



Uncle Tom and the Friendly Road

THIS year the Friendly Road will celebrate a quarter century of broadcasting, with Uncle Tom (above), who began it, still directing its activities. An undenominational religious movement, the Friendly Road broadcasts 10 programmes a week from 12B, Auckland, and one weekly choral programme from the other ZB stations. There is an adult choir, but Uncle Tom is best known for his work with children.

Most well-known juvenile choirs are adolescent groups, with children ranging in age from 14 to 18. In the Friendly Road choir they enrol at eight and are retired at 14. They come from the homes of supporters of the Friendly Road movement, and after being tested and accepted, are assigned to an auxiliary choir from which they step up as vacancies occur. The membership of each choir is 70—with 40 girls and 30 boys divided according to voice range into three sections, soprano, and first and second contralto.

The Sunday choir's repertoire stands at 100 hymns and slightly more than 100 other sacred songs. This number is maintained by the dropping of 20 songs and the addition of 20 new ones in the course of each year. Sessions are planned so that no one song is heard more than twice in a year, but a few special hymns are excepted and may make a third appearance. United three times annually—in May, August and December—the combined Friendly Road choirs give 10 public performances in all. Auckland's Town Hall, which seats almost 3000, is always packed for these occasions. Listeners in other centres may also have seen Uncle Tom and his children's choirs through the medium of a film about them which was screened a few years ago both in New Zealand and overseas.

Uncle Tom himself is in private life Mr. T. T. Garland, a minister of religion and justice of the peace. In 1951 he was awarded the M.B.E., and he was a recipient last year of the Coronation Medal. During the recent Royal Tour Uncle Tom conducted his Friendly Road Children's Choirs on the lawns of Gov-

ernment House, Auckland. It was on Christmas Day, and the Governor-General, Sir Willoughby Norrie, had requested them to sing carols for Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh.

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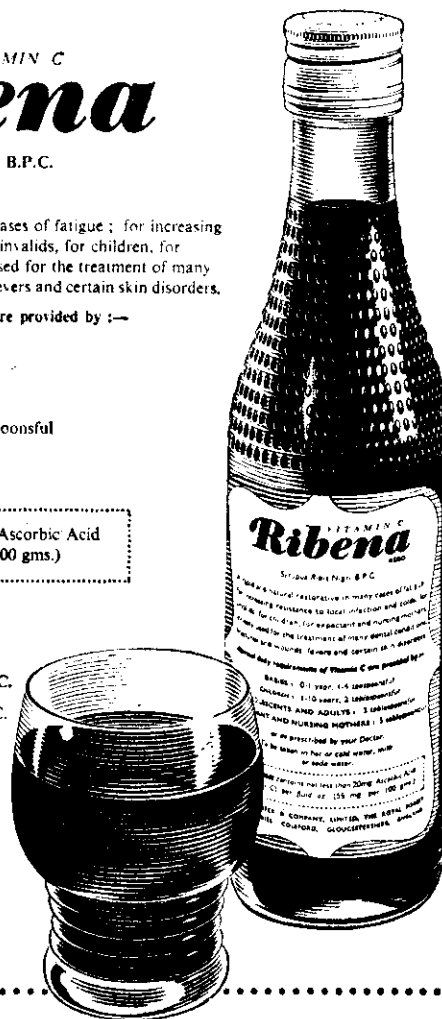
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