

SPARS FROM HOKIANGA

Sir,—In a recent interesting broadcast reference was made to a belief at Horeke, on the Hokianga Harbour, that Neison's Victory was masted with kauri spars felled at Hokianga. It is, of course, physically possible that kauri spars reached the Admiralty dockyards prior to 1805, though very unlikely, and unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence for such an assumption. It is, however, quite certain that no such spars were shipped from the Hokianga so early. When the missionaries Kendall and King visited Hokianga Harbour about the end of July, 1819, and Samuel Marsden in early October of the same year (in both cases travelling overland from the Bay of Islands) there was no shipyard at Horeke, nor, indeed, any European resident. There is no recorded visit of Europeans to the Hokianga prior to those of the missionaries. The Horeke shipyard was not established until the eighteen-twenties. The Prince Regent schooner appears to have been the first recorded European vessel to enter the harbour in 1820, but her companion vessel, the Dromedary, loading spars for the Admiralty, would not venture over the bar, and procured her spars at Whangaroa. A. H. REED (Dunedin).

A STATESMAN'S SPEECH

Sir,—If I may be allowed to quote very briefly from the Report on the Repatriation of Korean P.O.W.s by the Neutral Nations Commission, it may help G.H.D. to refrain from such obvious disposition to accept as true what he would like to be so:

The P.O.W. Organisation in the Southern Camps and the leadership which sustained them negate all assumptions or assertions about freedom of choice. As was already stated in the Commission's interim report (para. 11), "any prisoner who desired repatriation had to do so clandestinely and in fear of his life," or under protection offered by the guards of the Custodial Force, India. The Commission must frankly state its conviction, founded on its experience, that in the absence of fuller and further implementation of the Terms of Reference, it would be a bare assertion unsupported by any evidence that the prisoners had voluntarily sought non-repatriation.

The "representatives" of the prisoners (from the southern camps), anxious as they were to prevent any prisoner from breaking away to seek repatriation, so devised the emergence of the prisoners from their compounds as to make it extremely difficult for anyone except the most fearless and desperate prisoner to approach the Indian guards and seek repatriation. Fear of the leaders and influence of the organisation, therefore, prevailed to the very end. (Page 120, para. 32.)

If a perusal of the full report is insufficient to disillusion G.H.D., I would recommend his reading of Wilfred Burchett's book, *This Monstrous War*, and, if he is possessed of a really stout stomach, Wellington and Burchett's *Koje Unscreened*.

The report referred to above is contained amongst other United Nations authorised literature in *Reports of Assembly Official Records, 8th Session, Supplement 18*. It is available at the Auckland Public Library and presumably at libraries in other centres.

H. A. PERMIN (Auckland).

UP FROM THE SLIME

Sir,—G.H.D. apparently wishes us to reject the theory of evolution because some scientists he approves reject it. Hand-picking authorities in this way should enable one to reject practically every religious, political and social theory in the world. The evolutionary theory adopted by the commanding body of scientists is backed by a heavy and growing weight of probability.

The theory that all forms of life have been evolved from one or a few forms

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has been accepted by religious and non-religious scientists. For example, the late Lecomte du Nouy, a Roman Catholic, and internationally celebrated scientist, says scientists can "admit the existence of an evolution of evolutions covering periods of time quite inconceivable to man." He asserts that: "Evolution . . . is dominated by a finality, a precise and distant goal." Of man he says: "Physical man can only be considered as the result of a series of organisms which go back to the most elementary forms of life." And "Man, descended from the marine worms, is today capable of conceiving the future existence of a superior being and of wanting to be his ancestor." For du Nouy evolution is a divinely inspired process.

On the other hand, Sir Charles Sherrington—who seems to be a determinist—in his Gifford Lectures, says: "Nature, read by evolution, now containing higher animal life and man, begins to contain a certain conscious purpose." In his view we should combine our evolved scientific knowledge and ethical judgment to assist this purpose.

It seems that we cannot prove any absolute beginnings or absolute endings. We are seeking to comprehend the mysterious processes going on around us, and the evolutionary theory is proving a workable instrument to that end.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

NESTING BIRDS

Sir,—Like "Sundowner" I have wondered why nesting birds work sporadically, without apparent rhyme or reason. The heap of dry grass is always there for the taking. On some days it is ignored, on others the activity and the wrestling upon it are surprising. The weather must count, of course. On a windless morning two dozen or more sparrows operated a shuttle service to the trees, with loads they could scarcely manage. The air of excitement was intense. This morning they have been carrying freshly-pulled green grass, with the roots still attached. They themselves have pulled out newly-planted arabis, and carried it off, roots and all. Scarcely a plant is left. Similar light-leaved plants, particularly arctotis, have been pulled to pieces. Yet the fresh green of young dianthus has been left untouched.

The cat in the meantime sleeps under a bush, and when the sparrows have need of refreshment they help themselves to her milk. The only thing that seems to cow the sparrows is the arrival of harsh-voiced quail out of the valley.

I have read that starlings will build year after year in the same small crevice in a building where the clumsy young ones have no hope of escaping, and all die. Have birds very little intelligence, or is there some point in their seemingly very haphazard activity and choice of nesting material?

PAUL HENDERSON (Christchurch).

COMMUNISM AND THE WEST

Sir,—I have read the letter by P. J. Alley in *The Listener* of October 1. Here are a few facts on the subject which the writer ignores. No country is Communist today by the vote of the people. In every case—China, Russia, and the satellite countries—it was and is the result of civil war. In no case will the leaders let the people decide through the ballot box. Mr. Alley asks who would like to go back to Tsardom. Surely, Sir, there is an alternative. What about a little democracy? He says

Communists stand in this country for local bodies and Parliaments. Can anti-Communists do this in China and Russia? There are 6000 newspapers in Russia with an average issue of 30,000,000 copies daily, and these are only allowed to continue on the condition that they sell Communism to the people, and this after 38 years of Communism.

Several hundred thousands of East Germans have fled from the workers' Paradise after a very extensive revolt. Almost bare hands were used against the tanks and armaments of their Communist overlords, and the movement is going on at the rate of thousands per week. This is only possible because the boundary is through the large city of Berlin. Polish and other seamen wherever possible seek sanctuary in Britain: tennis players, athletes and embassy staff also. Mr. Alley says some of the Asian countries are a "disgrace to humanity." Could this be the result of the operations of their war lords, or of American imperialism? In the case of India, British merchants went there to trade. They found everything in chaos owing to the break-up of the last Moghul Empire, and to protect their trade gradually brought about order. In due time, in response to a wave of nationalism, they very properly decided it was time to walk out without bloodshed. Bloodshed happened only after the walk-out. If this country ever goes Communist, it will be the result of Communist imperialist invasion from the north, never from the vote of the people. R.J.H. (Wellington).

DAME SYBIL THORNDIKE

Sir,—Your article on Dame Sybil Thorndike and Sir Lewis Casson repeats an error perpetrated in the daily press in stating that they have both been celebrated, singly and together, for over 50 years. Whilst in no way wanting to belittle Dame Sybil's present eminence, anyone familiar with the English Theatre knows that she achieved fame as a mature artist. Her casting in the lead of Shaw's *Saint Joan* was a surprise to many, as up to that time, the early twenties, she was quite unknown to the public, was not in fact "a name." That she worked from 1914 to 1918 at the Old Vic bears this out, as in those pre-Lilian Baylis days no name artists worked this house. The same observation applies to Miss Horniman's players: celebrated in Lancashire no doubt, but hardly of national renown. Your article reads as though compiled from reference books. The true facts are more interesting. Dame Sybil struggled hard and long before recognition came. Many another great artist has, in my opinion, unaccountably failed to achieve wide recognition at all. There is a vast difference between 30 and 50 years. The national press stated that they had jointly "dominated" the English stage for over 50 years, which is a ridiculous statement. I doubt if such a statement could be validly made about anybody, with Noel Coward a possible exception (again 30, not 50 years).

I. R. MAXWELL-STEWART (Wellington).

WELLINGTON POETRY

Sir,—I wish to thank F. W. N. Wright for the comparison of my poem, "Song in the Hutt Valley," with the work of W. B. Yeats. This is to compare my poem with the highest attainment in the particular genre—and, of course, I humbly accept the strictures which

arise of such comparisons. But how niggling, petty and unworthy are the other comments made in the same letter.

This aside, I look forward to seeing your correspondent's knowledge of these matters bringing into print in *The Listener* a poem of the kind which I failed to write.

LOUIS JOHNSON (Lower Hutt).

HUMOROUS WRITING

Sir,—In his review of the recent Pegasus Press book *Take My Tip*, David Hall says, "Messrs. Journet and Magurk remind us how seldom we risk trying to be funny; there is Carl V. Smith's *From N to Z*—and what else?" It is only fair to point out that A. H. and A. W. Reed have added good humorous books to their New Zealand lists in recent years, notably the *Me and Guss* yarns and John Brimblecombe's *Shear Nonsense*. This may seem a small matter, but it does appear to me that New Zealand humorists have a very hard row to hoe to get even grudging recognition. They deserve better, at least, than to have their existence flatly denied.

To be sure, *Take My Tip* is perhaps the most polished of its kind we have had yet, but that should not stop us giving credit all round and telling our Smiths, our Journets, our Magurks and our Brimblecombes that we'd like to see more of their work.

DOROTHY KIRLIN (Wellington).

MUSICAL TASTE

Sir,—Much has been said and written about juvenile delinquency in general, and mainly to the effect that it is largely the result of trashy films and "pulp" publications. But the deplorable influence of pernicious and debasing recordings of the "Hit Parade" type does not seem to be considered. That a big section of misguided listeners should be catered for by the Broadcasting Service in this respect, under the direction of a Minister who also holds the portfolio of Education, is a serious anomaly which has never been explained. Never before has *The Listener* published such an exposure of depraved musical taste as is revealed in the article "You Asked For It," in your issue of October 15.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

NEW ZEALAND ACCENT

Sir,—If the written accent was always an indication of the spoken accent I would not hesitate before deciding in which class to place J.S. (*Listener*, September 24). I find his frantic and missionary letter difficult to consider friendly.

I am a gold miner who believes in the pot full at the end of the rainbow, and the right to pick and choose. I am also a Red Indian brave, who has danced on his own reserve for some time, prepared to pin him with an arrow.

Possibly, it is desirable to create a host of airy tone deaf-o-dills; namely, radio announcers—similarity in pronunciation gives the security of anonymity—but the impossible suggestion that variation in the diction of the people is undesirable, is like wiping dirty hands on a clean towel, or asking the leopard to change its spots. There is no one best species.

I cannot guess the hidden meaning of the handicap referred to in the letter. It is my opinion that if a man believes in his tone of voice, the accent will look after itself.

S. J. NICHOLSON (Matamata).