

RACE RELATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir.—I regret that Mr. Ritchie's reasonably toned comments have been answered by Dr. Winiata and friends with *ad hominem* argument. If Dr. Winiata, for instance, is true in his cheap sneer at "... Mr. Ritchie, whose work, if any, in the Maori field is not known to me..." he confesses his own lamentable failure to keep abreast of current work. For the other abuse, let Mr. Ritchie's Maori friends testify to his real humility and knowledge.

Mr. Ritchie, after all, isn't *advocating* integration; he's facing facts. Even if the symbiosis of Dr. Winiata and his mentor were theoretically desirable, is it practicable, or without dangers? They know that cultures are inextricably shaped by the mode of their socio-economic functioning. Consider South Africa. When common economic patterns (e.g., urban industrial life) tend to unify society, *apartheid* becomes dangerous and impracticable. The same factor is the bogey in a deliberate policy of symbiosis. Deliberate attempts to strengthen separate institutions will then result in mutual rejection, while economic patterns enforce proximity and similarity. Inter-group tensions, and profound conflicts for the marginal man, are inevitable. Or the attempts may relatively fail, but merely perpetuate institutions which are empty shells, bereft of their functional purpose.

Mr. Ritchie would regret the demise of those real satisfactions which he personally knows Maori culture (in the technical sense, not the popular sense of art or craft forms) to offer, and he knows that our society offers little to replace them. But economic forces are against its continued significant functioning, and it isn't ethno-centric for a pakeha to say so. Some institutions may survive; but their power to adapt, not any deliberate "strengthening," will in the long run determine their survival. Buck was sound in suggesting the tangi to be the chief of these. But the divergence between Auckland and Wellington (leaving aside Dr. Winiata's surprising failure to follow Mr. Ritchie's use of "culture") isn't on the significance of these institutions. It is whether they will survive within a separate culture, and should in contemporary society be deliberately and permanently continued. Dr. Winiata is rightly aware of the tragic loss if Maori culture ceases to have functional significance: Mr. Ritchie draws attention to the difficulties, the danger, perhaps the impracticability of trying to counter this loss with a shot of benzedrine into a system of institutions in order to pep up a culture. The loss, the relative emptiness of what our society offers, are not in dispute; but I fear that they will not be stopped by a Canute-like policy of symbiosis.

DENIS GARRETT (Wellington)

Sir.—There are four main sorts of data relevant to the current discussion of race relations in New Zealand. These are: Reports of field research; demographic statistics; other publicly available reports which are indicative of social disorganisation and disruption (for example, crime statistics); and finally, isolated social events which may be reported from time to time, the significance of which is not known except within an interpretative framework. Professor Piddington agrees that few of the first are available, but we differ about the interpretation of the other three sorts of data.

Demographic data allow of limited statistical interpretation; it is research

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

field work which adds their social meaning. Professor Piddington, however, invests the demographic facts with meaning based on evidence of the fourth sort, namely on an interpretation of the meaning of displays of Maori nationalism. This interpretation is used by Professor Piddington and Dr. Winiata to support their belief that most Maori groups are today living with a full and operative social organisation, including an integrated Maori value structure, all of which is said to offer to the Maori a complete range of social and psychological satisfactions. These scholars also believe that contemporary Maori social phenomena are not indicative of serious social disorganisation. Such a belief I maintain is gratuitous because unpalatable. Only extended research will settle the question at issue. Working purely on the hypothesis of social disorganisation (while the basic task of research progresses), I am suggesting that we aim at removing social evils, poverty, ignorance, and the rest, while attempting to increase social participation and communication between Maori and European, both as persons and as groups. It is not my wish to interfere with anyone's legitimate cultural aspirations provided these are a sign of integration and adjustment. But since Professor Piddington's interpretations may be in error, and these aspirations may represent, in fact, a turning away from the realities of economic and social disorganisation, an acceptance of illusions, I consider it undesirable that a romantic cultural interest current among scholars and intelligentsia be used to bolster a nativistic revival.

Incidentally, I see no reason to assume, as do several of my Maori critics, that pakeha field reports are so unreliable as to give no satisfactory understanding of Maori life. I see no reason why I should throw into my wastepaper basket copies of Percy Smith, Elsdon Best, Tregear, Firth, Keesing, Hawthorn and Sutherland. I am also sure that any University department is more than happy to offer all the facilities at its disposal for the training of Maoris in scholarship and research. The point at issue in Dr. Winiata's letter is really quite simple. Should we have in New Zealand a policy of "two peoples: one nation," or should our policy be based upon one country, one people?

Professor Piddington is no doubt far more familiar with anthropological literature than I am. I find it difficult therefore to understand why, in the light of his reading and experience, he should choose to ignore the disruptive consequences of "apartness" policies. Throughout the world there are examples of the effects of this principle among deprived and embittered minority groups. It is difficult to see what operationally valid guarantee Professor Piddington and Dr. Winiata can give themselves, let alone others, that an "apartness" policy such as they advocate will not be as disastrous here as elsewhere.

The values which I bring to this discussion are the values given by my training as a social scientist and are therefore not determined by my membership of any ethnic group. If ethnocentricity means valuing freedom for individual development rather than synthetically rebuilding and enforcing the authority of an outmoded social system, then I welcome the accusation. However, ethnocentricity does not commonly mean this, and in assessing my

values Professor Piddington has made a sampling error due, I suspect, to his over-hasty penchant for generalisation.

JAMES E. RITCHIE (Wellington).

(No further letters can be printed on this subject if they are more than 300 words in length.—Ed.)

ANNA RUSSELL

Sir.—The writer of a letter in your issue of April 22, signed "Anglican," has accused Anna Russell, broadcasting on March 31, of making remarks—"in the worst taste" about the singing of "small boys in surplices." There is no arguing about taste, of course, especially with pompous people—the last sentence in "Anglican's" letter is surely the most laughably pompous remark of the year so far—but perhaps "Anglican" would reflect on why your periodical has not been flooded with similar protesting letters signed "Opera Lover," "Only an Amateur," "Folk Song Enthusiast," "Pro-Pibroch" and a hundred other such.

W. L. ATKINSON (Whangarei).

Sir—"Anglican's" letter about "small boys in surplices" reads like the letters about the "Bison" joke in *Take It From Here*. But I do think it was extremely short-sighted of the Broadcasting Service not to stop all local-artist programmes while Miss Russell was in the country.

D. F. MCKENZIE (Wellington).

Sir.—The concentrated attack on Anna Russell by "Anglican," conducted on a very narrow front, provokes me to doggerel thus:

Shaking your bustle
At Miss Anna Russell
Will undoubtedly make you conspicuous,
But surely reflection
Will prove such objection
To be quite completely ridiculous.

(Mixed chorus)

Please pardon the peasantry's
Pooh-poohing of pure pedantry
(Our taste is so terribly low!)

I feel certain that here at least there will be no shortage of choristers.

PLACID PEASANT (Wellington).

SONG TITLES

Sir.—A programme note for 3ZB, April 7, remarks on the length and inanity of some song titles. "In Gilly Gilly Ossena feffer Katzenellen Bogen By The Sea" is certainly a mouthful, but in length it is outstripped by the Oedipus-complex sounding "I Want A Girl Just Like The Girl That Married Dear Old Dad." By cheating a little it is possible to go one better with the even more Freudian "How Can You Believe Me When I Say I Love You (When You Know I've Been A Liar All My Life)."

But surely the nadir of bathos and banality was reached in the early 1920's by the two gentlemen who composed a lament entitled "They Needed a Song-bird In Heaven So God Took Caruso Away?"

PETER HARCOURT (Wellington).

CHOICE OF PROGRAMMES

Sir.—Two correspondents, "Educated Archie's Grandmother" of Wellington and "M.W." of Christchurch, have written you in recent weeks on the over-use of the wide-band links at present being carried out by the National Division of the NZBS. Ever since broadcasting began in this country it has never been run properly and this present set-up is just another step backwards. The way the national division is being

controlled now, would it not be cheaper to have just one station broadcasting?

You may say that this move would cause less selection of programmes, but I ask you, what selection have we now? If you don't like what the broadcasting authorities try to push on to you, then what say do we have? Should a person raise his voice in condemnation of what the Service is doing, he is immediately shouted down. Chances are this letter will never be printed, just because I am not in agreement with what the Broadcasting Service does; and yet we are led to believe that this is one of the greatest little democratic countries in the world. The whole set-up reeks of regimentation, red-tape by the mile, and bureaucracy. I could go on for hours just supporting my claims, but what's the use, they'd never be printed.

M.G.M. (Dunedin).

"ART IS NEVER EASY"

Sir.—Letters appearing under this heading have been interesting, but the latest suggestion regarding heads on postage stamps savours of pot-hunting. The suggestion that our beloved Queen's head should be superseded by one of Katherine Mansfield is ill-timed and in bad taste.

The attempt to influence your readers to an appreciation by New Zealanders of the Misses Hodgkins and Mansfield's art is not deserving of much thought. Frances Hodgkins was, by her own words, not proud of New Zealanders as connoisseurs of art, but those who remember Miss Hodgkins, as I do in her youth, saw no reason to go into raptures over her paintings. Contemporary with Miss Hodgkins were artists of very great ability, such as L. W. Wilson, water and oils; O'Keefe, portrait painter in oils; the two Moultrays, father and son, the elder noted for the remarkable detail of his paintings; Robert F. Smith, a fine water-colour artist, and many others. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to have visited the great art galleries of London, Paris, Holland, etc., know the difference between genius and mediocrity.

After 30 years' experience as a book-seller I have yet to learn why Miss Mansfield is being so highly written up. Her writings were never in demand, and from what I know of them I think we should agree with the English critic who invited New Zealanders to drop Miss Mansfield and get on with the living. One cannot help but regret that the Government agreed to the spending of £600 on a biography of one whose claim to fame is obscure. One of the greatest monuments is to do something for the living.

PILL BOX (Gisborne).

TRUE CONFESSIONS

Sir.—Writers are so often getting brickbats in your columns that a small bouquet may come as a change. I always think *The Listener* worth my fourpence when it contains stories by M.B. Perhaps if more mothers combined a sense of humour and tolerance towards their children's activities as she does we would hear less of children becoming delinquents by carrying on their activities outside the home.

P.L.I. (Lower Hutt).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

S. B. Holt (Torbay): Letters must deal with broadcasting or with topics arising from the contents of *The Listener*.