

THE WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Sir,—Mr Charles Brasch (*Listener*, September 25) has given clear expression to feelings shared by many in listening to Mr Schroder's address—Writers and Broadcasting—at the recent Writers' Conference. Indeed Mr Brasch has I feel, stated the whole matter, the hopes and the failure, so clearly that he leaves little to be said—except to support him.

That this particular session was a failure, a thing at once negative and depressing, is not, I think, to be disputed. Mr Schroder, for whatever reasons, misunderstood both his role and his audience. I am less prepared, however, to accept Mr Brasch's further point that the writers themselves, one and all, had their share in this failure. My disagreement may be a personal one but it is not I think irrelevant.

I came to this session about to raise more general points about broadcasting and the writer than were raised that evening; and so, for all I know, did others. I had come neither to snipe nor, in the peculiar and pejorative sense of this word, to criticise. I had hoped that the Director of Broadcasting would discuss these larger questions and suggestions. I did not, in the end, raise these matters at all. There was, it seemed to me, little occasion, once the thing was under way, for "shifting the discussion to a higher plane." The whole atmosphere was against it: my own feeling, after the first hour, was also against it. I felt I had been patronised and insulted; and so did many others.

There is, however, little point in continuing the post-mortem at this level. I would agree with Mr Brasch that further to prolong that mood would be of little profit to writers or to broadcasting. Late in the session, indeed, in reply to a suggestion (I think by Mr Anton Vogt) that the NZBS consider setting up a "workshop" or experimental or testing studio for radio scripts, the Director indicated that the door was not yet tight shut against the writer. Such a workshop is to be established.

What does most clearly emerge from Mr Schroder's address, and from the resulting tumult, is, I think, the necessity to writers and to broadcasting of discussing their relationship in an atmosphere where a certain interdependence, and a certain independence, can be assumed from the outset; where questions both large and small can be asked, discussed, answered on either side without acrimony or suspicion. For there is, as Mr Brasch remarked on the evening of this session, a general atmosphere of suspicion and distrust informing the relationship of writer and broadcasting. There is little point in apportioning blame in these matters; it is sufficient to say that Mr Brasch's point was fully proved at that session. In the interests of such a discussion I can, I think, best quote Mr Brasch's concluding words, in his letter. "... the negative atmosphere in which (this session) ended must not be allowed to dominate the future relations of writers and broadcasting."

MAURICE DUGGAN (Auckland).

(This letter, and Mr Brasch's, was shown to Mr Schroder, who replies as follows: "I may best answer Mr Charles Brasch and Mr Maurice Duggan by stating the fact, that in replying to criticism of the Broadcasting Service I have always confined myself, in a matter-of-fact manner, to questions of fact, distinguished from opinions and judgments, which it is not my business or inclination to contest. A single large and calculated departure from this rule, in a correspondence personal rather than official, is known to Mr Brasch, who is now at liberty to print the correspondence in *Landfall*, if my correspondent agrees. Otherwise, no evidence will be found of that resentment of criticism or that hostility towards writers with which Mr Brasch charged me at

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

the Conference. Mr Duggan's letter makes it desirable to recall that the subject of my remarks, proposed to me without further advice or request, was Broadcasting and the Writer. I used the occasion to show that the difference between writing for print and writing for voice and ear presents a problem which many New Zealand writers have not solved and some appear not to suspect. This view may be, as Mr Duggan says, negative and depressing. All I am concerned to say is that it was directly relevant to the proposed subject and the occasion."—Ed.)

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"

Sir,—A concert leaflet issued by the NZBS concerning the above work contained the following statement: "The first public performance of *Messiah* was for charity, on 13th April, 1742, in Dublin. Unaccountably, however, its success was not repeated in London where the first performances were not even noticed by the journals of the day ... but in 1750 it was performed with tremendous success."

The explanation, furnished by Grove, is simple. The work fell flat in 1743 because it wasn't good enough. Handel himself was fully aware of its deficiencies, so he resolved to revise and re-write it, a task that occupied several months. The result was a vast improvement on the original, which was written in haste and repented at leisure.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

MORNING SERIALS

Sir,—I read with interest "Parihauhau's" comments on *Dr Paul*. I must be one of the few men in the country who can claim to have heard two instalments of *Dr Paul* right through. Each time I was alone at home, standing on a chair which stood on a table, painting the living room ceiling. Everyone has his or her own theory as to why *Dr Paul* is put on the air. My wife thinks it is a device encouraged by the welfare state for driving women off to their household tasks and keeping men out at work. I am inclined to the more obvious view that it is just what it purports to be—a powerful advertising medium. Between the announcement of "radio's great story of adult love" and the story itself are a few moments of reprieve, during which the advertising comes across. Relieved and grateful lis-

teners, as they walk over to switch off or change to another programme, are just in the mood to accept this message—for the respite it grants them.

Of course a simple explanation might be that it is just something put on by the caretaker or tea-lady while the staff of the station are having their morning break. This is borne out by the impression I gained that every instalment of *Dr Paul* is possibly just the same as every other instalment (as your correspondent says, about murder, blackmail, bribery, arson, double-crossing and unmitigated lying on-stage, or in retrospect or in prospect). Notes could be compared, listeners (who should say, as a matter of interest, how they came to listen to an instalment) pooling information on what they heard and when.

WALTER BROOKES (Wellington).

Sir,—"Parihauhau's" timely criticism of morning serials has my full support. It would be interesting to know just how many women actually do listen to them. In my own circle of average married women I can find no one who takes an interest in, or follows these programmes. One friend admitted that she listened sometimes "for a laugh."

I would suggest to "Parihauhau" that, after listening to that cheerful and inspiring woman, Daisy Basham, she switch off her radio until between 10.45 and 11.30 a.m., when the 2YA Women's Session with Clare Mazengarb should keep her going until it is time to prepare lunch.

It is time the Broadcasting Service took a serious look at the rubbish which is played during the morning. I believe that the average housewife is not the bird-brain that the powers that be seem to imagine. EVELYN SALISBURY (Wellington).

CHINA AND UNITED NATIONS

Sir,—It was very revealing listening to *Point of View* on Sunday night, September 27, to hear the very clear and unassailable arguments put up by Mr Youren, and the confused thinking of his opponent. The weight of the arguments for admission into the United

Nations are like the population of China against the opposition—absolutely overpowering. After hearing the broadcast, I picked up a small book well known to University people, called *Straight and Crooked Thinking*. Many of the reasons for failing to admit China to the United Nations are covered by the 34 dishonest tricks listed at the end of the book. To start with, here are some examples: (1) "The use of emotionally toned words." Mr Youren's opponent kept referring to the Chinese as "Reds." (2) "Proof by selected instances." Reference was made to the supposed disposal of some millions of Chinese at the time of the Revolution. (3) "Argument in a circle." (4) "Suggestion by repeated affirmation." And so on. Congratulations to Mr Youren on his extremely objective stand. P. J. ALLEY (Christchurch).

MARY SCOTT

Sir,—In my recent *Book Shop* broadcast on Mary Scott and her books, I find that I credited her with writing 14 articles a week during one period. A difficult feat even for one with her "fatal facility" when home and children also required attention. My original script stated, correctly, "14 articles a month" and I now wish to apologise to listeners and correct my inaccurate word.

A. E. WOODHOUSE (St Andrews).

"THE CRUMBS OF FATE"

Sir,—Thank you for publishing my poem, "The Crumbs of Fate," in your issue of October 2, but may I have the space to point out a misprint in it which has bemused a reader or two?

As printed, the second-to-last line in Stanza two reads: "His stubborn innocence? He would not rape." That final word should be *rage*. Is there, incidentally, any possibility of an author being charged with indecent intent arising out of a misprint of this nature?

LOUIS JOHNSON (Hastings).

PROGRAMME POINTS

Sir,—In spite of many protests, I am all for a New Zealand edition of the ever popular BBC programme *My Word*, which over the past nine months, has given endless variety to many New Zealand listeners. A New Zealand edition would be just as popular if the right people were selected. Then, with a question-master like the well known Professor Arnold Wall, of Christchurch, I feel that the programme would be a great success. R. R. HANDLIN (Auckland).

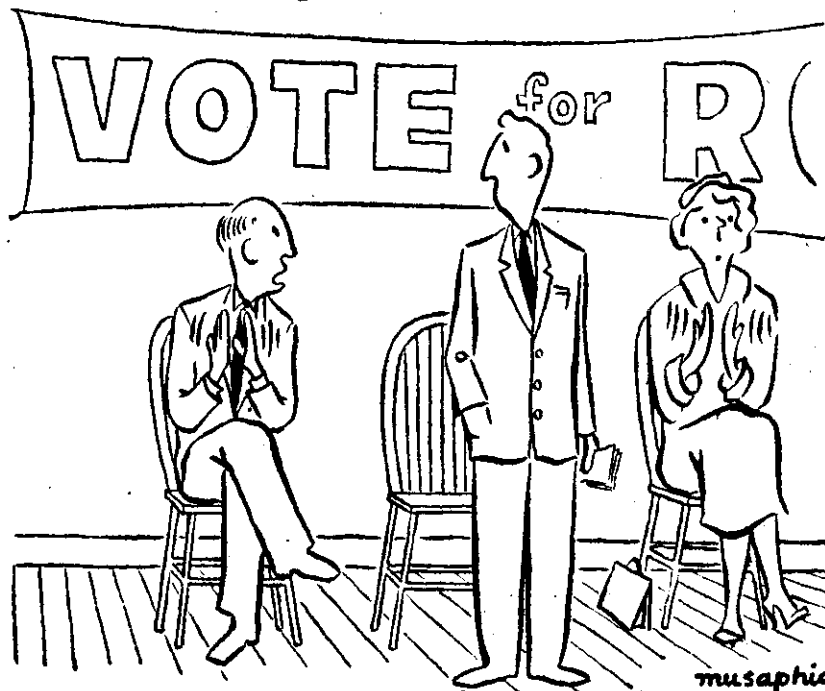
Sir,—On reading a review entitled "The Reluctant Listener," I could not help but come to the conclusion that B.E.G.M. had seized an opportunity to voice a quite irrational dislike to *The Reluctant Debutante* in any shape or form. I am a backblocks farmer, so that the NZBS production of the play was my introduction to it—and a very pleasant introduction at that. My special thanks to Davina Whitehouse for a wonderful performance.

W. W. SMITH (Ruawai).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

A.S.M. (Dunedin): Your letter is unsigned. C.H.H. (Hamilton): Yes, he was in the Middle East. A story will be printed at the first opportunity.

J.S.L. (Wanganui): (1) There has been no change in the type, and the changes you suggest would be impracticable in the space available. But we agree that an improvement is desirable. Possibilities are being examined. (2) The writer of the article was not instructed to "leave out" anything. His report was printed as received. But it had to cover a lot of ground.



"... and don't promise them the moon"