

WHY I USE THE NEW POUDRE TOKALON



By
Countess Belewsky

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SOURCES OF OUR SLANG

*Much Of It Is Home-Grown, But We Owe
A Big Debt To Australia*

IN my recent talk on New Zealand slang I alluded briefly to the currency of many hundreds of Australian terms in this country.

To-night I want to make the statement more explicit and produce some examples. For at least 20 years New Zealanders have considered it rather a good joke when someone says that he can "speak Australian." A good joke, that is, against Australians in general. But the fact of the matter is that people in this country are using and hearing Australian slang and colloquialisms almost every day of their lives.

How, for instance, could we surrender such terms as: *backblocks*, *larrikin*, *barrack*, *squatter*, *Anzac*, *wowser*, *cooee*, *cocky* (a farmer), *rough as bags*, *run rings around*, *Pommy*, *push* (a clique), and *dinkum*?

There is a misapprehension that most of our slang has been imported in bulk from America. No supposition could be further from the truth.

In the first place we use far more English slang than American slang (the English authority, Eric Partridge, supports that point) and in the second we use as much Antipodean slang as English and American importations put together, many of us a great deal more.

Influence of the Talkies

True, the American talking picture has supplied the Southern Hemisphere, as well as the remainder of the English-speaking world, with more than ten years of U.S.A. speech, but its influence is limited to a much smaller field than is commonly accepted.

Whereas U.S.A. underworld slang may appeal to the imaginations of the young in this country, it is impossible for those terms to have their strict American meanings in a section of the world which has few gangsters or negroes and has comparatively little intensive factory production.

The reason is clear. Geography and environment have provided unique conditions of life in the Southern Hemisphere and our slang has been quick to suit itself to those conditions.

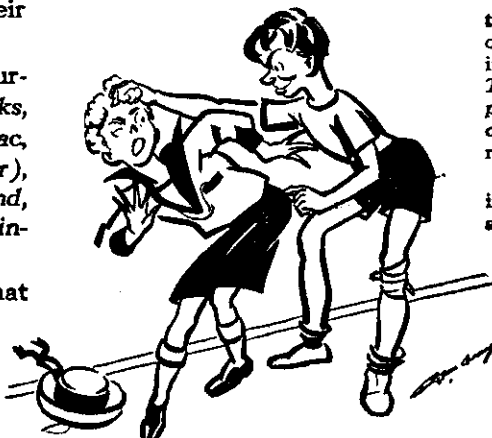
We have been using Australian slang now for the best part of a hundred years,

SIDNEY J. BAKER, who has been broadcasting from 2YA about slang in New Zealand, discussed the sources of our slang in his second talk, of which this article is a summary.

so much so that it requires a highly specialised knowledge to be able to separate the slang of the two countries.

Since I returned to New Zealand from London not long ago I have discovered that *stockyard* was in use even before 1802. In some old documents relating to New South Wales in the Wellington Public Library I came across evidence showing that the term was current even before 1800.

It can be seen that the origins of our indigenous speech go back to the roots of our history.



"... The delightful and often inspired language used by children"

Many Forms of Bush

Consider the term *Bush* and to what uses it has been turned. Originally used to describe scrub-covered land, it was by the 1840's applied to the country in general, whether tree covered or not. By the 1850's *bush* could be used for anywhere outside a town. To-day it can be applied to the suburbs of a large city, such as Sydney, Melbourne or London.

I have on numerous occasions heard London's suburbs called *the bush* by Australians and New Zealanders in that city.

Here are some more *bush* derivatives, many of which are used in New Zealand: to *go bush*, *take to the bush*, *bush apes* (that is, workers in the bush), a *bush Baptist*, a *bush lawyer*, *bush telegraph*, to be *bushed*, *bushranger* and *bush-whacker*.

The Language of Children

No record of Antipodean slang would be complete unless we spared a little attention for the delightful and often inspired language used by children. I shall run through a selection of them, mainly all authentic Australian and New Zealand contributions to the language: *dag*, *rubydazzler*, *hangashun*, *swinger*,

pearler, *stunner*, *beaut*, *snorter*, *ripsnorter*, *hummer*, *bosker*, *corker*, *snitcher*, *snitter*, *trimmer*, *jake*, *jakealoo*, *dinky*, *dinkydie*, *wonky*, *batty*, and *binjey*.

We should pay an ungrudging tribute to the youngsters who can find such wholehearted enthusiasm for their own language.

I have been asked in what way our slang has developed characteristics of its own. The question is not altogether easy to answer, since it is clear that such characteristics can emerge only over a fairly lengthy period. There are, however, several features of our slang which are individual and which seem worthy of mention.

The "-ie" Suffix

Take for example that simplest of all terms, *Aussie*. This *-ie* suffix after "z" or "ss" emerges in a dozen or more instances. Here are some of them: *Tazzie*, Tasmania or a Tasmanian; *pozzie*, a position; *mozzie*, a mosquito; *coszie*, a bathing costume; *rousie*, a rouseabout.

The *-ie* suffix has an additional interest. In English slang it is used almost exclusively as a diminutive or an endearment. In Australia and New Zealand, however, it is possible to name at least ten or twelve terms which, by the addition of an *-ie* will serve to mean the same thing—"a good or tall story, or a shrewd trick." Among them are: *fastie*, *hottie*, *shrewdie*, *smartie*, *swittie*, *roughie*, *goodie*. This particular use of the *-ie* suffix seems to have been inherited from America, but it has received such wide currency in our own countries that it can be regarded as an interesting feature of our own slang.

Similarly the *-o* suffix, which appears frequently in English and American slang, has been given special use in New Zealand and Australia. Few terms have a more general and hackneyed usage in these two countries than *godo* and *righto*, neither of which is guaranteed to find favour with purists. They have, however, a kinship with many expressions ending similarly: *whacko!* a joyous exclamation; *scrappo*, a fight; *arvo*, afternoon; *evo*, evening; *susso*, sustenance allowance received by the unemployed; *compo*, worker's compensation.

Harsh Sounds

One other feature of Antipodean slang is certainly worth attention. That is, the use of harsh sounds. Take, for instance, such examples as *plonk*, cheap wine; *cronk*, no good, worthless or ill; *tonk*, a simpton or fool; *pat*, a Chinese; *ziff*, a beard; and *zack*, sixpence. These are but a few of many dozens of such terms, largely monosyllables, in which sharpness in sound is the prevailing motif.

What effect the Maori and Australian aboriginal languages have had on this growth is a little difficult to assess, but it is an influence that cannot be ignored.

(Continued on next page)