



"Books and Periodicals are strewn at our feet"

about our botanists, like Lucy Cranwell and Lucy Moore with their work on seaweeds.

New Zealand is small and humble; but once we have discovered how interesting it is, a thousand lives would be insufficient for me to explore the possibilities.

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OF course I am not quarrelling with your former contributor, R. L. Meek. I think he should take his scholarship and study economics, after which he will decide on his sphere of work. He is not one who says that his environment is barren; but he does claim that it is uncongenial for one unable to conform to conventional ideas and standards.

This is true enough. I am of the same minority political persuasion as Mr. Meek and, in this respect at least, I think I know what he means. Personally, I don't care two hoots whether or not other people look askance at my non-conformity. There is reason to believe that almost all pioneers and innovators, in all times and places, have been similarly regarded. If one has confidence in one's way of life and the creative job in hand, it is possible to laugh at narrow-mindedness, prejudice and ostracism. It would be much more difficult (even if it were wise) to seek a sanctuary from them.

I am not sure that the problem would be solved by going to England. There would be the refuge of a greater number of kindred spirits; but I cannot help thinking of James Joyce writing on the Continent and hawking his *Ulysses* off to Paris to find a publisher.

The minds of our writers, as revealed in modern literature, give us a certain indication of the viewpoint of the intelligentsia. Many New Zealanders express a profound dissatisfaction with our community—its preoccupation with every man-for-himself, its crude materialism, its parochialism, its lack of any inner unity or dynamic force. They feel at a dead end. Mr. Meek's difficulty might also be, fundamentally, this impatience with the spiritual poverty of his environment.

Yet it is a curious thing that so many English writers are chanting on the same theme—with variations, but still the same theme: frustration, loneliness, lack of faith in the dignity or the destiny of man. The disease is not confined to New Zealand at all.

I would suggest that neither New Zealand, nor England, nor any other similar state is stagnant as a country. It is our social order which has outlived its usefulness and passed into decay, with a debasing of moral values and cultural standards. The frustration expressed by these modern writers reveals a powerful perception of reality existing in the classes among whom they live and move. Very few have seen beyond, and recognised the growing forces which will lead humanity forward into a new epoch, in which the human race may enjoy a full life in keeping with the possession of modern science and a universal accessibility to knowledge.

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THOSE of you who have followed me with approval so far may wish to argue violently at this point. That is well. We shall be agreed at least on our right not to conform unless we want to do so.

It is to our shame that brilliant tutors have been obliged to take positions in Australia because our Universities did not even pay a living wage. And there are other men whose natural bent has necessarily taken them outside our islands, such as Lord Rutherford and Rewi Alley. Yet I believe that most of us can do better work at home, for the simple reason that we have grown up here and know the *feel* of our environment. If there are also limitations, remember our national boast that a Kiwi never gets stuck in a crisis.

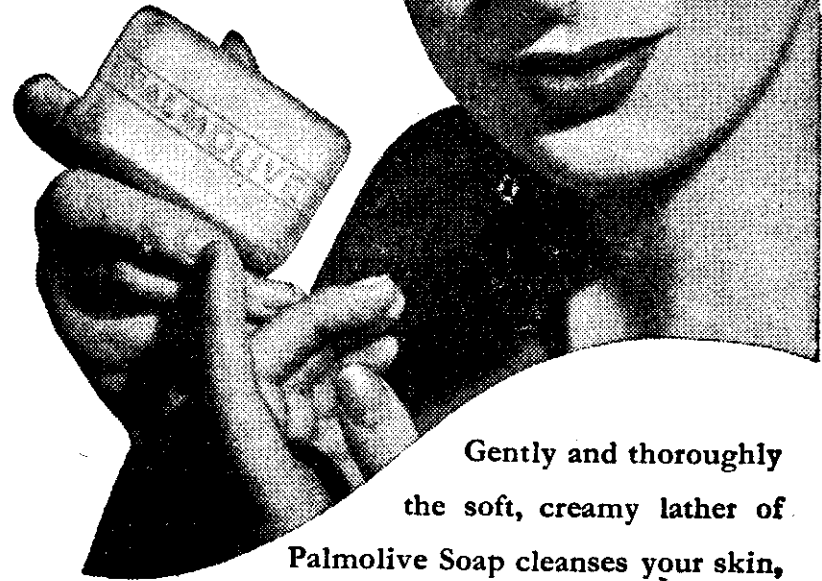
I am an incurable optimist. I am sure that in time we can, and will, find enough brains, resourcefulness, perseverance and sheer cussedness to make our desert blossom like the rose.

And if anyone counters this by telling me that New Zealanders mean England when they say Home, I shall scream.

To my generation there is only one Home—New Zealand.

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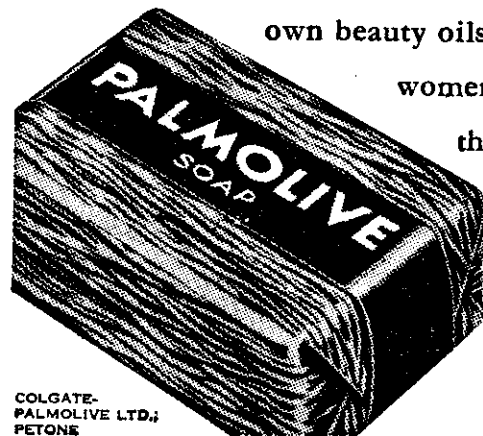
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