



THE DREAMING ISLANDS

Sir,—Your issue of February 15 last did me the honour of devoting its entire editorial to comment on an address given by me at the National Liberal Club in London. On my return to New Zealand I was for the first time in a position to enjoy the excellence of the prose and to regret that it should have been yoked to such indifferent argument. I had been given a short extract by letter and am glad that I resisted the urge to protest from afar. There was always the possibility that my informant might have given the wrong impression by a shortened or distorted version, worsened by being dragged out of its context. There was no need for both of us to undergo the same treatment.

I assume that my reply to correspondence in another journal will not have escaped your notice and that it will assuage your feelings in the matter of New Zealand scenic beauty. I should not have come back so soon if all that was to meet my eye was "ordinary."

I trust we can forgive and forget any misunderstanding that a cabled and garbled report may have occasioned. After all, the summer was hot and mayhap it made us all a trifle drowsy. On this count but one assurance: the Wurlitzer, the travelogue and the glamorous film star are anathema to me. If I dwell in the city, so many do, the countryside is a constant magnet and joy.

In somewhat strained condescension you allowed that my "peculiar views on Liberalism . . . may arouse only languid interest." Then you lay about me heavily for exhorting your fellow countrymen "to be up and doing in the cause of freedom," and lest I be accused of misquotation, "a freedom, that is, to enter unrestricted competition." Here I have incurred your wrath, but you must spread your anger to cover so many of your notable citizens whose "languid interest" induced them to form an Association for the Maintenance of Political and Economic Freedom within a few short weeks of my departure. However they may dub their "peculiar views," it will be difficult for them to escape the word "Liberalism," be the L large or small according to taste and desire to shun political affiliations for the time being. Nor will they find it easy to slough off a belief in competition. Is it fair to ask what is restricted competition? It smacks of unfair competition which usually infers that the other fellow has won.

I confess to a sense of gratification at the formation of this new body. Imitation is always flattering. Theirs will be no easy task. Generations of tariff, banking, and administrative control have entrenched central authority. It will not be easily dislodged. Nor will it ease their task that your pen, so smooth, so distinguished, so full of happy imagery, suspects their and my motives and outlook. And yet what better as an example than your own genius? It bears comparison with the finest. It competes with lesser mortals

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

and puts them in their place. They must find your competition fierce, unrestricted, perhaps, in their view unfair. Life is easy only to the few, the very accomplished, the complete among us, yea, the Lord's Anointed.

D. GOLDBLATT (Wellington).

(Our theme was taken solely from a report of Mr Goldblatt's speech, and was in no way concerned with the ideas and outlook of the Constitutional Society. The formation of this body was announced in the newspapers on February 7, the day on which our issue of February 15 was being printed.—Ed.)

THEATRE IN LONDON

Sir,—I have seen the friendly comments made by J.C.R. and B.E.G.M. about my talk on plays in London, and should like to thank them both. But I am puzzled by J.C.R.'s remark that my talk was "seemingly independent of vogue, save in the discussion of Brecht." Does he mean that my views were influenced by the fact that Brecht happens to be in vogue? He has not shown in what way. Or does he by any chance mean to imply that there would be no reason for discussing Brecht if he were not in vogue? His reference to "things which last month were *dernier cri*" does a little to suggest this. Anyhow, I should like to say that it was John Osborne's play which I discussed principally because it is in vogue just now; the vogue is worth discussing mainly because it tells us what is going on at the moment; but that I think Brecht worth approximately ten Osbornes, and full of matter which will last when he ceases to be merely in vogue. He is a major European figure, which Mr Osborne is not.

I should like to add that in thinking and talking about Brecht since my script was recorded, I have come upon a possible reply to my suggestion that his scope is limited. I said that his dramatic technique exhibited man merely in his social relationships, whereas the Western theatre was likely to go on exploring and dramatising the interior life of the individual. But it may be that the hero is dead; that we have reached the point where the individual personality, studied for its own sake, collapses and disintegrates (*Death of a Salesman, Waiting for Godot*), and that we shall be forced to study it either, with and yet against the Marxists, in its social relationships, or, with the existentialists, in its absurdity. For either of these treatments, the Brechtian technique, which consists essentially in looking at man from the outside, is obviously well suited and can be adapted by playwrights whose philosophy is not Brecht's. In suggesting that the classical Western theatre will go on, I seem to have been merely expressing my faith in the West; and I do not know how much I really have. I hope I have not bored your readers by this attempt at clarification.

J. G. A. POCKOCK (Cambridge).

UN INTERVENTIONS

Sir,—The ideals expressed in J. Malton Murray's reply are indeed praiseworthy, but it is difficult to imagine their fulfilment as long as rational men are influenced so strongly by hatred of an ideology. The notion that Communist countries alone err in the use of violence, and alone are guilty of the list of evils attributed to them, is clearly untenable in the light of recent history. Forces sponsored by U.S.A. unseated a democratic Government in Guatemala. Britain meets force with force in Malaya and Cyprus, and initiated violence in Egypt. France continues to

wage war on the Algerian rebels. Has any Western Power renounced the use of violence?

Without condoning Russia's actions in Hungary, it must be remembered that Hungary was Hitler's wartime ally, and one cannot imagine Western armies dealing any less forcibly with an uprising in an occupied country.

When both Russia and the West are prepared to make concessions, an effective disarmament scheme will be implemented. The West has been equally obstructive in the past with repeated accusations of insincerity. If member nations extend the Charter of UN to grant it the powers of world government, it seems certain peace can be preserved. We should campaign, then, for the evolution of UN, so that eventually the problems and grievances of all may be exposed and ameliorated. Meantime, there is no Western country so free of the sins Mr Murray mentions, that it can justly throw the first stone.

N. M. ROE (Tauranga).

THE A. R. D. FAIRBURN FUND

Sir,—This fund has been opened so that friends of Rex Fairburn, and those many others who feel that both as a poet and as a man he enriched their lives, may express their gratitude and regard for him. It has already been privately made known, but there are perhaps readers of *The Listener* who have enjoyed his articles and poems as well as his letters to the editor. He never received benefit from any fund, literary or otherwise, but gave freely of his wisdom, his wit, and his poetry.

All proceeds will go to his wife and family. Cheques should be crossed and sent to "The A. R. D. Fairburn Fund," c/o F. H. Haigh, Solicitor, P.O. Box 119, Auckland.

ANTONY ALPERS, VERNON BROWN, SARAH CAMPION, ALLEN CURNOW, A. J. C. FISHER, E. A. FORSMAN, DENIS GLOVER, R. A. K. MASON, S. MUSGROVE, BLACKWOOD PAUL, DOUGLAS ROBB.

ZB BOOK REVIEW

Sir,—Peter Llewellyn's book review session (Sunday, April 28, ZB) was of interest both for its deadpan ("just give me the facts, ma'am") delivery and, like James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the absence of punctuation. It was only towards the end of the broadcast that I realised the life of Baden-Powell and frozen mammoths were not chapters in the initially announced *Science in New Zealand*. In retrospect it appeared that this publication, together with the fourth book under review, was curiously dismissed in one or two sentences. Sandwiched in between was a Form 2 dissertation on natural history liberally garnished with pseudo-Dylan Thomas phraseology and a thumbnail sketch of the Great Scout which would have done justice to an article in a widely-read, small sized American publication. A session of this nature, while apparently satisfying the reviewer's poetic propensities, does not encourage interest in the books being discussed.

XX. (Wellington)

MUSIC IN THE DARK

Sir,—It seems a pity that your correspondent Mr L. D. Austin has so completely missed the point of my letter. The letters that have appeared on the above subject are the result of your excellent article in *The Listener* of February 22, in which it was stated that Mr L. D. Austin was appointed Musi-

cal Director of the De Luxe Theatre in 1924. As a matter of interest I said in my letter that Everybody's orchestra at Christchurch started in 1922 (I find now that it was 1921), and was the first of its kind in New Zealand. To be more explicit (which at the time seemed unnecessary) it was the first permanent orchestra in New Zealand to have a conductor in the strict sense (that is, one who stood and used a baton and who was not a player), and the first to raise the standard of musical accompaniment to pictures. The Crystal Palace orchestra began shortly afterwards, and then some time later there were two in Wellington and two in Auckland. The Liberty Theatre, Christchurch, never had a permanent non-playing conductor.

I am fully aware that pictures were accompanied by many combinations such as trios, duos, small orchestras, etc., before 1922, and I was a player as such myself.

I trust that I have made myself quite clear. May I repeat that Everybody's orchestra, Christchurch, was the first of its kind in New Zealand.

PLAYER IN THE DARK
(Auckland).

KAPITSA

Sir,—I have been suspicious for some time of the qualifications of *Listener* non-fiction book reviewers. It appears that persons have been allowed to review popular works in special fields of knowledge without any great background in these fields.

I was therefore interested in the review of *Kapitsa* by A. M. Biew (April 18). A glance at the cover of this work in a library display caused me to reflect that, if the contents matched the cover, then sensation rather than veracity was the author's aim. This snap judgment has since proved wildly optimistic. Your reviewer, apparently without a knowledge of physics, has swallowed the book whole. Readers may spend an entertaining five minutes with Sir John Cockcroft's devastating review in *Nature* (February 23, 1957, p. 392). This concludes: "This book does not even qualify as science fiction."

The least qualifications which one might expect of a reviewer is a training in physics. Better still, there are some people in New Zealand who worked at the Cavendish Laboratory during Kapitza's stay. They would easily detect the blatant distortions and glaring errors which occur in the account of the Cavendish period.

The reviewer has an important duty to protect the public from the worthless and in particular bogus book.

E. W. WAITE (Patumahoe).

(Our reviewer was fully qualified for the task by scientific training. We did not judge the book important enough to require specialist treatment—a judgment indirectly supported by our correspondent's own opinion.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS
J. E. Weblin (Hawera): Sorry, too long.
F.B. (Stratford) and Sound Planning (Matamata): Regret, too long.

