme staff of the Service, but not, of course, that you "shall listen." (2) Officers of the talks and women's programme sections of the station, in their responsibility to senior officers of station, district and Head Office. (3) Three guineas, each member: the programme is heard over a network.

D. B. Shakes (Auckland): The standard timetable is fixed by the Government. It rests with the Prime Minister to decide if broadcasting is to continue after the usual hour.