

Now We've Met The Americans...

TO judge by external signs, life in New Zealand is not an ordeal for the average American serviceman, whatever arm of the fighting forces he belongs to. It is most unusual to see one looking lonely or lost or depressed. But appearances are deceitful. To find out how they feel underneath their smiles and smart uniforms, we spent some time last week asking them questions. Simultaneously, we had a series of questions about them asked of New Zealanders who have entertained them. Here are some of the results.

What Do They Think Of Us?



OUR first encounter was with two very young American visitors on a tram.

"We like it here," they assured us. "The folks here have been swell to us."

Questioned further, they particularised.

Our houses: "You do put your houses in some funny places, don't you?"

Our weather: "Say, is it always this windy?"

Our women: "Sure, we like the New Zealand girls. They're so quick on the come-back."

This was rather surprising to us, since if you can believe the films, it's hard to beat an American cutie for a quick come-back. But perhaps it can be explained by the fact that both our servicemen were very young.

"They Don't Get Ideas"

However, this tribute to our New Zealand womanhood was borne out by another serviceman of riper years, who, when questioned by *The Listener*, said that he thought New Zealand girls were on the whole more intelligent and better-natured than the girls back home. Here was the proof:

"Back home, if I dated one girl one night and another the next, and then they both got together, they'd probably start tearing each other's hair out. But out here they don't seem to mind a bit—they just ask each other if they enjoyed their night out. And they don't seem to get romantic ideas too easily."

The Opposite Opinion

However, the opposite opinion was expressed by a sailor we met. He regretted that New Zealand girls didn't recognise a "line" when they saw it, but tended to accept all that was said at its face value.

"When I take a girl out for the evening and say to her 'Gee, honey, you're looking swell!' I expect her to come back with something like 'You're not looking so bad yourself.' But instead of that, she usually says 'Oh, am I?' and goes all ga-ga."

However, he softened the blow by adding that he'd noticed a change for the better, and that now, the girls here seemed to be getting used to the navy, and as far as repartee was concerned, were almost up to American standards.

"What do you think of our food?" was the question we asked the next serviceman we encountered.

"We're getting used to it now," was the reply.

Americans here apparently notice the fact that there are fewer fresh fruits and vegetables on the average table, and that apple pie comes in more often hot than cold. And they still miss their iced water with meals.

"Coffee? We wouldn't call it coffee," is still the universal comment. However, this particular serviceman likes drinking milk, and finds New Zealand milk particularly drinkworthy.

"Practical Rather Than Glamorous"

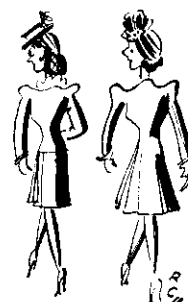
"Yes, I like it here. I feel plenty at home here," was the comment of one marine from the middle west. Except for the absence of central heating the houses here are very little different from those in his home town, he said. And the girls aren't much different either, except, as he put it rather kindly, New Zealand girls go in for practical rather than glamorous outfits. But he finds the street-cars slow. "Where I come from if you and a girl friend want to board a street-car you help the girl friend on and the car goes before you've a chance to get on yourself. But here you help her on and then get on yourself and the street-car waits for your shadow."

Our Money And Our Accent

The currency was the burden of a complaint by another serviceman we interviewed. "Been here a month and just can't cotton on to it somehow," he complained. "Look at your penny. It's not worth much and yet it's almost the biggest coin you have. And then there's your accent."

"Accent?" we protested. "We haven't got an accent."

"Waal," he drawled in a voice that the talkies have taught us to recognise as Southern. "It's what I'd call an accent. Why can't you speak decent Amurrican?"



What Do We Think Of Them?

"NICE but exhausting" is the verdict of a young woman who has met several Americans in the course of her hostessing duties.

"My first acquaintance with Americans was when we picked up two tram-forsaken servicemen and drove them from Karori terminus to the wharf. One came from Cincinnati, Ohio, and the other from Pittsburg. They spent the whole twenty minutes of travelling time giving us statistics about their respective cities. Finally I got round to asking them what they thought of New Zealand. 'It's a great little country,' said one. And bore out his statement by adding with suitable impressiveness, 'You know here you have almost as many cinemas per head of population as we do in the U.S.'"

They Like to Learn

The thirst for getting as well as giving information is a quality noted also by a woman in charge of one of our Home Hospitality Bureaux for servicemen.

"I think it does them credit," she said, "but it rather shows up the flaws in one's education. They take such an intelligent interest in everything. Several have asked me questions about the early history of New Zealand which, to my mortification, I have been unable to answer. Several others have asked things like what proportion of the population

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BRYAN O'BRIEN interviews five U.S. Marines in the CBS studios for the special programme of welcome heard last Sunday evening