

NEW ZEALAND SPEECH

Sir.—Your correspondent, L. D. Austin, need not feel so disturbed. No one here, I am sure, is condoning bad speech. But neither do we care for the characterless, imitative variety, for we maintain that there is a type of New Zealand speech that is both pleasant and characteristic. I think most teachers of elocution in this country would agree that the first requirement of expression is sincerity, in true harmony with the life and temperament of our people, and that a false standard does not encourage the desire for better speech. It would be ridiculous, for instance, to expect our sturdy young colonial Huck Finns to speak like little Fauntleroyes. Yet it is true that the flattened and distorted vowel sounds cited by Mr Austin are not pleasant, and could do with a little renovation.

Other common faults in our speech are slurred or mumbled consonants and monotony of expression. These could best be rectified, I believe, by encouraging our young people to express with confidence their individual ideas, unhampered by the critical attitude so often shown by their elders—a fear of non-conformity and an unquestioning awe of authority that are the more dreary remnants of our mainly middle-class British inheritance. Any standards accepted by New Zealanders, either in speech or modes of living, should be modified and adapted to our own requirements and infused with the colour of our individuality. This would be far better for our national character than a slavish following of the standards of another way of life—however much we may admire them.

WILLOW MACKY (Auckland).

Sir.—L. D. Austin is to be applauded for the remedy he offers for correction of speech in children. English spoken by the educated Maori is a sheer joy to the ear. The learning of Maori words also serves the twofold purpose of providing a basic understanding of Maori names and culture as well as eliminating distorted vowel sounds. (This would be particularly helpful for parents like myself from England or elsewhere who are still struggling to discover correct pronunciation of Maori place names when several versions are offered by the average New Zealander.)

Recently I was horrified to hear a high school teacher, with a degree, not only distort her vowel sounds but also punctuate her speech with "ay." A Bay of Plenty habit I have discovered, common in a large number of people—hardly an interjection, it expresses neither doubt, surprise nor a question—can it be explained as a form of Pidgin English or Maori? P.T. (Whakatane).

"JERUSALEM"

Sir.—Wilbur G. Manins (July 11) is evidently not a very frequent listener to Uncle Tom's choirs if this was the first time he had heard one of them sing Parry's "Jerusalem." The choirs have been singing this song, in just the same way, for several years past. I also do not like the way they sing the second verse, and the additional ending makes me wince. I also do not care for the habit of using old romantic melodies and operatic music as hymn tunes.

BUT... I have the sense to realise that these choirs were not formed to "put on a performance," but to give pleasure to people who for various reasons like to hear children singing the old-fashioned hymns and other melodies, and in many cases derive great comfort from them. I am a regular listener because I love many of the old hymn tunes,

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

even though I recognise the banality of the words of some of them, and because I appreciate the sincerity of the sessions and the lasting good these associations must do for the children concerned.

Since Mr Manins seems to find so much to criticise in the choirs, I suggest that he refrain from listening to them. Then he won't hear things he doesn't like—and then it won't worry him!

REGULAR LISTENER
(Papatoetoe).

RADIO VARIETY

Sir.—Good humour is scarce on the air but surely something better than the *Goon Show* and *Radio Roadhouse* are available. They are both stage shows broadcast and, as with all such, the laughter of the studio audience detracts from the intelligibility. Perhaps the worst feature is the screaming false voices. The Goons are more unintelligible than the *Roadhouse* people (whatever a roadhouse may be) and the screaming falsettos more irritating, but in the one presentation of *Radio Roadhouse* I have heard the ignorance of the characters was more profound. There was a Maori who used the word "plurry" several times. Surely anyone who has passed the sixth knows that there is no "l" in Maori and that the word "plurry" is pure Australian aborigine. Another character calls the Auckland wharves "docks," a term never used for wharves.

It is irritating to have to sit and listen to the studio audience laughing madly at something they can see whilst the microphone is silent. There is no entertainment for listeners in this. Programmes such as *A Life of Bliss* and *Life With the Lyons* written for broadcasting could well be taken as examples by the broadcasting people. J.S.L. (Wanganui).

SUMPTUARY LAWS

Sir.—The main points of M.M.J.'s letter (July 4) would appear to be these. First, that one group of opinion on the licensing laws recognises alcohol as a "demon," and receives medical support; this group further realises that weak persons may develop a craze for over-indulgence. Secondly, that while the other group has the privilege of drinking at home, they wish to extend not only the licensed hours but also the temptation to alcoholics, for unchristian and selfish reasons. Thirdly, that believers in "demon" alcohol find good reason for abundant vocal protest in the cause of helping the weak.

Perhaps, Sir, M.M.J. would answer these questions for me. First, does any

reputable medical treatise refer to alcohol as anything other than a depressant? Secondly, do we prohibit the sale of, say, cards, cigarettes or cars at any particular hour because there are those who may use them unwisely? Is home consumption a privilege or a right, and is it not extended to both the weak and strong? Do strong denouncements or prohibitions help the weak to face their weakness? And lastly, is pleasure unchristian, or the majority selfish?

Sir, I feel personally that the group M.M.J. represents would be better seeking ways and means of educating the weak to understand and overcome their problems, than in reviving old-fashioned wowsersisms. B.E.G.M. and his Christchurch lawyer have stated their case for extension admirably. However, the civilisation of licensed hours and restaurants would seem to depend largely on M.M.J.'s opposition becoming "far more vocal and voluble" themselves. Continued apathy will reap no reward.

KHAYYAM (Auckland).

"COMMENTARY FROM HOME"

Sir.—I hope Anthony Bartlett is not too dashed after reading Y. R. Wilkes's reproving letter on his short story (*Listener*, May 23). Far from finding the atmosphere morbid, I felt a warm kinship with the author's household and I am of the idea that most not-too-highly organised parents felt it too. I thought Mr Bartlett was quite restrained in his pen portrait of a small space containing two pre-occupied parents and two preschool children on a wet day.

It is my theory that most mothers of six, who also write, dwell in a wryly humorous manner on the minor crises of family life. They are too intelligent to strifle the abundant copy provided by a disorganised household. In this way they know they can count on an eager following of unskilled parents who feel smug or sympathetic as they read.

I suppose they merely make enough notes through the day, and after the charges are bedded down, carefully build these up into an atmosphere of suburban chaos. The atmosphere here, at the moment (another rainy afternoon), could do justice to Anthony Bartlett plus Russell Clark and I'm merely attempting a letter. DISHEVELLED (Blenheim).

HYMN SESSIONS

Sir.—I am at a loss to understand the criticisms of the Westminster Singers. So far as I can see, their only fault is that their words are always clear. As every student of church music knows,

and as every listener to 2YA's hymn sessions is well aware, the best hymn recordings are those in which choristers of some school or church yell in some language or other, but clearly not European, some tune which nobody has ever heard before. Hasn't anyone the courage to break some of the records made by school choirs? D. F. B. EYRES (Nelson).

LAMPOONING MUSIC

Sir.—During the visit of a famous string quartet last year I asked for their opinion on the lampooning of the art of instrumental music. The spokesman for the group replied: "As the recreation was puerile it had been ignored by the adult music lover... It should be remembered however that a lampoon is virulent and unsuitable for the adolescent who is taught at school that causing annoyance to other pupils is not real or true amusement... Recent problems with young people have shown that one of the main causes has been a desire for selfish pleasure without any consideration for other people's ideals."

W.R.M. (Palmerston North).

"MAN AT NIGHT"

Sir.—The BBC production *Man at Night*, broadcast in 2B Sunday Showcase on June 29, was in my opinion the most gripping radio drama that has been heard in this country for several years. It was entertainment on a plane that is seldom reached by our home-grown Showcase items, good though they are. The play commanded attention from start to finish, and built up terrific tension; the plot was ideally suited to the radio medium, and this was, I think, the reason for the powerful impact that it imparted. Let us have more of this sort of entertainment; it is most refreshing to be able to listen to something that makes you think and feel, instead of leaving you in emotional and intellectual doldrums. W. M. BROWN (Auckland).

THE WILD SWAN CHASE

Sir.—I read with great interest and amusement Ngaio Marsh's article (July 4) on the tortured Swan of Avon. As far as I am aware nobody has as yet tried to establish that Shakespeare was a New Zealander. Perhaps Miss Marsh could undertake research in this direction and publish the results of her detective work: her—no doubt—convincing "proofs" would considerably enhance (pace Katherine Mansfield and Miss Marsh herself) New Zealand's literary prestige! G. E. BELL (Wellington).

NEW ZEALAND POETRY

Sir.—Probably no New Zealand publication has done so much to encourage our poets as *The New Zealand Listener*. In her lengthy review of *Poetry Yearbook* Ruth Dallas made specific mention of two publications as encouraging the young poet. She did not include *The Listener*, which is ironical, seeing that the review appeared in *The Listener*. A.M. (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

P.A. (Wellington): Cannot reopen it.

Overseas (Auckland): "The Broadcasting Service might at least help to give it the recognition it deserves." Odd words, perhaps, when at least the Service helped you and others to hear it, and you'd not have heard it otherwise. Wait a little, please.

Teenager (Auckland): If a programme is advertised, say, at 7.30 and the next one advertised is at 8.0, it doesn't necessarily follow that the first programme is timed to last half an hour.

