

Sir,—After listening to the panel from Christchurch discussing the vital problem of "natural childbirth," I feel I must protest. It is impossible to discuss this subject with medical people who absolutely ignore the most important aspect of childbirth, the emotional side. It is time we had a panel at least properly balanced to discuss this subject—that is, two members who have enjoyed childbearing emotionally and physically, and not one to three. It is useless to say our hospitals are completely satisfactory. They may be more or less that on the purely physical side, but the personal and emotional upsets borne by many women leave a lasting scar.

Our nurses are highly trained, and I am one myself, but no lectures are given to help them to understand the psychology of a woman about to complete the supreme task of womanhood. Efficiency is very cold comfort if the human touch is not present. In the home the nurse can revel in her efficiency and the husband provides the balance and the emotional stability, which he cannot do in a ward full of women. I suggest that a panel now be selected from mothers who have attended the Parent Centre Clinics in Wellington to give us the most important viewpoint of the person most vitally concerned in childbirth—the mother. They have a large file of case histories from mothers who have successfully and enthusiastically tried natural childbirth.

I think the title natural childbirth is a little unfortunate, and training for childbirth would be more correct. It is now considered scientifically proved that the birth experience leaves a lasting impression, not only on the mother, but also on the baby. So here is another reason for easy natural births free from drugs and instruments. This is, of course, an aspect that medical folk will not consider, as it has so long been considered that nothing affected the child mentally until after birth. We must advance slowly but surely, and New Zealand women will get there despite the voice of authority. **BRUAG (Auckland).**

Sir,—I have just heard a most disappointing discussion from IYA on natural childbirth. For some members of the panel it was rather like deaf-mutes discussing a Beethoven sonata, the score of which they had, as one revealingly put it, "waded through." In fact, the very spirit of the thing, the mother's vital need for mental and emotional security, and the satisfaction of all instinctive reactions towards the child, was almost as completely missed. Comment would scarcely be merited were it not for some generalisations quite sincerely believed which should not be allowed to pass. Foremost was the confident assertion that patients in labour are not now left alone. Perhaps the fortunate ones in some hospitals are not, but my guess is that, taken over all New Zealand, two-thirds are left alone at some period, some for long terrifying intervals, and often in cases when the staff quite honestly believe they did not leave the patient. In fact, the statement "I was never left alone" is still something to be remarked on particularly, not just assumed. It should be noted, too, that the mere presence of another human being does not fulfil Read's explicit statement of the absolute necessity for the "continuous undivided attention" of someone in whom the patient has "absolute trust."

Another generalisation was that all patients now receive "nine months' instruction." This is also very far from true, and often the instruction that is given is very far from the education

advocated by natural childbirth experts. Then a speaker compared the education of a mother for a natural birth with a conditioning of attitude of girls in a native race, assuming an identical process. This alone would certainly bear out his later priceless admission, "I don't know what we're talking about," a perfect illustration of the complete lack of common ground between one who goes through the experience and one who watches.

In fairness I think the NZBS should broadcast talks by those who really merit the title of expert on the particular topic, in this case the ideal being presumably a woman doctor who has herself had a natural birth, and the opposition provided by a mother who has tried both types of birth and prefers the unconscious one.

EXPERIENCE (Opotiki).

CRITICALLY SPEAKING

Sir,—I should not like Bruce Mason to feel that his urbane and forthright review of *Outward Bound* was received by all his listeners in the way that L. Assheton Harbord's equally forthright, if not equally urbane, letter shows it was received by at any rate one. Mr. Harbord is able to tell us with the authority of a contemporary participant that the play was a success 30 years ago. Seen today, rather than having, as Mr. Harbord asserts, "stood the crucial test of time," it seems to me (and to others with whom I have discussed the play) pretty poor stuff. Perhaps because we have seen in the interval better plays and films exploiting the "realistic" (if that be a proper term) treatment of life after death, we are no longer blinded by novelty of presentation to the pretentious shallowness of the content. *Outward Bound* may have in some measure prepared the way for *Stairway to Heaven* and *Les jeux sont faits*, but it is not comparable with them as a work of art. Nor, in my opinion, is it a good enough play to stand revival for its archetypal merits.

Mr. Mason, I agree, did not extend himself to explain the past success of a play that no longer seemed to him good. That was not perhaps entirely fair to Sutton Vane and his contemporaries; but, given the exigent limitations of radio criticism, he made in my view a justifiable and laudable decision to protest at what he felt was an unnecessary revival. It is perhaps as much the function of criticism to stimulate the present as to be elaborately fair to the past. Mr. Mason chose to do the former and did it in a trenchant and eloquent review that seemed to be wholly admirable. I hope the NZBS will allow us to hear more of him.

KENNETH QUINN (Wellington).

NEW ZEALAND CRITICISM

Sir,—There is an undeclared premise behind criticism in New Zealand which was illustrated in last week's Critics' Panel from IYA. The Critics discussed two volumes of poetry, one by Denis Glover and one by C. Day Lewis. Mr. Glover's poetry was praised highly, for its skillful terseness and internal rhymes, and for its message (praise to the New Zealand common man). Mr. Day Lewis's verse was treated with grudging disdain; ignoring its obvious technical superiority over Mr. Glover's work, the Critics chose to decry Mr. Lewis as shallow and decadent.

Now Mr. Curnow, Mr. Fairburn and Mr. Keith Sinclair each know who, be-

tween Denis Glover and C. Day Lewis, is the better poet. What's more, the listeners know, more or less, that the Critics were measuring Mr. Day Lewis against world standards, meaningful standards, and Mr. Glover against the standards we use for local art. At the root of this practice, accepted by the public and defended strongly by many critics of press and radio, is the assumption that New Zealand art must be, now and for a long time to come, so inferior that it cannot be talked about in terms of universal standards. Many critics and some artists want to perpetuate the double standard—because they think it kind and well-mannered, and because it exists. None of these are valid reasons, and it can be argued that the practice is unkind to creative artists.

So much of what is wrong with art in New Zealand can be put down to lack of standards. So much of what is still provincial, "folksy" and amateurish could be helped along by exposure and constructive evaluation. To hide behind the philosophy of "we know this is inferior, but we'll give it a big pat on the back anyway," merely perpetuates the attitude of mind in which New Zealand artists function today. This applies even more strongly to local performances by drama groups, by musical societies and instrumental groups, and to art societies. To deplore colonial art because it is derivative is only the beginning: when it is inferior, one must say so, and say why, and search for the means to improve. **E.R.H. (Auckland).**

THE HISS CASE

Sir,—I have read *The Strange Case of Alger Hiss*, and as many reviews of it as I could get my hands on. As a result I agree with the *New Statesman* reviewer who said "any honest reader of this book is bound to be infected by his (the Earl Jowitt's) misgivings." The chief reasons for these misgivings might be summarised as follows: 1. The only significant witness for the prosecution, Whittaker Chambers, committed perjury seven times before the grand jury. 2. Since the conviction of Hiss, Chambers published *Witness*, a personal statement in which he reveals two facts unknown at the time of second trial. He, Chambers, attempted to commit suicide just prior to deciding to produce the documents which incriminated Hiss. He had taken steps to procure for himself "a life preserver" to guard against violence when he left the Communist Party. These two facts, together with the testimony of two trained psychiatrists about Chambers, must cast grave doubt upon his credibility as a witness. 3. Counsel for the prosecution introduced into his final speech a new suggestion entirely unsupported by the evidence given, viz., that the identity of the typist of the incriminating documents might be revealed by the documents themselves. No typewriting expert would support such a contention. Earl Jowitt gives reasons for thinking that this unchallenged suggestion influenced the jury. 4. The judge made no summary of the evidence and gave no guidance to the jury. As the hearing lasted two months the jury must have felt bewildered on a number of issues. 5. On many occasions Earl Jowitt quotes evidence that was allowed to stand which would have been inadmissible in British courts. 6. Among a number of inexplicable points one stands out. If Hiss, a highly intelligent man, was guilty, why did he not make certain of the disposal of the

fatal typewriter on which the case for the prosecution ultimately rested? Why carelessly give it away to a servant?

Several readers have taken your reviewer to task for his quite fair appraisal of this most impressive book. They will quote reviews; let them read the book. I should be surprised if they did not agree that "not proven" was the only satisfactory verdict.

TEACHER (Napier).

COLOUR AND PATTERN

Sir,—I wonder would Mr. W. B. Brockie be so kind as to mention one "concept" of the theory of evolution, which he refers to in *The Listener* of August 21 as "so obviously grounded on facts that they hardly require defending." I would like one fact, please, but of sufficient calibre to demolish the axiom—"Science does not deal with origins." This fact would also surely qualify the value of our established knowledge of the chromosomes as scientific proof of creation.

Human intellect is proven a very poor thing by "the riddle of the universe" it has created for itself.

WILLIAM CRANSTON (Auckland).

ANTIPODEAN

Sir,—*"Loquax"* in your issue of August 14 says that a selection of Miss Eileen Duggan's verse made a version of antipodean Christianity. My impression of this poetess's writing, conceding that there may be territorial variations in the character of a faith, is that it conveys an approach to religion that only a New Zealander could express. For antipodean Christianity one must look to other devotional verse; for instance, the Christian Year beneath the Southern Cross. It has, however, been suggested to me that I am bradypneptic; that *"Loquax"* does not intend to refer particularly to the Christianity of Spain, nor in a general way to that of the Continent of Europe, but to that of New Zealand itself; and that, impossible as it may seem, there is a kind of geography in which a country may be its own antipodes. If this is the case, or if *"Loquax"* is one of those curious persons who survey the world acrobatically from between their own legs, and expect other people to do the same, then it might save confusion if, for use instead of "antipodean," *"Loquax"* were to coin some such word as "amphipodean." If ever I hear of a specific for xenomania, I will pass it on.

TRANSPORTS (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

A.H.H. (New Plymouth).—Many thanks. C. E. Stephen (Tekapo).—No earlier version is on record.

The Ayes Have It (Timaru).—No prospect in next 18 months.

Listeners (Wellington).—The matter is receiving consideration.

D. Dorofaelt (Christchurch).—It will start from 2YC on September 26.

H. W. Giesen (Dannevirke).—Afraid it could not be done. Space is one difficulty; copyright another.

Constant Listener (Wellington).—It will be heard in Wellington a little later. The date and time will be published in the programmes.

J.R. (Auckland).—Four quarter-hour talks by Canon Bryan Green were broadcast by the main national stations in July—each at 9.15 p.m.

Badminton Fan (Christchurch).—Arrangements were made for results to be sent from Australia, and all information received—including full test coverage—was broadcast.

Podge (Christchurch).—Your opinion has been passed on and noted. Whether or not the description was overdone, the fact remains that it did pick up a highly diverting interview.