



# THEY WANTED TO TRAVEL — But Not All of Them Did

IT was mid-morning, but the queue for holiday travel permits stretched the full width of the station vestibule. One by one the people at the business end of the queue disappeared behind the wooden partition into the makeshift office. One by one they would emerge again, some philosophical, some resentful, some openly jubilant, some preserving a stoical calm from which it was impossible to deduce either success or failure. The people in the queue, I noticed, had thought to provide themselves with reading material from the neighbouring bookstall. There were no buskers to entertain them. They just stood and waited, five minutes in one place and then a forward shuffle, which brought them one place up the queue and a foot or so nearer the queue-head. One or two engaged in desultory conversation, but soon fell back into their previous brooding silence.

A silence which, not being particularly golden, could well be broken.

## Written Evidence

"People must be very keen to get somewhere if they're willing to stand in this queue for half-an-hour," I remarked to the woman in front of me.

"Half-an-hour?" she queried. "It'll be more like two before we get there."

"Think you'll get it?" I asked.

"Perhaps not. I want to go to my god-child's wedding—here's her letter. I think that's a very good reason, but I don't know if the authorities do."

"Do you have to bring written evidence?"

"Yes, I expect it's the thing. The permit officials have got past the stage of believing stories about sick grandmothers, if unsupported by written evidence."

I gazed along the queue. Sure enough, most of the waiting people were clutching scraps of paper. A hard task for the dealer-out of permits, discriminating between the self-written and the genuine letter, between the dangerously-ill and the malingering grandmother.

## Individual Enterprise

"He's been lucky!" This came from the woman behind me. To my surprise I was now tenth from the back of the queue, though I seemed to have made no progress in the forward direction. The man in luck was just coming out of the office, pocketing his permit with a proud smile.

"Wonder what he thought up?" This came from a tram-conductor two places behind me. There were murmurs of "Wish I knew", "Like to know the sort

of thing they accept." It was obvious that a certain amount of brain-racking was going on around me, and I reflected that by the time the speculators reached the judgment seat they would have had leisure enough to equip themselves with at least one water-tight excuse apiece. It was a case where Government control could not prevent individual enterprise and initiative.

"I said to her, 'love will find a way', but so far it hasn't. This came from two in front. 'But anyway it's hardly worth it for a visiting serviceman—here to-day and gone to-morrow. But she does want to see him before he sails. I told her she wouldn't get a permit—wives of servicemen, yes, but girl-friends, no.'"

"It does seem hard on the young people—not so bad for us older ones who are used to spending Christmas and New Year at home. Take my Margaret now, working up in Auckland. She did want to get home for Christmas—it's the first Christmas she's been away—but instead she had to stay in the hostel. Not that it was so bad because there were lots of other girls staying over Christmas, too. She said in her last letter, 'Pity I'm not a year younger'. The under-twenty-ones were allowed to go home, you see."

"Couldn't she have gone along and said 'I'm nineteen'?"

"No, you have to produce a certificate from your employer. So as she's not getting home for the holidays I thought I try to get up to her."

"Shouldn't think you had much hope."

"Still, it's worth trying." They lapsed into silence.

Just ahead of them stood a mother holding her two-year-old by the hand. A short time before he had been running from one end of the queue to the other, but now he was tired.

"Pick up, Mummie," he pleaded.

Mummie, too, looked tired. She picked him up.

"You go and sit down, dearie", said the woman behind, "I'll keep your place for you—it'll be a good half hour yet."

She smiled her gratitude, and sat down a few yards away.

It was forty-five minutes before her turn came, a further five to mine. The two in front of me had evidently failed to win through. I was more fortunate.

\* \* \*

A FEW hours later I called in at the Government Tourist Bureau for my reservation.

"Are many people travelling these holidays?" I asked.

"Yes", said the girl. "You should see them in here every lunch hour. Long queues at the ticket window and long queues at the booking-counter. And last

Friday night! We're supposed to close at five, but by five to there was a double queue coiled right round the office. We didn't leave work till a quarter-to-six."

"But why all the rush? From what I've seen permits are pretty hard to get, so there can't be all these people travelling."

"You'd be surprised!" said the girl daskly.

"You don't mean they're train-hopping?"

"Yes, I do. Aren't people terrible? When I see all these crowds of people waiting for their reservations and getting impatient when they have to wait even ten minutes, and us two girls rushing madly from counter to counter and phone to phone I feel like turning on the whole lot of them and saying 'Don't you know there's a war on? Why can't you do what you're asked and spend New Year at home?'"

—M.B.

## SIMPLE STORIES

### A GAME OF BRIDGE

DRAKE is in his hammock and a thousand miles away, but perhaps he heard this one from the South Pacific. It is a dark, hot, wet and generally tropical night somewhere on a little island on the Solomons. A few hundred U.S. marines are stationed there, passing the time playing—not bowls, for the ground is too wet and bumpy where the coconut palms have been yanked out—but bridge. Up comes a runner post-haste and out of breath.

"Five thousand Japanese have landed at the other end of the island. They have landed tanks and guns and are preparing for an attack."

There is a pause while the Marines go on with their game. Then one reluctantly rises.

"O.K. boys, I'll go. I'm dummy anyway."

(Contributions are invited. Send us something printable and brief, and if we like it, too, and print it, you will receive one guinea (less tax). But 200 words is the limit.)

## THE REAL STORY RECENT POLITICAL CRISIS

What are the facts about the recent coal strike?

What did Mr. Holland say in his speech on the No-Confidence motion?

What was in the "Censored Statement" written by Mr. Holland when Minister in Charge of War Expenditure?

These and other interesting topics are ventilated in a new pamphlet entitled "Cabinet Resignations — And Why." It will open the eyes of the electors to some disturbing political developments. At your newsagents, price 6d. or 7d. posted from the Publishers, P.O. Box 1155, Wellington.