



LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

New Zealanders (or those to whom this is a matter of some concern) should be given an opportunity of discussing what is, on the face of it, a highly debatable verdict.

PETER HARCOURT (Wellington).

THE GREAT DETERRENT

Sir,—We would like to associate ourselves with the people who condemn stockpiling and continued testing of nuclear weapons. One of the three big Powers must be prepared to call a halt if the world is to survive. We would urge the New Zealand Government to lead the United Nations and demand cessation of tests. We believe that if Great Britain would abandon her proposed tests as a gesture of faith and goodwill, the foundations for international agreement would be well laid.

We appreciate that Mr Holland has received assurances from the British Government that no person is in danger from the proposed tests in the Pacific. We understand that the UN Disarmament Sub-committee is now meeting in London and that there is little likelihood of ending nuclear test explosions until agreement has been reached by the "Big Three."

However unlikely the ending of bomb tests may be, we still urge our Government to press for cessation. When Great Britain has made her proposed tests, then U.S.A. will find it necessary to advance and yet again Russia—without warning—will make sure that she is not behind. Warning or no warning, the effect of the bombs will be the same, eventual destruction with unimaginable suffering.

We appeal to the women of New Zealand to bombard the Prime Minister, Houses of Parliament, Wellington, with letters. Just a card with "Stop the Tests" and your signature will do, but for the sake of your children please do something.

FLORENCE M. BABER,
LORRAINE HENSON
(Palmerston North).

THE FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS

Sir,—Your editorial, "The Faithful Followers," seems extremely childish to be written in a progressive country like New Zealand. Mention is made of "the behaviour of men who give their loyalty to a foreign country." The writer means, of course, the Communists. Communism, however, is international in its scope, and is not necessarily the prerogative of any particular country. Then it is stated that such people are embarrassing to "true patriots." What is a true patriot? Many soldiers who fought in the last war were Communists, or held left views. What is more, they fought to exterminate Fascism, which by no means has been eradicated. A person is not disloyal because he criticises the acts of the leaders in any country. They do this in Russia and in China by that wonderful method of self-criticism.

It would be fair to say that over half the people of England support the Labour Party, and recently there has been severe criticism of the Government for its policy in various places. Are the Labour Party disloyal? Have they not been opponents of colonialism in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Suez? No, Mr Editor, the story of the British Empire and its building is not a pretty one, and the time has arrived for the advent of left-wing governments; and the more of your so-called "followers," the better. Finally, why you should accuse Russia of being evil is hard to

understand. Russia has always been in the forefront of all the moves to bring about peace, and she has openly championed many good causes. It is a pity that New Zealanders with their two million population do not listen to the voice of 1000 million people to the north, who are all Communists, and whose way of life is to live at peace with their neighbours. Let the West look to itself, and learn how to live from the Socialist countries.

P. J. ALLEY (Christchurch).

(Russia is a large country in which are living a great many people—good, bad, and of indifferent virtue, like the rest of us. To accuse it of being evil would be as silly as to see perfection in all its works. But we did not say that Russia was evil.—Ed.)

VOICES FROM THE PAST

Sir,—In his article under the above heading Mr Owen Jensen wrote: "If you like passionate Italian tenors complete with sob in 'Vesti la Giubba' . . . I don't think I would have liked Signor Zenatello even in his heyday." Unless Mr Jensen is completely cold-blooded I feel sure his surmise is wrong. When one absorbs opera per medium of the radiogram it is so easy to be a little cynical of such artifices as "the Caruso sob," but when we go to the opera we expect to see as well as to hear full-blooded drama or comedy, not a mere recital. In the Golden Age a vocalist aspiring to operatic honours was expected to display some knowledge of the histrionic art, to act with some conviction the role he or she was singing, and I doubt if any man ever portrayed the personality of Don Jose more vividly than did Zenatello. I heard and saw him in the role three, perhaps four times, and I was never more moved than by his rendering of "La fleur que tu m'avais jetée," not forgetting Caruso's "Vesti la Giubba." In the last few moments of *Carmen* his acting and singing thrilled the audience. On one occasion the Carmen, although a commanding mezzo voice, was "a stick" as regards acting, but Zenatello terrified the poor woman into realistic simulation of a cornered victim frantically endeavouring to dodge the assassin's knife.

I have not heard a recording of Zenatello and cannot recall having seen him in *I Pagliacci*, though I saw Caruso as Canio several times. How he used to revel in the role! The horrified realisation of the crime he had committed, his despair and grief for all that he had lost, as expressed by Caruso in those final spoken words, "La Commedia è finita!" is something I still marvel at after fifty years.

When listening to "canned" opera we should visualise the scene and action, then an occasional sob may not sound out of place.

F. C. ARMSTRONG (Auckland).

"DO NEW ZEALANDERS SPEAK BADLY?"

Sir,—The discussion on New Zealand voices and speech was interesting to an old woman of pioneer stock. Among my young relations it is noticeable that, on the whole, the girls speak better than the young men, and the articulation is clearer. The youths are apt to talk on the vowels and barely sound the consonants; also the voices are rather monotonous. It may be that this is owing to the schools, the girls' education having been at private schools and the boys mostly at the large Government secondary colleges.

One point that strikes me in English speakers has been the courteous in-

flexion of really cultivated men which is on quite a different level from what can sound rather patronising and superior and artificial to New Zealand ears. Even in extreme old age, Sir Gilbert Murray's beautiful voice is delightful.

M.E.G. (Eastbourne).

Sir,—since-er-when-er was the little word "er" (which spattered the broadcast exhorting us to speak "correct English") adopted into the English language?

I agree with the second speaker that the "Oxford accent" is looked on as a dialect by the other English universities even if it has snob value, and I would recommend that if New Zealand wants to adopt an easily understood form of English, free from dialect, Latin roots and modern jargon, they should seek it from Maoris of the old school. I have never elsewhere heard English more beautifully spoken and handled to express deeper thoughts than from this quarter.

Meanwhile, I am quite satisfied to hear any form of New Zealand accent as long as it is spoken unselfconsciously and is expressing an individual opinion.

HYBRID (Havelock North).

NZBS PLAYS

Sir,—I am not a tired mother, an invalid or an elderly person, but I listen every night of the week to the NZBS plays, and would like to express my appreciation of this very enjoyable entertainment. I for one do not tire of hearing the "old familiar voices," and I honestly believe Davina Whitehouse merits an "Oscar" for the way she adapts herself to every part she plays.

KEEP ON KEEPING ON! (Nelson).

OPEN SKIES FOR PEACE

Sir,—I heartily endorse all that your correspondent Rex Bennett writes re unilateral disarmament. It seems to me that this is our only hope of survival. The sooner we begin work in that direction the better it will be for us all. Such a move would surely have the support of Christian people all over the world.

M. WHITE (Albany).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Diana Ball (Invercargill): It was "Proud Canvases," by Robert Farnon, and was on a theme disc not on sale commercially.

D. Sparks (Otahuhu): Sorry; letters must be confined to broadcasting topics or to matters already raised in *The Listener*.

D. M. Somerville (Wellington): (1) Perhaps there is another way of thinking of it: not as "replacing" an excellent programme of a different kind but as taking its own, proper place at a convenient time in a linked transmission. (2) With regret, it has to be said that such a classification would be too difficult.

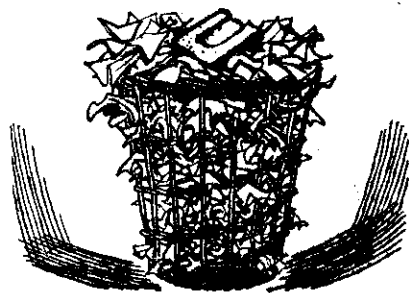
Rachel Plank (Hastings): No; she has not been commercially recorded. Thanks for your reference to the programmes.

David Hardgrave (Auckland): Rights for one broadcast over a link of commercial and one over a link of non-commercial stations were obtained and used. The tapes have been cleared.

Rewa Glenn (Wellington): Thank you. Will pass it on.

Film Lover (Wellington): Have shown it to the critic.

H. H. MacDonald (Napier): It is not usual to add the letters when the persons concerned are broadcasting or writing.



A PLAY FOR SOUTHLAND

Sir,—Your contributor B.E.G.M. has urged the NZBS to find and produce more New Zealand plays, and has suggested the 60-odd entries for the Southland Centennial Playwriting Competition as a likely source of material. I think we should be given an opportunity of hearing these plays and judging them for ourselves, especially in view of the decision to award first prize to a play called *The Montgomeries of Glenholme*.

As a disinterested party I can only express my astonishment if no better play than this was submitted. The judge, Mr Frank Newman of Christchurch, has said that all the entries were of a very high standard. I would like to believe him, but he has given me no cause to do so by choosing a play of incredible banality to represent that standard.

The Montgomeries tells a story of such triteness and ineptitude that even a woman's magazine, which is its spiritual home, might hesitate to publish it. Its construction is poor, its plotting weak, its characterisation superficial and inconsistent. Even the *Southland Times*, in a kind notice, drew attention to the fact that two of its principals were "victims of faulty characterisation."

The central figure, Mr Montgomerie, is inarticulate to the point of absurdity. His dialogue is repetitious and phrased in that peculiar brand of "upper-clawss" English which exists only in farce and deliberate caricature. The other characters speak like conventional English ladies and gentlemen of fiction in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Occasionally, as a sop to authenticity, they refer vaguely and self-consciously to "sheep," "paddocks," "gullies," and "the city" (unspecified).

The play is not even regional. I had supposed it took place in South Canterbury; the *Southland Times* hazarded a guess at the Wairarapa. The setting and period, we are told, is "The Colonies in the 1880's." There is little internal evidence to suggest that the action is passing in any particular colony of the British Empire in its heyday. As a New Zealand play, which it purports to be and which it had to be according to the rules of the competition, *The Montgomeries* fails to establish any sense of time, place, local colour or indigenous character. It concentrates instead on the familiar themes of domestic chatter, matrimonial chess, the mortgaged homestead and the "boulder" whose cash atones for his lack of class. I doubt whether any of the situations could be justified as distinctive of New Zealand, even 70 years ago.

I cannot believe that this was the best play entered for the competition. Among the also-rans were some authors whose reputation must suffer if their work has to stand uninformed comparison with *The Montgomeries*. The elevation of this play to a false position as typical of New Zealand drama would be unfortunate, to say the least, for our native theatre.

Could not the NZBS restore some of the damage by broadcasting a selection of plays from the competition and letting us make up our own mind about their relative merits? It seems to me that