

Sir,—Your correspondent Sarah Campton rightly stresses the need for more publicity for New Zealand books in London. In justice to New Zealand House, however, I should like to correct the wrong impression she has given regarding its library. Conditions which evidently obtained in 1949 do not obtain now. When I visited New Zealand House in 1952, I found it had a well-established and very well organised library. It consisted of a small but representative collection of New Zealand books, including the more important works of reference, and books likely to be of use to New Zealanders in London and to people emigrating to New Zealand. The selection of books is made here in New Zealand. The librarian, employed full-time in the library, was most efficient and helpful, and it was apparent, both from my own observation and from what I heard from other people, that the library was giving an excellent service.

ENID A. EVANS (Auckland).

TALKS ON RUSSIA

Sir,—May I reply briefly to my various critics? Mr. Malton Murray's long quotation from Lord Acton was a damp squib, because I regard the great historian's Liberal philosophy as erroneous—a canonisation of his 19th Century prejudices. In reply to Mr. Novak, I need only say that I was unaware of Mr. Bertram's talks on Czechoslovakia. Mr. Bell makes the weird accusation that I do not favour discussion, when the point of my criticism was that the NZBS was allowing only one side of the story to be heard. Mr. Collins denies that he was a sympathetic traveller in Russia and in the next breath argues that we should no more judge Soviet life on its slave labour camps than we judge New Zealand on its juvenile delinquency, as if there were not a world of difference between the two phenomena. "It is good," Mr. Collins declares, "that the NZBS looks for understanding of peoples and situations," doubtless implying that his talks contributed to this understanding. This I deny. Mr. Collins does not know Russian and his itinerary was very circumscribed. So his report on Russia was only too reminiscent of the blind man's report on the elephant. However honestly Mr. Collins may have reported what he saw and heard, he did not see much, and what he heard was mostly propaganda, like the statement: "There is no persecution of the church today." His diagnosis of our spiritual ills is substantially correct, but this does not warrant the conclusion that "Communism is not our enemy." For Communism will aggravate those ills and make their cure far more difficult than it is at present.

G.H.D. (Palmerston North).

Sir,—As a foreigner who has experienced "freedom of worship" and all other "freedoms" under the Communist regime, may I be permitted to comment on one of the main issues Mr. Collins raised in his recent talks on Russia? "There is no persecution of the Church today . . ." and "worship is free to those who wish to attend. . ." I feel that only a man who has no knowledge of the history of the "Living Church of Russia," and who is unable to comprehend the Communist tactics, can come to such fallacious conclusions. Until 1939 the Church was subject to most severe persecution. All clergy who did not conform were liquidated, imprisoned, or disappeared into labour camps. Finally, in 1939, the Government succeeded

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

in fomenting a schism of the Church and drastic and "progressive" changes followed. The Soviet authorities appointed their nominees as bishops, deans, and rectors, and the Church pledged unconditional support to the State.

To describe briefly the perfidious attitude of the Communist régime to the Church, allow me to quote a part of a discussion I had shortly after World War II with a high Russian official: "We realise," said he, "that the older generations of our people will continue to accept religion. The force of habit of millions and tens of millions is a most terrible force, and therefore in the struggle against the Church we have changed our tactics (in 1939) and have chosen a new way of undermining and liquidating the forces and traditions of the old reactionary society. In the transition period from Socialism to Communism the Church will, more or less, be a transit camp in which Christian teaching will be utilised for the cause of Communism."

As in Russia, so in her satellite countries the Church is being liquidated, systematically and deliberately. The clergy, carefully selected by the Communist authorities, are in return giving their full moral support to their Government "for the building of a new (Godless) society." They preach and teach that Communism and Christianity strive for the same social reforms.

There is, thus, freedom of worship, guaranteed by the constitution; but a man who has the courage to attend public worship is considered at least "a superstitious fool," who in a "progressive society" has no chance of advancement. This explains why Mr. Collins has seen only middle-aged to elderly women in the churches. The two or three young men or women, whom Mr. Collins also saw in the churches, consist usually of courageous (called by Communists superstitious) men, or else police agents sent to all churches and ecclesiastical gatherings to report on sermons, speeches, and attendances.

A FOREIGNER (Hamilton).

WELLINGTON POETRY

Sir,—One was glad to see Mr. Johnson's "Song in the Hutt Valley" in your pages, because it shows that there is no "personal vendetta" going on. But in another way one is sorry. One doesn't expect great poetry in songs. But Mr. Johnson has not supplied us with music, so we must judge his piece as literature. The trouble with song-poetry is that it encourages padding and parody. Mr. Johnson doubtless has taken his lead in song-poetry from Mr. Baxter. This new trend in Wellington poetry is probably to be regretted. It indicates a falling off.

There are some effective ideas in Mr. Johnson's poem, but they don't come across very well. Mr. Johnson lacks the direction and firmness a Yeats could supply. Mr. Johnson begins with recollections of geography lessons at school and moves on to Tennyson. In the second verse he might be with Gray in the Churchyard, until he remembers this is the 20th Century. But the effort is too much and Mr. Johnson collapses: "Houses still grow, the children/ Like cabbages are seen:/ Grandfather's thoughts are hidden/ Upon the bowling-green," which is rather weak. Mr. Glover is heard faintly in the third verse, but goes under in an obscure bit about houses and formations, which includes

some sort of pun that doesn't quite come clear. But Mr. Johnson does his best to finish up on a happy note.

One might notice that the double use of cabbages in two significances is a blemish. Also, old-time inversions in the last three verses tend to disrupt the easy rhythm and suggest lack of finesse. Poems of this kind, if they are done at all today, should be done well. Mr. Johnson is writing about a fine, sunny day. In such circumstances nobody could be expected to have his wits about him. Accordingly, it would hardly be fair to blame Mr. Johnson for seeming a little bemused. But one can't help feeling this sort of poem bears out Mr. Reid's contention.

F. W. N. WRIGHT (Christchurch).

STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Sir,—In *Book Shop*, heard from 1XN on October 4, I was interested in an interview with a member of the Country School Library. In this interview the librarian stated that there was a demand for stories for children with a New Zealand setting. The chairman concluded the interview with these words—"Well, there's a chance for New Zealand writers."

It may interest readers to know that many writers in New Zealand are eager and willing to write such stories. The point is, that there is no one here to publish them. It is a matter of costs, we are told—children's books published in New Zealand cannot compete with the cheaper books imported.

I was interested to know just how many such books were published here. I made inquiries at the children's section of our local library. They could produce but one—written and illustrated by Joan Smith. This book, I noticed, carried the names of two publishers—Paul of Hamilton and Whitcombe and Tombs.

I have had some experience in the writing of stories for children in New Zealand. My stories are all published in Australia. Next year, I intend writing a story for children with a New Zealand setting—a book for young Australians to read.

This country provides a wonderful market for writers from overseas—especially for the writers of children's books. Evidence of this may be seen in any bookshop in New Zealand. These books are well bound with attractive covers. And all this adds to the cost. On top of this they come by ship across many seas. And yet, we are told, they are still cheaper than anything published in our own country. Could someone tell me why this is so—someone knowledgeable?

LUNETTE (North Auckland).

MATURED ART

Sir,—J.H.H. has indeed let the cat out of the bag when he quotes the remarks of Picasso on art. Those are my sentiments, too. Like other correspondents I admire Russell Clark's work, but I certainly do not admire the monstrosities in sculpture; in fact, I am filled with thoughts of vandalism. Truly we seem to be living in a mad world. The works of the old music masters are presented in the form of jazz or swing. We have people screaming with delight at the discordant noise—a torture to those with a true appreciation of what constitutes harmony. The literature of today has to contain plenty of sex, crime and thrills to satisfy a sensation-loving public. We are fast losing our capacity of appreciating whatsoever things are

good. Contrast the sculpture of the Greeks with these latest examples of modern art. "Acid and sharp"—yes, that just about covers it.

L. GERARD (Christchurch).

CHILDREN AND MUSIC

Sir,—David Lyons's plea to parents not to force their children to take music lessons was heartrending enough, but one wonders what his advice might be to parents who did give in to the initial rebellion and distaste, and must now submit to reproaches from a seventeen-year-old—"Why didn't you keep me at it in my childhood? Now it's too late." Because it is then too late, unless one has enough application to launch a concentrated attack, devoting four or five hours a day to practice.

A lot of people might derive great personal satisfaction and recreation (in the proper sense of the word), even if they never rise to the heights of public performance or of giving pleasure to their friends, if in childhood their noses are kept kindly but firmly to the grindstone of learning some instrument. No beginnings are easy, and perhaps it's up to parents to provide the drive that, save in the rarest cases, a seven-year old cannot be expected to exhibit.

M.S. (Auckland).

NEW ZEALAND COMPOSERS

Sir,—In his review of the Christchurch Civic Music Council's festival of New Zealand composers' music, your contributor Owen Jensen commented that most of the works performed might have been written 50 or 60 years ago—so free were they from 20th Century influence.

Mr. Jensen obviously did not intend this as a compliment, but actually it was a striking tribute to the good taste and harmonic sanity of the composers represented. I myself listened to the broadcast of that festival, and I was delighted with the high standard, both of creation and performance, revealed by the participants, and the refreshing absence of Bartokery.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

FOREIGNERS SPEAKING

Sir,—In radio plays depicting life in any country other than our own, why should the characters speak in a hideous travesty of the English language? This habit is doubly exasperating in plays based on biography, as the listener assumes that the personalities portrayed spoke their mother tongue with ease. I have just listened to the story of a very famous Frenchwoman, made to sound as if she were suffering simultaneously from strangulation and hiccoughs. Couldn't these vocal gymnastics be reserved only for characters speaking in a language foreign to them?

INEZ S. HAYES (Kao).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Listener (Pukekohe): Thanks for the suggestion, but part of the interest lies in how well or how poorly third party candidates are doing. Shall try to meet your wishes.

J. V. Ede (Tauranga): Information about New Zealand broadcasts only. Full details will be printed later.

W. R. Farnham (Cambridge): The printed programmes were, of course, prepared well before the recordings could be made. Half an hour was left available for them; but for technical and other reasons only three representative items totalling 15 minutes could be selected.

E. S. Stringleman (Plimmerton): Letters on party politics cannot be printed.

W.A.E.G. (Linden): Many thanks.