

NEW ZEALAND HOUSEWIVES

Sir,—For a family wedding I had five house guests over last weekend. We came in from church and settled down as we always do to listen to the Sunday evening talk at 8.45, which on this occasion was given by an excellent speaker from the Home Science Department. As soon, however, as she warmed to her subject there was a unanimous cry of protest, "Oh, not again!" Then from six ordinary New Zealand housewives there was a babble of protest at the way we are being talked at and written at, and having it dinned into our ears that we New Zealand women are household slaves with no time for anything but the sink, the stove and the wash-tub.

Most of us are nothing of the kind. Take this particular six—a good typical cross section—all wives of working men, healthy, happy and contented, and all with families. A, a carpenter's wife with three children under five, has a washing machine, but until she and her husband can afford to build on their section, is living in a small inconvenient cottage without even a sink or running water in the kitchen. Her hobby is floral art in which she has lessons once a week at the Adult Education Centre. B, a dairy farmer's wife, who has had five children—two still at home—has a refrigerator, but no other gadgets, and does all cooking on a fuel range as there is plenty of wood on the farm which the boys cut, instead of "holding the lantern." She is the very capable president of her C.W.I., a keen member of its glee club and drama circle, and is extremely well read. C, the widow of a railway clerk with a boy at high school and two boarders, has no frig. or washing machine, but is saving for the former. She is president of the Church Guild, for 17 years has been on the Red Cross Committee, and is a keen member of the National Council of Women. D, another dairy farmer's wife who teaches her two children through the Correspondence School, is a very fine water-colour artist (and what's more works at it), and is on the women's committee of her political party. She has a washing machine but also cooks everything, including bread, on a fuel stove. E's husband is an engineer. She recently won a prize in a dress-designing competition and is the smartest and best-dressed woman in her township. She really enjoys designing unusual styles for her two small girls. F, me, well, I'm afraid I am ordinary, and not a "joiner" of anything. I haven't a frig., washing machine or even a vacuum cleaner, though I hope to have all of them some day. But we have got a library of several hundred of the best books—classics and modern—every one of which we have read, many of them aloud to our family or they to us, and a radiogram with a good collection of records chosen with the help of the folk who do music criticism over the air.

Busy women? Yes, all of us, but not slaves; and we do consider we are people with minds to cultivate and a contribution to make. New Zealand women should wake up, for in the words of one of my favourite radio comedians (yes, we do get time to listen to *TIFH*) we're being got at! ABIGAIL (Manutuke).

Sir,—After listening to Miss Emily Carpenter's talk on the New Zealand housewife and Mrs. Gunther's reply, I feel that Mrs. Gunther did not take Miss Carpenter's remarks in the spirit in which they were intended. Mrs. Gunther is evidently labouring under the delusion that Miss Carpenter wished to

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

deprecate the New Zealand housewife. Shall we take stock of ourselves, as Miss Carpenter suggests, or settle back complacently as Mrs. Gunther obviously feels we can afford to do? Mrs. Gunther's eulogy of the country housewife does not alter the fact that our homes are "pretty-pretty" (town and country); that they do tend to have a rather wearisome uniformity instead of being expressions of our own particular individualities. There is room for improvement in our household routines, and we can learn from the Home Science School better and quicker methods of cooking and cleaning.

Do we city housewives resent Miss Carpenter's constructive criticism? I for one do not. Since becoming a housewife I have made good use of the Home Science Extension Service, sending for pamphlets and listening to the excellent advice given over the air in the women's sessions. Consequently I did not have to waste time learning to run my household by trial and error. Labour-saving devices certainly make life easier for the housewife, and while agreeing with Mrs. Gunther that these may not be within the reach of a newly-married couple, it surely is folly to suggest that putting one's money on the totalisator will supply one with a washing machine!

CITY HOUSEWIFE (Invercargill).

"CLOCHEMERLE"

Sir,—Your film critic's barometer appears to require expert attention, as it does not seem to be in good working order. I refer to its reading "overcast" against the title *Clochemerle* in your issue dated July 3. Possibly it is operating in a conditioned atmosphere and in that case deserves pity. My advice to "Jno." is... open the windows and let the fresh air get at it. His extraordinary commentary upon the French film recently shown in Wellington convinces me that he did not view it in his capacity of critic, but instead spent the session struggling with his archaic set of repressions and inhibitions.

For "Jno.'s" information, modern psychology has long since exploded most of the ideas with which his mind is still cluttered. As an example I would point out that nothing in *Clochemerle*, or any other artistic portrayal of natural and commonplace human needs, reactions and inter-relationships is intrinsically "grubby." If any grubbiness exists it is distressingly obvious where it is to be found. "Jno." takes far too much for granted in referring to his own tastes as our tastes. Whence comes the surprising information that British artistic tradition is Puritan? Presumably "Jno." means to imply that, since we can hardly flatter ourselves that New Zealand has yet acquired its own distinctive tradition regarding matters of artistic representation.

To anyone familiar with the works of Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Shakespeare and a host of other eminent fighters against what "Jno." terms "innate Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy" it is absurd to suggest that British literature reflects that misguided, unsavoury prudishness which permits the private and guilty snigger at obscenity for obscenity's sake, whilst deploring it publicly.

Poor "Jno." and poor Justine Putet, who are unable to face the facts of life without blushing, would do well to visit a psycho-analyst before passing judg-

ment upon something which a normal healthy-minded person can only regard as a wholesome, robust and thoroughly enjoyable humorous satire.

In conclusion, let us hope that on future occasions "Jno." will view films objectively, as becomes a competent critic, and give us intelligent comments—which might have included in this case the fact that the film was badly mutilated, presumably by zealous pathological Puritans—and not be prepossessed with his feelings of shame at his Maker's handiwork.

HENRY WOOLF (Lower Hutt).

(Our film critic replies: "I can imagine Mr. Woolf in all sorts of fundamentally comic situations which would cause him, I am sure, acute embarrassment if they occurred in public, but I would not say that his distress was the product of unsavoury prudishness or an archaic set of inhibitions. I am in favour of a sensible and healthy attitude to sex, but films come too late in the educational process—and are too potent in their impact on immature minds—to be an effective means to that end. In reviewing, of course, I assume that readers by now are familiar with the moral considerations that may affect my judgment, and make their own adjustments accordingly."—Ed.)

COMMUNIST CHINA

Sir,—Once again I voice a protest against the championing of the Communist Government of China in *Look-out*. That the speaker felt it necessary to add an apologia indicates, I think, that he was not quite so happy in his mind as he would have had one believe. Though this may have been of some comfort to him, I must confess to having experienced a feeling of shame on his behalf. To express the view that the misery of life in China was such that it did not really signify whether the people were under a Communist Government or not! That the people lived so near the bread line that it made no odds! Do I need to comment? Not on the sentiment of such words surely? But this I would say. Western peoples are inclined to view misery and happiness as being a matter of standard of living. It is nothing of the sort. Happiness is a thing of the spirit, and a rich man is a man with a tranquil heart. I have lived in close contact with Asiatics whose standard of living was low indeed, when measured against that of Europeans, yet their joy in living seems to me to be greater than that of the average European.

I venture to say that when freedom is taken away, as it undoubtedly is under Communist rule, then happiness in life goes too.

The speaker saw cause for optimism at the present time. I doubt his judgment in this. There is no room for optimism while a large section of mankind is living in bondage, and while active steps continue to be taken to engulf the remainder. C.H. (Matamata).

"LITTLE MURDERESSES"

Sir,—I listened on Monday last to the session from 3YC called *Little Murderesses*, and was appalled by the exhibition of "horror thinking" given. For intelligent persons to take a charming book—a classic of childhood—such as Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* and read murder into it, and into the lives of its characters, seems to be indicative of how far the trend of "horror comics"

has led us. Today's men, women and children are being led into this acceptance of violence and horror by the type of book, magazine, and radio serial offered to them, and it is time the governments of many countries realised this, and did something to counteract this belief in the inevitability of violence, rapine and murder.

J. RYAN (Christchurch).

PLANNED HOUSING

Sir,—Your editorial ignores one obvious solution to the problem of housing, and it can be summed up in one sentence: It is the townsman's duty to see that his town expands only on to land not suitable for productive purposes. Sand, shingle sub-soil areas, and hillsides can be as productive for the home gardener as the fertile soils we are wasting ever more rapidly.

B. R. WALLER (Christchurch).

Sir,—You say in your leader (July 3), "Can we afford to build houses on first-class land which should be used for market gardens; should our cities be allowed to spread deeply into the farm lands?" It is strange how facts which should strike people in the face go unnoticed. The answer to your question is "No"; not until all vacant building sections and slum areas are fully built on. In all our cities and towns there are, in the aggregate, countless such areas. In the Auckland city rating area alone, 5000, according to the Mayor. In Wellington not so many, but plenty of slums which should be cleared and replaced with modern flat buildings.

The Government should buy up all these vacant lots and slums at an arbitrated price, and hand them to home-seekers, subject to a ground-rent with periodical revision of rentals. This would solve the financial problems of people seeking a roof over their heads and who would not be faced with a capital cost for sites. The scheme would pay handsomely, directly, and the indirect benefits would be almost incalculable. Epidemics would be wiped out and many thousands of man-hours saved for industry. Medical services would be greatly reduced and our hospitals half emptied. All this would take time, but it need not be so very long. Slums could be cleared in batches and the relatively few occupants temporarily housed and returned to the new flats. After the first batch no further temporary housing would be needed, as flats on a given area would re-house far more than the original occupants.

C.H.N. (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Rolf Kersten (Auckland).—Sorry; the correspondence has been closed.

Competitor (Little River).—It has been played frequently. You may hear it on July 26 from three different stations—1YA at 10.0 a.m., 3YA at 2.0 p.m., and 4YA at 9.30 a.m.

A.J.C. (Dunedin).—The opening bars of Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1.

TIFH Fan (Ngaio).—Each series has been played several times in each main listening area; rights expire after a fixed period.

Mrs. E. M. Brookland (Carterton).—The commentary is relayed from the ringside, but is recorded for delayed broadcast because weather and news and other fixed programmes hold the air from 9.0 to 9.30 p.m.

Edith Jessop-Hardwick (Waiheke Island).—Many thanks. Similar information has been supplied in letters already printed.

John Pinhey (New Plymouth).—"Prisoners of Silence" not yet in programme elsewhere, but information expected soon. "Foundations of Mental Health" now playing from 4YC.

Further correspondence will be found on page 15