



Some people never let their heads go for anything less than a lottery or two. And then again, nothing surprises others, our friend, for instance, who includes a crib over the next-door-fence as part of her "good-neighbour" policy! She knew all the answers . . . that

mother and child were feeling fine because they had PROTEX-ed themselves!

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ULTIMA THULE

Misty Story of the Campbell and Auckland Islands

CONDUCTING a short-range Gallup poll a *Listener* staff reporter asked four strangers, on trams and in the street, if they knew where Campbell Island was. One said he thought it was the island where the atom bomb tests would be made shortly; the others did not know. So it seems that knowledge of this place is as shadowy as the mists that almost continually shroud its coasts.

The island, of 42 square miles area, came into the news a few weeks ago when a Catalina flying-boat was sent on the 400-miles' journey south of New Zealand, to pick up a member of the meteorological staff who was ill. Though the flight out and the return trip were followed with keen interest in New Zealand, little if any news about the island itself was published. So we were glad of the opportunity of interviewing J. H. Sorensen when he walked into *The Listener* office a day or two ago, for he is the head of the meteorological staff on the island.

Mr. Sorensen—his father being Danish he refuses to anglicise the spelling of his name—is the man who correctly diagnosed as appendicitis the illness which resulted in the flying-boat being sent south. He told us something about this part of New Zealand's sub-Antarctic territory where a handful of men live the simple, easy-going life—living practically off the land—and where the morning race for the tram or train is unknown.

Hunt for Raiders

In 1890, Campbell Island was leased as a sheep station. It struggled on till 1927, when it was abandoned. No ships except enemy vessels had called at either Auckland or Campbell Islands for ten years when H.M.S. Achilles went there in November, 1940, looking for raiders. She found nothing, but it was suspected that a raider had used the islands to refuel from a supply-ship. In Wellington, plans were made to occupy the islands with three parties (each of four men) equipped with radio transmitting sets.

Their job was to watch the harbours and send a signal to New Zealand if the enemy came. If they were captured they were to pose as simple fishermen. The Navy asked the Public Works Department to undertake what was called the "Cape" Expedition. The name "Cape" was chosen because it was wartime and because it meant nothing; more, it was misleading. The party left Wellington secretly on March 5, 1941; like the old-time sealers, they sailed southwards in a schooner. Their main work was coast-watching. They were relieved every 12 months, and in 1945 the roar of outboard motors in the Auckland Islands ceased.

Permanent Occupation

But the weather reports sent daily from the camps had been invaluable for flying operations in the Pacific, so Campbell Island was kept on as a permanent

meteorological station. Mr. Sorensen showed us many photographs of the islands. "These," he said, "are misleading. They were selected from those taken on the rare fine days. Pictures taken on an average day show scarcely anything but a blur of mist and drizzle."

As well as sending meteorological information to New Zealand, the staff operates an ionosphere station for transmitting radio waves to the Heaviside and Appleton layers and measuring their reflections. This work is of great importance in predicting suitable frequencies for radio all over the world.

We asked Mr. Sorensen to outline the qualifications needed to be a member of the party. Volunteers, he explained, must be men who can live cheerfully together in isolated, miserable surroundings. They must be in perfect health and strong enough to carry heavy loads. They must be able to handle boats, bake their own bread and shoot, catch and prepare their own meat.

He Likes the Life

"We live on the best of everything. The lamb is delicious—no coupons. As a matter of fact I thoroughly enjoy the life—when I am there. But I'm a rotten sailor and every time I set foot on the ketch I swear I'll never go again. But I always find myself back there after leave."

There is no difficulty in filling in time. The men work regular hours and in their leisure do all they can to protect and encourage wild life and plant life. And the AEWS keeps them supplied with good reading matter. For a while they were attested members of the Armed Forces, so they received sets of indoor games from the Patriotic Funds. Most of the men have special study courses of their own and do a lot of reading. On Saturday nights they down tools for a get-together and a general discussion.

For smokers and those who like an occasional tot of good liquor, there is a free issue of tobacco and rum—a carry-over from the old naval days. They are supplied, too, with parkas, gloves, balaclavas, makinaws, oilskins and gumboots, for they need them in this island so close to the Antarctic Continent.

To-day there is a staff of five on the island and four on the ship standing by. Mr. Sorensen's main job is co-ordinating the work, and seeing that there is a reasonable degree of happiness and comfort and health in the party. There are plenty of discussions round the table, but three topics are banned—religion, politics, and the opposite sex. There is a suggestion of the Naval wardroom here.

Through the advice and help of the Department of Agriculture, a garden has been established, producing ample supplies of potatoes and green vegetables. This is a contrast with the earlier days when the men were apt to be overcome with lassitude, due to a diet of tinned food.

"And what about the climate?"

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