

LETTERS

Because this is the first issue of the magazine, we haven't got a letters column yet. We will have and you — the readers — are the people who are going to write it.

To give you food for thought we have assembled some of the opinions concerning amateur radio which we encountered in producing this new magazine. Frankly, most of them are jaundiced to say the least but they nearly all raise some aspect which may be worthy of discussion.

We came across them in the same manner which most of you will have done — by listening to both the harangue and humour of the airwaves. A few of them were offered directly: "Why don't you do an article on..." to which we reply: "Why don't you write one then?"

We would like this column to be an open net. We promise that we won't censor or cut correspondence (unless it's very boring) within the limits of the law of libel.

Please write to us with your views c/o Frank Ogden G4JST, Ham Radio Today, 145 Charing Cross Road, London WC2 0EE.

RAE too easy

The boom in Ham Radio is obviously caused by the lowering of the RAE standards with the introduction of the multiple choice answer examination. The famous book "So you want to be a radio amateur" became a book at bedtime and a guide to finding a lucky pin. The new RAE examination has had wider repercussions than just making the good time for the retailers. There is a noticeable decline in the standard of amateurs coming into the hobby. They're nothing more than a bunch of CBer's in the main.

Channelisation

A certain G3 insists on holding QSO's on the calling channel! May be he's right, the air belongs to anyone who is entitled to hold a licence and has paid for it, so get stuffed is the attitude of many! Who said the band has to be channelised anyway? The Home Office, RSGB? The likes of our G3 friend is going to appreciate even less the 12.5 kHz spacing that must be inevitable if the deluge of new licences continues year after year.

Self control

There always has to be a policeman these days to control a situation when more than a handful of people are playing the same game and that is what Ham Radio has come to — a game — yet the licence is still issued for electronic experiments and self

teaching. The minimum age to hold a licence should be raised to 18. Kids should be out of their nappies before being allowed to belch profanities over the air. Listening to some of the lids, wallys and squeakies, call them what you will, it is obvious they are well beyond any self control. The RSGB as the wouldbe governing body of Ham Radio in the UK doesn't have the facilities or legislation required to clamp down on the offenders; while the Home Office is just not interested.

Too many contests

There's nothing but contests on the HF bands these days. It seems that wherever you tune the c1y is "CQ CONTEST, CQ CONTEST". It's really difficult to get a word in edgeways these days without some Italian or Russian station coming up and shouting over the top of you. There are just far too many. It really takes the fun out of the hobby for those of us who simply want to rag-chew. Contests should be cut right back.

Amateur vs CB

"I understand that you're a radio amateur."

"Well, yes."

"I wonder if you could explain to me the difference between ham radio and CB?"

"I'll try. Amateur radio takes in far more than simple CB. True, both of them are concerned with two way radio but ham radio is concerned

with long distances and things like bouncing signals off the moon."

"It sounds very interesting but a friend of mine is a radio amateur and he's got something called a two metre black box... I listened to it and it sound very like CB. What's the difference with that?"

"Price, I suppose."

CW anachronism

CW is the most archaic form of communication, even the tribesmen of Africa use it with their drums. Why are we not taught morse code at the same time as learning to talk if it is so important a form of communication? There's a lot more sense and value in teaching everyone to type in their youth (they do in the States), those becoming Hams could then use RTTY or a typewriter to a morse converter (another black box) with the replies displayed on a VDU. It's a lot easier to learn to type than to use a morse key. Those that can't spell lose out either way, that's why the Q code was invented!

Homebrew

"I did it my way" is the cry of the home brew merchants. They always manage to design something that out performs any black box. "I've only tuned it up by ear, but it's better than my (a well known black box)". You've heard it so many times on the air, isn't it amazing how they manage to get a component to perform a task it was never designed to do, and what is more they set it up with a neon screwdriver, at UHF fre-