

# Infectious Enthusiasm

**SPOTLIGHT ON NATURE** is one of the raciest sessions of its kind I have listened to, and one which would scarcely be produced anywhere but in New Zealand. Mr. Williams, with a sure instinct, chose subjects we ought to know more about but don't, as, for example, the octopus and the tuatara. His talk on the first, showing that the octopus is by nature timid and that it can change its colour to suit its surroundings, was quite new to me. In dealing with the tuatara, and in his asides on following this reptile's example by taking only two breaths a minute in order to survive 300 years, Mr. Williams showed that he carried his knowledge lightly. He is so uninhibited before the microphone that it is sheer entertainment as well as instruction to listen to him. I wonder if he has ever been considered for Broadcasts to Schools? What could be more important for children than the infectious enthusiasm he has for his subjects? I shall certainly tune in to the next 3YC session on "The Barnacle." The things not dreamt of in my philosophy are enthralling when discussed by Mr. Williams.

## Poems for Anzac Day

**GREAT** occasions sometimes find us unequal to the moment. Unable to find words to suit our feelings we grasp

the nearest to hand, with the result that Anzac Day will, as often as not, find us listening to Binyon's "For the Fallen," which is in danger of becoming hackneyed. Through the foresight of the NZBS, Anzac Day, 1952, introduced 3YC listeners to Ruth Gilbert's sequence of poems *The Slow Years Pass*. These new flowers at an old grave show that we do not intend to forget those who in two wars have given their lives for their country. The different character of each poem was emphasised by the variety of voices reading them and the music in the intervals between readings brooded on each poem. Commissioned work may not always equal that which comes unbidden, yet there can be no more real employment for the poet than in responding to the community's most worthy needs. Except where poems are of an obviously superlative quality a single reading is not enough by which to assess them, nor as part of an Anzac memorial would it be fitting to comment. One hopes, therefore, that they will be heard at other times or that they will be printed.

—Westcliff

## Between Two Stools

**DUNEDIN'S** critics for April—Arthur Manning, Barbara Manton and Christopher Johnson (chaired by Philip Smithells)—gathered at the microphone to discuss the local production of *Romeo and Juliet* and the collected edition of Somerset Maugham's short stories. There seemed little reason for this odd and unrelated mixture on the one programme; still less reason for calling it a "discussion," the value of which lies in the effect it can give of lively conversation, preferably argumentative, over-

heard by the listener. In this case, each critic came forward in turn with his collection of criticism which he laid before us rather in the manner of a door-step hawker. There was, admittedly, very brief discussion after each speaker had said his say, but it contributed little either in extension or in contradiction of the main speaker's contentions. Even Christopher Johnson's excellent review of Maugham, pin-pointing so exactly the vague dissatisfaction this author inspires in one, could not redeem this programme which lacked the structure and symmetry of a prepared talk, yet failed to achieve the liveliness of real discussion.

## Mozart Concertos

**RECENTLY** I commented on 4YC's series of Haydn quartets, and in the past I have enjoyed such other series as the Beethoven violin and pianoforte sonatas; for sheer delight, however, these have been eclipsed by the just completed series of Mozart pianoforte concertos with their marvellous tunes and variety unsurpassed by anything in music. Who could want anything more lovely than the slow movement of K.488, more dramatic than the opening movements of K.466 (D Minor) or K.491 (C Minor)? Comment on this series could easily turn into a catalogue of superlatives. Perhaps I should confine myself to the pleasure of differing with occasional performers, for whom should I choose to perform all the Mozart Concertos? Not Schnabel—I can't like his, to me, excessive slowness in the slow movement of K.595—nor Bruno Walter, since I am not sure about his K.466; perhaps Fischer or Gieseking—there is a lovely performance by the latter in K.271. On the whole, however, I think I should choose Kathleen Long, who, with her clarity and brilliance and the knowledge to allow the woodwind to be heard in the right places, is perhaps the perfect Mozart pianist, and her performance in K.450 and K.491 incomparable. It is to be hoped that 4YC will let us have these Mozart concertos again before very long.

—Loquax

## Maximum Information

**THE** 1YC discussion on the American Presidential Primaries turned out to be less a discussion than a fact-giving session. It was probably the more interesting for that. Robert Benchley explains the American electoral system thus: "This new country, faced with an experiment in government, worked on nothing sounder than the assumption that the average citizen knows enough to vote. The wonder is that we have got as far as we have—or have we?" The 1YC panel told us more than Mr. Benchley because A. K. Turner acted as a kind of inspired quiz-master, opening up the right avenues for Tom Bolster and Robert Chapman. At the end we were left with a fairly sound idea of how the primaries originated, how they are now exploited and what their political effects are. Some radio discussions seem ordered with an eye to the "entertainment" value which may arise from the clash of views on rather trivial topics. I always find these less satisfying than those in which informed people, by pooling information, clarify points of fact on a serious subject, and offer a

rounded point of view to the listener. The 1YC discussion was a success because it gave us the maximum information in the time available.

## Life Without TIFH

**AS** a substitute for the lamented *TIFH* from 12B, the *Bing Crosby Show* has little to recommend it. Bing's shirt-sleeved personality is not microgenic enough to sustain a script so weak that it barely totters to the end of the session. *Calling All Stars*, on the other hand, has its points. I find Ted Ray an engaging comedian, who grows on you. He hasn't the cheekily vulgar, acrobatic-voiced insanity of Frankie Howerd nor the majestic truiting of Jimmy Edwards, but in his good fire, smart-alecky delivery he reminds me of Tommy Handley at his best. Sometimes, I think, the situation of the naive young man being assailed by the slinky, seductive adventures is over-used, and in dubious taste, anyhow. And why is it that the curtain-lines of the latter-half sketches are always so feeble? *TIFH* suffered from this weakness, too. But, ah! the vanished strengths!

—J.C.R.

## St. George's Morning

**I** AM a confirmed listener to 22B in the early morning, since it is only from a commercial station that one gets at an unseasonable hour the assurance that there is someone who cares—even if he does spend half his time chivying you into a home-perm or a bargain-price gent's natty suiting. And I am prepared to pay for this personal interest ("Aren't you out of bed yet, you eight o'clockers?") by tolerating such well-thumbed platters as "Silver Dollar" and "Mocking Bird Hill." Imagine my gratification the other morning, therefore, when I was roused by "Ruffy-Tuffy," drank my tea to "Sussex by the Sea," and finally broke cover accompanied by Nymanshepherds, who had also chosen this moment to come away. No, not a new deal, I learnt later, but a special programme for St. George's Day, which comes but once a year. It's a pity most other mornings are unblessed with saints so apt for heartening radio commemoration, but it's good to know that the Service is on the ball in taking advantage of the ones there are.

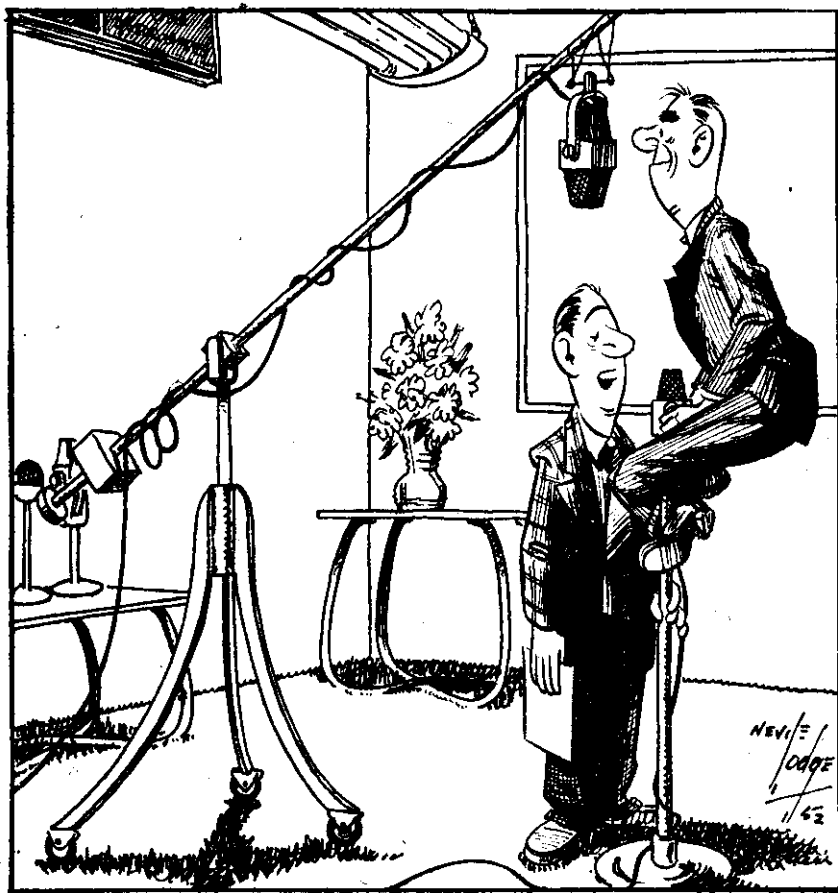
## An Emotional Strain

**IF** I had seen *The Dam Busters* as a film I should have been compelled to shut my eyes a lot of the time. The BBC programme *The Dam Busters* was so vivid I did the same thing involuntarily. But, dramatically vivid, the programme was towards the end emotionally halt. The length of time taken to destroy the dam, necessary to a full appreciation of the daring and skill of the men who bombed it, gave the listener time to assess the destruction in human as well as military terms, and had the effect of rousing in the listener a conflict of feeling which the programme seemed callous in not recognising. Certainly a programme of this type cannot afford to dissipate its emotional energy by adopting opposing stances, but it should be careful not to provide too glaring an opportunity for the listener to do so.

—M.B.

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 9, 1952.

## Lodge Listens . . .



'And now Mr. Bliggins will relate some of his experiences as a steeplejack'