

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

Sir,—I was performing this morning with my two-year-old daughter, participating joyfully in Kindergarten of the Air, as I had done with my older children when the session first began years ago. I wondered, if it isn't too late, if I could voice for thousands of mothers, teachers and children, our warm appreciation, and thanks to Miss Jean Combs (Mrs. Desmond Buckley), who has lately retired from the position of Supervisor of Broadcasts to Schools and Children's Programmes.

Her excellent choice of teachers (I'm sure Ernest Jenner's sessions are listened to by as many adults as children), and the high quality of the educational programmes using the medium of dramatisation, were shown clearly, for example, in School Broadcasts and the Children's Holiday Programmes. Also, few people would have failed to notice the marked general improvement in Children's Sessions since Miss Combs was appointed Supervisor of Children's Programmes in 1953, or that at the same time each station still reflected and retained its own local colour.

Miss Combs undoubtedly has been a fine administrator, a necessary qualification in her job, but I think that her real strength and success lay in her sensitive understanding of children. She has modestly pioneered and created much of the work that we know, enjoy and take for granted—and we are grateful to her.

HELEN BREW (Wellington).

COOK STRAIT POWER DISCUSSION

Sir,—If radio talks are to have any value or to command any respect in New Zealand, it is essential that they be free from political control. The Supervisor of Talks is entitled to exercise the same degree of control that is exercised by the editor of any good newspaper, in order to ensure a suitable standard, but the essential idea of free speech, of enabling the public to hear both sides of a question that vitally affects them, is of paramount importance.

The proposal for a Cook Strait power cable has been freely discussed in public by Government speakers. Three programmes have been given over the air in which the Gotland cable was described, and, as has been said, these programmes from Mr. Williams in Sweden "showed the Gotland experiment in a favourable light, and, by linking that experiment with the New Zealand situation, did direct attention to the possibility of a similar installation here. Indeed, the programmes were intended to arouse public interest in New Zealand."

In this they certainly succeeded, and the Broadcasting Service wished to give the public both sides of the case. Broadcast discussions were therefore arranged, with some speakers on each side. One such discussion was to be held by a South Island group, and another by a North Island group, intended to include both professional and lay opinion on each side. This intention was admirably fair. Moreover, it should be remembered that addresses which the public had previously heard or read in reports were from Government officials, and that the narrow confines of Government employment, if subject to political control, do not readily permit a wide view, still less an opposing view, such as may be essential if the truth is to be discovered.

The broadcast that was arranged for May 10 was, however, cancelled as a result of pressure brought to bear upon

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the Broadcasting Service, a pressure which could not be withstood without vigorous help from the Minister in Charge of Broadcasting. That help was not forthcoming, and so the freedom of speech in this country was pushed a further step downhill towards the compelled silence of the Iron Curtain countries.

Important as the whole subject of power supply certainly is to New Zealand, the matter of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of broadcast discussion is far more important still. If sufficiently strong protests are now made public, it is to be hoped that good will come out of evil, and that the Government will be forced to give the Broadcasting Service a guarantee of freedom from political interference and censorship, equal to that now enjoyed by newspapers and by speakers at public meetings. Truth is more important than dictatorship.

ARTHUR LUSH (Christchurch).

(What Mr. Lush justly calls "the essential idea of free speech," to enable the public to hear "both sides of a question that vitally affects them," is in fact one of the principles by which the Broadcasting Service regulates the discussion of controversial questions. It implies that any question should be fairly and competently discussed in the full light of the evidence. As the Minister in Charge of Broadcasting, the Hon. R. M. Algie, has already indicated, discussion of this question is not suppressed, but was deferred by his decision till the results of a special scientific investigation that had been ordered and was in progress could illuminate it.—Ed.)

QUIET WEDDING

Sir,—I am bound to say I was disappointed by your editorial article of May 4 on the Monaco wedding, or rather, upon certain circumstances attendant upon the occasion, for of the wedding itself and the bridal couple there is virtually no mention.

As an essay satirising the frenzied nonsense that passes for "society" behaviour, and as a reminder of the real character of some of the personages so behaving, your article will have met with a just approval. It is to be hoped then that readers will not have failed to see the beauty of the wedding through the fog which these uncouth beings raised around it, to the profound embarrassment, we may be sure, of the Prince and his bride.

The press generally seems to have missed an opportunity to highlight the heart of the affair, which, surely, is the entirely good example, set in the most public way, by both the Prince's and Miss Kelly's Christian devotion, each of them proving that in neither the circle of high society nor that of the film world is it necessary to live a loose life. Neither has anything to forget (e.g., in the way of a divorce) in coming to a true marriage and both are devout adherents to the Church and Sacraments. I am sure that all true-minded folk will rejoice in this state of affairs and regret that so little attention was paid to the essentials of the occasion.

J. C. P. LAND (Cambridge).

Sir,—Sometimes your leading articles annoy me, and this week was one of them. I was not amused by your supposed to be amusing remarks about the Grace Kelly wedding. Just because it is a very small country does not make Prince Rainier III any less a prince. There was a lot of publicity about our own Royal wedding too, and perhaps you thought the same about that, but did not like to say so. All women loved reading about

our Royal wedding, in every little detail, the same as we all loved reading about the Kelly wedding; perhaps more so, on account of the terrific romance attached.

It may surprise you to learn that a lot of people knew *before* the wedding that the people of Monaco are called Monegasques. Another thing, you sneer at the Casino, saying that gambling is their main contribution to the work and welfare of mankind. Have you forgotten that the people of Monaco as a whole are bringing up families, even as you and I, and no doubt there are butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers there, earning a living, leading good lives, perhaps helping each other, and being charitable, quite apart from any gambling. To my mind, our T.A.B. is a far more cold-blooded way of contributing to the country's finances than the colourful Casino at Monte Carlo, but because we have the T.A.B. in our midst it does not mean that it is our sole contribution to the work and welfare of mankind. A woman who is bringing up a family, and doing her housework, and looking after her husband in an efficient manner, is leading the life she was intended to live, no matter what her country.

A previous leader of yours about men wearing pyjamas, when you threw Dr. Marie Stopes into the discard because of her views, also annoyed me. Pyjamas are much more suitable wear for women than they are for men, from reasons of health, as Dr. Stopes meant, and hundreds of years ago Eastern women wore pyjamas, and men wore togas, and nightshirts. In America, nightshirts are coming in again, and are much more comfortable. **JUST A HOUSEWIFE** (Wellington).

CALLING ALL BANDSMEN

Sir,—I wish to compliment you on your article "Calling All Bandsmen" in *The Listener* of May 11. The information given by Dr. Wright was concise and informative. The snobbishness that he says is not as marked here as in England will come as a surprise to some people who tend to regard brass band music as somewhat low brow. If they would listen to the music that is played by a band in the light of a brass ensemble instead of comparing them to a symphony orchestra they will enjoy the beauty of tone that Dr. Wright speaks about. We know the failures of brass bands in certain types of music, but if such conductors as Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent do not consider it degrading to conduct brass bands, why should lesser beings, in their ignorance, brush this type of music aside?

There are good and bad brass bands just as there are good and bad orchestras. I am sure all brass band enthusiasts will look forward with pleasure to this programme.

N. H. YOUNG (Auckland).

BBC BROADCASTS

Sir,—I can sympathise with Roberta Highton (*Listener*, April 20) over the criticism of the BBC announcers, for as a second generation New Zealander and constant listener I feel that their voices and pronunciation are usually so clear that this is quite undeserved. But I must add that, like C. W. Thevenard (*Listener*, April 13) I have found a few of the speakers in talks far from easy to follow. I would like to point out to Roberta Highton, however, that every Dominion seems to be evolving its own

way of speaking and pronouncing English, just as America has done. This young and growing country must not be expected to try to remain a shadow of the mother country, much as we admire her way of life. We are told that we are the most English of the Dominions, and perhaps this leads English people to expect too much of us. Other outside influences will leave their mark on a country so isolated by distance from the world's centres.

Surely Roberta Highton's scathing remarks could not only be engendered by the criticism of two unappreciative listeners to the BBC. Perhaps there has been an expectation of an exact replica of the English way of life out here. If we fail by English standards (in her eyes) in other ways we must, as New Zealanders, plead guilty, but we cannot honestly apologise. For this is New Zealand! **UNDESERVED** (Katikati).

THE GOON SHOW

Sir,—I am one who fully agrees with the views of your correspondent "S-on G-how" in your issue of April 27 on the above. I have listened only once to the broadcast and that was enough. We are getting far too much of this kind of entertainment over the radio, and it is about time the half-hour wasted on this kind of rubbish on Saturdays from 9.30 p.m. to 10.0 p.m. was replaced by some good music. In recent months we have had *Take It From Here*, *Calling Miss Courtneidge*, *Hancock's Half Hour* and *Much Binding*, all much on the same lines as the *Goon Show*. If we have to have a little variety, then let it be confined to *Radio Roadhouse*, our NZBS production. A few nights ago while 2YA was broadcasting Parliament I tried in vain to tune in for a programme of good music. All I could get was *Book Shop* from 2YX, *Book Shop* from 3YA and another talk from 3YC. We are also getting a plethora of plays now over the air, some of them of a not very edifying nature. Our radio, like that of your correspondent "S-on G-how," is now far more silent as a consequence. **J.R.R.** (Wellington).

Sir,—Why are you and your contributors so enchanted with *The Goon Show*? (Two covers, two articles, several references.) I don't enjoy it in the least, and I've met only one person who does. Presumably somebody does or it would be taken off. Am I and my friends all out of step? Is it an acquired taste?

Mind you, I do think that man plays the mouth organ nicely.

P.M. (Hastings).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. J. Sheat (Mt. Albert): No photograph available at present. But should not your reference have been to Lincoln Ellsworth?

Old-Timer (Christchurch): Successive series of that programme have played up and down the country for several years and at various times. It is impossible to alter a current placement in an Auckland programme to suit a listener in Christchurch, pleasant as it would be to please him!

Old Listener (Temuka): Administrative, programme, advertising, technical and clerical? No idle hands there.

Regretful (New Plymouth): The series arrived late and the programmes have been placed as well as they could be, when others had to be displaced to admit them.

T.B.H. (Ohingaiti): Contributors are not obliged to answer criticisms from correspondents.

J.A.B. (Auckland): Interesting, but afraid space not available for individual reviews. Criticism should be confined to special points with which you may be in disagreement.

D. E. M. Thomson (Hokitika): Thanks for suggestion. To save space, however, those items have to be grouped with light music.