

AUCKLAND: Through Rose-Coloured Glasses

Where They Ask How Much You're Got

SOMEONE once told us that when someone visited Otago she was asked who her great-grandparents were. When she went to Canterbury she was asked which part of England she came from. When she went to Wellington she was asked how her father earned her living. And when she went to Auckland she was asked how much she had.

All sorts of traditions grow up round the different characteristics of the different parts of New Zealand. That is one of them. There must be some foundation in fact, some explanation to be found in family trees, or the climate, or the soil.

During the last month the varying parochialisms of the provinces have been brought home very closely to *The Listener*; but never more forcibly than they were brought home this week by the unexpected arrival of two Aucklanders, fighting fit and furious, embattled for the fray. Some mention of Southland had appeared in the magazine. Canterbury, quiet, dignified, followed suit. Then came Auckland.

Things We Should Have Known

They did not tell us that Auckland is the largest province in New Zealand, or how many cows feed on each blade of Waikato grass, or why the Trans-Tasman airline goes there, or why it's the naval base for New Zealand (what price the Ramillies?). They did not even trouble to show us the Year Book, or point out that Auckland Province has an area almost twice as great even as the wide acres of Otago, or a population almost twice as big even as the populations of Wellington or Canterbury.

We were supposed to know these things, and pay silent homage while a spate of uncouth words told us the real truth.

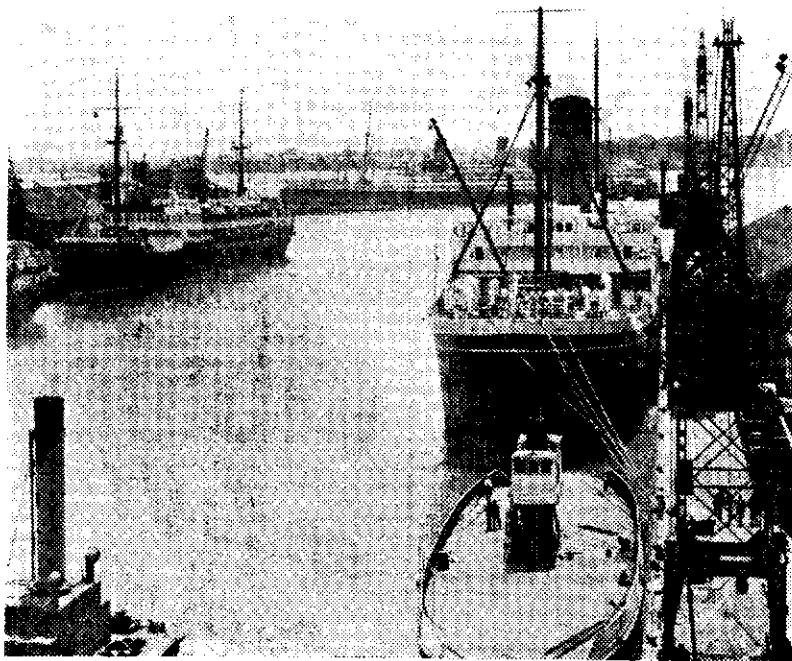
"What's all this Southland dope?" they inquired, comparatively mildly.

"And what's this Canterbury place you're giving space to? Is this magazine published exclusively for them? If not, why all the ballyhoo? Where is Southland? Who lives there? If anyone does, why? It looks mighty like a build-up for Southland to us. How much did they pay for it?" (There you are again!) "What's all this about

Auckland's waterfront came the answer. It was not at all polite.

Not Biased!

"Anyhow," they said, with that peculiar grace of diction encountered only in the North . . . "Anyhow—let's forget Southland and Canterbury and have a look at Auckland. Now, we don't reckon Auckland's got everything. Fr'—



Auckland goes in for shipping in a big way—a glimpse of Prince's Wharf

chamois and deer and moose and wapiti?"

Settling Down To It

In a conversational flow that sounded like an anchor chain running out of a hawser pipe, they settled to their moorings and painted ship

"Suppose," they suggested, "you took Southland or Canterbury away from New Zealand. What would you lose? A few fiords, a fistful of people, a mountain or two that's no use to anyone, and that's about all. But if you took Auckland away, what would you have left then?"

We supplied the common argument that the whole North Island would be empty if the South Islanders went back home. From

instance, Wellington's got the Exhibition (while it lasts), and the seat of Government (yeah, but struth!) and it shares Cook Strait with the Kaikouras, and Christchurch has the Avon and bikes. Dunedin's got—well no doubt we'll think of something after a while. You see, we're not biased up our way."

Then after some impossibly superlative descriptions:

"And look at Auckland's beaches! Say, you Southerners ("South" being somewhere south of Onehunga), don't even know what a beach is. Waiheke Island, in Hauraki Gulf (best gulf in Southern Hemisphere), Whangaparoa Peninsula, the whole North Coast, the whole South Coast, the East Coast, the West Coast, all of them are

studded with long expanses of clean-fresh-blazing-golden-sands.

Shooting And Fishing

"The Southlanders do a bit of shooting, do they? Well, we've got plenty of pig, deer, and all the birds: pheasant, quail and duck. Have they heard of godwits down under? And there's decent roads to take a man wherever he wants to go shooting. Want some snow play? Try Egmont, Ngauruhoe, Tongariro, Ruapehu—they're all in Auckland Province. And how do you get along below there without a Rotorua or a Wairakei?

"And fish? FISH! When an Aucklander decides he will toy with a bit of fishing, he puts his feet up on his desk and makes his plans. If he goes after the big stuff, there's Mangawai, Russell, Paihia, Parengarenga, and all points North. (Don't hear much about swordfish down South). If he wants trout, then all he needs to do is close his eyes and advance in any direction.

"And you realise we haven't yet said anything about Auckland City. What's your idea of a city? Invercargill? Christchurch? Wellington?

More Sales Talk

"Well, you wanna go up Mount Eden sometime. You'll see some of Auckland—the business area (more goods pass through it in a year than anywhere else in New Zealand), with its orderly-and-attractive-array-of-modern-buildings-nestling-happily-and-securely-beside-the-placid-sparkling-Waitemata. You'll see suburbs, with spacious homes in spacious grounds in spacious streets, the whole-effect-softened-by-the-fresh-green-verdure-of-glorious-parks-lawns-trees-greens-gardens-playareas. And that's just a start . . .

"Gee, it's great. Sorry we've not time to tell you more. Must get back there . . ."