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AUCKLAND NOTEBOOK

Memorial to Optimism

OUR public buildings and memorials are a sad collection. I suppose it would be amazing if they weren't, considering the standard of taste at our origin—Victorian England; lower middle class. Generally we do better with a memorial like Kapiti Island, where we just leave the place alone and give the birds a fair go.

But in Auckland, the Savage Memorial seems to me to be an exception. The gardens are well proportioned, stone work and statuary neither cute, num-erous or top hatted. Good proportions make a comfortable pausing place. You cannot feel rested or refocused in a phone box, or, at the other extreme, in the foyer of the Wellington railway station. So let's be grateful that on a fine day with a slight harbour breeze it is possible to spend an hour walking very slowly about the gardens at Bastion Point and feel a renewal of whatever it is that needs renewing if one spends too long in a city.

I'm inclined to think that the memorial is really to simple optimism. During the depression we felt bad. We had broken, we were told, some economic law, and we were punished, we felt, by losing our jobs, and being sent to unemployment camps, and having to rely on charity. We carried a load of guilt we couldn't get rid of even in the small riots Auckland suffered. Savage said it wasn't like that, and that we could simply shape a better economic pattern. He said it in personal, human terms and a majority of New Zealanders believed in his optimism. They cast their votes and felt an emotional upsurge. They had been punished unjustly. They were not, after all, guilty for being alive. This feeling must have been especially strong in Auckland, where things had been worst, but where climate and venue make misery an even more unnatural state. After the economic pattern had been changed, until mass punishment by deflation became less likely, the memorial was built, well built, to celebrate our release from guilt. There are, of course, other furies, and each individual, even in Auckland, can still make himself miserable if he turns his attention to it, but at least we've broken out of one cage, and our memorial to this release is worthy of the event.

Massacre

IN a couple of thousand years the records of the massacre may have returned to dust, or whatever newsprint and recording tape returns to, and the archaeologists will have to reconstruct the ill-fated religious ceremony at Eden Park as they now try to piece together the customs of the moa hunters. They will certainly be better equipped by then and may even have apparatus which will be able to select from the sound of the past some of the groans which were uttered that day. What may escape them is why fifteen South Africans, specially invited to take part in this religious ceremony, should have the power to discomfort so thoroughly such a large gathering of fervent Maoris. The archaeologists will dig, and piece together fragments joined with speculation. Something was awry. Were the

omens taken correctly? Was the ceremony of purification botched? Were the calculations amiss squaring off the H shaped totem poles at each end of the arena? (These, the archaeologists note, were always erected for the winter religious ceremonies, and are thought to have cast shadows which intersected lines marked across the arena, probably plotting astrologically favourable sites for sacrifice.) In some way the South African adepts shamed the Maoris and held them powerless. The groans and cries the instruments selected could only



mean massacre, although no record of the number slain came to light.

Back in the 20th century, after the game, no one in Auckland, Maori or Pakeha, had any illusions about the extent of the massacre. What to do? Go home; slowly, quietly, tiredly, resting sometimes in small groups where shop doorways were sheltered from a gusty wind, sitting on butter boxes passing round the last bottle. Better to go home; familiarity is healing. But the way out of town was not always easy. By seven it was dark on the North Road, where I happened to be driving through a depressingly respectable suburb. The car headlights, theatrical devices, picked out a tragic mime on a blowy corner: two players, a middle-aged Maori shrunken into a flapping overcoat tugging his shoulders and belabouring his knees, and a pakeha boy with him, nine or 10, clutching the belt of the overcoat and pointing North. A simple, universal mime; Lear, in trouble, directed to a hovel; any man on his own after a lost battle. Better to go home.

Memory for Faces

THIS is a short, obscure, cop episode. It is no more than simply factual. I don't want to get into an argument about cops. Some people like them and some don't, but I shall eschew emotional colouring. Let us agree, fairly calmly, that all of us who are taxpayers pay for them, and if we are paying less and less for their horses; charges for dogs, motor-cycles and prowling cars are increasing. Money, or symbolic money, comes into this episode, but the chief interest, and obscurity, is the way cops work.

On a fine afternoon, about 2.30, I had just parked in Queen Street at an un-metred spot by a bank. Immediately a police car with uniformed driver, double parked a few yards ahead of me. A square rigged man wearing blue trousers, a dark tweed jacket and no hat got out and went into the bank. He was a cop. You get to know these things. The driver put the nose of the car into a small space by the kerb, leaving the back end poking out into Queen Street, which didn't help anybody much. If a cop goes into a bank he may come out with a robber or a bar of gold. I stayed to see. When he came out all he had was two ledger sheets, one white and one blue. As he passed the front of the car I was driving he dropped them on the ground. He picked up one by the kerb, inspecting the left front wheel and underparts of my car as he did so. Then he took

(continued on next page)