

Sir,—You suggest, in your editorial of March 28, that the New Zealand Press is hardly a machine or a monster. But you refrain from reference to the significant fact that the Press is an industry, and one which requires a great deal of capital. As it is usually assumed that the providers of this capital have considerable control over the selection and presentation of news, one is rather surprised to see your statement that the true functions and influence of a newspaper are in the hands of the men who work for it. Indeed, from my own observation as a journalist, I can only say that I wish you were correct.

Would you, or any of the speakers in the forthcoming nine talks on the New Zealand Press, care to express an opinion as to whether or not our Press meets the "obligation to deal scrupulously with fact and opinion?" You have, of course, said that errors are made by journalists, who are fallible enough at any time and especially so when the deadline is rushing towards them. But that does not explain why so many newspaper "errors" give the same "slant."

Almost any person will say that he does not believe everything he reads in the newspapers. But, in fact, almost any person does believe everything that is frequently reiterated. And any layman who will go to a good public library will find, on the evidence of authorities, that among English and American newspapers the suppression and distortion of fact and opinion is both common and well-nigh universal. After all, the vast majority of newspaper owners, overseas and in New Zealand, are businessmen whose primary aims must be the making of profits and the supplying of propaganda for political policies that will maintain and increase their own personal wealth. There is no incentive for them to provide trustworthy news-services.

No critical study of the New Zealand Press has yet been published. However, most people would concur with your statement that our dailies have integrity above that of the Press in most other parts of the world. But the difference does not, to me, appear sufficient for any complacency.

In view of the desirability of a thorough examination of the situation, it is unfortunate that the NZBS talks have, apparently, been planned to evade the major issues. It is, for example, difficult to conceive of a managing editor criticising his employers' policy or even suggesting that the New Zealand Press could be improved. Yet basic reform is essential if the interests of our community are to be regarded. Government control would not be a satisfactory alternative to the existing set-up, but there would probably be a great improvement if the value of newspaper shares that might be held by any one person were limited, say, to £100, and if steps were taken to raise the ethical standards of journalists and then to give them more responsibility.

THIS ABOVE ALL  
(Christchurch).

Sir,—Your editorial on our daily Press read to me like a tract by the Build Up Boys, an attempt to dissipate the polite contempt in which our Press is held by the people. The monopoly which every metropolitan newspaper in this country enjoys, and which you deem of little consequence, has been used to

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

condemn and obstruct practically every social and industrial reform on our Statute book.

It is rather fanciful to say that the suppression, selection and slanting of news are caused by pressures of work and time and space, and detected only in the leisure hours of reading. Editors and sub-editors are well grounded in the tradition and policy of their papers, so that suppression, selection and slanting would become second nature to them. They do not dictate those traditions and policies, as you infer; failure to uphold them would, naturally, mean certain dismissal.

Writing of his leader-writer days in Christchurch, Mr. Justice Alpers says that his job was to attack the Radicals in power. "And attack I did, occasionally with a wealth of vituperation of which I am ashamed today." It will be interesting to follow the forthcoming talks, given though they are by men still employed by newspapers, to see how closely they resemble the productions of public relations offices.

G. R. BEYNON (Auckland).

## SCHIZOPHRENIC WRITERS

Sir,—Mr. Fairburn attempts to indicate what schizophrenia is, and to justify his use of the term. His idea of the nature of schizophrenia is somewhat inaccurate, and his use of the term in describing the Australian writers hardly admissible.

Confusion arises as to the nature of schizophrenia because the word means literally a splitting of the personality. The term *schizophrenia* was first used in the 1880's by Bleuler, one of the early students of abnormal personality, but subsequent study and research have revealed that the use of the term by Bleuler was most unfortunate, and anything but helpful in understanding the nature of the disease. The descriptive phrase *split personality* should be confined to phenomena such as dual personality states which Stevenson depicted in Jekyll and Hyde.

Schizophrenia is a shattering or disintegration—not a splitting—of the personality. For many reasons too detailed and technical to be mentioned here, some individuals are unable to use their abilities in order to organise their lives. They are unable to plan long or short term projects, unable to do productive work or do so spasmodically. They may even become unable to carry out the habitual tasks implied in routine work and physical care. The individual's thought processes, too, become illogical and bizarre. Like an army which, having an inadequate administrative centre, is unable to use its potential in man power available, so the individual has abilities which he cannot utilise because the co-ordinating forces within him are weakened.

If we use the term *will* for this co-ordinating ability of human beings, and *desire* for desire on the part of the individual to utilise his abilities, then we can, as Mr. Fairburn says, speak of a conflict between will and desire, and this conflict is generally present in the early stages of schizophrenia. But this is to describe the disease in terms of only one symptom.

Enough has been said to indicate that when Mr. Fairburn used the term *schizophrenic* to describe the Australian writers, he did not mean that the writ-

ers' powers of co-ordination were shattered. Rather, he meant that the writers were experiencing a conflict between the European as against the Australian patterns of behaviour, and ways of feeling and thinking. But experiencing this kind of conflict is not in itself schizophrenic, nor need it necessarily lead to schizophrenia.

I think that Mr. Fairburn would have been more accurate had he spoken simply of a conflict situation which, as he aptly puts it, leads to "unease of spirit and extreme self-consciousness."

J. GABRIEL (Wellington).

## THE BIG RACE

Sir,—In your feature "The Big Race" it is stated that the flights of the American-built Dutch commercial plane and of the American airliner which took second and third places respectively in the London-Melbourne air race of 1934 were of "greater immediate importance" than that of the winner, the specially designed D.H. racing Comet. This is perfectly true. But the real significance of the Comet was revealed later, when the D.H. company produced the Mosquito—developed from experience gained in the designing and construction of the 1934 Comet. The extraordinary performance and versatility of the Mosquito (unbeatable, in its day, by any Allied or enemy aircraft) was a very big factor in our maintenance of air supremacy. The development of the Spitfire from the Schneider Trophy race winners is another example of the importance of organised air-racing to aircraft design.

ARNOLD WALL (Christchurch).

## THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—It is disturbing to find, in the printed comments on the National Orchestra both in your own columns and in the daily press, nothing between eulogy and irrelevant remarks on its cost to the unmusical taxpayer. One can well understand that no critic wants to provide ammunition for the enemies of culture; but is it really in the interest of anyone to pretend that the orchestra's present performances are consistently good or even enjoyable?

Full publicity was given to Mr. Bowles's statement that there is apparently little appreciation of good music in Auckland; but there was no suggestion that lack of support for the recent concerts here might be due to a low standard of playing. Everyone in this country can hear recordings of good music well played; and many have attended concerts by first-class orchestras overseas. This being so, it is unrealistic to assert that music-lovers are, or ought to be, enthusiastic about playing which, for example, is far too often faulty in intonation: where the brass blares and the strings, in an effort to be heard, achieve only edginess; and where the total effect is of an instrument about as sensitive and responsive as a brass band.

I am personally a whole-hearted supporter of the National Orchestra as an institution. It would be foolish to expect that in such a short time, it could be already first-class; and I hope that it may prosper and improve. I look forward eagerly to the time when attendance at its concerts will be not only a public duty but a pleasure. But I am sure that no service is done to the conductor, the players or the public by continual indiscriminating praise. All that

the absence of constructive criticism is certain to achieve is a lowering of standards (already perhaps noticeable) accompanied by ill-founded complacency.

P. H. MONTAGUE (Auckland).

## BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Sir,—Your correspondent "Atlantic Pact" (*Listener*, March 21) would do well to ascertain the accuracy of his figures before writing of "thousands of innocent German women and children drowned in the Mohne and Eder raids." In his book on those raids, *Dam Busters*, Paul Brickhill gives the casualty list as totalling 1249. Of these, 749 were Russian prisoners of war. Mr. Brickhill must surely have obtained accurate figures. The damage to German war potential must have been enormous. What of the Coventry raid with its list of civilian casualties which did little to help the German war effort? By all means let us cultivate amicable feelings with Germany; but—once bitten . . .

NATO (Christchurch).

## SUBURBAN VALUES

Sir,—May I suggest to "Westcliff" (*Radio Review*, March 21) that the indictment against "suburban values" should be dropped? This sweeping generalisation is silly enough in England, but still sillier here, where, geographically and socially, a larger proportion of the people are suburban and class distinctions are so much less rigid. The "materialistic" and-so-on values that "Westcliff" lists are found in every section of society, from city flats to remote farmhouses. A trim suburban street may be thick with intelligentsia; there is a well-known one in Wellington. Moreover, persons of low intellectual or aesthetic tastes often have qualities necessary to the health of society that are by no means always found in the writer or the artist.

As for the possibility of a New Zealand Galsworthy arising, he will not come unless there is a large body of inferior work from which he can spring. This persistent hoping for genius in our letters is natural enough up to a point, but the danger is that we shall ignore the teaching of all literatures; that great work comes out of a ruck, the compost that nourishes the flower. What we need is more men and women writing novels—a lot more, and novels of all kinds—more encouragement for the second-rate, and less talk about prospects. Also, the first job of a novelist is not to be a social studies student, but to tell a story. I quite cheerfully subscribe myself

SUBURBIA (Wellington).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Murray Gotherp (Hamilton).—Could be explained but cannot be excused. Much regretted.

Humbag (Wellington).—The effect frequently results from poor earthing of electric wiring circuits and hot water systems in the house. It may also be due to a fault in your set. Otherwise, a good outdoor aerial and an earth connection to your set, will probably help. The noise does not come from 2YA.

M.S. (Christchurch).—(1) The explanation more probably lies in the varying response of the receiving set to different frequencies than in studio level, which can be and is carefully regulated. (2) Usually the station. (3) Yes, and whenever it's possible they are intended to be. But while a play or a talk is not regarded as a good programme alternative to a serial, band music is. Such complaints are more readily checked if dates, times and stations are cited. Thanks.