

CRITICALLY SPEAKING

Sir,—The splenetic outburst from Bruce Mason in his review of *Outward Bound* from 2YA on August 13 was an offence against good taste besides being very ill-informed. He had the effrontery to sneer at Sutton Vane's masterpiece, which was considered worthy of inclusion in a volume of Great Modern British Plays edited and selected by J. W. Marriott. In his preface Marriott refers to its "triumphant first act" (which nearly put Bruce Mason to sleep) and describes the play in general as "a remarkable play."

Bruce Mason saw fit to sneer at the mentality of the public in the 1920's—a period about which he obviously knows nothing. For Bruce Mason's benefit that period of the 1920's marked the impact of Ibsen and G. B. Shaw on the English theatre (to mention but two names). During the run of *Outward Bound* in England (I toured with this show in the Provinces, playing the part of Tom Prior) most of the towns we visited had the unusual experience of hearing the churches use the theme of *Outward Bound* for the Sunday sermon—so great was the impression made by this "trashy" play. Further, the papers were filled with letters commending the play to all thinking people.

Again, Bruce Mason was "dreadfully embarrassed" at hearing "Duke's" prayer beginning "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild"—a note of utter simplicity and sincerity which should be (and always was in my experience) one of the most moving moments in the play. Bruce Mason also stated that he would prefer oblivion to being examined by a "hearty, rugger-blue parson." Doubtless Mr. Mason's ego would demand nothing less than the Deity by virtue of the fact that he has written a sordid play himself and as a playwright in the modern idiom (from which God save us all) is far removed from the common herd.

I do not defend the production of *Outward Bound* (I did not see it), but I take strong exception to anybody making such derogatory remarks about a play which has stood the crucial test of time and box office and been twice filmed, as well as being performed in the better part of the world.

I consider that Bruce Mason's jeremiad was an insult to listeners as well as to Sutton Vane, and I am at a loss to understand how or why such an un-informed person could be permitted to use the radio to inflict his adolescent views upon an intelligent public.

L. ASSHETON HARBORD
(Lower Hutt).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

JOHN ARLOTT

Sir,—In your issue of August 7 it was reported that Jack Lamason, speaking of John Arlott, "would very much like to know how he produces the turn of phrase which may not tell you anything, yet which is interesting in the extreme." I think John Arlott's ability to produce picturesque turns of phrase was well established long before he began to give cricket commentaries. I first met him about 10 years ago when he was beginning to see some of his poems in print. When he later joined the BBC, his work, in one of the Overseas Services, was largely concerned with literary programmes and poetry readings and it seems that his natural gift with words has combined with the reverence for cricket of the true Hampshire man to produce a commentator of distinction.

I was on the BBC staff myself at the time John Arlott was about to have an interview for a position with the

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Corporation, and it is amusing to recall that he felt that his chances of a broadcasting job would be lessened by his now famous "loamy" accent. When I last spoke to him, before leaving to join my New Zealand husband, he expressed himself envious of my new life and added, "Let me know if you hear of any opening for a jobbing poet." I have not been in the best position to look for such an opening, but thousands of cricket fans can rejoice that I never found one!

NOEL SUNLEY (Hastings).

ARAWATA BILL

Sir,—In *The Listener* of July 31 I read an account of Arawata Bill (W. O'Leary), which says that he travelled with a horse for 20 years. He used to buy old horses to carry his swag, though not always; generally he carried it himself. As Mrs. MacKenzie says in her book *Pioneers of Martin's Bay*, he travelled alone, not even with a dog for company; but sometimes he bought a horse to carry his outfit, when he would make a longer stay in the wilds. Once he had a horse with only one eye. The longest time he had a horse was about five years. Twice I was on the coast and met Arawata, and he had no horse. Horses cannot go through the West Coast bush unless there are tracks, and tracks are few. It was said that he got his name Arawata Bill because he kept the 37 miles of track clear between Jackson's Bay and Big Bay. There is no track, and never was, except between Jackson's Bay and Cascade. Arawata was never employed on it. His name originated in his long prospecting of the Arawata Valley. For a time he tended the ferry over the Arawata River.

J.M. (Mosgiel).

"EDUCATING ARCHIE"

Sir,—I see that the British 10-year-olds are enthusiastic about Archie and Peter Brough. Well they can have them. The ZB Sunday programme used to be quite good. Why ruin it with such rubbish? We like P.C. 49, TIFH, Much-Binding and good murders. Put Archie on at five for the infants, and let us have some adult BBC.

RELAX (Dunedin).

GIANT SEAWEED

Sir,—Everyone laughs at the botanist's cumbersome Latin names for even unimportant plants. The defence is that it is well to be accurate, and there are pitfalls for the user of popular names. *The Listener* gives us a neat example. "Sundowner" took for his text for July 23 a quotation about the giant kelp, *Macrocystis pyrifera*, and its claim to be the largest (in the sense of the longest) plant in the world. That was fair enough. But it was hardly fair to head the column with a photograph of a

giant kelp that is neither *Macrocystis* nor a particularly long plant. *Durvillea antarctica*, or bull kelp, shown growing on intertidal rocks at Preservation Inlet, has a solid trunk a couple of feet long; the broad leathery fronds, split down the middle, make the traditional containers for preserved muttonbirds, and one bag is big enough to hold dozens of corpses. This is sturdy for a seaweed, but small in every way compared with a large tree.

Macrocystis is a different matter. Its main dimension is length, and a big plant consists chiefly of dozens of flexible stems, as thick as a heavy skipping rope, and often 50 to 100 feet long. There are authentic records up to 200 feet, but the older stories of plants 1000 to 1500 feet long are now discredited. In fact it is usually impossible to unsnarl the tangled plants to find the length of a single one. Each stem arises directly from the grapnel-like base on the sea-floor, often five, sometimes 10, and occasionally 20 fathoms down. Pear-shaped floats (hence the name *pyrifera*) buoy these stems up to the surface and each float carries a membranous leaf a foot or two long. The plants grow in extensive beds, and form the golden-brown rafts, anchored just offshore, that are familiar in most of our harbours from Cook Strait southwards.

Durvillea is a common New Zealand seaweed too, growing only on the most exposed rocks, from the far north to the subantarctic islands. It is a pity not to distinguish clearly between these two spectacular kelps. Perhaps Maori names would help. Rimurapa is the textbook word for *Durvillea* but I do not know if it is in common use. *Macrocystis* is probably just rimuroa, the long seaweed, the giant kelp, which takes us back to where we began!

LUCY B. MOORE (Wellington).

Sir,—As I do not want your excellent journal to become a vehicle for misinformation, I hope you will permit me to point out an error which arose from "Sundowner's" recent reference to seaweeds. The statement in the text that the giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* is the largest plant in the world is quite correct, and it is found on New Zealand coasts; but the photograph accompanying the article was that of quite another kelp, *Durvillea antarctica*. The *macrocystis* has a relatively thin stem from which run air bladders at regular intervals, each bladder terminating in a long, thin, ridged leaf or frond. Strangely enough, it is off the coast of California, where the giant redwoods grow, that this seaweed has been found up to 1000 feet in length. In other parts of the world, including New Zealand, it has grown only up to about 100 feet. This truly giant kelp is being utilised in the United States for the manufacture of sodium alginate, a product which has manifold industrial uses, besides being

the stabilising ingredient of half the ice cream made in the U.S.A.

The *Durvillea* which appeared in Dr. Falla's photograph often has broad, leathery blades and stems as thick as a man's wrist. This is the seaweed which the Maoris slit down the centre to form a waterproof bag for storing such things as muttonbirds.

E. W. de ROO (Christchurch).

"THE CRITICS"

Sir,—As a classic example of the national lack of humour and of smug complacency, the performance of "The Critics" from 1YC on August 13 would be hard to beat. Haven't these New Zealanders and others of the same ilk been writing ironic prose and verse in order to detach themselves completely from these same national defects? I seem to remember these men recently "interviewing" an American writer and telling him what he thought of New Zealand writing. By all means let them criticise to their heart's content, but they should not be allowed to take up valuable YC broadcasting time.

VERSE (New Plymouth).

PASTEURISATION

Sir,—Germs are everywhere; we come in contact with them from many sources each day and milk is only one of many possible sources of infection. Our only real protection against them is a healthy body, which has a perfect defence mechanism against invading organisms. But this mechanism is severely weakened if it does not receive its quota of essential vitamins, and this is where pasteurisation is a shortsighted policy. For by destroying the vitamins C and D, it strikes right at the heart of our resistance to disease. When this is considered it is obvious that over a period of time the health of the community will be worsened rather than improved by pasteurisation of milk.

It will be said, of course, that these vitamins can be obtained from other sources, such as oranges; but in most cases this will not come about. How many mothers of families can afford to give their children oranges? If a calf is fed on pasteurised milk it will die, and yet this treated product is thought good enough for our children.

When he visited this country the late George Bernard Shaw was the first to urge us to adopt the free milk in schools plan, and he specially advised against pasteurisation for the same reasons as those given above.

Finally, let us not forget that this country was built up on the pure unpasteurised milk which bureaucrats are now trying to prevent us from obtaining.

E.J.D. (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Appreciation (Wellington).—The talk will be heard from 3YC on September 1 and 4YA (or 4YC) on September 24.

Interested (Kyebrum).—"Prisoners of Silence" will be heard from both 4YA and 4YZ in the week starting September 28.

L'Allegro (Warkworth).—Mr. Williams already answers all questions received; although, when one correspondent raises several questions, all may not be answered in one session.

E.H.T. (Napier).—They are of lower power than the YC stations, but at night broadcasting transmissions travel long distances. Every endeavour is made in assigning frequencies to minimise interference between stations in different countries.

Harry H. Franklin (Bluff).—(1) About 200 stations, Australian and New Zealand, have to be accommodated in 107 channels on the broadcasting dial. That makes it a little difficult to allot a clear channel to each. (2) It would be interesting to know which "much more populous parts of the world" have satisfactorily resolved their interference problems.

RESIDENT CONDUCTOR FOR ORCHESTRA

THE position of resident conductor of the National Orchestra will shortly be advertised in New Zealand and overseas, the Minister of Broadcasting, Hon. R. M. Algie, announced last week. The appointment will be for two years, with a possibility of extension for a third year, and the new conductor will take over at the end of August, 1954, when Warwick Braithwaite's appointment as guest conductor ends. Applications will not close until musicians throughout the British Commonwealth and beyond have had full opportunity to consider the position, Mr. Algie said. Committees in England and Australia would review applications lodged in those countries, and special arrangements for the interview of Canadian and South African applicants would be made if necessary. All overseas recommendations would be reviewed by an advisory committee in New Zealand, which would be a somewhat larger body and more widely representative of informed musical opinion than in the past. This committee would make its final recommendation to the Minister.