



defined as they used to be?

"People," said Dr Gabites, "talk of a wet season or a dry season; and while this may be true of their particular area, it may not be true for the rest of the country at all. January this year, for instance, was rather dry, yet some parts of the country had more than the normal rain."

Normal rainfall, he went on, was determined on a 30-year average, and though there were broad patterns, month by month and season by season the location of storms and settled weather varied. Last May, South Eastern Australia had very marked anti-cyclonic conditions, and a resulting drought, while New Zealand had a series of repeated depressions coming from the south-west. These fast moving depressions reached their greatest development east of the country, and gave a large percentage of rain to the south-eastern part of Otago and Southland. For Invercargill, with 8.60 inches, it was the wettest May in over 50 years of record. Over most of the country—the exceptions being North-

IF there is one point on which people agree when they discuss the world's commonest topic, it is that the climate was very different when they were young. It is only when they begin to explain why it was different that disagreement arises. And whether their arguments are for wetter, warmer, drier, or colder—or perhaps all of these in turn, every time a report comes of record rainfall or sunshine ("greatest since 1910") they feel their case is proved.

Twenty years ago old timers would passionately claim that "It's all this radio that's doing it." These days, impressed by vastly greater technology and not sure of anything any more, it is more likely to be: "I bet it's the Bomb"—said jokingly, but with a discernible undercurrent of seriousness all the same.

Several years ago the Press in England put the Bomb question to the British Atomic Research chief, Sir William Penney. "Could it be that which is responsible for the very bad summer?" they asked. "No, gentlemen," he replied, "it's not the atom bomb, it's television." Seeking some definite answer on this perennial question of changing climate, *The Listener* decided to climb to the Meteorological Office on Kelburn Hill behind Wellington city, and consult the experts. In the Research Section we met the head of the Section, Dr J. F. Gabites and a Senior Meteorological Officer, Dr J. F. de Lisle.

Our first question touched on a recent report in the Press, in which an Australian C.S.I.R.O. meteorologist had said that Australian weather was slowly changing, owing to some change in the high pressure belt that, by and large, controlled the weather over the Commonwealth. He had added that the H-bomb had nothing to do with this

change. What, we wanted to know, was the significance of this report?

"We thought there would be repercussions from that," said Dr Gabites wryly. He explained that it was hard to tell what the scientist was getting at from reading such a bald report. This particular scientist was well known for

his research work into long-term climatic trends, and the report may refer to some later and as yet unreported development in his studies.

Well, then, we asked, was there any ground for believing that New Zealand's climate was changing—that the seasons were not as clearly

land, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay—rainfall was above normal. The only place to have much more than normal sunshine was Gisborne.

"Now take May, 1956, as a contrast. Whangarei had had its wettest month for 50 years in April and May was even wetter. Gisborne and other eastern districts

