

MAORI CAVE DRAWINGS

Sir,—The broadcast talks on the cave drawings gave us the points of view of artist, scientist and layman respectively. Only the mythologist was missing. Had we heard the opinions of someone well-versed in Maori mythology, Theo Schoon's case for their being connected with the magical practices of tohungas would have been strengthened. We are no experts in these matters, but Mr. H. McCully and myself have already made tentative links between certain drawings and myths, for example, the Big Dog as a deity who guarded travellers, the Taniwhas as probable personifications of the river as a source of food, the ritual of dog sacrifice, and others.

I felt that the least objective of the speakers was the scientist, Dr. Duff, who tried to make a strong case for the drawings being recent by citing certain examples as obviously modern, and other shelters where mission script is found near what he compares with doodling. He seemed more anxious to debunk those who believed the drawings to be the work of moa-hunters than to give all the known facts. Or perhaps he hasn't heard all of them.

For instance, it is fairly well known in South Canterbury amongst those who take an interest in these things that the cave-shelters with drawings were tapu to the Maori until a tohunga, Te Maiharoa, travelled around removing this tapu so that modern Maoris could use them. This was done some time towards the end of last century. With the tapu removed, the shelters were freely used by the last parties to hunt the weka. Members of these parties wrote their names in mission-style script. This makes possible a gap between obviously modern additions and the drawings themselves.

We have every confidence in the veracity of two elderly Maori friends from Temuka who, after visiting certain shelters with us, told us that while they had no idea who had done the drawings the names in mission letters were those of certain old people who were alive when our informants were young. In fact, they knew exactly who they were.

If the courteous Maori often gives answers we want to hear it would be unfair to imply that he never at any time speaks the truth.

W. HART-SMITH (Timaru).

A VOICE FROM THE KITCHEN

Sir,—I should like to know why the programme organisers at 1YZ Rotorua considered J. B. Priestley's play *The Linden Tree* unsuitable listening for mothers and housewives. So it would seem, because if they had tried really hard I doubt whether they could have found any hour out of the 24 when a housewife is less likely to be able to sit down and enjoy a play than between 10.30 and 12.0 in the morning. Being a Sunday morning it was eminently suitable for the five-day-a-week; but Sunday, Thursday, or Pancake Day, it's all the same to the housewife.

The play sounded wonderful, too, judging from the excerpts I heard as I poked porridge into the baby, tossed up scones for morning tea, washed napkins, polished the bedroom floor, and cut a salad for lunch. Is there any reason why this play could not have been broadcast in the evening? Is there any reason why 1YZ cannot relay the 11 a.m. church service and leave Sunday evenings free for full-length plays? Time was when 1YZ had a half-hour play (albeit of indifferent standard) on

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Monday nights, but for some inscrutable reason even that is now denied us. Thus the poor neglected housewife, when her day's work is done, has to content herself with such fare as *Eb and Zeb*, *Experiment with Time*, and the ever-lasting pegs upon which is hung a quarter-hour of recordings such as "Sweet Rhythm" and "Voices with Appeal." Therefore, on behalf of all my Bay of Plenty sisters in exile in the kitchen I request that *The Linden Tree* be presented again from 7.30 to 9 one evening.

WET HEN (Mt. Maunganui).

("Wet Hen" argues so persuasively without help that it is almost ungracious—but it is necessary—to say that other arguments than hers have helped to end the experiment of Sunday morning plays. But hers will be the sole credit of bringing *The Linden Tree* back to 1YZ for a repeat evening presentation.—Ed.)

WRITERS MILITANT

Sir,—In his long letter, A. R. D. Fairburn does not get to grips with the question posed in your editorial: how is the declaration to be interpreted that condemns "writing liable to sharpen existing dangers and hatred"? Leaving out all questions of motives and "mugs," and assuming that there can be honest objection to signing the writers' peace manifesto, interpretation is the core of the matter. "Liable," "sharpen," "dangers," "hatred"—the widest meaning can be given to these words, singly and in combination. "Dangers and hatred"—among whom? Everybody familiar with manifestations of national feeling knows that the slightest thing, such even as a mispronounced word (I have an example beside me) can produce fury and therefore hatred.

Most of the writers listed by Mr. Fairburn are novelists, poets or critics; I observe hardly one commentator on world affairs. The novelist's position under the declaration is easier than the publicist's but he has to walk warily. In a recent novel Ernest Hemingway makes an American character critical of Britain. This has been noted there, and may have caused resentment and hatred. I can imagine Hemingway's comments if he were asked to refrain from such character-drawing. For *Whom the Bell Tolls* must have aroused hatred in Spain, if it was read there. It might be difficult or even impossible for an English novelist to write of American life in such a way as to wound no American susceptibilities. When long ago the Congo atrocities shocked the conscience of civilisation H. de Vere Stacpoole wrote a novel about them, *The Pools of Silence*, which must have sharpened hatred in Belgium. Dickens might be held to have violated the clause when he wrote the American chapters of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

The honest publicist (and we are not concerned with the other kind) feels he must call attention to what he believes to be threats or evils. Twice in my time honest men have been labelled scare-mongers because they warned their countrymen of threats which subsequently materialised. Are such men now to refrain from asking questions about Russian policy, or the kidnapping of 28,000 children by the Greek Communists? Is an American investigator to be silent about what he considers evils in the British colonial empire or blunders in Persia and Egypt? I regard sympathetic study of American history and life by British peoples as a prime cultural need, and I take every opportunity of saying so. But in pointing out the vir-

tues of the Americans, must I ignore such things as recent revelations of corruption? Conversely, an American could not possibly make a broad survey of conditions in Britain without annoying someone. Strict interpretation of the declaration would reduce comment on foreign affairs to Pollyanna mush. I am sure Mr. Fairburn, who has strong convictions and an exceptionally lively style, would not wish this to happen. Is he quite sure that he himself has not violated the declaration?

ALAN MULGAN (Wellington).

NO CULTURAL AMBITIONS

Sir,—May I support "Visual Education"? Vision is a sense that is able to be developed and reproductions of masterpieces on title pages of *The Listener* might maintain art, a part of culture, as well.

A country creates from its own sources and the cultural wealth of history and peoples. The oldest works of art belong to the Upper Palaeolithic period and probably date between 20,000 and 10,000 B.C.

OUCHRE (Sumner).

Sir,—If *The Listener* has any cultural ambitions I have seen no evidence of any such. The paper seems to be run on the cheap. A page of "Letters from Listeners," some photographs (the women glamorous, the men grim), a few columns of puff for the ZBs, and the thing is done. The only matter worth reading is written by "Sundowner." As for the story page—blithering twaddle!

A.L.W. (Dipton).

THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—May I add a few remarks to those of P. H. Montague about our National Orchestra? In the main, I agree with him, especially regarding the brass section, which I hope will yet attain the richer mellowness of older-established orchestras. However, even the greatest orchestras could hardly be expected to maintain an unwaveringly high standard with every performance. In fact, I have heard recordings of famous orchestras in which the playing was frankly atrocious at times, far below the usual standard of our own orchestra. Certainly some concerts by our orchestra have been rather disappointing, and I have yet to hear them do full justice to a Sibelius symphony (admittedly difficult works), but on the other hand I have heard them give some truly magnificent performances. I think I will always gratefully remember such occasions as the concerts with Alfredo Campoli, and the superb playing of the Vaughan Williams works, *A London Symphony* and the *Tallis Fantasia*, to mention only one or two. More recently I was delighted with a studio performance of *Peter and the Wolf*, and *Tubby the Tuba Player*, superbly presented. Taking it all round, I don't think we really need to fear too much "ill-founded complacency."

A. H. BENNETT (Rai Valley).

MATERNITY HOSPITALS

Sir,—As a mother of 25 years ago I was appalled to hear from the 2YA Women's Panel on Wednesday, April 23, of the conditions alleged to be existing in our maternity hospitals today. My three children all came into the world in a small maternity hospital run in conjunction with a Hospital Board.

There were, I think, eight beds, and the hospital was in charge of a sister, who had as staff a nurse in training and a cook. My first baby was born at 6 o'clock in the morning, after I had been in labour all night, and all through that long night the sister did not once leave me alone. She had a couch in the theatre and would sometimes lie down for a few minutes, but did not leave me or get any sleep till next day, when she knew all was well with her patient and baby.

And to think that all mothers cry nowadays! I only felt joyful and happy and at peace with the world, knowing that all would be well, before the baby came, and content to lie and enjoy him and my pleasant surroundings afterwards. I could not have received, nor expected to receive, any more devoted care and attention than was given me by the sister and nurse of the hospital. From the moment of entering the door, a feeling of security, peace and serenity descended upon me and remained until the fortnight was over, when I returned home, feeling rested, strong and energetic, and ready and happy to take up my home duties once more.

A GRANDMOTHER OF THE FUTURE (Pelorus Sound).

BACH'S ORGAN MUSIC

Sir,—I would like to join Thomas E. Sims in his appreciation of the Bach organ series, concluded recently from 2YA. Like him, I was misled at first on being told that the "O Lamb of God" prelude was from the *Little Organ Book*, till I found it two volumes later—by which time the piece was well started.

How much better would it have been had we known in advance, all the items of each session, so that we could have been prepared with our music! Instead, the announcer hurriedly gave out at each period (in English translations of the titles) the four or five items then to be played in a string, leaving us to find them as best we could among the German titles (listed alphabetically) as used by John Sebastian. Often there are three or four on the one hymn.

Why not always have all the items of the organ sessions scheduled in advance? It would save us having to dash away and find the music, missing the first part of the piece meanwhile.

F. K. TUCKER (Gisborne).

A CLUE ASTRAY

Sir,—In crossword No. 594 "R.W.C." has scimitar spelt with an "e." What dictionary has it spelt that way?

P.A. (Nelson).

(We are sorry about this—the first spelling error, as far as we can remember, to upset one of our crosswords.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

C.S.H. (Karori).—Thanks. Will pass it on. A.C.N. (Hataitai).—Afraid it moves a little away from the point.

Hilda Eiby (Wellington).—Thank you. Your appeal could be made more suitably through daily newspapers.

T. A. F. Stone (Auckland).—Thank you. We think, however, that the dangers were sufficiently covered in the official reply.

"No Brow" (Ashburton).—It is impossible to use all the letters sent for publication. Subject and treatment are taken into account when a selection is made.

Clarence Bridge.—You mean Sunday mornings, not Tuesday, don't you? Most of these 9.30 documentaries, etc., are either repeats of evening presentations from 2YA or 2YC, or are repeated in their evening programmes.