

Paradise Lost . . .

by GORDON INGHAM

SIX summers ago we spent a happy holiday at our favourite seaside resort some 12 miles from Auckland. Returning reluctantly to the city we decided to make the break with civilisation and make our holiday home permanent. So we left our flat, packed up our portable property and the baby, and came to live in a three-roomed bach while we built our own house. After a few weeks here I wrote the story for *The Listener*. "We would be living in a real community," I said, "where our children could grow up free from the stresses and strains of city life; where we would get back to the essentials of living and the things that matter. It would be a freer, better life of contentment." Remembering that now, my wife says those sentiments should be enshrined among "Famous Last Words."

Not that we were alone in this effort to regain the simple life. Many of our friends and acquaintances were doing the same thing. They settled on "The Island" or in the very outer suburbs where they could grow their own food, gather pipis, and driftwood, and return to nature.

We, who are the last survivors, hear from them occasionally. Beryl and Bill are in Christchurch, Joy is in England, Gay is in Tauranga, others are back in Auckland or Wellington. We, who are about to fly, salute them. Since in time there will arise a new cycle of suckers who seek sanctuary beyond Suburbia, we can assure them that their Eden will also be invaded by a variety of snakes proffering indigestible apples. And they will bite.

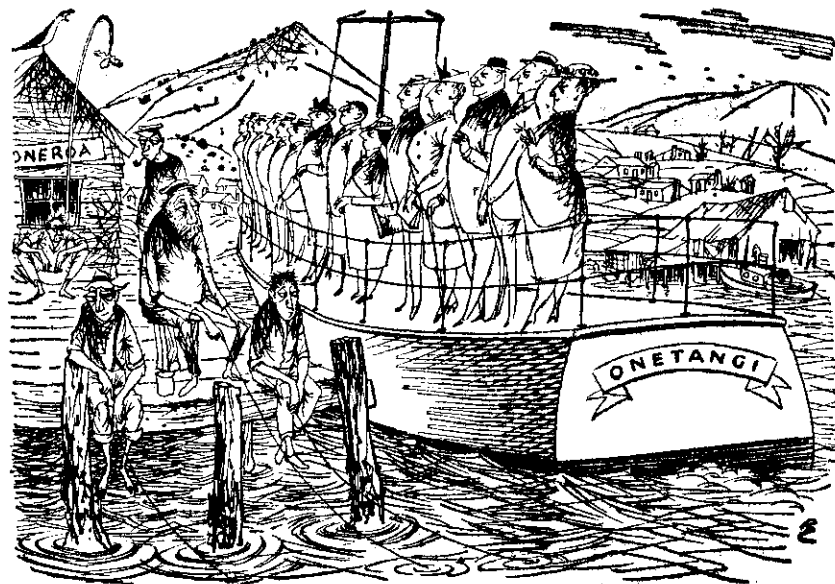
The trouble is that people who seek change continue to want it unless they actually prefer discomfort, which few

do. Like our counterparts in other semi-rural Utopias, we soon began to organise for better transport and more facilities; worse, so enamoured of our Paradise were we, that we wanted to tell everyone about it and urge them to join us. "Come, all and sundry," we cried. They came, especially the sundry.

Soon we had a "Workers' Boat," and people were getting up at five in the morning and our sleep was disturbed by ancient buses hooting for the tardy. Some wise guy once remarked that only immoral people go to bed before midnight. Only a bad conscience can root anyone out of bed before seven! We have never worried about time. Now the Shipping Company had to get out a timetable and stick reasonably close to it. Idle and cantankerous people sat by their windows with watches in their hands and wrote to the Transport Authority if a boat left late or early. Where once the boat used to wait for the last passenger, now the departing passengers watch gleefully the wrathful belated who could not sprint the last hundred yards.

Our Friday Shoppers' Boat used to be a social event, the passengers drinking tea provided on board (for a consideration) and visiting with people from other parts of The Island. Now the boat is filled with strangers intent on doing the rounds of the Friday sales. The constant influx of strangers has killed the community life.

We told the story before of the local paperhanger who began to paper a room and went off to the butcher's to get meat for his dog. He didn't come back for six weeks. He has gone, but his heirs and successors are with us. We had a window to fix. Of the four local car-



"Oneroa is looked down on by the inhabitants of Onetangi"

penters who have promised to come and fix it during the last six months, one has left the Island, another is now in such a large way of business he doesn't do such things; a third is dead; the fourth has abandoned building. He now has a shop and sells things to the other builders.

WITH the increase in businesses, the former rivalry between the different villages in our community has sharpened. (This applies elsewhere, I find. Up in "the Whangaparaoa," Auckland's currently favoured boomtown, there is a cold war between Manly, the older settlement, and Stanmore, the newer and boomier.) Indicative of the new spirit is the remark of one local. The village of Oneroa, which caters largely for the "trippers" and the yachties, is looked down on by the inhabitants of Onetangi,

whose visitors are largely catered to by "private hotels" (boarding-house to you). It is the pleasant delusion of Onetangi residents that "a better class" of people frequent their bay and beach. "We had a famous doctor staying in Onetangi recently," said one resident, "and he said he had the most interesting holiday of his life there." "Dr. Kinsey, I presume," was the Oneroa rejoinder.

From the other side it is contended that if Oneroa, which is a rash of fibrolite baches built during the war, were to pull down all the outside lavatories, seventy-five per cent of the buildings would go.

When we came here there were no churches. That was not a good thing, for it also meant no Sunday School, which most kiddies love. Soon, however, a parson arrived and founded an inter-denominational church. Everybody went happily to church together. Soon the church was full every Sunday and prospering. Then sects appeared. Now we have five churches and four more promised. The children who once went off to Sunday School together now pass one another on the road to their respective temples.

THERE are compensations, of course. We have a new theatre, supplying a steady diet of Westerns, at prices only slightly higher than in the city. We have a milkman who wakes us in the morning with his truck. The milk comes from town the previous day. For the genuine suburbanite by preference there are many compensations. But we were not suburbanites by preference, nor were so many of our friends. But today we will gladly change our retreat in Paradise for a week-end bach in Queen Street, Willis Street or on the banks of that Southern ditch.

Some of our neighbours have not given up. They talk hopefully of moving to the Great Barrier Island, blissfully unaware that the Automobile Association is pressing the Government to make that the great "Playground of the Gulf." For ourselves, we no longer sing "Thoreau's a Jolly Good Fellow." To us, he was a false prophet. The simple life is for the simple; we aren't that simple. "Wanted, Flat or House by married couple with three children. Preferably on tram line, packed in by other houses. No objection close railway station within sound of whistles. Apply Refugee, Paradise Lost."

(Solution to No. 640)

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Clues Across

- Backward conflagrations.
- This romantic burglar suffers a reverse in himself far too often.
- Everlasting part of friendlessness.
- Crooked sign at the back of a hostelry?
- "Time — on."
- Is in the rain, but it's nevertheless dried.
- Confectionary.
- Produced by volcanic action.
- Study the business concern in order to strengthen.

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- If you make one, you may give it, but you should keep it.
- Dead par (anag.).
- If you're out of these you're in a bad way.
- The singular of these close relatives is an anagram of 4 down.
- Confused dimple.
- Rascal.
- Rosie helps to make baskets.

Clues Down

- It could be a tram, see! But then it would be out of its element.
- Corollary on horseback?
- A terror for draughts but possibly more interested in outdoor sports (5, 3, 5).
- Is surrounded by repose, in order to oppose.
- A 3 down would probably have them wide open (6, 7).
- Fifty catch fire, and the result is a kind of coal.
- This sort of hit is good for the box office.
- "Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor — — — a cage" (Loveplace).

No. 641 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

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