

THE INTERVENTION

Sir,—I have just heard an eminent New Zealander broadcasting in *Lookout*. He stressed the impotence of Britain, her loss of prestige, and her very serious financial difficulties. He concluded that it was time we made new affiliations with America. Surely he did not mean what his words seemed to imply. What sort of renegades are we that we should consider deserting the Mother Country in her hour of need?

We owe everything to the fostering care of the Mother Country. She gave us complete liberty, and never once infringed upon it, except to restrict the settlers in their exploitation of the native race. This, though it enraged the settlers at the time, has redounded to our credit. We are proud of our Maoris, and of our treatment of them. When, despite the restraining influence of Britain, we managed to precipitate a Maori war, Britain still sent troops for our protection.

What power but the might of the British Navy allowed this infant colony to refuse admission to all the undesirable and indigent hordes that were ready to flock here? This gave us the inestimable advantage of being able to develop our country largely with European stock. Incredible as it may seem, we had the temerity to refuse entrance to British subjects—that is, to those who paid for the Navy that allowed us to exercise this power.

In the twenties, when unemployment was strangling Great Britain, her Government three times asked us to take British migrants and settle them on our waste land. She offered a most generous share of the cost, and to take back all misfits. Yet three times we definitely refused. Britain has demanded nothing from New Zealand, not even exclusive trade rights. Of the circumstances that brought about Britain's present loss of prestige, there will be various criticisms and opinions, but in the end they are our responsibility. The results, the humiliations, or possible triumphs are ours. We waste our time on recriminations. Rather let us rouse New Zealanders to remember that we are British, that we belong to the Commonwealth, and that loyalty should prompt us to stand by the Mother Country in her darkest, as in her finest hour.

HELEN WILSON (Hamilton).

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Sir,—Mr. Maxwell-Stewart's recent statement that most books of reference are delightfully vague as to the actual date of the invention of the saxophone is quite true. I have done a great deal of research into the life of Adolphe Sax and have found that hardly any two books of reference agree, or even attempt to give the precise year of its invention. It was, however, a surprise for me to read Mr. Maxwell-Stewart's statement that the instrument was invented in 1820—especially as he quotes a programme in the possession of Professor Sigurd Ruscher as his authority. Maybe Mr. Maxwell-Stewart is not aware that Sax was not born until 1814, and would therefore have only been six years old when he invented the instrument.

Perhaps there is some confusion with the immediate predecessors of the saxophone. These were a nameless instrument which was really a clarinet with a bent mouthpiece and bell (not the bass clarinet) constructed by Desfontenelles in 1807, and the "tenoroon," which was simply a bassoon with a small clarinet-like mouthpiece fitted to the end of the bassoon crook.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

The actual idea of constructing the brass saxophone is said to have been suggested to Sax by both the clarinet which, when over-blown, sounded an octave instead of a twelfth, and the ophicleide, which was made of brass and has similar tone holes. In this respect Mr. Maxwell-Stewart's statement must be regarded as quite in order, as nobody really knows how Sax came to devise the instrument.

It is of more than passing interest to note that Oscar Comettant, in a biography of Adolphe Sax published in 1860, states that Hector Berlioz was one of Sax's most enthusiastic supporters and often helped him—even to the extent of organising concerts featuring his new instruments. For one of these in 1843, Berlioz wrote a sextet featuring the saxophone which, unfortunately, has since been lost. The work was conducted by the composer himself with Sax playing the saxophone part.

The instrument was not quite finished on the day of the concert and Comettant relates that "Sax, a man never discouraged by difficulties, tied the keys on with string, and held the other parts of the instrument together with sealing wax. After a long tutti, which filled the hall with a powerful but gentle sound, each player had a skilfully written solo passage which showed the advantages of his instrument. The last and most important passage was for the saxophone. A long-held note was conspicuously featured near the end of this solo. Sax played the note with great calm and assurance, swelling and diminishing the sound, giving it every nuance possible. He had forgotten the fingering of the next note, and kept going in order to gain time. Finally his memory came back, just as his lungs were about exhausted. The passage ended, and the audience burst into enthusiastic applause: it appeared to the listeners that this very long holding of the note was proof of immense skill, and a bold and happy instrumental inspiration. The concert was a genuine triumph for the inventor." S. P. NEWCOMB (Eltham).

"A BIRTHDAY OFFERING"

Sir,—Mr. Mason has saved me the trouble of putting Mr. Crowe in his place, and has done so in his customary impeccable style. Maybe I am an "old dog who barks at what he cannot understand" but at least I am not a young puppy who is not yet house-trained. Mr. Mason refers to Mr. Crowe's "undoubted musical gifts" with which I am no more acquainted than Mr. Crowe is with my "musical Kitsch." I have seen Mr. Crowe's name associated with the Society of Contemporary Music, but on the only occasion I attended one of their "concerts" I came away with a sense of bewildered nausea such as I experienced when I viewed the recent open-air display of "art" in Wellington. For Mr. Crowe's edification my musical experience started long before he was born and my "musical Kitsch" had been performed by the Portland Symphony (Van Hoogstraten), the Boston Symphony (Serge Koussevitzky) and La Scala, Milan (Alberto Bimboni). Oddly enough these rather good conductors were all of mature years and could actually converse.

After listening carefully to a repetition of "A Birthday Offering" I see no reason to change my opinion. I would remind Mr. Crowe and Mr. Mason that the general student and the professional

musician are equally prone to form preposterous ideas of the demands which a great piece of music makes upon the technical experience of the listener. As Sir Donald Tovey said, "Nothing bores me more intensely than a composer with a new system of harmony." In any case, harmony is a very much larger musical category than any harmonic theorist, classical or revolutionary, has made of it.

Mr. Mason is brilliant and talented, but much as I admire him I have never hesitated to "lambaste" him if I thought he deserved it. We are all entitled to our own views and controversy keeps the arts alive, but I cannot and will not remain silent when the very high standards I set for music and the theatre are, in my opinion, debased or outraged. Hence my "choleric temperament." To Mr. Mason for his courteous, tolerant and eminently just letter I say "Thank you," though I cannot share his delight in "A Birthday Offering."

In conclusion may I quote from the music critic of *Musical Opinion*, London, whose reviews are published regularly. He says: "Mr. Horsley's piano recital . . . is drawn from the conventional repertoire save for the Sonata of Douglas Lilburn . . . Mr. Horsley's enterprise on behalf of his fellow-countryman is commendable, but despite his eloquent advocacy, it may be doubted if any member of the audience had the slightest desire to hear the work again. Its three brief movements are harsh, angular and percussive, containing little harmonic or melodic interest, and indeed, scarcely a single idea worth recording."

L. ASSHETON HARBORD
(Lower Hutt).

CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sir,—It would be unfortunate if listeners were lulled by Dr. K. Stallworthy's comforting reassurances about "the law" and its practical effectiveness in protecting society into believing that no ripple of dissatisfaction ever stirs the surface of the minds of those interested in this problem. The Reports of the Justice Department show a keen appreciation of the need to improve our penal policy by more careful individual assessment of offenders and even an awareness that imprisonment may at times make people more dangerous to society. Even Dr. Stallworthy's complacency about the facilities for psychotherapy are not apparently shared by the Department.

As for the McNaughten Rules, has he heard that in 1953 a Royal Commission in U.K. recommended their abolition? Or has he heard of the Durham decision in U.S.A.? This bids to change radically our archaic criteria for legal responsibility, which he admitted are ignored unless the opinion of the Government psychiatrists is challenged.

R.E. (Dunedin).

CHILDREN'S SESSION

Sir,—Each week the *Listener* presents reviews of various broadcasting personalities. The criticism and appraisals are often very stimulating and sometimes rather unnecessarily petty, as I felt was the case towards Colleen at 2YA. It seemed as if the reviewer tried to minimise her undoubted talent and popularity with the younger folk by drawing comparisons with programmes performed some years ago under the headings of "Comic serials and Operettas." These efforts were to my mind nothing short of chaotic. Let us hope that an out-

burst of this sort of talent will not occur again. After all, this session should be for children and not just a vehicle to give vent to the musical meanderings of some mike-happy youths.

Colleen's understanding and tact with children is something which is quite a delight to witness. Has our reviewer ever watched her conducting her children's quiz programmes on Saturday afternoon? I have never seen crowds of children so charmed as they are by her on these occasions.

Here we have a radio personality with a clear lovely voice, completely natural and at home on the mike with an unceasing supply of bright ideas for her listeners and a talent for story-telling and characterisation which is a rarity in New Zealand. Her rendering of the story of Tom Sawyer was remarkable; she made this tale live again for me and invested it with a richness of atmosphere that Twain himself would have enjoyed.

I hope that Colleen will continue to bring pleasure to her many listeners as she has to our family for the past few years.

J. RYAN (Dannevirke).

BOY SCOUT MOVEMENT

Sir,—In a recent talk we were given some up-to-date information about the famous Boy Scout movement. What I have to say about it goes back exactly 60 years. At that time there was a huge man, a first cousin of Baden Powell, who was a Church of England vicar in the East End of London, and who later became Bishop Powell in South Africa (Mashonaland). His then habit was to conduct a crowd of lads every Saturday morning to a swimming bath at Stratford, and it was quite a common sight to see him helping the boys to learn to swim. What wasn't a common sight was to see a crowd of boys trailing behind a huge figure dressed in full clerical array. It is my belief that it was this gentleman who lit the torch of the Boy Scout movement. In other words the original idea was planted in the mind of Baden Powell by the then unusual conduct of his vicar cousin.

J. STEWART SMITH
(Otumoeai).

ENEMY OF FREEDOM

Sir,—Most helpful and suggestive is your editorial of January 11. How many of us desire the truth as a servant, humbly seeking the real with homage and reverence, transcending our personal likes and dislikes, not imposing but encouraging others to find the truth for themselves with that essential requisite of honesty, transcending colour, sex, time, the universality that will bring peace and harmony to the world? Such a man gives the blessing of his understanding wherever he be.

A. DAVIES (Auckland).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

I. D. Walker (Auckland): As was announced at 9.25 that morning, programmes were rearranged to allow for a replay of the Duke of Edinburgh's address to secondary school pupils the day before in Auckland.

Mrs. W. Green (Birkenhead): Some episodes available; 1YD will tell you when they are to be played.

R. Brown (Papatoetoe): (1) Improvements such as you suggest were the object of negotiations with the Press Association some time ago. They were unsuccessful, but the object is still in view. (2) Sponsorship of such sessions is not considered to be desirable.

P.A.R. (Auckland): Letters should deal with broadcasting topics, or with subjects already raised in *The Listener*.

Harry Richardson (Wellington), Paul Wire (Kumeu) and Another Student (Wellington): Had hoped to use, but demands on space have been too heavy.