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manageable...easier to set! Home Permanents take better!*

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AT CHEMISTS AND DEPARTMENT STORES

Prepared by Richard Hudnut Ltd., 21 Federal Street, Auckland.



Obituary

MORE EQUAL THAN MOST

THE death of George Orwell the other day passed almost unnoticed in the New Zealand Press, yet it seems likely that posterity will claim him as one of the greatest satirists of our time. Known for many years only to a few intellectuals and radicals in England, Orwell leapt into world prominence with the publication in 1945 of *Animal Farm*. This work, an amusing farmyard allegory that contains a scathing attack on Communism and the Soviet Union, led to his being described as the most brilliant political satirist since Jonathan Swift. It has already become a contemporary European classic, translated into 14 languages, and with sales of well over a million copies. It was broadcast as a radio play by the BBC, and the radio script (which has been bought by the NZBS) is to be produced here also. Orwell added to his stature with the publication last year of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a ruthlessly savage account of an imaginary totalitarian police-state "utopia."



GEORGE ORWELL
Icy idealism

Orwell's real name was Eric Blair. He was born in Bengal of an Anglo-Indian family and became a scholarship student at Eton, where his school friends included such *avant garde* highbrows as Cyril Connolly, the editor of *Horizon*. He served for five years in Burma as a member of the Imperial Indian Police, and later fought and was severely wounded in the Spanish Civil War as a member of the P.O.U.M. militia, a loose minority organisation of anti-Stalinist Marxists which was fiercely attacked by the Communists. What he saw in Spain and what he saw of the organisation of extreme left-wing political groups gave him a horror of such politics, and although he was always "left" in sentiment he believed that a writer could remain honest only if he kept free of party labels.

His most outstanding characteristic as a writer was an absolute refusal to be bamboozled. He was the most honest of men, and because he was also a congenital nonconformist, his violent and indiscriminate attacks on the parties, personalities, and pet beliefs of his friends helped clear away a lot of fuzzy and half-baked thinking about Socialism. Yet this same desire for truth often led him into a perverse exaggeration of the weaknesses he was attacking—an exaggeration from which developed the fine flowers of his satirical genius, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. His earlier books exposed with pitiless clarity the squalor and abjectness of the lives of poor people in industrial Europe, and they were all based on his own experiences—in the slums of London,

Paris, and the English provinces. They were no high-minded idealists' tracts, but grim studies of the degradation that unemployment and poverty can bring to men.

In *Animal Farm* he attacked mankind's newest form of oppression—Communist dictatorship. The animals overthrow their human masters only to be enslaved by the pigs, led by a Stalin-esque boar named Comrade Napoleon. His policy of ruthless domination is embodied in the slogan, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." This use of slogans was

carried a stage further in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where all thought, as well as government, is subject to absolute dictatorship. Here the wretched citizens are spied on continuously by "thought police," watched by hidden "telescreens," and compelled to read and hear every hour of their lives the three slogans on which Orwell's imaginary state is founded: "War is peace; freedom is slavery; ignorance is strength." The chilling, paradoxical logic embodied in these contradictory "truths" is a measure of the razor-sharpness of Orwell's thinking. Truth was his trade and his tools were a love of freedom and a desire for equality, as Paul Potts said recently of him. Orwell himself, in his burning search for truth and his desire to expose sham, hypocrisy and muddiness in our political thinking, became a martyr to his own icy idealism, and was only 46 when he died of tuberculosis in a London hospital. In an age which has generally given only lip-service to the theory of egalitarianism, he was, in the best sense of his own classic phrase, truly more equal than most.

—P.J.W.

Elusive and Protean

BECAUSE chimpanzees were too expensive, research into the common cold is being carried on with human cooperation at Harvard Hospital, Salisbury, England. According to the BBC a surprisingly large number of people have been found who are prepared to go there for a week or two and catch a cold for the sake of science. Dr. C. F. Andrewes, F.R.S., who is in charge of British research into the common cold, advised C. Gordon Glover, the writer of this particular programme in the BBC series *New Horizons*, and the result is twenty-eight minutes of entertaining speculation. The only cloud on the New Horizon is that although Dr. Andrewes discovered the influenza virus some time ago, influenza is still a house guest even in the most scientific homes. Listeners to 2YA can get this latest progress report on the pursuit of the elusive sneeze at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday, February 26.

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 17, 1950.