

He Raced The Nazis On One Leg

N.Z. Geologist in Scandinavia

MOST of us would think it a good performance to give the slip to a Nazi patrol if we had both legs to run with, but Dr. Brian Mason (right), who has been appointed Lecturer in Geology at Canterbury University College, achieved this distinction with one leg in plaster. We can't tell the full story, because we have not Dr. Mason's permission to do that, but we can say that he was in Norway when the Germans arrived in April, 1940, convalescing from a broken leg, and that he not only outwitted them in the race for the Swedish frontier, but contrived to get himself admitted to the University of Stockholm, to maintain himself there for three years, and then get out again with a Stockholm degree and a Swedish wife.

Now he is back again in New Zealand, a little troubled by the cold of our unheated houses—Mrs. Mason developed her first chilblains in Wellington—and was quite willing to talk to us when we called on him so long as we did not wish him to tell us things that might prove embarrassing to other people.



NOT ONLY THE COWS EAT WOOD IN SWEDEN

ONE of the first things we talked about when we interviewed Dr. Mason was how Sweden uses her timber resources.

"Sweden is one country where paper is just a glut on the market," he said. "Since the Kattegat was closed, the industry has been working at about 20 per cent capacity, and even so, the papers are still carrying about 30 pages daily. But the Swedes have been most ingenious in devising all sort of ways of using the surplus wood-pulp. They even have paper sheets for about sixpence; so of course if you go away to spend a week-end with friends, you can take them with you."

"And just use them once?"

"Oh, well, you can use them about two or three times really, but they're so cheap there's no need to spin them out. They are coming into use in hospitals quite a lot, too, I believe. Then there's wood alcohol — you've heard about that. There is no petrol at all for private use, and very little used in any

motor-cars. Most of them use producer gas, but some are run on alcohol got by fermenting cellulose. Not only do they make methylated spirits and motor fuel but they also make quite a good line of gin. Yes, it was good gin! And cattle fodder. Sweden's dairy industry was built up on imported feed, and when they couldn't get it any more, they had to slaughter a lot of cattle, but even then they had a job to feed the others, so they tried synthetic fodder, made out of wood. I was told that the way you make the beast eat it is to give her nothing else for a week or so, and at the end of that time she just eats it!"

"What does it look like?"

"Well, a bit like greyish paper, torn up!"

"Presumably that's exactly what it is?"

"More or less. It's cellulose, partly broken down into complex sugars. Part of the cow's digestion is already done for her. It isn't fattening, but it keeps the cattle alive through the winter. The Swedes make substitute beef, too, also from cellulose. I think it's done with yeast, something after the style of marmite, and when you only get a pound of meat a month, I can tell you a piece of 'fried beef' is quite acceptable, even if it is only a piece of wood."

From beef we turned to beer, a subject a Swede would be ashamed to know nothing about. In three years of living as a Swede among Swedes, Dr. Mason found out enough about the licensing laws as they affected the ordinary citizen to give us a lively account.

"The Swedes always were and still are heavy drinkers. They can still stand an awful lot of spirits. Still, before the last war, public opinion began to take a stand—the Swedes are a very logical people — and everyone saw that the problem must be taken in hand. So the State took over all wine and spirits as a State monopoly.

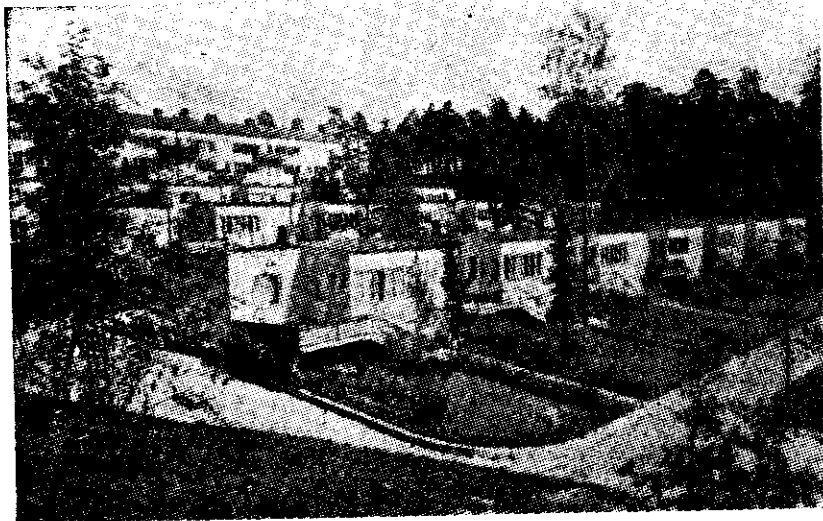
"Beer is not regarded as an intoxicating liquor. You buy it in Sweden just as you buy soft drinks here, and I could get a dozen bottles from the dairy on Sunday morning if I wanted them. It's very light beer, about three per cent, I think.

"However, about the wine and spirits: the State took over the buying and selling of all wines and, spirits, and issued ration-books. A man gets his book when he turns 21, and a woman gets hers at 25. You're interviewed by the issuing authority, and provided there doesn't seem to be any reason why you shouldn't have it, your book allows you to get a basic ration of a litre (about a quart) of spirits a month—a woman gets a litre every three months; they seem to think women can do with less.

"Businessmen who can establish that they entertain a lot, can get up to four litres a month. Then there's the allowance for married men. When I got married my basic ration was doubled. Not so that I could drown my sorrows necessarily, but because it was assumed that I would have guests to entertain from then on. There are special issues for parties, too. When Sir William Bragg came over to Sweden, my professor entertained him, and was allowed 10 litres of whisky. They naturally thought an Englishman, and a knighted one, would expect whisky. The whisky was English. No whisky is made in Sweden, and it was a very sad day when the Wine and Spirit Monopoly announced that stocks of imported whisky were exhausted."

"What about wine?"

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WORKMEN'S DWELLINGS of the Co-operative Society at Kvarnholmen, Stockholm. Surrounding parklands give plenty of room to breathe.