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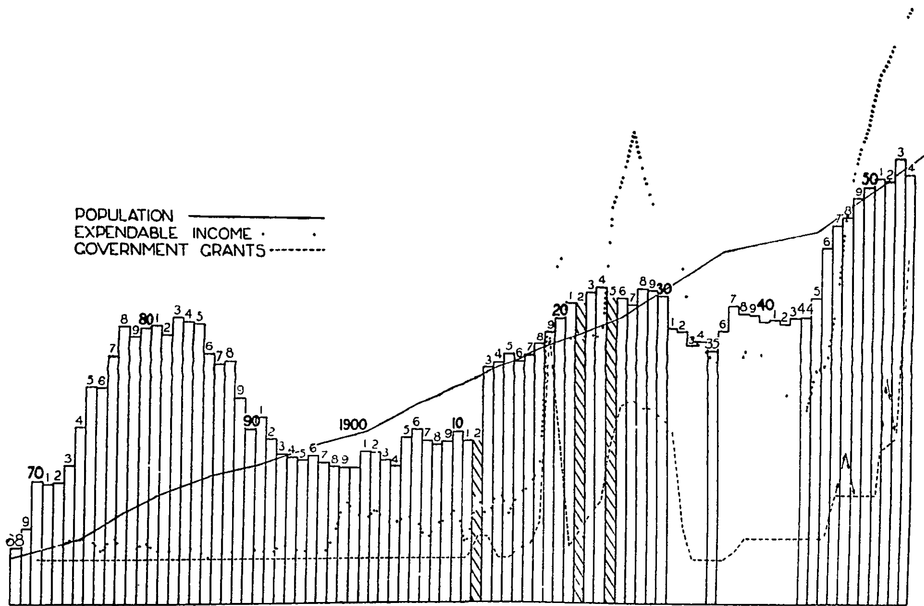

Graph to illustrate fluctuations in membership of the Royal Society compared with population and income from 1868 to 1954, the decades being in heavy type. Population and income are presented in different but reduced scales as compared with membership (in columns). The blanks covering membership for 1931-34 and 1936-43 are estimated, while the cross-hatched columns (1912, 1922 and 1925) represent the years when no *Transactions* were issued. The arrows in 1947-49 and 1951-53 indicate special Congress grants from Government

The Royal Society's Place in New Zealand Culture

By David Miller, Ph.D., M.Sc., F R.S.N.Z., C.M.Z.S

My subject is basically concerned with some features reflected by the cultivation and spread of knowledge in New Zealand. In the arrangement of it a few generalities, which present some aspects worthy of remark, lead to a comment on the cultural organisations of the country and to a consideration of the Royal Society's place in the community.

Much of this subject has been dealt with before; but everyone knows that a field not periodically tilled will lose its fertility, and its crops their vitality—particularly in times of changing methods and needs.

European culture was established in New Zealand during the period of the crinoline and dundreary whiskers But I think it profitable for us to recall Cook and his companions who opened the door to civilisation in New Zealand in 1769; because, apart from the fact that it was then the permanent European influences (in the guise of European rats and fleas above all things) first entered to disturb the primeval scene, there is a feature of that first voyage which stimulates a thought. It is that there we find two pioneers, Cook and Banks, on an

equal footing, but whose social origins were poles apart, especially in their time—when the glamour, pomp and piety of an over-perfumed and caste-bound eighteenth century England cloaked the underlying misery of serfdom and poverty. In Cook there was the sailor, the impecunious son of an agricultural labourer who had risen through the hawse pipe to the quarter-deck; and in Banks, the scientist, a wealthy son of Eton, Harrow and Oxford. So it is in that Cook-Banks association one can find (at the risk of being platitudinous) an emblem that was to become so clearly reflected in New Zealand's domestic life, nourished by the stabilizing influences of opportunity and of enlightenment through an education within reach of everyone.

The first few decades following Cook witnessed a polyglot period of traders, whalers, sealers, explorers, some freebooters, a few straggling settlers and several missionaries. However, it was not long before some organised culture became manifest in the train of those early missionaries; this has always been, and is still, the case in the pioneering of new lands—indeed, we are prone to overlook the fact that the cultural amenities we enjoy in our advanced civilisation stemmed from the Church

So, on the foundations laid by the missionaries, it was not very much later (virtually at the beginnings of colonisation) that organisations arose for the betterment of knowledge within the country. There was nothing extraordinary in that, because the earliest colonists, whether drawn from the more favoured peoples or from what Byron called the "blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions," came imbued with the best traditions and customs of the Old World, and with the desire to develop them in their own way according to individual taste

So our cultural institutions were born: and through the fleeting years they multiplied and became established as schools and universities until to-day we find ourselves unable to fully cope with the demand for trained personnel. On the other hand, there are also those many voluntary societies of such varied interests now found in every community both large and small—societies supported by people from every walk in life, indicating the extent to which the cultural urge enters the overall life of the country.

This is natural enough, but is of course, not peculiar to New Zealand However, a factor contributing to it and one characteristic of the country, is found in the people as a whole who have evolved as a compact individual tribe in such a brief period, even though so subject to divergent Old World influences, indeed, the people are more uniform in outlook, customs and speech than the peoples of Great Britain, yet retaining so much in common There has been no enduring segregation of distinct units. The early colonists certainly tended to congregate in different regions of the country, but they eventually intermingled, so that now it is exceptional for anyone to decide from what part of the country a New Zealander hails In this the Maori and European have something in common in that the Maori became distinctive though remaining essentially Polynesian; but there the similarity ends. The Maori retained his tribal distinctions with their consequent internecine strifes, he entered a strange climate and was compelled to discover many strange foods; he was soon shut off from the outer world, and after centuries of isolation he came to develop his own characteristic clothing, agriculture, defence, art and dialect. On the other hand, the European never has been isolated; he came to a climate with which he was familiar, and he has constantly drawn on the outer world for his material and cultural needs—influences that have become increasingly evident under modern progress and movements of peoples.

Thus European culture in New Zealand does not basically differ from that in those countries from which the people originated, as is reflected in government, industry, business, learning and general amenities, as well as in those ethical standards which must enter the warp and woof of any stable community Certainly there have been modifications in many aspects of the basic culture; but it is not always possible to know how much of these modifications has been due to the normal course of universal progress, and how much to local environment. World influence is evident in the progressive standards of life and all that that entails, as in schools, universities, library services and various cultural societies. On the other hand, influence of environment is obvious, for instance, in many agricultural methods distinctively characteristic of the country, in some of our literature and art, and in the constitution of our Royal Society as I shall endeavour to show later on.

The point I am endeavouring to reach is that there has always awaited the seeker much that is peculiarly New Zealand—the spirit of the place, perhaps something of what can be likened to that beat of the unseen feet which Shelley claimed only the angels can hear. The more this is discovered, the more of what is New Zealand itself will become a reality in our culture. I do not mean by this that the spirit of the country can be found, let us say, in a landscape, simply by knowing the name of the artist, or by including in the picture some material object typical of the country (a cabbage-tree or flax bush, a moa or kiwi, a Maori or perhaps an All Black). On the other hand it is not suggested that the development of all culture in New Zealand should necessarily be dominated by the characteristics of the country, but I do suggest that we need not blindly follow what is done elsewhere without heed of our local conditions

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As a natural outcome of progressive development people of outstanding ability soon came to the fore in New Zealand; their numbers increased in time so that there is now a constant stream proceeding overseas for various purposes—a principle to be encouraged no matter the facilities available in New Zealand Many people leave to carry on their work permanently in other lands; we often hear of this in the complaint about what is called the "export of brains", emigration would be a better term, the reasons for which are many Lack of scope in New Zealand for individual needs is perhaps basic in many cases, but the country is young and greater scope is developing in several ways—though this need not necessarily be so in all ways if we are to consider the demands of both local and Empire economy; in some cases the mundane influence of pay is the urge; in others a natural desire to move in the greater world However, whatever the causes may be, it would be rather near-sighted to expect everyone to remain in, or to return to, New Zealand.

This complaint of " export of brains " is a thoughtless one, unfortunately expressed. Arising as it does, in a pastoral country it rather savours of the meat trade; it could hold some reflection on those left in the drafting pens, it could imply that those who still are, and will continue to be, " imported " are solely for the stimulation of the breed. A little thought will show that this " export " and "import" business is not peculiar to New Zealand, though the country has naturally become involved in it. It is a normal and healthy phase of migration within the international fellowship of knowledge The movement is an ancient and instinctive one; indeed it is part of an immemorial stream which has flowed from the time when man commenced to move from one territory