

THE RISE OF LABOUR

Sir,—In his interesting talk on the rise of Labour in New Zealand Professor W. T. G. Airey rightly attributes stresses within the Labour movement to differing opinions on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. He refers to Mr Savage's claim in 1935 to be taking up where Seddon left off. The liberal ideas which inspired Pember Reeves's original 1894 Act are seen by Professor Airey as sanctifying the approval with which political Labour has regarded the processes of compulsory arbitration. But Professor Airey questions the credentials of this liberalism. Liberals, he claims, are faced with the perennial difficulty of drawing boundary lines between extremes. When they search for positive principles they are likely to accept Hegelian concepts such as those of T. H. Green, and these (we are told) are not far removed from Fascism. This is surely an extraordinary distortion of the most profound of English liberal thinkers.

Professor Airey concludes that, in adopting the early liberal heritage, political Labour has been content to build within a capitalist social structure and has renounced the Marxist doctrine of class conflict. This has brought it into opposition with militant elements in the trade unions. In a capitalist society, it is asserted, the machinery of state is the instrument of the capitalist class. Hence an organ such as the Arbitration Court cannot be expected to function as an impartial arbiter between workers and employers. To some this may seem a plausible conclusion, but I believe its assumptions to be wholly inapplicable to New Zealand conditions.

Does Professor Airey maintain that the only "true liberal" is a Marxist? If so, I remain far from convinced.

J. H. M. SALMON (Wellington).

ALFRED HILL

Sir,—I am writing on the composer Alfred Hill and would be very grateful if any of your readers who may have letters from Alfred Hill in their possession, or who may remember incidents from his life, could communicate with me. I am particularly interested in Wellington's musical life in the 1880s and 90s, in the early operas, in the Christchurch Exhibition orchestra of 1906-7 and its subsequent tour, and in the two visits of Verbrugghen's orchestra in the 1920s. I would also like to have descriptions of touring opera companies, of great artists, and of music in the life of New Zealand up to the end of the 1920s. Any letters, programmes or press cuttings will be looked after carefully and returned.

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WRITERS AT WORK

Sir,—Mr Chas J. Cutler in a letter about the late Rex Fairburn says that Rex was "not perhaps as casual an amateur as Vogt would think, but certainly not a professional with half an eye on style and one and a half eyes on boiling up the financial pot." The italics are my own.

The inference seems to be that no professional writer has any pride in his work, that integrity is sacrificed for box office and that to be interested in box office is not done by the best people.

No editor worth his job is without a keen eye for the phony. No script lacking style, standards, or craftsmanship can get past that eye. Therefore, if a professional writer wishes to keep his place in his own chosen and highly competitive

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field, he cannot afford to ignore style and all that it implies.

Apart from this admittedly practical view, the professional writer is usually such because he wants to write. Or feels he has to. No labour of love or compulsion is ever undertaken merely because of money. By the very nature of his calling, the professional writer is, with a few exceptions, continuously preoccupied with the perfecting of his craft, for its own sake, as well as for his own.

I think it a pity that more New Zealand writers do not acknowledge the necessity for a harder, cooler, more professional assessment of their work. If they did so we would have fewer desultory dabbings, fewer practising dilettanti, and a greater volume of solid, indigenous work than we have at the present time. ISOBEL ANDREWS (Whangarei).

PARLIAMENTARY ENGLISH

Sir,—In your issue dated October 16, the article, "Parliamentary English," by "Auditor Particular," interested me particularly. The greater part of it, I, as English born and educated, thoroughly appreciated—but desire further information on two points. In line 3 of his second column "Auditor" says, "Eligible is persistently confused with illegible, both being wrongly stressed on the second syllable..." How does "Auditor" propose to stress the latter word?

In the last paragraph, but one, on what authority does he use the phrase "of that ilk" in such a strange way? Wyld's English Dictionary defines "of that ilk" thus, (a) of the place or estate bearing the same name as that of the owner, *Anstruther of that ilk* meaning *Anstruther of Anstruther*. (b) used also, ignorantly, as meaning of the same class.

Does "Auditor," as a critic, claim ignorance as an excuse? H. J. W. KNIGHTS (Christchurch).

Sir,—Never did I imagine myself defending the English or the pronunciation of our M.P.s; but your pompous "Auditor Particular" surely needs correction himself. "Illegible" is not wrongly stressed on the second syllable. His use of "ilk" is vulgar. And the under-stressing of the prepositions in the quoted passage of

the Gettysburg speech which he recommends is no less absurd than over-stressing; the prepositions were just as important to Lincoln as "the people."

W. E. MURPHY (Lower Hutt).

THE WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Sir,—In his comment on my letter and Mr Duggan's (*N.Z. Listener*, October 16), Mr Schroder again denies feeling that hostility towards writers which was the dominant impression of his attitude left on some who heard his talk at the Writers' Conference. Let him

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then show that no such hostility exists, not in words now, but in action. What he wrote and said in the past is past; it is what he does in future that is of interest. I for one shall watch hopefully for evidence that the NZBS deals with writers in as fair a way as it does, say, with musicians. The proposed workshop which Mr Duggan refers to sounds like a step in the right direction.

CHARLES BRASCH (Dunedin).

MUSIC OFF THE TAPE

Sir,—The recent innovation of using tape as a means of conveying music promotes the collaboration of the acoustics engineer with the musician. This partnership provides a due measure of praise for the engineer when the broadcasts are good, e.g. the National Orchestra; when the relay is below standard readiness to shoulder responsibility is praiseworthy.

Many people have criticised Karel Ancerl for accentuating the brass and percussion at the expense of the strings and woodwind, but as a member of the audience, Graham Paton shows that this view was incorrect. Further inquiry reveals that the microphones for the Czech Orchestra were not adjusted to the best advantage. G.M. (Palmerston North).

JACK BUCHANAN

Sir,—In the article on Jack Buchanan (*Listener*, October 16) it is said, "His first appearance was at a flea pit called 'Packard's Panopticon.'" This should be

Pickard's Panopticon and both the man and his music-hall were popular in the years ante D.D.T. He was a showman of the Barnum and Bailey brand and had a wax-works but whether at the Panopticon or elsewhere I cannot say. Probably he showed the first films in Glasgow.

It would be interesting to know how he came to name his place "Panopticon." This flair did not leave him, for in the depression years he built a cinema in Glasgow and called it "The White Elephant"—and it was white.

I hope someone much older than I has his memory stirred by the Panopticon and the people who appeared there. I don't know where it was!

A.F. (Richmond).

"THE GIRLS"

Sir,—I was amazed to read the criticisms of this favourite programme of mine in your September 11 and 25 issues. Except for weather and news, it is the only thing in the whole radio range that I make a point of listening to; I wish we had more of the like. Friends and relatives also tune in regularly and I have yet to hear a word against it from anyone. I think it would be a sad blow to many if it was scrapped.

T. WERE (Auckland).

Sir,—It would not matter to me whether "The Girls" came from Picton or Paris, Lyttelton or London, so long as their session was worth the time given to it on the air, but it is not. I work with 28 others and the verdict is, "we never listen. It's one of the feeblest sessions ever." Most admit they tried it for six weeks or more, hoping it would improve, but now merely switch it off. There's just one thing I want to know. What is Sarah Campion, one of my favourites, doing in such company?

EDNA WOODWARD (Wellington).

PROGRAMME POINTS

Sir,—I hope someone has told Mr Maybury that Jeeps is not a fly-half but a scrum-half and that a hippopotamus is not a river pig, but a river horse. These radio quizzes should be accurate.

W. LOBB (Stratford).

Sir,—I wish to protest against the nonsense which one hears on *The Goon Show*. It is very hard—if not impossible—to follow because of conflicting loud noises. I am sure that many other listeners would be pleased to see the end of this programme and have something worth listening to instead.

TEENAGER (Tirau).

Sir,—Your two Wellington critics of morning serials should try a little term of back-block life, where we working women have no time to be high-brow. Perhaps some of the stories are rubbish, but we enjoy *Dr Paul*. Cannot these "fuss-pots" turn their radio to another station and allow us to have our serials? We do not have the many entertainments in the country that our city sisters have. I would like however to suggest a brighter programme on Saturday nights for us stay-at-homes. A good play would be entertaining, and more comedy.

GRANNY (Mangaweka).

