



LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CROWN AND COMMONWEALTH

Sir.—The letter of F.C. (Sumner) on this topic expresses an emotional reaction to criticism of Crown and Commonwealth and probably represents a very large body of opinion. But it also includes contentions that cannot be sustained. It claims that for centuries "men and women have worked with courage and vision to build a unique world-wide association of some 600 million people." The facts are that the Empire and Commonwealth sprang from the self-centred operations of individuals, groups and nations who never dreamed of building any such world-wide association. For instance, Cromwell's conquest of Jamaica is described in Hannah's *History of British Foreign Policy*, as "an example of pure and unprovoked aggression, from which our history on the whole is very largely free." The same authority says that "The Commonwealth was our one experiment in what would now be called Fascism." Cromwell's Jamaican exploit produced a war with Spain.

I heartily agree that with all its imperfections the British Empire and Commonwealth has been a great power for good under historical conditions. But the lamentable under-nourishment, illiteracy and general backwardness of peoples over whom we have held dominion reveals that our Empire and Commonwealth did not function on the altruistic lines that might be deduced from F.C.'s letter. And the difference in our status is indicated by F.C. classing us as "a vital Third Force" in international relations. Time was when we were the First Force, but the glory has departed, and we have to adjust ourselves to the new conditions.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

THE CHICKEN-HEARTED

Sir.—I criticised J. B. Rhine's *New Frontiers*, and your correspondents leap to the defence of Eastern philosophy, yoga, hypnotic phenomena (whatever they may be), paranormal cognition, and what have you. All I was ridiculing was the nature of the procedures he employed, the validity of the data obtained, and the soundness of the assumptions drawn. Rhine preferred testing those who were avowedly interested in getting "good" results, and he found the very worst kind of investigator was the intellectual academic, the doubting type that checks, and re-checks, and has a cold, inhuman interest in facts. He admits he did not oversee most of his experiments, and he discarded results that showed the subject did what he calls "less than chance." His data, even if it were valid, no more proves E.S.P. than it proves that a fairy whispered in the subject's ear.

Dr Rhine, like "Student" and J. C. Hayes, is fond of comparing Dr Rhine with great scientists of the past whose discoveries were at first greeted with scorn. But merely being laughed at doesn't make you right. Their demonstrations worked just as well in the presence of sceptics as of believers. "The solemnest polemist who ever feared a fact has to admit when once he puts

his eye to a telescope, any telescope, anywhere, in anyone's presence, that—despite anathemas, Dominicans, doctors, dungeons and edicts—Jupiter has the satellites that Galileo said it had."

And this is just the sort of demonstration that Dr Rhine, and those who believe in clairvoyance, won't—and can't—give. Hundreds of thousands of tests, with Rhine's own cards, in five of the larger Universities failed to find anyone who was clairvoyant. To use "Student's" words, the "reproducible experimental fact" is that Dr Rhine's clairvoyance cannot be reproduced experimentally. Until it can, anywhere, any time, we are justified in scoffing at those people who prefer to believe in the supernatural rather than the natural.

When the parapsychologists can regularly demonstrate phenomena that cannot be duplicated by a good professional magician, then will be the time for me to recant.

R.M.D. (Masterton).

Sir.—Unfortunately two impressive degree lists do not prove extra-sensory perception; especially when L. J. Bendit's wife is clairvoyant. It is a fact that many scientists, especially workers in the field of the exact sciences, reject E.S.P. In the August 26, 1955, issue of *Science*, G. R. Price, a medical researcher, presented a pretty telling case against E.S.P. The ensuing discussion showed that, despite many years of ardent evangelism, parapsychologists have not convinced the U.S. scientific community.

Price argues roughly as follows: If a phenomenon is incapable of plausible mechanistic explanation, then extreme scepticism is necessary for, (1) fraud has been associated with miracles; (2) such fraud is very difficult to detect; (3) E.S.P. is incapable of such explanation so we must demand a fraud-proof test; (4) analysis of one of the most reputable series of tests shows fraud is quite practicable.

So far as spontaneous phenomena, mediums, etc., are concerned, even the protagonists of laboratory E.S.P. agree that the evidence is of little value. Price wryly notes the decline in the more spectacular doings in the medium's cabinet since the exposures by Houdini and Dunninger. In these fields a conjurer is often a better observer than a scientist.

C. W. WAITE (Auckland).

THE MUSICAL CLIMATE

Sir.—I am a student of the piano and have studied both classical and contemporary music. I find in the latter a wealth of feeling and quality, as found in classical music. I was most disappointed with L. D. Austin's criticism of modern music in a recent issue of *The Listener*. He does not seem to realise that the world and music go on, and he is closing his eyes to progress. It is a great pity that Mr Austin is being left so far behind.

Recently I pondered these questions: (1) Why do some musicians dislike modern music? (2) Do they realise what they are missing in the way of "musical food"? (3) Do they find it difficult to play and so put it aside? (4) Are they ignorant of the idioms and are therefore attempting to "speak a language not knowing the grammar"?

Students of any art are grasping for news on the latest developments in their respective fields; and I feel sure that Mr Austin is as keen a student as that, and will not allow himself to miss out any longer on the enjoyment of modern music.

I would refer Mr Austin, and any music lover who is finding contemporary music still puzzling and a little strange, to an excellent little book, *This Modern Music*, by Gerald Abraham. My questions are solved in it. There is one qualification—an open, eager mind.

MARION CLEAVE
(Palmerston North).

PARLIAMENT AND 2YC

Sir.—With regard to the article, "Parliament and 2YC," I feel that the official defence is only half the story. The fact is that the whole of the central districts of the North Island appear to be badly served from a musical point of view. We live in a musical vacuum which can only be appreciated if you are transferred, as we have been, from close to Auckland or Wellington to this area, which stretches roughly from Wanganui to Gisborne, and includes such populous areas as Hamilton. Not only is it very difficult to receive the YC stations, but the YZ stations, which we are largely compelled to listen to, have a programme which is definitely inferior to the YA stations. Why is this? Is it because it is considered that people in provincial areas are less well informed and educated than those in the cities? After all, we pay the same licence fee and should therefore be entitled to similar reception, within reason, to those people who are fortunate enough to live in the larger centres.

E. D. FORESTER
(Rotorua).

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Sir.—May it be asked who authorised the appearance of this misguided person on New Zealand stations? The summary of his writing, in your issue of August 30, is surely offensive to any educated New Zealanders. How does this strike you? "The crying . . . need of a great world-wide human effort to know ourselves and each other a great deal better, well enough to concede that no man has a monopoly in right or virtue any more than any man has a corner in duplicity and evil, etc." And, "I think that the world could sidestep the sort of corruption which I have involuntarily chosen as the basic, allegorical theme of my plays." Williams has apparently no knowledge of the Christian gospels. He is quoted as the "grandson of a clergyman." Ingersoll was the son of a clergyman. Would anyone have the gall to read Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses* as likely to interest New Zealand listeners?

ROBERT J. STRONG (Auckland).

DRAMA OF MEDICINE

Sir.—From 12B on Tuesday, September 3, in *Drama of Medicine*, the boy is rushed to hospital with tetanus following a cut on his foot a few hours earlier. This must surely qualify for the shortest recorded incubation period in history, the usual being two to 14 days.

Is it too much to suggest that producers make sure of their facts before presentation?

RISUS SARDONICUS (Auckland).

"SOMEONE'S ALWAYS DYING"

Sir.—The short stories published in *The Listener* have rarely been one of the paper's brighter spots. Many of them have been drear, and it has often seemed that dull ugliness has been mistaken for the realism of genius; but for banal sordidness a new low has been reached in the story "Someone's Always Dying," by Thomas Hindmarsh. If either author or editor can

see any literary merit in it with regard to either content or style, they are urgently in need of a brighter outlook on both life and literature. This letter has been prompted by finding that my young daughter had read this story. Children should not be exposed to such sad and sorry meanness by persons who mistake the portrayal of seamy monotony for art. Are we to need to lock *The Listener* away from the children? Delinquency lies not only in gangster comics; it can also breed from a twisted unhappy attitude to life.

T. E. MILES (Christchurch).

NZBS PLAYS

Sir.—It is not often that this hardened listener is moved to set pen to paper to write his appreciation of the work being done by the NZBS drama department, but during the past few weeks the NZBS have come up with at least three plays that are comparable with the best we hear from overseas, principals and supporting players giving the kind of performances one likes to remember. First, Bernard Beeby's beautiful production of *Johnson Over Jordan*, with John Meillon turning in a remarkably good performance as Johnson. Then, *Love on the Dole* (another fine Beeby production), with Dorothy Campbell's moving characterisation of Sally. Lastly, *Small Hotel*. This rather unimportant little play was lifted out of the rut of mediocrity by William Austin's polished production and the really impressive acting of Linda Hastings as Mrs Samson-Box.

If there have been other recent NZBS productions as good as these, I have missed them, and it's my loss.

NICE WORK (Trentham).

WASTE PAPER BASKET

A tisket, a tasket,
Bravo! the rubbish basket.
Once R.W.H. my spirits buoyed
(Blest anodyne to one annoyed)
For her alone I spent my pence
To make of her concoctions, sense.
For she alone held me enthralled
All other bits of writing palled.
But now, another claimant rises—
A willow basket, all surprises.
Piece-de-resistance, sweetly comic;
Full, empty, feline, or atomic.
Te saluto ubiquitous cane!
May your creator long remain.

AUCKLAND ADMIRER.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Fuzzled (Dunedin): Harry Rabinowitz.
Over 70 (Dunedin): As has been already stated, late listeners and early are entitled to equal consideration. Many programmes are replayed. Then, if they have first been played early, they are generally replayed late, and vice versa.

E.B. (Wakefield): Considerations of standard are involved and limit the possibilities; but the Service is regularly adding to its collection of hymns sung by New Zealand choirs and including them, as they are received, in the Sunday morning session. Recordings from 11 church or school choirs have been newly received or are expected.
Citizen (Rangiora): Thank you.

