



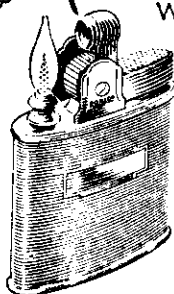
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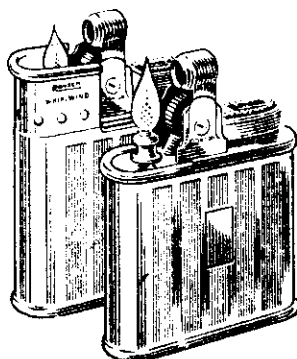
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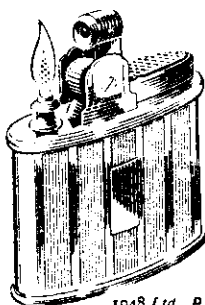


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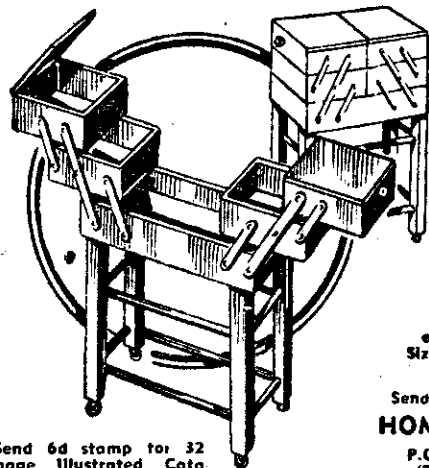
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FEBRUARY 26, 1954

Editorial and Business Offices: 115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

G.P.O. Box 2292.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Telephone 70-999.

## New Zealand Cricketers

THE New Zealand cricketers had some good games in South Africa, and seemed to be deservedly popular; but it cannot be said that they played impressively in the test matches. There were good individual performances, and a welcome improvement in fielding—a phase of the game in which from the beginning they had much to learn from the South Africans. What was lacking, however, was the ability to drive home an advantage, to turn a promising situation into victory. This was evident in the third test, when a large first-innings score was made too slowly; and again in the final test, when a few more runs and a little more fire in the bowling could have brought the right result.

Qualities needed for winning matches, especially concentration and tenacity, were revealed several times, but always in defensive situations. New Zealand's recovery in the first innings of the second test was exciting and dramatic, made memorable by Sutcliffe's fine batting after an earlier retirement through injury; but the effort was nullified by a collapse in the second innings. Although some good scores were made, the side was not consistent or well balanced. At no time during the series could any confidence be felt in the middle batsmen, and spin bowlers were badly needed. For most of us the tour has left mixed impressions: conscientious leadership, good recoveries, sudden and deplorable collapses, individual successes which never quite opened the way to full achievement, and an underlying sense of strain against an opponent whose reserves were seldom taxed. The obvious explanation is that South Africa was much the better side. It had already shown its strength against the Australians, and was clearly a team with all-round ability. Cricket in New Zealand, never

very strong, had been passing through one of its weaker phases when the touring side was selected; and few people could have looked for more than modest achievements.

The steady training which a tour provides could not bring out special talents that were missing when the team was chosen; but it was expected to bring noticeable improvements and an increasing confidence. After the fifth test match the manager and captain were able to name only two batsmen who had improved during the tour—Reid and Beck. Results have been disappointing, though perhaps it is too soon to know all that has been gained. The highest value of a tour is not to be found in a list of matches won, lost and drawn, or in tables of averages for batting and bowling. It comes afterwards, when the players have returned to their own country, and are able to pass on the experience they have gained abroad. There is another value, less obvious, but not to be overlooked. The New Zealanders had to accept defeat more often than must have been pleasant for them, but their reverses were faced with unfailing cheerfulness. South African cricketers enjoyed playing against them, and in spite of disappointments on the field they remained popular with the public. They were unassuming and likeable young men who represented their country worthily. This was the best feature of the tour, and one that few of us would have exchanged for victory. Some day, perhaps, a New Zealand team will win fame in the cricketing countries. It is a success devoutly to be looked for—but only if it can be gained without any loss of that easy friendliness and sportsmanship, on and off the field, which help us to remember that cricket is still a game, even when it is played by international sides.

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 26, 1954.