

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—Because other listeners may be influenced by what Mr. L. D. Austin had to say on this page about jazz in New Zealand, and because *The Listener's* new jazz policy ought to be encouraged to continue, I'd like to reply.

Of course "a volume of pernicious trash" is broadcast (and must be, because a lot of people want it), but it is not jazz. The over-commercialised "Band of Gold," "Shifting, Whispering Sands" type, or anything noisy and with a rapid tempo is still, here, thrown by many into a bin labelled jazz. What constitutes an art-form, however, must be defended; and when a singer or instrumentalist of good technical skill (and in jazz this reaches the heights) opens his mouth or works at his instrument sincerely to express himself, that is art. He is giving something of worth to *somebody*. (We may say we don't like his art-form and refuse to listen, but he must be allowed to continue for those who do. If you're not interested in pottery, sculpture, or architecture, you say so, and your own business it is too. But to say it's rubbish would be both fantastic and outrageous. If I am an expert in one art field do I think I can condemn another?)

To quote again from the same sad source as before, there is really "nothing more to be said," in terms of justification; jazz being in "incontrovertible fact" an *art-form*. Consider—much of the jazz idiom is used in contemporary classical-music writing. Many significant jazz writers and performers are not making money, because they value artistic expression more, and so keep to the only art-form they know. Far more significant and celebrated symphonic musicians than the one mentioned earlier study and execute serious jazz. For sheer technical brilliance, musical imagination in improvisation, cleverness of arrangement and orchestration, jazz demands attention.

When I am deeply moved by a Beethoven symphony, or enchanted by an aria from Tebaldi or a Scarlatti piece, I want other people to share it and feel sorry for those who can't. This last feeling I also have about the Austins of the world when I hear certain jazz. One must find out for oneself what this certain jazz is. How often have you heard said to someone who doesn't care for classical music, "If only you listened, and got to know it!" Well? It works both ways.

DAVID LITTIN (Whangarei).

Sir,—L. D. Austin has shown commendable restraint in confining his latest attack on "jazz" to a single letter. Unfortunately, his passion for brevity has resulted—in my case—in several questions being unanswered.

Does he consider it the duty of the NZBS to take sides in a (real or imaginary) battle between the forces of jazz and "musical refinement"? Does Mr. Austin suggest that a Member of Parliament should use his position as Minister of one department to influence the operation of an entirely different department under his control? One of the few politicians in the free world with a nation's broadcasting facilities directly under his control, Mr. Algie carries out his unenviable task fairly and with consideration for the varied tastes of the licence-holders for whom he is trustee. He would be betraying that trust if he denied a section of the community the kind of programmes it wanted because a smaller group labelled that kind of music "pernicious trash."

Does your correspondent advocate a cultural dictatorship which will give us, not what we want but what it (or Mr.

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Austin) considers is good for us? In what, if any, country, does such a broadcasting service exist?

As a licence-holder and a voluntary subscriber to a broadcasting service, Mr. Austin is entitled to express a view on the material broadcast. Regardless of his undoubted experience in certain fields of music, his opinion on this issue is worth something less than one half-millionth of the total and is exactly equal in value to the opinion held by a teenager who has a radio licence. While this state of affairs continues the majority of listeners will be well satisfied.

TOLERANT (Wellington).

THE MEDICINE BILL

Sir,—Listening to the *Question Mark* programme on our drug bill my sympathies were with the officer of the Health Department, who found himself hamstrung in replying to the cogent arguments of the other panel members. If an anonymous general practitioner had been on the panel he could have explained "patient pressure" in terms of those who present themselves demanding vitamin preparations for which their doctor can find no indication, or sedatives and hypnotics (usually a barbiturate specified by the patient) for minor psychiatric illness. Investigations of prescribing in the United Kingdom show a high proportion of these two groups of drugs. These patients announce openly their intention of obtaining their demands elsewhere if any attempt is made to investigate their real needs, and as Dr. Sutch drily commented—a doctor has to live.

Though no one denies the right of patients to receive medicine which is necessary to maintain their health, the real problem is surely the set-up which tends to lower the position of the family doctor to that of a purveyor of drugs prescribed by the patient. The economic pressures on the doctor tending towards over-prescribing (e.g., the need to spend an average of less than fifteen minutes with each patient) were also hinted at.

R.E. (Dunedin).

POLIO VACCINATION

Sir,—Listening to a National panel discussion in the Women's Session from 1YA recently, I heard the woman speaker state that medical opinion is almost unanimous in approving polio vaccination. The speaker is not to be blamed for the statement, of course, since all information that might cast doubts on the safety and efficacy of polio vaccination has been rigidly suppressed.

New Zealand parents should know that the BBC broadcast letters from listeners both for and against polio vaccination, and invited two doctors—one in favour and one against—to sum up the advantages and disadvantages. It is significant, I think, that in England and Wales only 29 per cent of the children between the ages of two and nine have received their parents' consent to be vaccinated.

How is it that the Health Department here can play God and see that the public hears only one side of the question—that which the Health Department thinks it is good for the public to know? Are these bureaucrats by any chance infallible? If so, they must be a unique species of the human race. How is it that Dr. Turbott can broadcast in favour of polio vaccination, but no speaker with opposite views is invited to do so? How is it that *The Listener* prints two articles on the subject by Dr. Turbott, but nothing of the reverse

viewpoint? Is it, perhaps, because if the full truth about polio vaccination were known, the percentage of children to receive the vaccine would not be in the 80's as it is now, but nearer the British figure? There are many interested parties who would not be pleased if the scheme failed to "go over."

MARY I. STROOBANT (Auckland).

(This letter was shown to Dr. H. B. Turbott, Deputy-Director-General of Health, who replied as follows: "The statement in the panel discussion that medical opinion is almost unanimous in approving polio vaccination is correct. That does not mean that the medical world believes it to be the final answer, but rather that it is the best protection yet devised, and that it should be used in countries with a high incidence of poliomyelitis until a better vaccine is devised. The World Health Organisation at its meeting at Geneva in May, 1956, with doctors representing 88 countries attending, unanimously agreed to advise countries plagued with poliomyelitis to use the vaccine immediately it became available.

"As far as is known no New Zealand doctor is opposed to the use of the vaccine. The Health Department, in recommending the vaccine, is guided not only by W.H.O., but by an expert New Zealand Medical Committee representing the academic and practising medical profession. Of course, there has been a certain amount of reservation! We all had it after the U.S.A. initial mistake. However, the measures taken after that mistake have satisfied world experts, and everywhere now the vaccine is being accepted as being as safe as it is humanly possible to make it."—Ed.)

ON THE SEVENTH DAY

Sir,—Your correspondent P. J. Alley takes too much for granted. Apart altogether from the question of whether man has "emerged from a lower intelligence," which is only guesswork anyway, he will surely admit that man has come quite a distance since prehistoric man first observed a day of rest. There was, for example, a highly educated man named Moses, whom both Jews and Christians agree to have had something to do with instituting a day of rest every seventh day. That made rest orderly and gave it a purpose. So far, there is no need for differences. However, the early Christians, living in a pagan society, often as slaves with no rest day whatever, met daily, with special emphasis on the first day of the week in commemoration of their Founder's Resurrection. It is as simple as that.

The dispute arose when certain elements sought to impose the Jewish Sabbath on Christians. Obviously, viewed purely as a rest day, one day is as good as another. But the significance of the day observed is felt by Christians and Jews alike to be a matter of some moment.

D. F. B. EYRES (Nelson).

TIME TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE

Sir,—Your criticism of those "who feel unable to express an opinion in letters to papers except over a pen-name" reminds me of other such comments I have seen and with which I firmly disagree. Logically, there is no real point or importance in signing the name, as long as the editor is aware of the details. The subject matter of the letter is what counts, not a writer's identity. The only occasion on which the latter point might seem important is when a publicly known person is writing in to stress certain debating angles with which his name is already associated. Otherwise, signature or non-de-plume could not matter less.

There is an erroneous idea prevalent that guilty inhibition or "shamefacedness" must be responsible for disinclination to air one's name—this is needling at complexities which do not even exist. Everyone has simple reasons why they like to use a pen-name—one reason, the writer may have relations who share his

name, but not his more controversial views, so he does not wish to cause embarrassment. Again, a use of a variety of pen-names obviates the chance of the constant writer to the press becoming a tedious bore by continuous flourishing of his quite insignificant signature. Several do this, self-righteously, and I for one would find their repetitive opinions more refreshing over a change of name! As for lack of humour and anaemic discussion—those will always remain faults of the self-satisfied nation.

LESS EGO (Wellington).

(There are, of course, people who have good reasons for not signing their names, and who use anonymity with discretion; but we have found that opinion is generally more responsible when it appears over a signature.—Ed.)

"HORI AND DAD"

Sir,—I wonder if J. McL.H. has ever seen a *Radio Roadhouse* performance? If so, he surely wouldn't make such a statement about Hori and Dad. After never having missed a live show of *Radio Roadhouse*, we can tell him the Maoris are certainly not being made clowns of. All the Maoris I know are good-humoured and sensible enough to take this as the joke it is meant to be. We personally think Hori is the starring part of this fabulous show. I know we pakehas wouldn't mind Barry Linehan giving us the same treatment.

S.D. and P.R. (Auckland).

CRICKET SUMMARIES

Sir,—Many New Zealanders do not approve of the immigration policy. However, they must realise that with the world's ever-growing population all nations are greedily looking for underpopulated countries to which they can export some overspill population.

The question is, Sir, which nationals would New Zealanders least like in their land? Should the answer be English, perhaps you would disregard the letter from "Civis" (Wanganui), who is obviously not a cricket enthusiast.

JOHN PARKER (Wellington).

STANDARD PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—I have every sympathy with provincial variations, but must confess that in *Episodes in the Life of Sir George Grey* Professor Rutherford's pronunciation of the "o" in Governor and government as in poverty or pot irritates me as a conscious affectation.

As for pronouncing korero as Ko-ree-ro, how delightfully English it is!

KATA (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Half-Hour (Dunedin), C.W.C. (Timaru), and *Ingrid* (Whangarei): Thank you. Will pass it on.

W. R. Carson (Huntly): The correspondence is closed.

H.H. (Whakatane), and G.L.C. (Alexandra): Regret space not available for all letters received on that subject.

Dimwit (New Brighton): (1) When—"w": hen. (2) No significance beyond its position in the clue.

Opera Lover (Henderson): P for Pagliacci, C for Cavalleria R.: November 13, 1955, P at 4YC; December 4, 1955, C at 2YC; January 8, 1956, P at 2YC, C at 4YC. Next presentations, none before January, 1957. For extracts, put requests to Programme Organiser, 1YA; he will gladly consider them.

Disappointed (Ngaio): Persons who neither walk nor motor nor garden at that time are perhaps more numerous than you suggest, and are entitled to hear a good programme. But you may count on hearing it replayed in the evening, probably early next year.

Groucho (Christchurch): (1) Not announcers at all; recorded productions, commissioned and paid for by the advertiser, just as he commissions and pays for space and type and illustrations in the newspaper. (2) You would be just as right, no more, no less, if you said the intelligent reader discounts the whole thing and just pleases himself.