

PETER LLEWELLYN'S TALKS

Sir,—Seldom have I listened to such irresponsible talk as that delivered by Peter Llewellyn on Sunday, July 15, over 2ZB. His confession of laziness gave one "key" to the somewhat poor outlook which he displayed. Of course, the other key to this "essay" is the journalist's urge to give expression to some new and different idea.

I would say that among any group of men engaged in work of any sort, whether it is a skilled craft or comparatively unskilled labour, I have always found men who find satisfaction in doing a day's work and in seeing some tangible result of their labour, skilled or what is classed as unskilled. Here I would point out to Mr. Llewellyn that there is no such thing as pure unskilled labour. The days of the treadmill are over. If any man thinks that pick and shovel work, for instance, is unskilled, let him work for a while alongside one of the old hands on, say, a job of drain laying. He will find that the old hand is constantly using his knowledge and experience to make his efforts more effective and he will very quickly show that there is more in labouring than meets the eye. And if he will spend some time with the men who make and work in the holes in our streets he will find that they are applying knowledge and experience of no small degree.

It seems that there is a high percentage of idealists in the population of New Zealand, but unfortunately they sometimes pursue ideals which are incompatible. One of them wants the power poles abolished from every street while another says that we should not employ men on such tedious jobs as laying cables. None of them wishes to go back to the bush and they all appreciate the benefits of modern sanitation, yet Mr. Llewellyn says we should reserve such jobs as drain-laying for the criminals. It seems that we shall require a high percentage of criminals to make Utopia a possibility.

To suggest that men should refuse to do such work and so force the "back room" boys miraculously to produce a machine for the purpose shows a lamentable lack of understanding.

A.G.P.H. (Wellington).

AUSTRALIAN-N.Z. VERSE

Sir,—In his review of *A Book of Australian and New Zealand Verse*, James Bertram writes of "the fourth edition now making its belated appearance over the editor's dateline of April, 1949." Unfortunately, belatedness is a common and widespread condition of publishing these days. In addition to delays incidental to the business, there are industrial and economic factors special to this time, over which publishers have no control. This liability to long delay is well known in the trade and among interested persons outside it. Such lapses of time between handing in a script and publication may affect the reader's judgment of author or editor. New poets swim into our ken and others develop their talent. Two New Zealand poets who have attracted an unusual amount of attention in the last two years published their first volumes in 1949 and 1950 respectively, after I had made my choice for the New Zealand section of the anthology. One of them is on Mr. Bertram's list of poets whose absence he criticises. I could cite other facts bearing on these names. The other day

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

a friend told me he had taken up a new book on the English theatre, and immediately looked for what it had to say about Christopher Fry. There was no mention of him. My friend concluded that the book had gone to the publisher before Christopher Fry made his recent spectacular entry into fame. Finally, Mr. Bertram's reference to "contemporary women poets" may lead some readers to conclude that I have omitted Eileen Duggan. This is not so.

ALAN MULGAN (Wellington).

THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE

Sir,—It is regrettable that you saw fit to conclude an otherwise thoughtful editorial, "The Mysterious Universe," with a comparison between "the patient investigations of science" and "the inspired guesses of religious thinkers" in connection with the nature and destiny of man and the origin of the universe. The comparison is so obviously one-eyed that it lays you open to a charge of materialistic bias.

The patient investigations of religious thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas would rather more than hold their own with some of the inspired guesses of modern scientists, including those of Mr. Hoyle. Indeed, if the ultimate nature of man belongs to a world beyond the world of matter, as you suggest in saying that man "through consciousness . . . receives the muted pulse of a creativeness outside the nebulae," then such questions are far more properly the field of trained theologians than of new cosmologists with a persuasive delivery before the microphone.

EX NIHIL (Huntly).

THE CAVE DRAWINGS

Sir,—It seems that the formation of a National Trust in New Zealand is overdue. Mr. Schoon's letters to *The Listener* indicate the urgent need for official protection of cave drawings in both islands. Mr. D. MacMillan in *The Press* of June 16 writes of the neglect and decay of Samuel Butler's hut at Mesopotamia. Some years ago in Wellington I followed many blind alleys before locating the Karori home of Katherine Mansfield. We have a miscellany of irreplaceable legacies, each year increasing in value, which we could add to the world's storehouse. The cost would be chiefly the effort of recognising the expert's knowledge of his subject.

PHYLLIS CAMPBELL
(Christchurch).

THE VOICE OF AMERICA

Sir,—I have read with mixed feelings the article entitled "The Voice of America" in *The Listener* of June 29. To me it seems to be either very inept or else a dangerous form of propaganda. The introduction claims that the page "records . . . the significant fact . . . that democracy in these United States is still of the people and by the people," yet there is no attempt to evaluate the interesting quotations, expressing often the laudable sentiments of individuals, with the political history of the United States.

The introduction also claims that the war which began 175 years ago was to determine whether a nation "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could endure. I should like to quote from C. M. Andrews, Farnam Professor of History in Yale University, in *The Colonial Background*

of the American Revolution: "The colonists were not contending for democracy, popular government or universal suffrage. . . The War of Independence was not fought to make even America safe for democracy. With independence won democracy would come in America's own good time, just as it would have come had the colonies remained attached to Great Britain."

Returning to the article, I have long followed the advice it contains, and "nor trust the editorials in picture weeklies" nor those in any other publication.

G. F. T. JONES (Auckland).

THE WRONG BLOCK

Sir,—Just a small point I would like elucidated for my own interest. Is not the photograph, supposedly of Bartok, in Frederick Page's article in the July 6 issue, actually one of Ernest Bloch? H. R. THOMPSON (Auckland).

(Yes.—Ed.)

QUIZ KIDS

Sir,—On a recent Friday the Quiz Kids were awarded the jack-pot of £20. For this large prize should not these children have to give almost 100 per cent correct answers to the set of questions put to them? I give below four questions from the session, the answers to which the youngsters definitely did not know.

(1) *The date of Joan of Arc's death.* The first guess was 1500 and something, the next 1600 and something, then came 1700 and something, and then (after a hint from the Q.M. that they were on the wrong track) they started back at 1400 and something. The date being 1431, the Q.M. let them through on this.

(2) *The date of the first Olympic Games.* Again the first guess was 400 B.C., then 500 B.C., 600 B.C., and lastly 700 B.C. Pure guessing, yet again they were let through.

(3) *The meaning of schizophrenia.* Their answers showed that they had not the least idea what it meant, which was not surprising—it was a hard one for youngsters—and the nearest one of them got was that it had "something to do with dreams." Although this was a long way from the meaning, which is "split personality," they were let through.

(4) *The meaning of surcingle and crupper.* They got "surcingle" but only got "crupper" after a broad hint from the Q.M.

This is an interesting session, but is it not giving these children an inflated idea of the value of their intelligence to award so large a prize for a display of general knowledge such as this? No school examiner would "let them through" on answers so wide of the mark.

H.T. (Christchurch).

Sir,—Would it be too much to ask that a little friendly advice be offered our Quiz Kids on the real importance of clear and distinct speech on their part?

As a New Zealander one is naturally pleased and proud at their many displays of brightness and cleverness, but too often disappointed—and even shocked—at their lack of consideration for listeners. Youngsters so bright should need no more than a gentle reminder that they are paid public entertainers of large audiences, that the listeners help to pay the pipers—even

though only indirectly—and so have every right to hear the tune, all of it.

Might I add that while I regard the jolly, free-and-easy friendliness prevailing between "Master" and "Kids" as all to the good, I think a little more respect for the position of each would make it better? Apart from one's own entertainment, one is not happy at the thought of the impressions that may, on a particularly care-free night among the "Kids," be gathered by passing-through listeners.

AUCKLAND LISTENER.

STRANGE PARADISE

Sir,—Although the discontent of new settlers with the way of life in New Zealand seems to be elaborately discussed in the article "Strange Paradise," I think Mr. Benda has missed a very important point. Most of the foreign immigrants to this country—particularly those who become the "displeased" persons—come from towns in Europe, New Zealand, because of the smallness of its population (not its territory, though), and because of its geographic situation, can only assume a place in relation to the rest of the world which any provincial town in any other country can assume in relation to its respective capital city. But there are, of course, many people who are quite happy to live "in the country," particularly if it is a beautiful country like New Zealand.

E.B.S. (Wellington).

AFTERNOON PROGRAMMES

Sir,—As one who has been without an effective radio for two years (and therefore comparatively fresh to radio listening) I meant to write this morning an appreciative letter to the programme organisers via your columns. The past week or so has afforded me much interesting listening as many facts and facets of life and living have been presented interspersed with quite a large amount of glorious as well as "common garden variety" music. Which surely means that the organisers are trying to cater for all kinds of listeners. But we are slower at lifting our pens to praise than to blame (perhaps a good thing, too), and I don't think I would have written at all if it were not that my old grouse comes to life once again this afternoon.

Why, oh, why, must there be that dead patch in the afternoons when the broadcast to schools comes on? It would not matter if the *Radio Listener* could switch to one of the ZB stations for relief, but what does one always find?—*Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories*, a saccharine monstrosity in my opinion, and quite unendurable. It probably has a large following of listeners, but in my opinion it should be staggered over the four ZB stations. In any case, as one can't always be sitting by the radio or carrying it with you, music should be available from some station, or other at all times; but if this is too much to ask, the above small adjustment would bring relief to what must surely be as large a section of listeners as the "Aunt Jenny" variety.

I notice a marked improvement in the standard of programmes after two years, and NZBS productions in particular have shown progress. But I hope to see even more improvement—the field is limitless!

MUSIC LOVER (Morrinsville).