



Department of Agriculture photograph
"Rats have defied man for generations"

authorities on acclimatisation, have both drawn attention to the fact that blackbirds from the beginning "shied off the poor lands immediately north of Auckland" and took a long time to find the good lands beyond this hungry belt. Guthrie-Smith gives good reasons for his belief that blackbirds, after being released in Auckland in 1867, followed the East Coast all the way to Hawke's Bay—a mere trickle of birds for 40 or 50 years, and then a steady stream. I don't know when they turned north again, but it was after they had established themselves in the south, and had accepted New Zealand as their home.

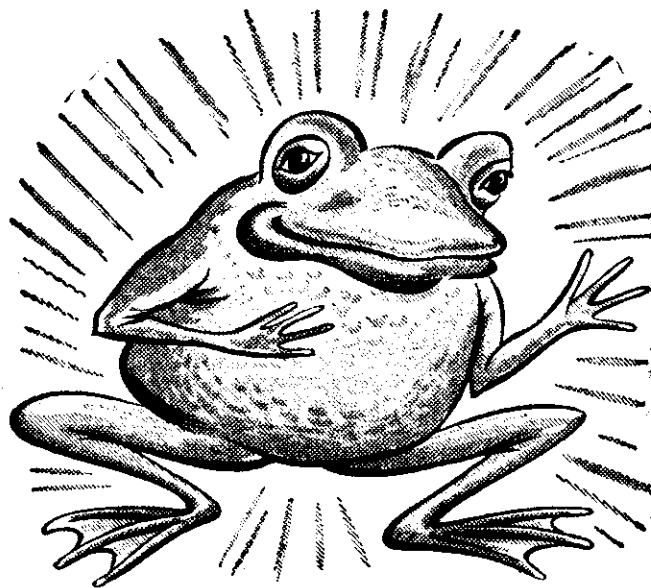
With regard to their singing, I would find it easier to believe that they have developed new songs in Northland than that they refuse to sing at all. Most birds are mimics to some extent, and it may easily be the case that Northland has put something into a blackbird's song or taken something out. Gilbert White says somewhere that he heard a blackbird singing—not just chattering or calling—on the wing. That is something I have never heard in New Zealand, but it would surprise me less to hear it than to go through a season without hearing any song at all. I don't expect to hear blackbirds in February, but from July or August till January they are hardly ever silent. I have heard them in October deep in the bush.

(To be continued)

Farming the Hill-Country

SCIENCE and the hill-country farmer will be discussed by Dr. J. Melville, Director of the Grasslands Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, in *Science Commentary* for April. As announced last month this feature is now being heard in the National Programme at 1.30 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month, and Dr. Melville will be heard on April 3. Dr. Melville, who succeeded Sir Bruce Levy as Director of the Grasslands Division, joined the D.S.I.R. before the war, going first to the Wheat Research Institute. An Otago boy, he had graduated earlier from Otago University and taken a Ph.D. at the Imperial College of Science, London. Under a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship he had also carried out research in the United States. Since the war he has paid another visit to America to study antibiotics. Before taking up his present post, Dr. Melville was Director of the Plant Chemistry Laboratory, Palmerston North.

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 25, 1955.

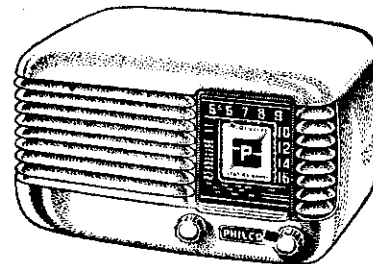
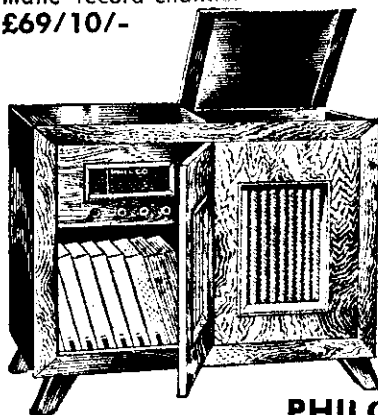


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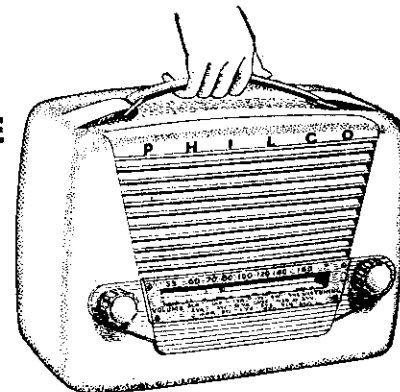
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