



THE GREAT DETERRENT

Sir,—In order that we may each carry conviction that our case may be heard we must ask ourselves on what grounds individuals can press for the abandonment of nuclear weapon tests by Britain. We are agreed that some time a halt must be called to the arms race, and that the vicious circle, which depends on the argument that because other nations have the hydrogen bomb we must have it too, must be broken. And clearly now that our own nation is about to explode a nuclear weapon is the time to protest, both morally and expediently. While there is not, or can not at present be, complete agreement among scientists as to what the long-term effects of the nuclear tests will be, there is sufficient agreement to make it plain that the effects on life are bound to be deleterious: effects, due to present testing of a device whose employment in war—as a weapon—is unreal anyway. This may be met by the argument that there are things, especially in modern life, which are deleterious to health and yet which have to be put up with for the sake of our continued livelihood. The internal combustion engine pollutes the air with harmful particles and yet we cannot do without it; similarly it can be argued that the hydrogen bomb is essential for defence.

It is known that cigarette smoke is a causative agent in lung cancer and that animal fats precipitate heart diseases, yet people still go on smoking and drinking cream. However, the important point is that the decision whether or not to go on doing so is a personal one to be taken by individuals, and many individuals have decided not to expose themselves any longer to these particular agents in their daily life. Our exposure to radiation due to nuclear explosions is not a personal decision, and by protesting we are questioning the right of a government of a nation not at war to take a decision on a matter of life and death for individuals not only of its own nation, but of all nations. This is apart from the issues raised by contemplation of nuclear warfare; and it is for this reason we should press for the abolition of nuclear weapon tests by Britain. By doing so we align ourselves with those (the Japanese) who above all others, having experience of the facts of nuclear warfare, have best grounds for protesting against an action which they consider brings us all one more step nearer final disaster.

A. PACKARD (Auckland)

MEMORIES OF SWINBURNE

Sir,—It is pleasant to follow in The Listener Walter Brookes's trail of Swinburne's footsteps. This recalls times of surging joy on youthful discovery of Swinburne's magic, joy which can still be felt, tempered though it may be by cooler judgment, after the passing of many years. I had "The Pines." Putney, pointed out to me when I first drove into London. Years before, about one-fifteen on a morning in 1909, I received in a New Zealand newspaper office the "late cable," the last news that came to us. This time it consisted of two words: "Obituary Swinburne." Hurriedly I wrote a short footnote, and

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

quoted from memory a verse from "The Garden of Proserpine"—"From too much love of living," and so on. Was it "no life lives for ever," or "no man lives for ever"? I got it wrong.

Mr Brookes's article may move some to inquire into that queer ménage at "The Pines." Edmund Gosse dealt with it in his biography of the poet, and Quiller-Couch has a first-class chapter on this book and the poet generally in *Studies in Literature*, first series. Quiller-Couch had no doubt that Swinburne was a great poet, and he says so with true Victorian enthusiasm, but he is emphatic about his artistic weaknesses, and candid on the debit side of Watts-Dunton's praiseworthy rescue, with its 30 years of guardianship.

I am glad Mr. Brookes quotes from "A Forsaken Garden," a haunting poem, applicable to many an old home in New Zealand.

Over the meadows that blossom and wither,
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song:
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

In *How to Write*, Stephen Leacock misquotes the last line as "all the year long," and thereby weakens it. This is an excellent example of what small detail can convey in poetry. Yes, Swinburne is quotable. The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 1941, gives him four pages. A.M. (Wellington).

FIRST HEARINGS IN JAZZ

Sir,—Is your correspondent A. John Scott aware that the meanings of words constantly change? He is quite entitled to hold whatever view of the meaning of the word "jazz" he feels fit, but to condemn others for using a more widely accepted meaning is a bit tough. I could quote hundreds of examples where the word is used in difference senses to that used by Mr Scott, and I'm sure Ray Harris could do so too. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary gives "Jazz: syncretized music and dance of U.S.-Negro origin," which is a considerably wider definition than Mr Scott's, and I should think, considerably wider than that advanced by people who appreciate jazz; but it goes to show that no one should be guilty of forcing his personal view down another's throat.

In his book *Jazz Americana*, Woody Woodward says: "Frenchmen call it le Jazz Hot. If you want a hot argument just ask two or more enthusiasts to define it for you." As this correspondence shows, he is quite correct. In my opinion, to limit "jazz" to the traditional styles and their imitators, is as absurd as to limit "music" to the Gregorian Chant or some such thing, but I still realise Mr Scott is quite entitled to hold his own opinion, as Ray Harris is entitled to hold his. May I quote *Through the Looking Glass*?

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be Master—that's all."

And much as Mr Scott would like to, he can't build his own wall and then push Mr Harris off it!

THISTLEHEAD (Christchurch).

MUSIC IN THE DARK

Sir,—Like most of your correspondents I have my own ideas on Mr L. D. Austin's opinions in matters musical. But if there is one thing for which he deserved full marks it was his uncanny ability to handle a cinema orchestra in the days of the silent films. His skill in

finding the right thing for a major film, or adapting the appropriate snippets for a newsreel was remarkable. The type of music he used to draw on, though most of it would make our contemporaries smile now, was for its period of excellent quality. I remember as a youth regularly watching the advertisements for the King's Theatre, Wellington, not only for the overture and the entr'acte that the orchestra was going to play for that particular week, but also the list of compositions from which the remainder of the musical programme was to be selected.

Mr Austin is in error, however, in giving 18 as the number of players in the King's Theatre orchestra. Himself included, there were 12—six string players and five others. Even when this orchestra was transferred to the newly-opened De Luxe Theatre in 1924 and augmented, the number, if I remember rightly, was still only 14.

Perhaps after all these years a belated compliment is not out of place to Miss M. A. Bryers who for years at both theatres played first violin alongside the leader, Miss Lilian Strangman (later Mrs Fahey). For reasons unknown to me she sometimes assumed Mr Austin's place at the piano, with no apparent deterioration in the efficiency of the orchestra, which is saying a great deal.

On two of the three occasions when I played the piano for the silent films, I played on the grand pianos used by Mr Austin at the King's and the De Luxe. How conscious I was of sitting (however nervously) in the seats of the mighty, fumbling over the same keyboards that the great L. D. had used! The films incidentally were *The Gold Rush* (for which Rachmaninoff in G Minor came in for a terrific thrashing during the famous crazy cabin-scene) and *Peter Pan*. The third and last occasion was in response to a call of distress from Short's Theatre (now the Tudor, Willis Street) where the mechanical pianola had broken down.

The Musicians' Union is now much more vigilant against the intrusion of youthful inexperience, but on all three occasions I know the money was more than welcome to an impecunious university student. KLEIDES (Auckland).

Sir,—To use his own words, L. D. Austin's claim regarding the De Luxe Theatre orchestra is "almost ludicrous." I was for some years employed by one of the film distributors in New Zealand, and in my travels heard many theatre orchestras, including the De Luxe. That orchestra was noted for the manner in which the action of the film was faithfully followed by the music, regardless of the type being performed. Thus the music was deliberately mutilated in time and expression to fit the action on the screen; a good effect in one way, but from a musician's point of view a lowering of all musical standards.

In my opinion the best theatre orchestra was Auckland's Regent, which contained specially selected musicians, some imported from Australia, and a conductor who used a baton, and was not a pianist conductor.

A. MANSON (Diamond Harbour).

SIMNEL CAKE

Sir,—I wonder what authority our good friend "Aunt Daisy" has for stating that Simnel Cake is the "traditional Easter cake"—and for all those dear little Easter eggs on it!

Surely she is a little late. Simnel Cake is the traditional fare for Mothering Sunday or "Mother's Day", four weeks before Easter at mid-Lent, a day kept throughout the Church of the

Province of New Zealand as it has been in the English Church for at least 700 years. This is the cake, or its present day descendant, referred to in the 14th century carol:

And now to fetch my wheaten cake,
To fetch it from the baker,
He promised me, for Mother's sake,
The best he'd bake
For me to fetch and take her.

Simnel cakes are ordered from local bakers in England for Mothering Sunday (as are our hotcross buns for Good Friday here), and are baked in many New Zealand homes at this time.

Though it seems we must have thrust upon us Santa Claus in November and "Easter" Shows in Lent, please, oh please, let us salvage the crumbs of our Simnel Cake for Mothering Sunday! LUCILLE NICHOLSON (Te Kuiti)

MICROPHONE MISTAKES

Sir,—Your correspondent is, I suggest, somewhat unnecessarily "Touchy" concerning the pronunciation of New Zealand announcers. Two of the words he instances are among hundreds in which the pronunciation of various authorities differ. Webster admits "irrevokable," though admittedly "rare," with accent on the third syllable. As for "fertile," all the dictionaries I have consulted allow "fertil," and most prefer it to "fertile." "Touchy" finds the Scots weather forecaster "actually hard to understand." I am not a Scotsman, but find his voice pleasing. Is anyone bold enough to claim that he never mispronounces a word? I have several times heard BBC announcers use a pronunciation for which I could find no authority. Is it reasonable to expect New Zealand announcers to be more free from an occasional mispronunciation than are other educated persons?

A.H.R. (Dunedin).

THE DANCING COW

Sir,—About this cow seen by "Sundowner" rocking and rolling. Are we loyal Elizabethans? Or are we not? I assert, Sir, that this cow, meek pastoral creature, was moppin' and mowin'.

P. MCCARTHY (Athol).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. L. McCulloch (Christchurch): (1) The last sentence of the script read: "If there is any gleam of light in the present dark prospect for the future, this is it." The cut came at the word "any." (2) There have been occasions when the arrangement of programmes has allowed a slight over-run of time; there are occasions when it has to be avoided.

Harry Duckworth (Wellington): Your letter has appeared elsewhere.

Ethel G. Burton (Auckland): Much appreciated. Will pass it on.

J.H. (Wellington): Many thanks.

Magellan (Thames): Much appreciated. Will pass it on.

K. O'Brien (Hastings): Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan.

Let's Have a Change (Wellington): (1) From July 19, there will be a series of programmes from different centres. (2) Of the eight artists you name, two are not recorded at all, and one is recorded in a single old disc; this is why recordings of them are not programmed. All or most of the artists figure frequently in studio programmes, National and Commercial.

