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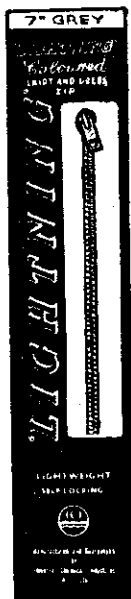
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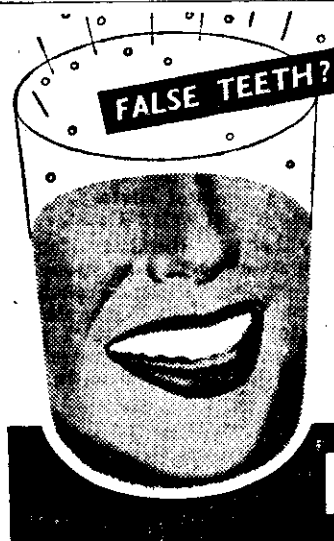
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Auckland Letter

## TAKE IT HOME TO DAD

WE are by now so used to hearing of a public body taking a tentative sniff at culture and then scuttling away horrified, like a spinster with a man under her bed, that perhaps the following true story will not seem so very odd. In any case, I'll tell it, in all its fatuous simplicity.

Takapuna Borough Council, on Auckland's North Shore, has already to its credit ever such a pretty model of the Gothic, in geraniums, arabis and lobelias, with which it greeted the Queen three years ago. Maybe it should have stuck to such artless manifestations, for its latest nibble at culture has not been such a success. There appeared recently in the *New Zealand Herald*—as some will know, a staid organ not given to unconventional alarms—the following tit-bit:

"Working from the model of a £150 statue submitted to the Borough Council by a Sydney sculptor, a retired Murray's Bay plasterer is turning out the 'Reclining Woman' figure in cement for a cost of £20. When the council was casting about for a cheaper statue, Mr W. Mowday, library committee member, had said: 'Give me the sample model and I will take it to dad and see what he can do.'"

Apart from the price, about which some confusion appears, there's only one mistake in that: the "Sydney sculptor" is Christchurch's own Alan Ingham, who worked five years with Henry Moore in England, was forced out of this country by lack of commissions, and is now in Australia.

Otherwise this fascinating story of private enterprise scuffling away under the hen's wing of a public body is as follows: Before Alan Ingham left for Australia the Takapuna Borough Council asked him to do a statue for the wall of its new library. A small model was submitted, was accepted, and was, moreover, shown to its public at the North Shore Festival of the Arts in 1955. The commission was a firm one, and the agreed price £120.

Unhappily, when the finished work arrived in New Zealand, the head had been accidentally broken off in transit. In spite of the assurance of a knowledgeable architect that this could be perfectly well repaired by a competent stonemason, the council refused to accept the "Reclining Woman" who, insured by the sculptor at his own expense, had then to be handed back to the insurance company for breaking up before they could pay him his money.

However, this idea that a stonemason could make a broken statue good as

gold again had evidently got around, with bells on, by the time the new council met to consider what on earth it was going to put in that empty space on the library wall. Mr Ingham, having been asked how much he would charge for a new statue, and having not unnaturally intimated that the price would be the same as before, plus £10 for a sample model, was now considered too expensive. It's awful what art can cost, in a butterfat country. However, the brilliant idea of giving Dad some homework was hit upon: and delighted the burghers must have been when he signified his willingness to knock the reclining lady up again in concrete for a mere twenty quid.

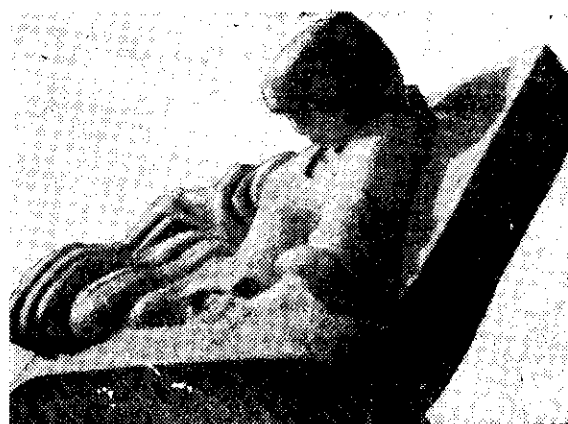
It should be underlined at this point that the model Dad was to work from had probably not cost Takapuna a penny, and was still, in law, the sculptor's: but the council evidently wasn't going to bother its head over such a trifle as copyright.

All, indeed, might have gone merrily as a marriage bell thereafter, for the sculptor had his cash, he'd nothing to grizzle about, had he? And the council, where Dad, as good as his word, would soon have a solid bit of art to sling up on their library, the pride of Takapuna—if it hadn't been for those beastly newspapers. As Mr Vincent Crummies once remarked, it's extraordinary how things do get into the papers. The headless lady made the headlines: and the *Herald's* suitably dead-pan item was followed at once by some disapproving letters.

Douglas Sheath, a former Mayor of the Borough, wrote: "To copy the model without the sculptor's authority and then place the resulting object on the face of a fine library building is a disgraceful act unworthy of a local authority, which should be giving an example in the community." Mr Sheath is a businessman, and it's good to have so strong a voice coming from that quarter. Alison Duff, herself a sculptor and therefore likely to feel the council's offhandedness very keenly, pointed out that this is a "classic example of the treatment artists receive in this country. It is also the reason why they leave it." She added the neat question: "I wonder if the committee member with the bright idea would agree to being operated upon by a plumber? It would probably cost less than the services of a doctor."

In brief, the general opinion as expressed both in letters and in the talk going around Auckland, is that, if "anywhere else you can do that there, you can't do that there." And I hope you can't.

The Takapuna Borough Council is made up largely of business men; and when the dust has settled a bit I wish they'd look at the whole thing this way, instead of reiterating that Mr Ingham has received his £120 anyhow, he's got nothing to squeal about. Business—business of any kind—is dependent on advertising in the press, on displays in shop windows. By refusing to have the original statue repaired (and this could



ALAN INGHAM'S "Reclining Woman"

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 20, 1957.