

Chain Reaction Day at Bikini

THIS comment on preparations for the atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll next month is taken from "The New Yorker":

THE natives on Bikini are being moved to another atoll to make *Lebensraum* for our scientists on Chain Reaction Day. The account we saw of the eviction said that these Bikini Islanders were an unusual bunch—they lived in peace and didn't murder one another. Such people, afflicted with an unnatural



lassitude, are out of luck on this up-and-coming planet and it is not surprising that they are having to move on. Presumably nothing much will be left of Bikini when the scientists get through, it will simply be remembered as the one-time habitation of some queer dicks who failed to drop things on each other.

We like to sit and think about the editorials that would be appearing in the American press this spring if Japan were the nation conducting the A-bomb experiments in the Marshalls. That is one set of editorials we hate to miss. It would be a privilege to watch the fourth estate when its writers, working feverishly and behind closely guarded doors, finally succeeded in splitting the polemic.

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TWO hundred goats, two hundred pigs, an undetermined number of sheep, and thirty-seven hundred rats have been assigned the best seats for the Bikini show. They are going to be placed aboard the target ships. We would like to volunteer to join this plucky crew, as it seems only right that the human race be represented on so vivid an occasion. As yet it has not been definitely established that an atomic bomb can kill a man if he is standing on the deck of a ship. And until we know that, how can anybody rest easy?

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But he sings the trials of the suburban householder with amusing dexterity. The book, poorly produced otherwise, is illustrated by Beegee, whose period scenes are entertaining.

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A *PLAY TOWARD*, a note on play production, by Ngaio Marsh, may be recommended to everybody who produces, acts or attends the plays so indefatigably mounted, year in, year out, by amateur societies all over New Zealand. These are essentially practical hints, but what the reader will most appreciate, if he has either courage or ambition, is the tacit assumption that we can in this country produce the best.

Before signing on, however, we would like to examine the Committee's permit to drop the new, improved A-bomb, which, as one scientist put it, "will cause almost unbelievable damage." We feel that the papers of a bomb dropper should be in order, and it isn't clear wherein the authority lies for unpredictable detonation. Who issues the permit to blow the fishes out of the sea? What bureau of licences places its blessing on Nuclear Man, who doesn't know his own strength?

Bikini Lagoon, although we have never seen it, begins to seem like the one place in all the world we cannot spare; it grows increasingly valuable in our eyes—the lagoon, the low-lying atoll, the steady wind from the east, the palms in the wind, the quiet natives who live without violence. It all seems unspeakably precious, like a lovely child stricken with a fatal disease.

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THERE is one more passenger that ought to be aboard a Navy ship on the great day, alongside the goats, the pigs, the sheep, the rats, and us. We think archy ought to be aboard, archy's lineage is truly ancient; he goes back one hundred million years. We've been reading about cockroaches in a book by Edwin Way Teale and we are of the opinion that the cockroach is the creature most likely to survive the atomic age. Sensitive to light and shade, he instinctively seeks the dark (and there should be plenty of that). Furthermore, archy can get along for two weeks without nitrogen, can last many hours without oxygen, and can digest the gold lettering on books. . . .

Well archy's boss is dead, God rest his untransmigrated soul, but archy himself is probably good for another hundred million years. There will be enough gold lettering from pulverised books to keep him going, and, as we pointed out, his nitrogen needs are small.



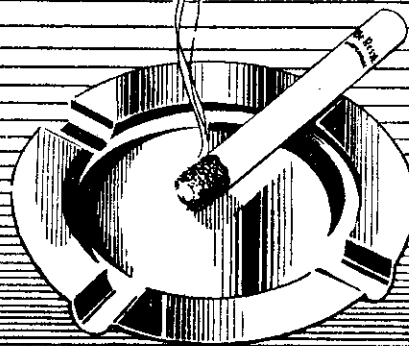
Ngaio Marsh's advice is addressed primarily to the producers of great plays—of Shakespeare or Synge or Strindberg—rather than to those who waste their time and talents on the slick and fashionable. A play is "an experience shared by the actors with their audiences. This experience is created afresh with each presentation of the play and is infinitely variable, hazardous and incalculable. . . . Without an imaginative response from the audience a performance can scarcely be said to exist." This book will help both audiences and players to get the performances they desire and deserve.

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