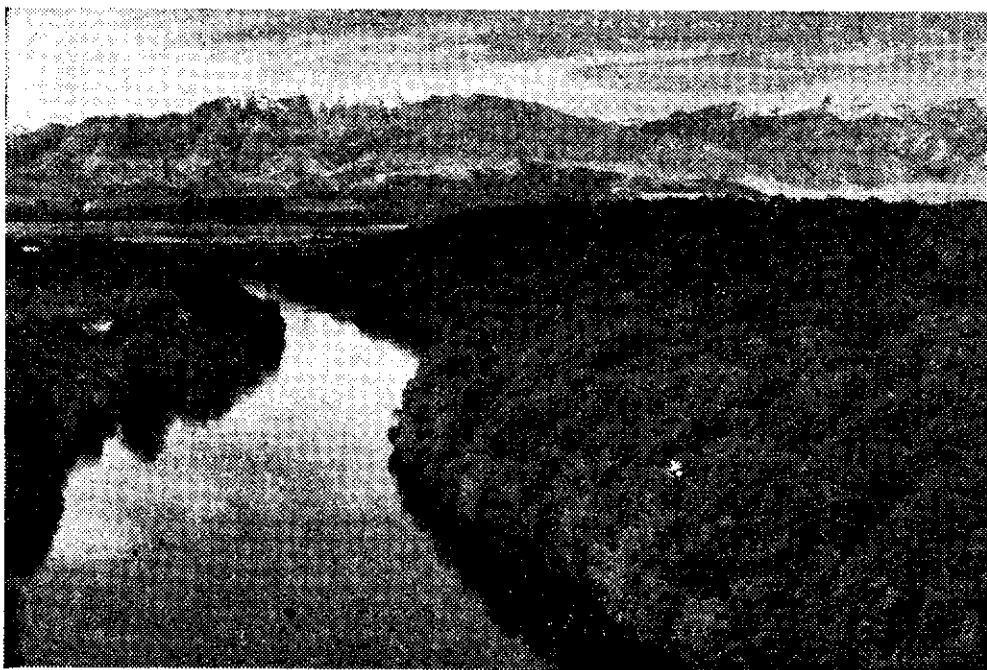


WHEN he was looking for a site for the Otago settlement in 1844, Frederick Tuckett, chief surveyor for the New Zealand Company, made a brief visit to Southland. He was not impressed and described the area as "a mere bog, unfit for human habitation."

That passage is from a newly-published book of aerial photographs* which shows clearly how wrong Mr Tuckett was. Among the varied sayings attributed to Confucius is one to the effect that a picture is worth a thousand words, and on that basis the author has said a great deal. The volume contains no fewer than 182 full-page, black and white aerial pictures. From the cockpit of his light aircraft Leo White has contrived to record in astonishing detail not only the topography of Southland, but also a measure of the way in which its people work and play.

*WHITES PICTORIAL REFERENCE OF SOUTHLAND, photographed and compiled by Leo White; Whites Aviation Ltd., N.Z. price 63/-.



THE FACE OF SOUTHLAND

From above, the "mere bog" looks undeniably like a richly pastoral province, its surface marked by the signs of careful husbandry.

The recurrent oval features in the landscape may, of course, be private swimming pools, or open-air theatres, or outlets for young bloods in Jaguars, but superficially, it must be admitted, they look like Rugby grounds and race-courses. The aerial camera, however, is not always so graphic. Looked at from high above, the animals on which Southland prosperity rests appear as ovate finely-spun cocoons scattered at random on screens of closely-woven fabric. Deciduous trees give the formal elegance of Queen's Park a feathered, aerial quality seldom discernible from the ground. On the West Coast, Milford's rock teeth bite into a slim, metal-smooth bar of water.

The ocean by the gently-sloping Oreti beach wears an uneven fringe of luxurious softness contrasting with the

inland farmlands which come in rigid cubist patterns recalling the closely cultivated landscapes of Europe.

The advantage of aerial photography lies less in its novelty than in the perspective it gives: the wide sweep of countryside, intelligent patterns in living and farming. The camera is provided with endless studies in light and shadow because in these latitudes the sun—as any Southlander will tell you—is never directly overhead.

The drawbacks of a view entirely from the air are those converse to breadth: a certain lack of depth; a flattening of feature. The aerial camera's eye has the oblong pupil of the grazing animal, seeing the broad pasture, but never the blade of grass at front dead-centre. Man himself is rarely seen. Only the tiny pedestrian speck and the insect-crowd at a game of Rugby football testify that the province has not been deadened by the plague. More time on the ground might have remedied this impersonality of view. It might also have prevented Mr White from talking of Southland people's Scotch descent. True Scots, we are told, acknowledge only three varieties of Scotch—whisky, hop and butter.

The book should have a good market abroad among prospective Southlanders and the kinsfolk of settlers past and present. Within the province itself many will pay the relatively high price (the book is on art paper) for the sake of a good long look at the old home bog.

LEFT: The Southland Waiau, not far from the outlet at Lake Manapouri. TOP OF PAGE: Farming land at Gladfield— "marked by the signs of careful husbandry"

NOW...

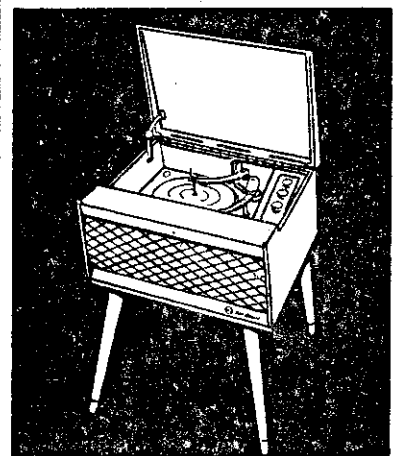
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