

## NEW ZEALAND'S FAILURE

(By *Waiaatua*.)

## ONE RACE, ONE PARLIAMENT, ONE BIG APATHY

IN the United States, "a melting-pot of many races," with a slow-working Federal constitution that puts every American under two Governments and two Legislatures, they envy New Zealand with her rapidly working unitary constitution and with her racial purity. One race one Parliament, one Government—why, New Zealand should, in the opinion of Americans, have the best and most rapid-working wild life administration and legislation in the world. With the goal plain before us, and with a straight legislative and administrative approach to it, we New Zealanders should have "no problems." We should be one united people with one big record of achievement.

But in wild life we have almost no achievement at all. Wild life administration is divided between various mutually suspicious Departments. We talk about consolidating departmental control, but we cannot even consolidate the acclimatisation societies. We cloak our non-achievement behind mountains of words. The New Zealand Treasury may possibly have heard about the balance of nature, but its only active concern is the balance of the Departments.

With one governing machine, one politically predominant party, and one race of people, that machine should have done much for wild life in the last half-decade. But what has it done? Perhaps it has done a little more than its predecessor. But that is a poor recommendation. Piebald North America, with all its confusion of colours and castes and classes, with all its political barriers, eclipses New Zealand in consciousness of wild life, and in protective achievement.

Notwithstanding the complications of conflicting Federal and State Governments within the United States, and notwithstanding "international conservation complications," the United States people do their best to limit the killing of the birds in transit and thus to reduce the effect of the shock that awaits these migrants when they meet the pot-hunting armament close to the Equator.

Now compare these North American migratory geese and ducks with the godwit and other migratory species that grace New

Zealand with their occasional presence among us. So far as is known, the godwit when breeding in sparsely occupied North Asian wastes is little interfered with by man, but in New Zealand every year we fire a salvo, not in its honour but at it. That is how New Zealanders celebrate this annual triumph of instinct, this never-ceasing wonder of Nature—the migration of the godwit. In its other home in North Asia there may be a few Eskimos, but they are not machine gunners. As far as is known, they are in no sense Mexicans. For the purposes of the godwit, we New Zealanders are the Mexicans. And proud of it!

Some of our birds go to and fro from the Arctic. Some of our birds go to and fro from the Antarctic. In their Arctic haunts human life is scarce. In the Antarctic it does not exist at all. Therefore Antarctic and sub-Antarctic bird life has little to fear except from us New Zealanders. But what do we find when the albatross tries to nest on our coasts? We find stoning and egg-smashing by vandals.

The vandalism of individuals is bad enough. The apathy of the people, and the paralysis of Parliament, is worse. That apathy illustrates our so-called culture, which has hardly yet learned to lisp the word aviculture. We do pretend to agriculture, but the relation to agriculture of aviculture and silviculture (the alliance of forest and bird to serve man) is far beyond the ken of all save an inactive minority and a few active individuals, who knock at the door of public opinion almost in vain.

The envious American who considers that New Zealand should have "no problems" refers to the advantages of our "universal education." But are these advantages real or apparent? Forty years ago the middle-class man was far better informed on wild life than he is to-day. To-day he is a specialist sawing bones, drawing teeth, or balancing account books—he is a specialist and nothing else. Education to-day educates the masses for the soap-box and the classes for narrow specialist jobs. That is too wide a story to be dealt with here, but it is the root of the evil.