



MAN-A-WAR BAY, one of the many picturesque bays of Waiheke Island

(continued from previous page)

and one stout fellow of the other persuasion who claimed the right to be present and know what the Government was getting up to.

Like and Unlike

In common with the city people, we have no gas. But unlike them, we are promised a greater supply of electricity—when the power lines come through. But we can get plenty of firing, and these nights, sitting around a glowing coke and carbonette fire in the kitchen range, we think scornfully of our late landlady's refrigerator which she let to us as a furnished apartment.

Since this is a country district, there is of course no fresh milk, nor are eggs or vegetables available. These come down from town on the morning boat and the whole Island repairs then to the stores to collect the rations. Because the same air of leisurely movement applies to the storekeeper, one's shopping takes an indeterminate time. So what?

It's Different in Summer

Of course, in summer life here takes on a different complexion. Then the week-enders, the campers, and the trippers come down in their thousands and from hundreds of baches, tents, and unbelievable shacks—which defy the laws of gravity as well as those of the building controller—there issues sound of devilry by night. But that is only an interlude and one that is fast going as more and more permanent settlers move in. Soon, we hear, we are to have a local body and then the days of anarchy will end. We will become more respectable and conventional. The clock will have to be wound at night and one will no longer find sheep and cattle congregated on one's front lawn in the early morning. Then there will be more cars on the road (at present there are up to a dozen in our district) and our more sedate citizens will probably take to wearing shoes. But that time is not yet come.

Our friends come down from town, and return there thankfully. We are isolated, they feel. But we remember those things that seemed vital in the city, the must-be-attended meetings of the W.E.A., the Film Society; the anxious awaiting of the next repertory show and the running to the outer suburbs in pursuit of some "important" picture. They seem very unreal and trivial compared with the candidatures for the Road Board, the clash of interests between permanent residents and

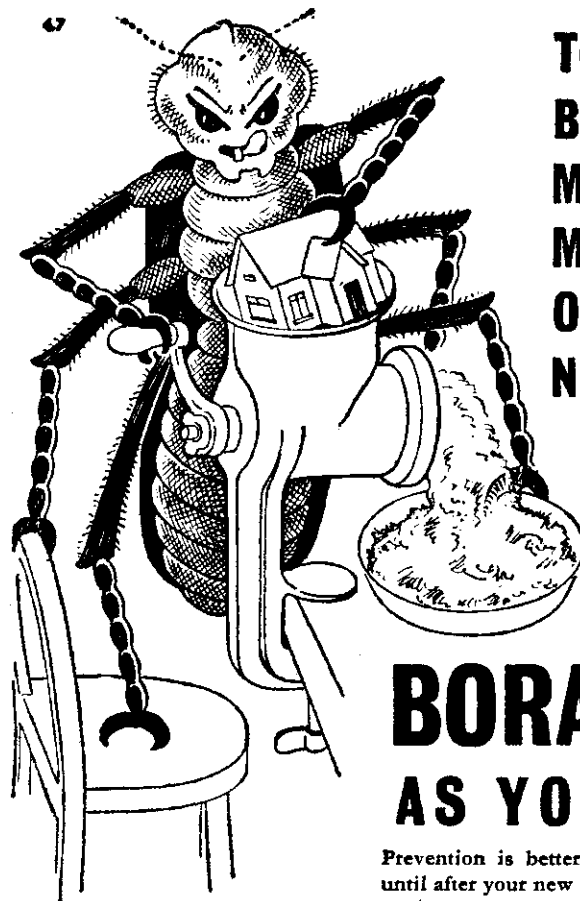
campers, and the state of the tide as it affects the gathering of pipis.

According to Wise's New Zealand Index, Waiheke is 20 miles from Auckland, but that part of it in which we live, Surfdale, is 10 miles. We never have figured that one out any more than Mr. Wise did. We prefer to say "Oh, it's only a pleasant hour and a quarter's run in the boat."

"Plenty of Scandal"

We catch no trams, run for no buses or trains. Geologically, we are told, Waiheke is the oldest part of New Zealand. It certainly is still in the horse-and-buggy days. Maybe that is why it is a community and has something that is missing from the modern life of cities. Like most small communities, naturally everybody knows everyone else's business—and talks about it. But is that any different from poring over the autobiographies which still flood the commercial library shelves, or reading the gossip from Hollywood? When first I suggested founding a small newspaper down here, the reaction of most of my fellow Islanders was "You'll get plenty of scandal to put in it if you see so-and-so." My invariable reply was that after working around the district I was in a position to blackmail half the population and sue the rest for slander. After all, it seems that the essentials of a civilised community are the same here as in town.

We had our small son christened here the other Sunday. As we have no resident clergy, the christening took place in the local hall and the officiating minister was from the Melanesian Mission. It was a pleasant ceremony and the other children present were those among whom he will grow up. That will give him a sense of belonging, a sense of being in his home community. I may seem to stress that word community. But it is possibly the most important one for us in to-day's disintegrating society. We made the break from town with its easily accessible pleasures to a life in which there are not a great many of the usually accepted amenities. But it means for us a greater freedom because we can grow up along with our district and take on some share of the responsibility for its development. We are at liberty to assist in the shaping of our home town, and without the right to assume responsibilities there is no freedom. The Hitlers have demonstrated that.



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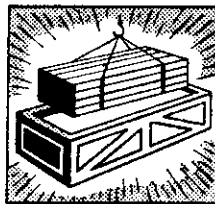
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