

SCOTTISH





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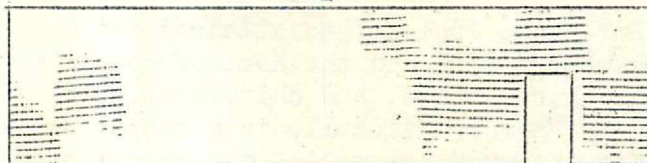
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+++Walt Willis absent due to unforeseen
circumstances. Back next issue.+++

Offical Critic—Frances Varley(unpaid)

BLEATHERINGS



Being comments upon the Thirty-First Ompa Mailing:

Off-Trails: I shall fill out the Egoboo Poll; but first I intend to haul out the 1961 mailings and browse through them, any other way would not be right. At the moment I cannot think that the BEST POET category is of much use, we have so little poetry in Ompa. I would rather see a category for BEST COVER, although the tendency to omit a cover is fading slightly. I should also like to see it made clear whether material that appears by non-Ompans is eligible or not.

Amble:No 5: Mercer: I should like to read that book--THE FRENCH QUARTER--would it be difficult to obtain? Your life in the Army sounds so dreary; I am so glad I did not have to go through it myself. I think it would have been better either to have told of the trick cyclist reports, or not to have mentioned them at all. This only invites speculation. As it isn't polite one tries not to.

Souffle:No 2: Baxter: It does seem odd that you are still under the impression that your zines are being run off on Bruce's duper. Has he never told you that they are run off by him on mine? I see by your mailing comments that you are a person of decided views, so that ought to make Ompa livlier. I merely glanced at your SF poll sorry; the thought of filling in all that just does not appeal. It reminds me too much of an examination paper.

Erg:No 11: Jeeves: Ted Tubb writes an interesting if rather sweeping article. I could argue with a few points but the main one I'd object to is the theory of Lingua Europa. English as the major language is much more likely, its spread as the second language in Europe is quite fantastic. We rarely want long for a maid nowadays--they are coming over in droves to perfect their knowledge of our language.

Conversation:No 17: Hickman: I deeply envy the reproduction you show on this lovely cover. The Wollheim letter on today's youth should bring forth some discussion. Must say the young ones I meet do not seem less interested in rocketry or space, they all seem very knowledgeable. You mention Newburgh and the high standards of independance shown by the people there in their stand against reckless handouts of social welfare. I just knew that if I kept the Alastair Cooke cutting about this from the GUARDIAN of Aug. 3rd 1961 it would come in useful. I quote it in full....

The Guardian Aug 3rd 1961 from Alistair Cooke:

"A social experiment in the finest do-it-yourself traditions of Samuel Smiles and Horatio Alger appears to be doomed today by the sudden appearance of the law and the Welfare State running tandem. Until this summer Newburgh, a Hudson valley town of 30,000, was famous mainly for its cunning treatment of a lobster and for the site, a couple of miles out of town, of the last encampment of the Continental Army after the recent (1781) surrender of the British. But since June it has attained national prominence as the birthplace of the Newburgh Plan and the home of Joe Mitchell folk hero and the nemesis of all slackers, slobs, and chisellers. The Newburgh Plan, proclaimed in June by City Manager Mitchell, is a social welfare code containing 13 points or rules for the guidance of the department of public welfare. It lays down who may go on the dole and who may not. It forbids unemployment relief, either in cash or goods, to anyone for more than three months a year. It excludes from relief any able-bodied person who turns down any kind of 40-hour a week job offered by the city. It will support an unmarried mother (provided she has no more bastards as long as she lives in Newburgh.) The plan did not go into effect until two weeks ago, but down-to-earth Americans got, and applauded, its message throughout the early summer. Mr Mitchell was hailed by Arizona's Senator Goldwater as a True reformer reversing the trend to handouts and helplessness. Mr Mitchell was taken to Washington and there was asked to describe his vision to a rapt audience of the heathen press. He told a sickening, but familiar, tale of huge (almost a million dollars a year) disbursements for the "relief" of the shiftless at the expense of the industrious taxpayer. He told of reckless doxies feeding their fatherless children at the public trough. He told of an invasion of Negroes from the South, coming north to live the life of Riley off the cuff. He said he would put an end to all this. He would set the army of bums to work on city financed projects. Well, sir, the great day came and the plan went into effect. Five applicants for relief appeared. None of them quite fitted the definition of a bum or chiseller and Mr Mitchell "chose not to invoke" any of the 13 points of the code. "I'd rather be right than hasty," said Joe Mitchell, a fast man with a proverb. Other annoying facts came out that amply justified Mr Mitchell's wisdom in postponing the actual working of the plan. It costs more money to finance a city work project than to pay the bums for staying home; and last year there was only one man on a work project, a very luxurious form of "relief." Last year too, the record showed, the city spent only 205 dollars on that tide of Negro immigrants, and 540,000 dollars on white residents, the bulk of it on old people who had lived here all their adult lives. Moreover, somebody mentioned the awkward item that the Federal Government and New York State between them paid Newburgh for almost 65 per cent of its relief monies. Joe Mitchell was not to be intimidated. Applications for relief, he announced, "have dropped by 29". He could only identify six. The chisellers, the bums, the easy riders? They must be there, he thinks, but he can't quite put his finger on them. A new welfare commissioner, is sure the code is legal, but he thinks there might have to be "a delay in further implementation of the code." Fifty years ago a Tammany politician caught in this awful collision with the facts of life would have gone out and imported his Negro invasion to prove his point and vindicate his honour. But these are shiftless times my masters. Mitchell is on the spot, and plenty mad. Yesterday the heartless law moved in. New York's Attorney General will bring Mitchell and his plan to court. Newburgh will be charged with trying to enforce a welfare plan "contrary to State and Federal

rules" a plan that is "causing irreparable injury to applicants for relief" and "degrading them". Worse, it may make "imminent" the cessation of the flow of Federal aid into the State of New York. The citizens of Newburgh begin to have their doubts about Joe Mitchell, the former martyr. "The cold gray dawn is breaking," said a town official. "Looks like this whole thing may be a hoax," said another. "Let's get back" said a third, "to those damned lobsters."

Of course I don't know what happened after that..can anyone tell me what did happen?

Pooka:No 4:Ford:Perhaps you noticed..among that list you gave of commonly misspelled words, a lot were of the same type. That is the pronunciation of them was very little help. They are like the word ophthalmic. I have seen one of the h's missed out even by nurses who have their Ophthalmic Diploma! This, Don, is the best contribution you have ever put into Ompa-rambling away, telling us your thoughts and doings. I loved it all and read it all, though it was difficult in spots. What happened to your duper? I do not agree with all your opinions but I like the equable(well, mostly so) way you present them. And you often hit the nail on the head and make me laugh out loud. More of this please.

Son of the Fanalytic Eye:Linwood: The glimpses you allowed us to have of the Cult was rather brief. It did seem though as if Dave Hale was right in thinking you had nothing but destructive criticisms of present-day society to offer. Well-tell us some more about yourself..do you enjoy being lazy, or does it worry you?

Envoy:No 4:Cheslin:I do not like your odd page size. However I was very appreciative of the colour work, Ompa often appears a bit drab. Your paragraphing is still all shot to hell; and I do wish you would justify the left hand margin, this erratic way is so eye-distracting. When your material is good it is such a waste.

Packrat:No 4:Groves: Thank you very much for the front cover. Whilst I did enjoy your mailing comments I will be glad when you have time to do more.

Conversation:No 18:Hickman:Again a beautiful cover, I think the best of the lot. Why not explain a bit more about the 14th amendment so we British can understand? We are always interested in the American constitutional workings, and it might clear up some misunderstandings.

Chicken-Wagon:No 1:Demmon:Biff I shall call you--to blazes with all those little dots you put around your name. That crack of yours - writing about your book collection being rather like showing Home Movies - went spang! right home! I see you are a Trouble Maker -but Fun-in fact I haven't had so much Fun reading an Ompazine since Mal went into hibernation.

Zounds!:No 7:Lichtman:You won't get any answers from me on these questions you raise I'm afraid. I just haven't got the Time.(Sorry,,it's infectious..) Yes, please, we would like more from you than just comments.

Quartering:No 1:Fitch: Welcome to the glee club. This had a fine original

cover for a start. Bill Donaho is to be congratulated that his essay on the art of mailing comments produced such a fine response from you. I'd like to hear more about your job of growing tropical plants. You couldn't grow them here, that's for sure-into April and it is still wintry weather.

Olla Podrida:No 1:Breen: Welcome to the home from home apa. You say you are a graduate student of sociology - are you teaching now? What do you think of the book I have been reading THE PROPER STUDY OF MANKIND by Stuart Chase? Hospital gossip is worse than back-fence because it is duller. Among the patients it often comprises one giving his life story to another..in detail, or a blow by blow description of his operation. Among the staff it is even deadlier running along the lines of "she said..Dr said..I said.." for hours. I enjoyed your hospital joke however; if you analyses them they are very much concerned with the bodily functions in one way or another.

Outpost:No 1:Hunter: Your cover has been greatly admired by all who have seen it and shows great ingenuity;maybe you will stimulate John Roles to exotic effects again. You mention that John Osbourne chose perfume as his luxury on the programme DESERT ISLAND DISC. When I heard Amis on this, he chose whisky! It is fine to have you with us; and I do think all you new bods are to be congratulated on the way you have swung smartly into mailing comments. So-welcome to the nuthouse apa.

Sizar:No 6:Burn: To be honest I thought the poems were pretty poor; but I tried them out on My Ortic, Frances Varley. She said they are the kind you can churn out. Active moderates..it is a nice idea, but a rather difficult thing to be I should think.

The Wall: Me: This would never have been finished I doubt had not Bill Donaho a tidy mind.

Dolphin:No 1:Busby: Welcome Elinor, three hearty cheers that you decided to come amongst us. I am sorry you veered when you started to tell us about yourself; maybe you will veer back next time? Look forward to hearing about the World Fair at Seattle, I have seen some intriguing pictures. I agree to your remarks on fans; but my friend Frances took exception to your saying that fans are just a little bit brighter than non-fans. She said it was "big-headed" and went off on a Toot. I defended it on the grounds that it was a generalisation. You ask about the pronunciation of Buchman. Not buck for sure..it is said softly as in hooch. You also mention a Taff delegate being expected to make a speech. I then thought - how come we never read in a con report what the Taff delegate said? My, but it's nice to have you with us. Thank you for the front cover.

Asp:No 1:DonahoE You are another to receive my grateful thanks, this time for the back cover. I too hold up the posting of Scot till the mailing is out; and agree that it is only courteous to let Ompa members see it first. Now, I saw someone(who shall be nameless)handing out ompazines even before the mailing was posted in the London area! That is rather a garbled version of what happened in the Highlands. What book have you been readin? I asked SFCoL member Ian Peters to answer you, as he has a very good reference library, and is a good article writer. Any comments?

Ul:No 6:Metcalf: I do not belive you lack a personality: you are stubborn for a start, I bet. Much as I enjoy your mailing comments, I do wish you would add something more. Entertaining yes..but not a magazine by my definition.

Morph:No 26:Roles: I see you are starting to have fun with the shading plates again: good luck to it! Much amused by your interpretation of a crack of tartanthunder. I enjoy these behind-the-scenes glimpses that you give us of the book world and hope for more.

Vagary:No 15:Gray: Dear Bobbie: sometimes I wonder at you!...As long as the CND are being polite and reasonable by only offering you leaflets - that's alright. As soon as they sit down on the pavement-you'll be strongly tempted to kick them out of the way and stuff the leaflets down their throats! What a reasonable way to treat them! Among your many interesting items, high up on my list was those quotes from the children's essays. Seen through their clear eyes the Bomb becomes more frightening than ever. I too feel it is an indictment of our society that children of this age should have to know such things exist. The child who wrote "It is very wicked" wrote true. The witchcraft articles were of absorbing reading. Mind you I do not believe in any "power", except that of the mind - and this, I suspect, could be almost infinite.

POST MAILINGS

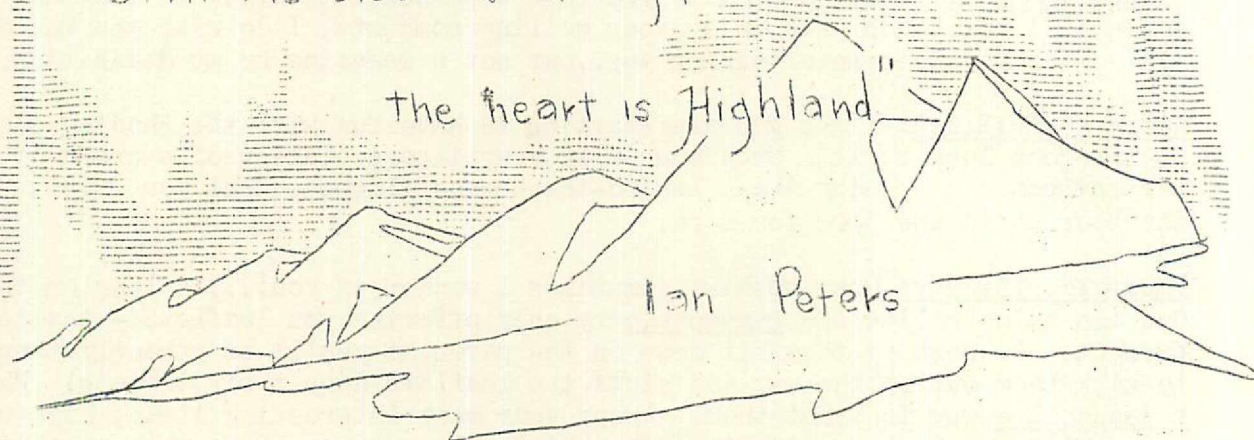
Envoy:No 5:Schultz: I am glad you asked how I keep Atom stencils from tearing -it's patience that does it. Frankly it makes the hair on the back of my neck rise to think of your paying postage for a four page post-mailing! Why, for the same postage you could have sent another 20 pages.

That's all the Ompastaff for this time round. Now I parcel them up and they go the round of my regular contributors. Sometimes I don't see it back again for months, and it's just like getting an extra mailing. Most non-Ompa readers have asked me to retain BLEATHERINGS in their copies, so I have done so. However I must warn you all - these comments are aimed specifically for the editors concerned. The rest of this magazine, dear Reader - is yours.

"Still the blood is strong,

the heart is Highland"

Ian Peters



I have long been of the opinion that the history one learns in school consists of equal parts, fairy tales, political propaganda, and sheer balderdash. 1066 AND ALL THAT - without the jokes! If this is true as regards the history of one's own country, then how correspondingly less accurate is one's idea of the history of other countries.

My mind was lead into these channels on reading a remark by one, Bill Donaho - "But the depopulation of the glens, the driving of the Scots to the colonies etc. was done by the Scots to each other, not by the British. England didn't foist an English upper class on Scotland or confiscate land, it was the Scotch nobles themselves who in defiance of custom, but in accordance with law did the evil deeds. Of course it was England who gave Scotland the peace, tranquility, etc. so that the clan leaders didn't need the protection of an armed band that enables them to do so." unquote.

Now, let me say right away that the first two sentences are substantially if superficially true. Later I shall delineate the numerous factors involved in the situation, without which it is impossible to form a reasoned and a reasonable opinion.

There is however no excuse for the confusion in nomenclature. The United Kingdom, alias Great Britain, consists of the union of four distinct ethnic regions: England, the dominant member in wealth and population; Wales, the last stronghold of the old Brythonic peoples, conquered only with great difficulty by the Romans and absorbed later by the Normans, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the homelands of the Gaels and ever the objective of the Empire-building English. The citizens of Britain are the British, right! - but each Briton is either a Scot(Scotch refers to the produce of Scotland whether it be bottles or beeves) an Irishman(a paddy), a Welshman(a taffy) or an Englishman(a sassenach,) the anglicised form of the Gaelic for Saxon.)

The last sentence in Donaho's statement is, I confess, difficult to understand. I take it to mean that English domination of Scotland led to the pacification of the Highlands so that the clan chiefs could dispense with their armed protectors, the clansmen. Such a statement exhibits complete ignorance of the clan system, a peculiarly Gaelic development, though there appears close parallels with the Plains tribes of North America. The Union

of the Crowns occurred in 1603 when James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne due to his descent from Margaret, daughter of Henry VII of England who married her to James IV of Scotland in 1503. James VI then became James I of Great Britain and his power was so increased that he was able to keep the quarrelsome Scottish nobles in hand and to "dragoon the Highlands into something like obedience to the law." He ruled Scotland via the Privy Council. He was not a nice man, had homosexual traits, but a shrewd King and though he was overfond of English ways, was a Scotsman.

But perhaps Mr Donaho refers to the period after the Treaty of Union, 1707, when shamefully, Scotland's own parliament - the Estates - was dissolved permanently and Scots representation adopted into the English parliament in London at a time when it took a fortnight to reach Edinburgh and newspapers did not exist until 1718. Thus it took the English 900 years to gain full control of Scotland. "European politics in the 18th century, were possibly of a more cynical debasement than at any other time between the fall of Rome and the thirties of the present century: and the Treaty of Union is not the least flagrant instance..it was wrought..by a mixture of chicanery and corruption that makes an ugly passage in history for the decent reader Scot or Englishman."

During the next forty years there were three armed counter revolutions. Scotland was in deep poverty at this time, the actual money in the kingdom being reckoned at 15/- sterling (2 dollars) per head. Hostile weather for the first seven years of the century caused famine and disease; one in ten was a beggar. The tragic Darien scheme cost Scotland almost half its total assets due to ruthless English politico-economic interference. In spite of this the powers granted by the Treaty were used in an oppressive manner. The new Customs and Excise, dominated by Englishmen "treated the natives with all the contempt imaginable; English press-gangs went to work on Scottish seamen and the first work of the Union parliament was to appoint new legal and taxation machinery. Taxes rose. Scottish industries, coal and linen were placed at a severe disadvantage by export duties. The tax on salt put an end to Scottish fishing. Scottish members who protested in the Commons were asked indignantly "Have we not bought the Scots and a right to tax them?" and told that their country was "now but a county of Britain" and when they protested that things were flat against Scots law and the Treaty were informed that "whatever may be the laws of Scotland, yet now she is subject to the sovereignty of England."

1708 - rising planned with French help to put James Stewart, the Old Pretender on the Scots throne. It did not get far.

1713 - repeal of the Union was formally proposed in the Lords and only failed by four votes.

1715 - armed rebellion in Scotland, again the Old Pretender. Failed due to poor leadership.

1719 - another Jacobite revolt with Spanish help.

1745 - the Jacobite rebellion in favour of the Young Pretender, who raised the Standard of his father at Gelfinnan. No guns, no money, disunited leaders, yet Edinburgh fell while London panicked at the success of these "Highland cannibals"..whose behaviour in fact was remarkably unlike that of civilised troops in the Highlands six months later!" They turned back at Derby though the Price would fain have made for London. In terrible weather the starving

army was shattered at Culloden. Reprisals were savage: the wounded were shot on the field, some were burned alive, the prisoners were deprived of food, water and clothing. The Highlands were systematically devastated, methods of food production destroyed, houses burned, shooting and flogging were the order of the day.

Pacification? I call it sheer military oppression. So much for the "tranquillity."

...
The Highland Clearance.

This refers to the depopulation of the Highlands and Islands by the emigration either voluntarily or forcibly of the inhabitants. This began as early as the 1720s but by 1750 sheep were replaving men over large areas. Between 1760 and 1783 a country with $1\frac{1}{2}$ million people lost 30,000 of its finest stock. This drain continued in the 19th century: between 1811 and 1820 - 15,000 people were cleared from the one county of Sutherland with all conceivable brutality. Mind you this was the worst example during that period - the notorious "Improvements on the Marquis of Stafford's Estates", those of Sutherland which Lord Stafford an English noble who married the Countess of Sutherland. By law, he was master then of her estates. Many who did not emigrate went to the towns. The population of Mull dropped from 10,000 to 5,000. The people who remained were put on the unproductive land.

The work was helped on by the clergy, ever the supporters of the establishment, and by the absence of many men in the army, where their conduct was such that, on general parades for punishment they were ordered to quarters, "no examples being necessary for such honourable soldiers." Skye alone between 1797 and 1837 gave the British Army -21 lieutenant-generals and major-generals, 48 lieutenant-colonels, 600 majors, captains and subalterns and 10,000 other ranks, besides one Governor-General of India, four Governors of Colonies, a Chief Baron of England and a Lord of Session. The loss to Scotland was great. In 1845 the standard for recruits to the Highland Regiments was 5'6" - in 1897 it had perforce to be lowered to 5'2".

The causes of this depopulation were many and varied. After the '45 the harsh treatment of the Highlanders destroyed much of the free life among the hills and the brutal severity with which the Proscription Act 1746 was carried out struck a death blow to the remnants of freedom. This Act says.. "no man or boy within that part of Great Britain called Scotland..shall..wear..Highland clothes(that is to say)the Pladi, Philabeg or little Kilt,Trowse,Shoulder belts or any part whatever..and that no tartan plaid or stuff be used.."Penalty - transportation to the plantations for 7 years. This foul ordinance was only rescinded in 1728 by which time the art of making the tartan was largely lost, the unique knowledge of vegetable dyes irretrievably gone. The pipes were declared by "Butcher" Cumberland to be an "instrument of war" and proscribed also and the Gaelic was suppressed by all possible means. The Episcopalian religion of the area was forcibly suppressed. Acts of 1746,1747,and 1748 disarmed the clans and abolished military tenures; 40 estates were confiscated. The Heritable Jurisdiction Act was especially reprehensible, passed by a Government sitting in London, determined to devitalise the Highlands. Of this, my Britannica says innocently: "a reform long overdue, for the administration of

justice by magistrates whose tenure of office was not dependent upon the central government was incompatible with good administration." In actuality this act "paved the way for the eviction, the deer afforestation, and the bitterness of the 19th century." That it helped to make possible the colonisation of the Empire was purely incidental. Abroad the Highland people carried with them the hardiness and endurance which had distinguished them through the centuries, with them also their treasured heritage of poetry and music, their dress and language, their traditional craftsmanship and, greatest possession of all, a deathless attachment to their native land and to the kinsfolk who still remained there. Scotland's loss was the world's gain but many times in the two centuries since the '45 have the sons of the North come home to the Motherland, in greatest numbers when war threatened their native soil.

And now, I have come at last to the crux of my argument. The severe repressive measures taken after the '45 (you may use double-think and say 'pacification') besides breaking the spirit of the people of the glens and making them seek freedom overseas, also and much more seriously, broke the old clan system. There are several reasons for the Clearances: economically there was immediate justification since the income from wool sales was much needed and was usually put to improve agricultural techniques. Even Stafford had no evil intention he merely thought of the matter in abstract terms, ignoring the human element involved and its effect on the national life. A modern economist of high repute, no sentimental exponent of Gaelicism, has remarked that while "overpopulation of certain districts, infertility of the soil, backwardness of agriculture and squalid conditions of life" did present problems, "these were not adequately solved by indiscriminate depopulation."

But to really understand the tragic consequences of these two acts, it is necessary to know a little about the clan system. "Never in the history of the world has a system of government developed such instances of paternal attachment by the rulers to their subjects or of devotion of the subjects to their chiefs." The word clan or 'clanna' simply means children i.e. the descendants of the actual or mythical ancestor from whom the community claims descent. Both the group and the clan territory were called after the chief who in theory was owner of the whole group and of the land of the group, with absolute power over every member. Dr Johnson says: "...This inherent power was yet strengthened by the kindness of consanguinity and the reverence of patriarchal authority. The Laird was the father of the clan, and his tenants commonly bore his name; and to these principals of original command was added for many ages, an exclusive right of legal jurisdiction... every duty moral or political was absorbed in affection and adherence to the chief."

In 1587 and 1593 Acts were passed making the chiefs responsible for the behaviour of their followers. The Highland nobles, on the other hand owed much of their power to their feudal superiorities over chiefs holding land of them, but they also owned a great deal of land where there was no predominant clan. The clans thus gave Scots feudalism a unique character, more than 1/3 of the man-power of the Highlands following the great feudatories and while the feudal powers of the Lowland nobles crumbled, the clan continued to be strong and cohesive till the '45.

But the Highland chief was no autocrat. The organisation of the clan was

remarkably democratic, as it was a fundamental principle of clanship that the chief administered the clan territories on behalf of his clan, it being his duty to see that every one of his clansmen were suitably provided for. The chief was regarded not as an over-lord but as a friend. The fortunes of the clan depended on the ability of the chief. To have a chief was essential and if his line was exterminated, the clan generally disintegrated. The chief owned the land "be or by the law" and settled his followers on it, providing for the families of men who fell in his service. He was advised by a council of the heads of the leading families though of course their powers varied. Without a chief the clansmen degenerated into "broken men" or helots and without the support of his clansmen the chief could not have occupied his land or kept his livestock. Thus there was mutual interdependence and the connection was glorified by a wonderful devotion on both sides, warmed by the ties of kindred and pride in the clan. The humblest clansman addressed his chief (even a powerful noble like Argyle) by his patronymic. There was a sacramental significance in the clansman's right to take his chief by the hand.

By the 17th century most of the feuds were settled though numerous rivalries still existed, which was the flaw in any Highland force and proved fatal to each and every uprising. Succession to the chiefship was complicated. The law of Tanistry gave the ruling chief the right to nominate his successor but the succession was hereditary in the family, it was sometimes selective in the individual. Matriarchal lineage applied, an incoming husband being required to assume his wife's name and held the office of chief through his wife. What the Heritable Jurisdiction Act did besides removing the right of the chief to act as magistrate, was to destroy the bond between chief and clansman. The exiles and forfeitures made a breach in continuity. The new lairds were not the leaders of a people, but the owners of land, in their own right and responsible only to that. It is a psychological turning point in Scottish history. "Deprived of the old leadership and social sanction, the social structure was in ruins, and they had not the will or capacity to evolve a co-operative effort on their own behalf while the government had no machinery and a profound ignorance." It was the considered policy of that government to put an end to the Scottish clan system and it almost succeeded. It exists in a very strong and virile form today of course but in an altered and, let's face it, not such an ideal form. Any student of American history will notice many startling parallels between the Scottish clans and the North American Indian, both ethnologically and historically.

As for foisting an English upper class on Scotland, well, that just doesn't make sense. What happened was that the Scottish upper crust and the not-so-upper-crust aped English ways until a man came to be looked down upon for his good Scots tongue, and the dialects, rich in expression, humour and onomatopoeia have now almost been lost. Yet today a Scots accent is a passport almost anywhere in the world as I well know, who am a stranger in a strange land.

In conclusion let me emphasise the salient features.

1. By the 17th century, especially under James VI of Scotland, the Highlands were reasonably peaceful

2. Between the Union of the Crowns 1603 and the Union of Parliament 1707, most Scottish troubles were due to religious doctrine, a mainly internal affair. The very real poverty was accentuated by English trade rivalry.
3. The immediate and prolonged result of the Treaty of Union was war, mostly with the Highlands but with some Lowland support.
4. "Peace" was achieved by the physical, economic and cultural destruction of a racial minority.
5. The Scottish Parliament had contained 154 members. The Union Parliament contained 45 Scottish representatives (one more than for the county of Cornwall.) This parliament confiscated 40 Estates.
6. Many neglectful and impoverished Scots landowners, now with no legal responsibility for the people on their land, cleared it for sheep. Certainly they were Scots, but a new class created by Parliament. Many other clan chiefs and lairds went bankrupt and numerous clan lands passed from clan control. In the last few decades several clan heartlands have been repurchased.

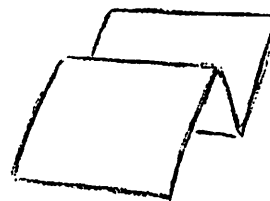
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Ian Peters.

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"From the lone sheiling in the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas
But still the blood is strong, the heart is highland
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides"
from "Canadian boat song" by Sir Walter Scott.

LETTERS



Brian W. Aldiss

Iffley Rd.

Oxford.

"Talking about sf, I'd better say something to Alan Dodd, who asks about Male Response. The question of the cover is indeed interesting. Let's quote Alan's description of it: "Shows a scientist examining a flask in a laboratory while in the foreground a blonde is removing her bra - I've heard of scientific detachment but this is ridiculous!" - This is not quite akkerate; the blonde is not scientifically detaching it but putting it back on. Their brief affair is over, and the scientist is back at work. Myself, I suspect that's a sample he's inspecting in the flask - with your medical background Ethel, maybe you can tell us; if my theory's correct, the girl's diabetic. What is more perplexing is what the cover has to do with the contents. You'll see too that the opus is labelled sf. That was not my idea. I did not think I was writing sf. So far only James Blish, Geoff Doherty and Bob Coulson have had a word to say (in my hearing) about the book, but they seem to share my impression that this was a comedy/satire with anti-romantic leanings. Alan's right when he suggests that you don't get the background for this sort of book in Oxford - Oxford's the place where the men know all the angles but the women only want to know about degrees. But I haven't spent all my life in Oxford; heck, I had a gilded youth once - he got away, and I've stuck to female society ever since. In India, in Sumatra, and particularly Macao, I had a glimpse of a sort of cock-eyed society that is represented by my imaginary republic in Male Response. As far as I know, nowhere do you get the public initiation rite they have in Goya: I'm the male responsible for that; but if you have a potentate, it seems wise to prove him potent. One thing I must say for the maligned Beacon people who published Male Response. The cover and blurb may have been dreadful, but they didn't fiddle about with the text at all, just let it run, and run with a minimum of misprints. Apart from Fabers, there aren't too many of that kind of publisher about. Another subject. Has anyone come across Alan Nourse's NINE PLANETS? I haven't seen a word in fanzines (or prozines for that matter) about this splendid and fascinating book. The sub-title is Astronomy for the Space Age, and by golly nobody has ever set down so interestingly what each planet in our system may be like - with a few new ideas, too! Book has four colour and eight black and white plates by Mel Hunter. Harper published it in the States, Hamish Hamilton distribute it over here. It's a bit pricey: two guineas, but you'd be doing Nourse as well as yourself a favour to press your library for it. Come to think, Ken Slater must have slipped up here - I haven't seen it in his catalogue. What's that you say, Ken?"

+++Many thanks for an entertaining letter. Not having seen the book cover in question, I am unable to give a firm diagnosis, but I agree that diabetes appears to be feasible.+++

Rick Sneary
2962 Santa Ana St.
South Gate, Calif.

USA

"Varley reopens a notion I'd had some were else—that you British have a hard time getting rid of large items of trash. I think it was Ella mentioned the bombed sites that are filled with old prams and bedsprings. I can't say for the East, but out here..in our area, anything under a certain size and weight(roughly what a man can lift) will be taken, if you want to do it piece meal, they would no doubt take a tree. I'm not sure about bricks though..but one or two a week would go. Of course he could build a little wall with them..The fannish suggestion would have been to mail the bricks to Tucker. Or how about renting a locker, filling it with bricks, and then mailing in the key? Maybe he should run a contest --the winning to get the pendulum. I'm with you regarding the simple life. Actually today life is a lot simpler than it use to be. The trick is to take advantage of modern advances, and not to let them take advantage of you. Sid's point about enjoying a bus ride across town is well made, but it is not the falt of the times if people don't enjoy it now as they once did. Sunsets are no less beautiful than they were, and more people have the time to look. And I know at least three fem-fans who make home made bread, because they like it--but buy it when they are rushed"

+++

Colin Freeman
Ward 3
Scotton Banks Hosp.
Knaresborough.
Yorks.

"Now to reply to Betty Kujawa. I admire Lincoln and don't hold it against him that he came from Indiana. The quotes from him that Betty sent are well-proven economic "laws". However I'm sure he was not referring to the Welfare State when he made them. I wonder why Betty is so sure he would be on her side in this? Does Betty want to live by animal laws-the survival of the fittest? If so why bother to have hospitals or help anybody at all? Let me take the last of the Lincoln quotes: "You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves." I agreed that there were leadswingers and that every effort should be made to weed them out, but they are a small percentage of the whole. Does Betty want to abolish our Welfare services completely because of these few? Is it not conceivable to her that there are many people who are suffering prolonged ill-health through no fault of their own? People who are unable to help themselves, is it so strange that an advanced and civilised society should help them? I wonder if Betty has ever helped a blind man or a crippled old lady across the road, and did she feel exhausted by the effort, or did she perhaps feel a little stronger afterwards? I have good reason to know that Betty is a most kind and generous person and would not see anyone suffer, but should people have to depend on charity because they have been unlucky enough to lose good health and cannot afford medical bills? As Shakespear said: "Thank God for Harry, England and the National Health!"

+++Seconds out of the ring....+++

Donald Wollheim
66-17 Clyde St.
Forest Hills 74
New York.

"I am not an authority on Lincoln but I believe that the quotes attributed to him by Betty K. are provenly fictitious. There was something about that recently in a N.Y. newspaper—it seems that the lines she quotes are from some sort of right-wing lunatic-fringe pamphlet, which some skeptical reader sent to Carl Sandburg to have the quotes checked for authenticity. He wrote a line across the thing to the effect that they were strictly counterfeit, horsemanure, or words to that effect. The man who freed the slaves could not possibly have been such a lickspittle for the wealthy as Betty quotes. Tell Colin Freeman he doesn't have to argue with the Lincoln as quoted."
+++Too late, too late. One thing though—Betty would not have known this when she quoted them I'm sure, and the statements are still arguable whoever first thought them up.+++

Robert Coulson
Rte. 3
Wabash
Indiana.

"On this business of forcibly changing a culture, I think I can paraphrase Ted Paul's remarks on censorship: it's never right, but it's sometimes necessary. I've just finished Alan Moorhead's THE WHITE NILE—he makes the point that while the European powers did ride rather roughshod over the African tribes, the tribal power was already being eroded simply by contact with civilisation. Survival of the culture was impossible (except under the strict quarantine which stf novels sometimes postulate for "backward" races) and that even before the intervention of the various empires, the tribes were falling prey to Arab slave traders, semi-civilised native leaders and individual opportunists. It would be nice if the African culture could be kept from imitating the European-American one, but it has to be advanced enough to compete with it if it is to remain independent."
+++I suppose I have to agree with you but it seems all wrong—we'll end up with one culture and life will be deadly dull."

Edmund R. Meskys
723A 45 St.
Brooklyn 20
New York.

"A few nits to pick. Wasn't the first Amazing pubbed in 26? And not in 28 as stated by WAW in his article? And I greatly enjoyed 4th R myself, but my copy was written by George O. Smith. I share your coldness for BROKEN SWORD, but not for being a modern rehash of mythology, but simply because I didn't care for all that gore and the constant feeling of gloom and doom. On the other hand I simply loved his 3HEARTS AND 3 LIONS."
+++I'll leave WAW to answer his one: but I plead guilty to the 4th R mistake.+++

Seth A. Johnson
339 Stiles St.
Vaux Hall
New Jersey.

"Well if your going to keep pubbing these letters of mine you'll never see an end to the things..the hottest opponents to the idea of socialised medicine are the American Medical Association. And so far they have succeeded in lobbying to the point of keeping both parties toeing their line on National Health. And their line is that nothing but nothing should come between the Dr the patient, and the fee. Their contention is that without the fee and profit motive the whole medium would go to pot fast."
+++Whilst it is alright for Americans to criticise their Health service: it is not for me to do so. Our NHS I can speak about from personal knowledge, but what I know of American practise is very little. Anyone like to elaborate?+++

Sid Birchby
1 Gloucester Ave
Levenshulme
Manchester 19.

"thankyou for the tenth haverings and twentyseventh scottishe and umpteenth bletherings. I havent forgotten about capital letters if you are wondering but i am against capital punishment in any shape or form this week. well i suppose you will want to know what i thought of your publications went you...by the way dont expect question marks. i am also against forced interrogation. one thing occurs to me that is that leaving out capitals makes this letter read like a neofans. what a difference it makes using the full keyboard i think that if i left out punctuation as well the effect would be even more marked do you suppose thats how neofans start i mean just pecking away down there at the edges of the keyboard when their tiny hands are too damn weak to operate the shift what a gruesome thought not under gooseberry bushes but under the feedoff spool thats where they come from. i will see you too at Harringay unless you see me first.ggod gracious still havent commented too late now im sure."

+++brave girl ament i..saw you at harringay and didnt go eek and run away.+++

Ann Chamberlain
2440 W.Pico
Los Angeles 6
California

"The line you chose to comment on(in Betty's letter)"YOU CANNOT HELP THE POOR BY DESTROYING THE RICH"..toh toh, Ethel, too late you must have noticed your discrepancy. It is just as true that the rich are not helped by destroying the poor, either. Here in the US there are Monopolies existing side by side with small businesses, and both have found their profits neither hurt not helped by the other's existence. However, many people will insist that this is a freak of nature which cannot long endure-no matter how well it has been proven. Some LIKE being poor, and some LIKE being rich. Sometimes the one or the other is the envied, for many and varied reasons."

+++I'm blest if I can follow your reasoning here, or understand the point you are trying to prove. However:I would LIKE to be rich but I'm not, maybe you know some rich person who does not want to be so? I'll change purses with them...+++

Pat Scott
Box 401
Anacortes
Washington.

"Thought the cover on Scot was most charming of the curiosity shop even when I couldn't figure out what the heck it was doing on a fanzine. Supposed that it was just something that you liked until on the third or fourth time of looking at it I finally noticed the spaceship!"

+++They don't call ATOM artful for nothing..+++

Betty Kujawa
2819 Caroline
South Bend 14
Indiana

"..to your question do I think the only way to help the poor is by destroying the rich--not always but it would seem the only way most countries TRY to do it. In the case of England these past years the taxation from all sides to anyone with inherited wealth or property, or even self-earned wealth is of the 'soak the rich' persuasion..the facts are right there around you, gal..why else ARE the rich of your land being taxed? For 'their own good'? Or'to help the poor'?? You tell me. It seems to be the basic philosophy to grab it from them that have to give to them that don't have..and I imagine your native wealthy by now are just about bled dry--are they not? Most of them anyway? And HAS it really helped your poor? Or has it in many cases discouraged many productive inventive men from creating new wealth and industry that could well employ and pay wages to many many of the poor??? You kill

too many geese who are laying the golden eggs..and..where are you? Give a good long hard look at the nationalised industries, the railroads etc.are they better than in private hands? Are you getting things at fairer prices? Are the commodities equal or better? Is the service and the condition of, say the train system, better or worse? As you enter into the Common Market will these industries compete successfully with their European counterpart? Does your laboring man in them do a good days work for a good days pay--really does he???Can it withstand what the European main-land worker does for his wages? Can you survive in free competition with things being like they are right now? Comment, please???? There was a report from Britain on tv last week with reactions from all strata of Brti-society to the Common Market--whoosh, me dears talk about chauvinism and isolationists in America twords furrainers!..lordy it would seem from hearing them talk that the Briton is a Sacred Aryan Race something like what Hitler tried to sell to the Germans a while back. I shall remember those comments about the 'luns' and the 'frogs' next time someone England-side tells me we Hoosiers are isolationists who think Ammurika is something special. It kinda 'got' me seeing the English people on that show set themselves up as something that special and perfect..am hoping this is not too common, as it seems to me to show us here why Europeans go on warring and warring down thru the centuries. Come the Common Market and then, God let it come, a United States of Europe, perhaps all will be MUCH more brotherly and see the things they have in common instead of the racial differences. A truly United Europe could be the greatest thing to have happened in the past 2,000 years and all the world cant help but gain by it in the long run. And I am quite willing and happy to take a cut in my personal income from stocks and investments that shall happen when this comes to pass.Now HOW did I get so far afield??Excuse all that chatter--but how do YOU personally feel about being as one with the rest of Europe??"

+++I'll tell you what I felt when I read this letter:a strong desire to shout 'Help!' So I tottered off to Brian Varley and said.."You do the Common Market and I'll do the National Health..and that only leaves the railways and are the poor better off now for the letter column. What do fan editors do for material who do not have our Betty in their letter columns?" Dear Betty, pardon me whilst I repeat some of the things in my letter to you for the benefit of the readers who are waiting to see me getting out of this fix. The poor first:of course they are better off..in this country no one need be hungry; they have a right to be fed. The nationalised industries next: I notice you mentioned them in the plural but only harped on the railways. Take our nationalised electric-ity-it makes a whacking profit every year and benefits everyone by keeping the cost of it down. The rich of our land are not nearly bled dry- the bulk of wealth in this country still belongs to a minority not the majority. It is a pretty small minority too, and a very large majority. There are still people who make do with very little. There I shall leave it; I hope to see a letter column next issue full of folks answering you! Then I really will dedicate the issue to you!+++

NOTICE

NOTICE

NOTICE

To non-Ompan, non-contributer, non-trade, folks.....

Unless I hear from you by either sub or letter of comment, this, alas,is your last issue.

Ethel.

Machial/Varley

This month I am devoting my efforts to comments on the European Economic Community (popularly known as the Common Market.) This is mainly for the benefit of American readers who may view Britain's reluctance to enter as a sign of insularity and isolationism not in keeping with the concepts of the 'Free World.' Indeed, one American - Betty Kujawa - seems to believe that we are exhibiting the Super Aryan tendencies of Hitlerite origin. Personally I am not altogether against entering, but I am going to give, as basically as possible, some of the points which argue against joining the Common Market.

Firstly: there are the political reasons. Entry requires the loss, in time, of a certain degree of our national sovereignty. Britain throughout this century has a record of stable government unsurpassed by any nation in the world. Consider then the records of the 3 major countries in the Common Market - France, Italy, and Germany.

France:-About 20 radical changes of government since the war. Communism held to a large minority by electoral finagling. Present, a supreme ruler De Gaulle, obtains total command by offering electorate a Machiavellian choice in a referendum:-"De Gaulle and Peace in Algeria" - Yes or No. The alternative choice is, of course, no De Gaulle and War. Present Prime Minister, M. Pompidou, has never stood for election, indeed is not a politician but a banker.

Italy:-Another country plagued by Communism and, even more than France, could be represented by a Communist government within the next few years. Italy is also, and has been since the war, suffering from severe unemployment and the standard of living is miles below Britain's.

Germany:-Ruled by a rigid authoritarian Adenauer who has recently publicly berated his main supporter, America, over Berlin and who has displayed alarming tendencies to try and start a Holy War over East Germany.

The main obstacle to Britain's entry is the DeGaulle-Adenauer axis. These two aging demagogues have no wish to have their supremacy abated by the entry of a third and greater force. Even so, what happens when these two depart? France again will start the sorry business of a different government for each month of the year and Germany will be split by the squabbling of Adenauers' underlings over shares in the political cake.

Still political: De Gaulle has stated that Britain must bring, as her dowry, her atomic knowledge and nuclear stockpile. Britain has exchanged many atomic secrets with America, but strictly in line with the American policy of keeping atomic knowledge to present atomic powers. How do Americans feel about their secrets being put at the disposal of 6 non-atomic powers, with the further probability of others such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal?

Now to economic considerations. The E.E.C. as it now constituted is made up primarily of industrial nations who import their raw materials from abroad. Britain at the moment has a vast and virtually unlimited source of raw materials from the Commonwealth. These materials are admitted duty-free through Imperial Preference, and are of great economic value. A few hard economic statistics..In 1961 Britain exported on average every month £120 million of goods to the Commonwealth, to the Common Market -£51 million. Most of our dealings with the Commonwealth is based on exchange dealing. We import £20 million of wool from Australia, they buy £20 million of farm machinery from us, and so on. Should the Australians have tariff barriers erected against them, as is the principal of the Common Market, they will find that they are receiving less farm machinery in exchange for less wool. Result of this, as the Australian Foreign Minister has already said, is that she will seek more equitable trade agreements with Soviet Russia and Red China.

Britain is also a great investor in foreign industry. These investments prospered to a large extent because of trade with Britain. We reap both ways -profit from investment and greater trade as the foreign industries expand. At the end of 1961 Britain's investments overseas included £2,631 million in the Common wealth and only £578 in Europe, (Common Market and the rest!)

Finally sentiment. Britain looks after her own is a cliché that has operated so long that it is never spoken these days. Take New Zealand, a country which is more British in parts than Britain. Throughout the '39-'45 war New Zealand voluntarily undertook stringent rationing although they had a plenty, in order that Britain could be fed. Fifty per cent of New Zealand's exports come to Britain through Imperial Preference. Erect tariff walls and the dairy products of New Zealand would be priced out of the British market. The result of this would be economic ruin for New Zealand. Admittedly this is the severest case in the Commonwealth, but all of the members would be affected to a lesser degree if Britain were to enter the E.E.C. without safeguards for her Commonwealth.

Let it be said that all intelligent Britons welcome the idea of Free Trade, a lowering of barriers throughout the world. We also do not want to cherish hatreds born of earlier wars - but must these things come about by damaging the economy of our staunchest friends and allies?

From a purely personal point of view I feel that it is through the inept fumbblings of British post-war governments that Britain is placed in this invidious position. At the end of WWII we could have had the leadership of a European Community just for the asking. No doubt we shall in the end enter the Common Market, but how deeply I regret the lost opportunities.

Brian Varley.



Training school days continued: Some reflections on the NHS.

Ward 13 was always busy: the number of beds was officially 36, but we often had more than forty. This was achieved by putting beds down the middle of the ward. The staff normally consisted of Sister, one Staff Nurse (in her 4th year) one Junior Staff (in her 3rd year) and two or three probationers. Each ward also had a resident maid. Ward 13 had an Aberdeen woman who called everyone "quine", she was very light-fingered - especially with food. We pros had to help her with the work. First thing in the morning the beds had to be hauled from the walls so that the maid could sweep (for years I had a corn on my hand from pulling these beds). Where she swept we followed with polisher, duster and also cleaned the brass of which there was an abundance. As soon as the beds were back in place two of us would proceed down the ward; first the patient's pressure areas had to be rubbed with spirit, then pillows plumped, sheets straightened, beds tidied. All this had to be done in the half hour before Sister came on duty.

After a while the patients were no longer a blur of faces to me, you soon got to know them all - the long-suffering, the fretful, the troublemaker, the gossip, the cheerful. Mostly they were loud in praise of the pros and highly critical of the Sister; on the whole the patient's sympathy is with the junior nurse. They were often generous with presents, handing out sweets and small gifts of money when they left. There was rarely much money to spare in these days, and I can remember feeling rich from a windfall of 2/6d. Going down the beds we chatted with each one and got to know them well. I can clearly recall two from these days. One a woman who had to be nursed flat as she had been operated upon for the removal of a defective kidney. I can remember her face and the fact that she was awed (I was too) at what had happened to her.

Further up the ward I remember a woman of about 40 who had undergone a colostomy operation. This consists of an artificial opening into the bowel when (often due to cancer) the patient is unable to excrete faeces normally. She was a cheerful woman with a craggy, likeable face, I can see her munching charcoal biscuits, a useful deodorant. Her daughter was a bus conductress and due to her odd hours of duty allowed to visit outside the normal visiting hours.

Very like her Mother, she would charge in cheerfully, still in uniform, and full of energy and chatter. Through her I discovered that I could get priority on the buses. I used to get home once a month, usually on a Sunday. I would rush down to the bus depot to find a huge queue: this was wartime and the number of buses cut down. My home in Carnoustie was a popular spot in the summer and invaded every weekend by crowds headed for the beach, I had sometimes waited for two hours. Through this conductress I learnt that if I told the inspector that I was a nurse with limited time off, he would put me ahead of the queue. As the conductor pushed me ahead, he would explain this to the queue, and never once did anyone complain. I carried an identity card which held a photograph of myself in uniform. Leaving home and having to watch for the 10.30pm deadline I would again be confronted with large numbers on their way home. Many times I would have been in trouble had it not been for my Mother who was indomitable on these occasions. She would stand in the middle of the road and flag down a bus with my card--she must get back on duty--as if the whole hospital would collapse else! Once again I was never refused. I would occasionally feel uneasy at this apparent favouritism - but it was a fact that I had precious little time to spend at home.

I can no longer give a blow by blow description for the wards blur in my mind and only isolated events come clear. The first death I saw must have been in my first medical ward, I was very junior. I was told to sit by the bedside of a man who appeared to be heavily asleep: I was not told anything else, just to sit there. All of a sudden he stopped breathing, my chief feeling was of immense surprise that it could happen as quietly as that. Later of course I was to be at the deathbed of patients whose history I knew well, whose end slow or quick, caused a reaction of helpless anger. Death never frightened me, I was first surprised and then angry, though I did not recognise the latter emotion till I read this poem by WS Blunt -

THE TWO HIGHWAYMEN

I long have had a quarrel set with Time
Because he robbed me. Every day of life
Was wrested from me after bitter strife
I never yet could see the sun go down
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear
Over the dying summer. I have known
No truce with Time, nor, Time's accomplice Death.
The fair world is the witness of a crime
Repeated every hour, for Life and breath
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly
The voices of these robbers of the heath
Sound in each ear and chill the passerby.
What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?
What have we done to Death that we must die?

I feel I would like to turn away for a while from the incidents of my training school days which, like every nurse, I can prose over at the drop of a hat, and tell you something of our National Health Service. This is because lately I was sent a pamphlet by Betty Kujawa (who really ought to have this issue dedicated to her or something) which was entitled A CASE AGAINST SOCIALISED MEDICINE. It was filled by quotes from British sources criticising the NHS.

Frankly it raised my blood pressure: but what Americans choose for their health service is their business not mine, so I shall confine myself to telling you a little of how our NHS came about. This is the first point that I should like to make: that the history of medicine in this country bears little resemblance to that of the USA.

The history of the NHS can be found in a book called THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE IN GREAT BRITAIN by James Stirling Ross. Oxford University Press. In this he starts off with a quotation I like... "Great thoughts come from the heart: but they must go round by the head." The general plan had its roots in the past, in British hospital, general practitioner and public health traditions, and in the old Poor Law. So let's take a quick look at that past. The first hospital was founded in 1250, the first Poor Law Commission in 1834. For a general estimate of the health of the country in the eighties it is sufficient to know how the people lived. The salient facts were the poverty and degradation of the people in industrial towns, the appalling sanitary conditions, including the widespread collecting of human excreta as a source of gain, and the terrifying dangers of epidemic diseases. Statistics for the whole population show that the death rate was about 22 per 1,000 living between 1841 to 1850: in 1871 it was 158: as late as 1901 it was 151. Today it is under 30.

From the first Public Health laws, improvement was desperately slow. There were two types of hospitals - Poor Law and Voluntary. The first were for paupers and were paid for from the local rates; the second was financed by voluntary contributions. So from the beginning a social stigma was attached to the first type - it being thought by many then (and many now?) that to be poor was also to be base. In the voluntary hospitals you were supposed to pay what you could, even if you could only dole it out in shillings. Many paid 2d or 3d per week into a fund which partly paid the cost, it was quite impossible to pay it in full. The majority of our large hospitals were built at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century as the tide of reform began to flow. These are the hospitals which the NHS inherited.

Because the patients could not afford to pay fully for their treatment they were used to help to train the medical students. The cost of maintaining the hospitals was always ahead of the amount of money that flowed in. Therefore conditions were poor on the amenity side however high the medical skill that was available. Food was plain and bought cheaply, nor was it particularly plentiful. In my own hospital the last cooked meal the patients had was lunch, only porridge was provided in the evening. Afternoon tea was just that and no more, biscuits the patient had to provide for himself. The staff fared little better, and particularly so when war began. In the diningroom we were served with the same milk pudding every day of the year.. we called it 365. For our main meal during the night we were often given one desert spoonful of dried egg and a piece of cheese. The doctors usually were paid only enough to keep them in cigarettes. By the end of the war the majority of the voluntary hospitals were bankrupt. The chairman of one great London hospital talked of putting up a hoarding - "This building to let."

The beginning of the war saw the real birth of the NHS for it was then that the Emergency Medical Service was forced into being. After the war it was impossible to go back, more and more the hospitals relied on public assistance to keep going. It was then that plans for the NHS began, and the Appointed Day was 5 July 1948. There were to be no miracles: the Service was to start with the resources we had got. And that was how it did start..with ' old hospitals in a country at the end of a devitalising war, and with very little money to play with.

In the first year £179 million was asked for, halfway through the Minister had to go back and ask for a further £51 million. From then onwards cries of "extravagance" have been levelled against the Service. Yet consider what it set out to do and contrast the amount spent on health by that spent on defense! Consider that practically no provision was made for capital expenditure, that the number of new hospitals built is farcical, and the amount spent upon rehabilitating old hospitals enormous. Consider that quite soon after the Service was inaugurated the Labour party (whose vision it was) went out of power. Consider that for almost ten years now we have had a Conservative government and moan though they may about the cost they have never even toyed with the idea of discontinuing the NHS! Sure there are faults in the NHS: I know of many, but they are caused by a lack of money being spent not too much. A comprehensive health service must cost money, but the gains in the health of the people is immeasurable.

Let me return to what I know of personally. When I first entered hospital life I found the majority of my patients poor in physique. Their teeth were bad, they often needed glasses-you could see them buying cheap glasses in Woolworths, trying to guess for themselves which were the correct lens for them to choose. There were women with legs bent by rickets, there were men who could not afford a truss or the time off work for an operation. There were children who were white-faced and anaemic. They smelt: they had vermin, bone-combing the hair was a junior nurses daily task. They were humble: conscious of the charity which gave them a hospital bed. They waited patiently in queues in the out-patient department till the consultant deigned to appear. Oh yes, there were dedicated men among the consultants, but there were others. The patients took orders given without question. I can remember one ward where the women were not allowed to sit on the tail of their nightgown because it annoyed the surgeon if he had to wait till it was hitched up before he could make an examination. Dear me, I do remember a lot of things, little and big.

What is it like today? The patients are of good physique, they have regular dental treatment. They wear proper glasses. They are not anaemic for the want of vitamins. They have any medical appliance they need. They are clean, well clothed, it is a long time since I have seen a child in rags and without shoes. Vermin is decreasing due to the stringent precautions in the school health service. They are not servile: they sit up in bed cheerfully, this is their hospital, this is their due! They grumble if the appointments scheme in the outpatient department does not function smoothly-it should be made more efficient they insist!

Nothing is perfect in this world, and our NHS has a long way to go yet, but I am proud of it.

Ethel.