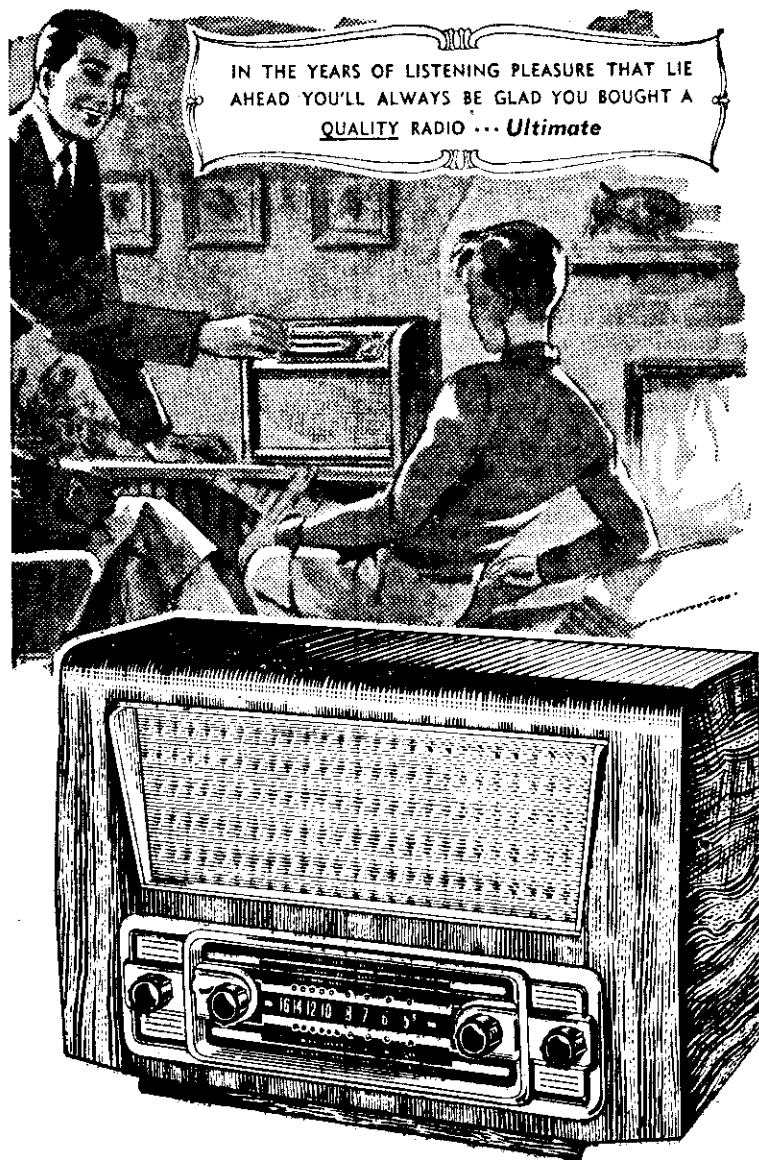




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(Also in the picture is the STUART . . . £26/17/6)

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Auckland Notebook

THEN WAS THE HOUR

ON the way out to Whenuapai the day the Springboks left I wasn't sure they were taking off from the right end of the country. The team might be all right; with luck they'd be allowed to disappear quietly into the suburbs of Capetown and the halls of Stellenbosch. But they, after all, had done no more than follow the exhortations of their warrior priest, whether that led to hamstringing or sacrificial attempts to stop Peter Jones. Dr. Craven had given the orders, and it seemed to me his wisest move would be to take off in the opposite direction from the other end of the country, for a sabbatical year with Operation Deep Freeze. Of course, he's not that kind of warrior priest; he's the sort who advances boldly, drawing fierce fire, and still survives.

There he was, making his progress through the lounges at Whenuapai, solid, energetic, the power of his friendly aggressive spirit popping his eyes as he sought out groups to fare-well. There he was at table; two laden spoons of sugar in his tea, and making more talk, turning fully to everyone he spoke to, shooting out his neck to reach nearer to them. And there he was, his movement unaffected by a load of hand luggage, parting the crowd ahead of him on the way to the aircraft. He had plenty to spare, of whatever it is you need to survive triumphantly a lost battle. I suppose we all have some of this valuable essence. At the moment of take off, he needed extra supplies less than the girls left behind who wept over the barrier in the empty, sound-blasted wake of the aircraft, but given a fine spring and a well escorted summer holiday, they'd triumph, too.

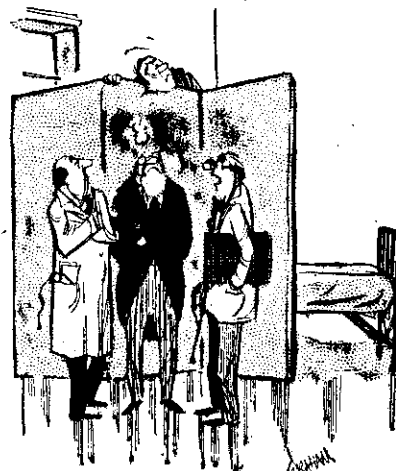
Chinese Sunday Brunch

TWO social facts of life in the U.S. impress themselves early on the visiting puritan: one, there are many terrible temptations to break the Sabbath, and two, many many people go to church, more populationwise (mortal sin against the Book of Fowler, that suffix) than in New Zealand. My American friends who went to church seemed to go, first, because they liked to feel good and also because they'd always seize a chance to visit with friends. Few puritans, on the other hand, will accept absolution from their sins, preferring a safe state of guilty misery to the risks of feeling good; nor do they seek often the company of a group of friends. Here we aren't supplied with entertaining temptations to break the Sabbath, and such a man is in a bad way on Sunday mornings, particularly the spring at the seams, secular New Zealand puritan, the man who gets his money without recognising craftsmanship, his entertainment without recognising art, who knows too much to read and is too shrewd to join anything—on

Sunday mornings he is at a low ebb, particularly if he's vaguely ill and a bachelor. Those are the ones who live in rooming houses. Every city should have a wailing wall for them (compulsory but secular, municipally maintained). Then they could stumble down their musty, mid-morning stairs when they woke, and in half an hour walk away the week's accumulation of guilt, fitting themselves to face the rest of the Sunday desert. Instead, in one of the rooming house streets of Auckland, they take up a saucepan and go to a near-by Chinese restaurant. Don't mistake me, this is no wailing wall; the therapy is different. The magic word, I fancy, is non-attachment; the gift of leaving well alone, and of leaving ill alone, without immediately pointing it out to everyone else. This gift makes for a restful atmosphere. A man can take his empty hulk into such a restaurant any Sunday morning, with a beard and a rheumy eye, wearing last week's unpleasantly stale shirt, and get the same welcome he had, shaved and clean, on pay day. Not a big hello, just a calm admission on a basis of equality. The children (well behaved but lively) do not withdraw from him; the adults do not advance making possessive noises, and alternately promising salvation and damnation for changing or not changing his ways, which is what he fears from some churches, or offering embarrassed small talk, which is what he gets from the clergy of others. He gets his saucepan filled, he stays to natter a little, and then he leaves, having achieved unconsciously the same objectives as Americans in church; he feels good (or at least better), and he has visited some with friends. Possibly that's Taoist evangelism.

Professional Hazards Apply Here

SOMEONE was advertising for a casual truck driver in the paper the other day. He shouldn't have much trouble finding one in Auckland. If he needs more peculiar drivers I can put him on to several over-exhilarated taxi men and a bus driver who's right round the bend. I met this last clinical exhibit on a blind corner of the South Road between two warning Mental Hospital signs. He was passing another car and that left no room on the road for me. There seemed only a thin chance of stopping in time, so I went off the road, half into and out of the ditch, ploughed up a lot of land without capsizing, and stopped sideways, partly back on the road again. He did about the same. Our combined reaction times were just good enough, and there was still two feet between us. As I thanked my Guardian Angel and drove on again through the drizzle I recalled that I never needed protection against bus drivers in the south. They drive professionally and are



(C) Punch

(continued on next page)