

Shaw's progress:

*how he laid siege to New Zealand
from 15 March to 15 April 1934*

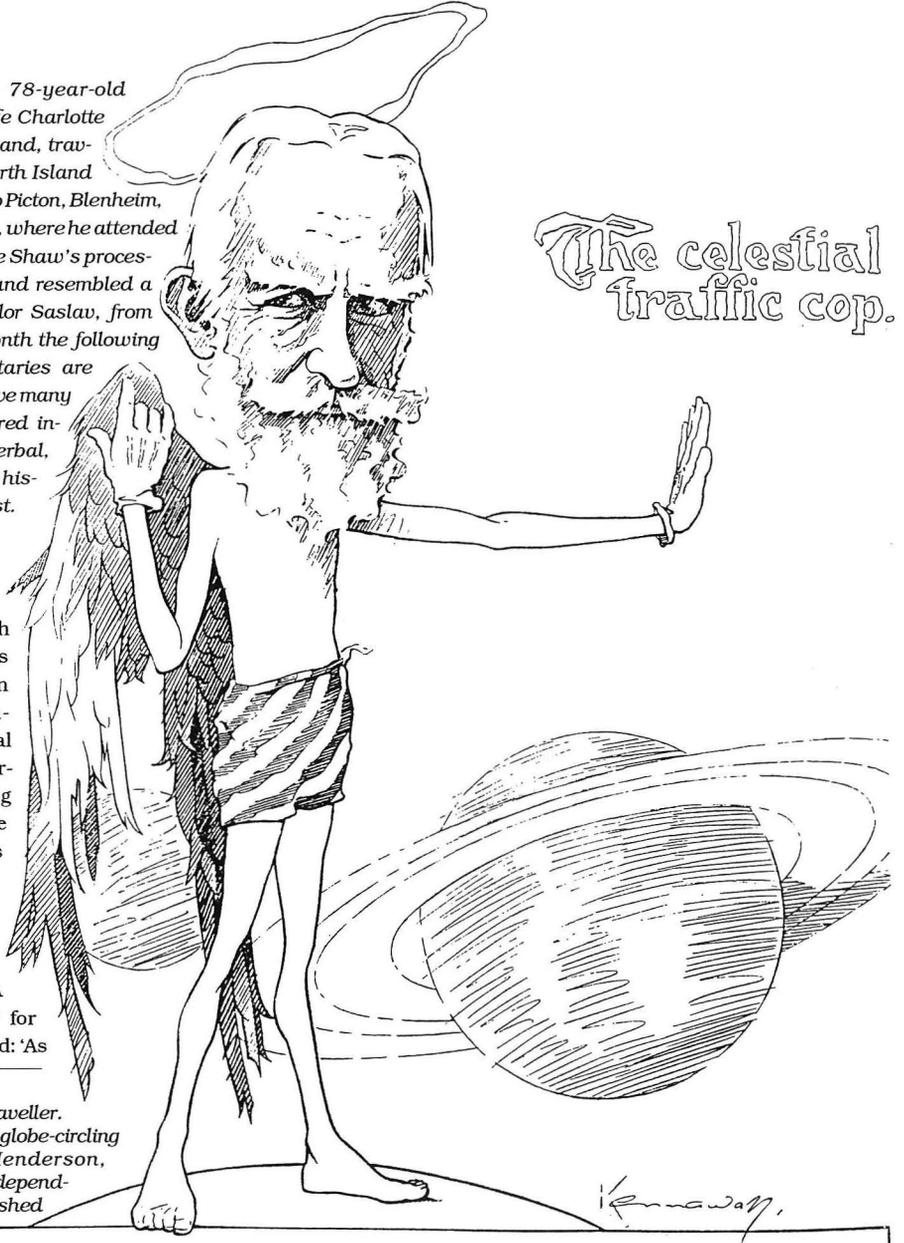
On 15 March 1934 the 78-year-old Bernard Shaw and his wife Charlotte spent a month in New Zealand, travelling extensively in the North Island and making an expedition to Picton, Blenheim, Kaikoura and Christchurch, where he attended his only civic reception. 'The Shaw's procession throughout New Zealand resembled a royal welcome' writes Isidor Saslav, from whose seminar on that month the following illustrations and commentaries are taken. Shaw generously gave many press conferences, answered innumerable queries, some verbal, some written, and made a historic uncensored, broadcast.

ISIDOR SASLAV

BERNARD SHAW AND HIS WIFE arrived in Auckland on the *Rangitane* on 15 March 1934 where the first press encounters took place on the deck in brilliant sunshine followed by a general interview lasting three-quarters of an hour. Having trenchantly condemned the parliamentary machine as being a barrier to progress, Shaw asked 'Why is it that immediately a Labour man gets into Parliament he becomes no use whatever?' A certain Mr P. Fraser, MP for Wellington Central, objected: 'As

"The New St Bernard"

Shaw was an inveterate traveller. Perhaps reflecting on his globe-circling activities Kennaway Henderson, founder and editor of the independent journal *Tomorrow*, published this caricature in the 28 August 1935 issue.



a Labour MP I cannot accept that statement'.

Shaw then journeyed south to Rotorua where he learned that the district radio inspector in Christchurch had banned a reading of the epilogue to his play *Androcles and the Lion* as being controversial and contravening regulation 138. Shaw responded by saying that as the epilogue was not part of the play it should not have been read in any case.

He visited Hell's Gate at Tikitere which greatly affected him: 'I wish that I had never seen the place ... It reminds me too vividly of the fate theologians have promised me ... Hell's Gate, I think, is the most damnable place I have ever visited - I'd willingly have paid ten pounds not to have seen it'.

At Christchurch over 2,000 people were estimated to have attended the civic reception tendered him in the Civic Theatre at which James Shelley, later to become the first director of broadcasting, said that he wanted to hear Shaw as much as former peoples wanted to hear Socrates.

Shaw's widely-ranging speech was broadcast. In it he referred to 'The old tradition of public action and spirit' which must be retained and urged New Zealand to ensure that its level of culture did not drop. His reference to F.W. Petre's Roman Catholic Cathedral as 'original and powerfully treated' by comparison with the Anglican Cathedral 'which was more a copy', attracted hundreds of people to the basilica on succeeding days.

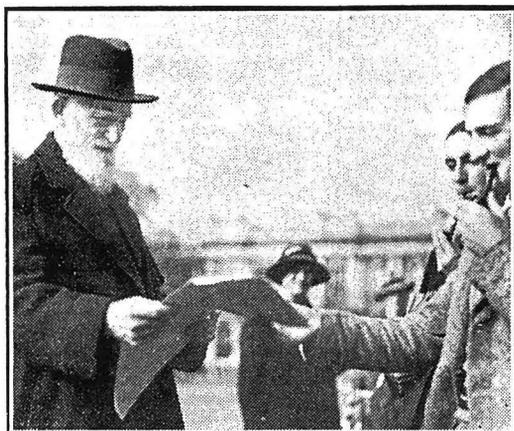
During his month's visit Shaw had touched on a multitude of topics from the present state of Maori music, literature, agriculture and log chopping to those he was most constantly questioned about, economics and politics. The largest crowd of the year thronged Glasgow wharf to farewell him and a photographer extracted from him one of his most quotable remarks of the tour when he asked for his brightest smile: 'If I showed my true feelings I would cry; it's the best country I've been in'.



Left: Shaw at Hell's Gate with Te Aho Welsh, at 17, its youngest guide. Te Aho still lives just across the road from Hell's Gate today, where she was interviewed by Isidor Saslaw.

Below left: Denis Glover giving Shaw a copy of *Canta*, the student's paper of Canterbury University College, as reported in their issue of 11 April 1934.

Below: The editor of the Wanganui Herald sent Shaw a questionnaire. He replied in his own handwriting from Wairakei, the interview being published in Wanganui and also throughout the country. The original manuscript was recently located and acquired by Peter Harcourt through the editor's heirs. Many of Shaw's answers, in hindsight, have a prophetic ring. These, and other questions, are reprinted on the opposite page.



Do you think that New Zealand and Australia have anything to fear from any Asiatic race?

N.Z. has everything to fear not only from the Asiatic races but from the human race as long as competitive commerce and industrial conquest of markets, minerals, and territory rule the world.

Can you offer any explanation as to why there are not more New Zealanders engaged in writing fiction? Would stories of New Zealand life and history be acceptable in England?

Presumably because they have ~~to~~ something better to do, any story that is a good story will be acceptable in England or anywhere else; but it will be acceptable as a good story and not as a N.Z. story.

March 26, 1934

Mr G. Bernard Shaw
c/- Wairakei house,
WAIRAKEI

Dear Sir: In the event of your not visiting Wanganui will you kindly reply to the following questions for publication?

1. Since your arrival in New Zealand have you observed that New Zealanders have developed any separate national characteristics? In what way would you say the New Zealand environment had influenced the descendants of English stock?

No. It is the other way about. The characteristics of the British Islanders have changed so much in this century that they no longer resemble the Englishman of the XIX century. New Zealanders resemble them very strongly. Consequently there is now a marked difference; but it is the Englishman who has changed, not the New Zealander. I, being an old Victorian, am much more at home here than in London. You are quite natural to me; but to an English visitor born after 1900 you probably appear quaint, foreign, and incredible. But that is only my guess—since you ask me for one.

2. Is there a tendency for New Zealanders to become Americanised. If so, in what direction?

The whole world is being Americanized by Hollywood, which, by the way, is not typically American. You must really learn to make your own talkies or you will lose your souls without even getting American ones. But as far as I can judge the tendency is not worse in N.Z. than elsewhere—not anything like so strong as in the British slums and suburbs.

6. Do you consider that sufficient publicity is given in Great Britain to New Zealand's tourist attractions?

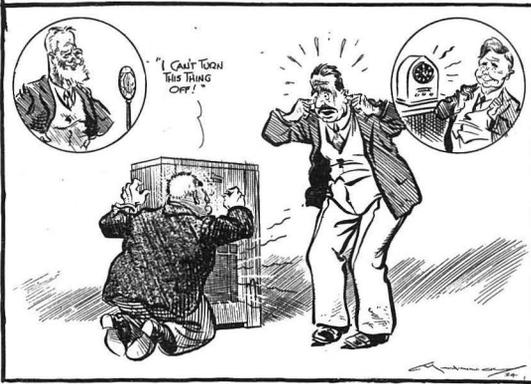
Sufficient for what? You don't want to make N.Z. another Riviera, do you? Remember all tourists are not exemplary characters like myself...

8. After you leave New Zealand will you base any of your future writings on your experiences of this country?

All my future writings will bear the marks of my trip to N.Z. just as they will bear the marks of my other experiences. I am not going to write a guide book to N.Z.; but in a sense all my books are guide books for New Zealanders. I trust your present rulers will read them as conscientiously as Reeves and Seddon read Fabian Essays in the nineties.

Right: From Wellington the Shaws journeyed across the straits in the Tamahine to Picton where he was photographed standing outside the Terminus Hotel. Shaw's visit was fully covered by the Marlborough Express.



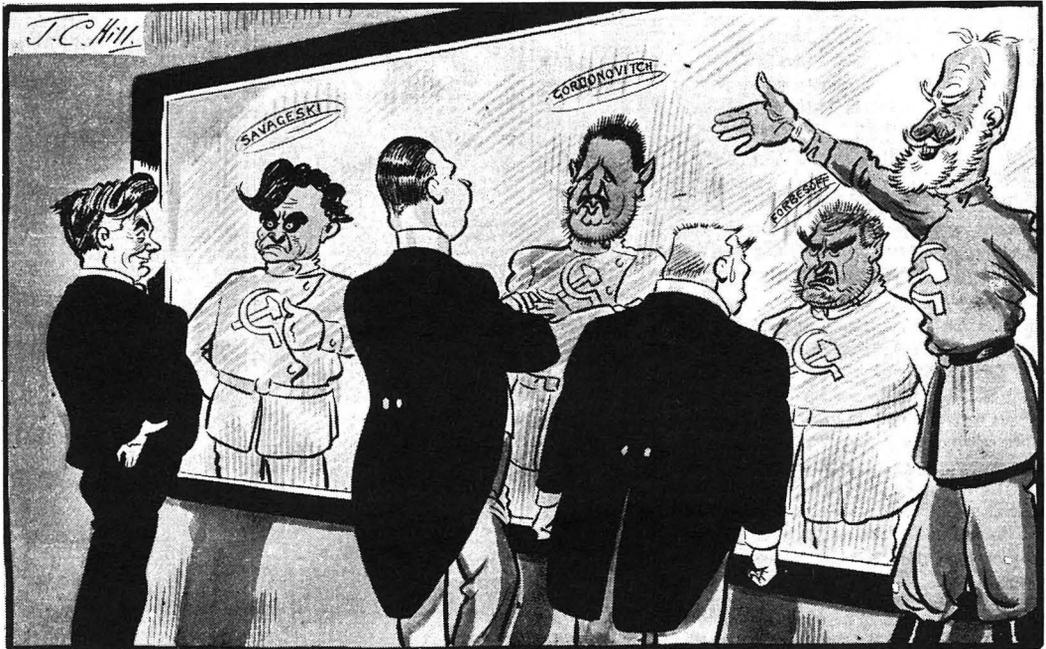


Above and below: Back in Wellington, Shaw delivered his uncensored broadcast address on 'Observations, Pertinent and Impertinent' from 2YA. It was expected that 700,000 people, about half the population of New Zealand, would listen as well as some three million in Australia. For their benefit the broadcast was delayed until 10 pm New Zealand time. Cartoonists had a field-day, as witnessed in Minihinnick (above) in the New Zealand Herald, and J.C. Hill (below) in the Auckland Star of 14 April 1934.

Right: Not all of Shaw's excursions were formal occasions. Here he is shown paying a visit to the Truby King-Karitane Hospital in Wellington.



"LOOK IN THE GLASS."



"You are to some extent, thanks to your admirable Communistic institutions, actually leading world civilisation." "You are second only to Russia. There is this curious joke about it—the Russians know they are Communists and are proud of it, but the extraordinary thing is that New Zealand does not know that it is Communistic and actually thinks that Communism is a very terrible thing."—(Extract from wireless broadcast by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw.)

STUART
PETERSON



OUR ADVISER-GENERAL.

G. B. Shaw (with a parting smile): "Thank you. Enjoyed myself so much! Sorry I can't stop to answer all your questions, but accept from me this little keepsake."

[Mr. G. B. Shaw will leave for England by the Rangitane on Friday.—News item.]

Above: Stuart Peterson's cartoon from the New Zealand Freeland of 11 April 1934, shortly before the Shaws re-

turned to England or 'Home' as he had disapprovingly noted many New Zealanders still referred to Britain.

3 days out from Wellington to London



The New Zealand Shipping Company

R.M.S. Rangitane

15th April 1934

Dear Mr. Lee
The book (*Children of the Poor*) is certainly a whopper. Its only rival in intensity is young Lionel Britton's *Hunger & Love*, which is also an autobiography of an errand boy, but without family complications, and with an intellectual instead of a natural background. John Lawson's *A Man's Life* (I think this is its title but will not swear to it) is a remarkable description of a boy's life in a coalmining village where all his aspirations are to a career underground.

I mention these recent works so that you may not feel lonely or fear an absence of rogue prejudicing you with the publishers. Your book has a peculiar poignancy as a record of a life of poverty in the world of the poor, where normal poverty is not disgraceful. The effect is curiously like that of poverty in the world of the well-to-do and the rich. The autobiography of Anthony Sallope, whose father insisted on keeping a butler and sending his unfortunate son to an aristocratic public school where such luxuries were ridiculously beyond his means, is almost as painful as yours.

Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* tells us that shame was the hardest nuisance to get rid of; among all the perils of the road to the Celestial City; but Bunyan's shame was not the shame of poverty (he was quite respectable in his class) but of illicit religion in a world of "shouting" regulators, scoffers, and Church of England conformists.

Then there was Dickens, declared in the blacking factory. Shame again.

My only criticism is that you accept the brand too cravenly. In your circumstances and your sector's (if Rose was real) the heroic robes were those of the thief and the whore; and it is one of the merits of the book that it makes them appear so in spite of your conventional shame. Many thanks for letting me read it.
G. Bernard Shaw.

P.S. I am presenting it to the ship's library to keep it in use.

Do not remain anonymous longer than you can help. It takes a long time for a name to become known in the wide world of literature; and you cannot afford to lose a moment of it.

CHILDREN OF THE POOR

BY

JOHN A. LEE

LABOUR MEMBER FOR PARLIAMENT
IN THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT

Author of
"THE HUNTED"

"Your book has a peculiar poignancy as a record of a life of poverty in the world of the poor, where normal poverty is not disgraceful. Thank you for letting me read it."
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

SIXTH THOUSAND

LONDON

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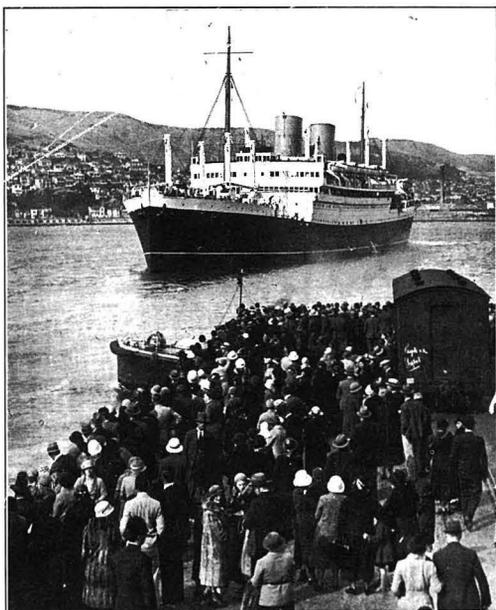


Photo by E. S. Robson.

R.M.S. "RANGITANE," 17,000 Tons, leaving Wellington, April 14th, 1934

MR. & MRS. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW travelled from London to New Zealand in "Rangitane," 8th February, 1934, and returned to England in the same vessel on April 14th

"Via PANAMA"

The Shortest Route with the Maximum of Comfort

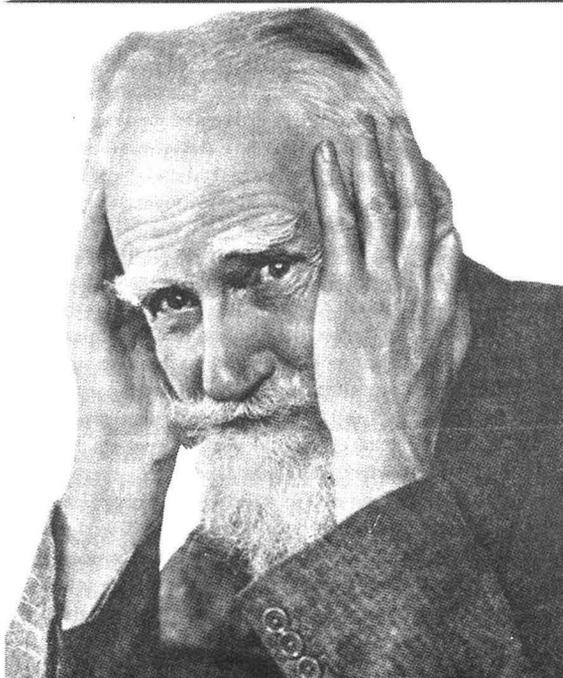
BY

The New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd.

Home Buildings, WELLINGTON

138 Leadenhall St., LONDON

What I Said in N.Z.



The Newspaper Utterances of Mr. George Bernard Shaw in New Zealand

March 15th to April 14th, 1934.

Opposite page: A facsimile of Shaw's letter to John A. Lee. Shortly before Shaw left New Zealand John A. Lee sent him a copy of his recently published powerful novel *Children of the Poor*. Three days out from Wellington Shaw wrote to the author with his reaction. Lee used quotations from this letter in subsequent editions of this and other of his books, as evident on the title page of a later edition, shown here.

Above: A selection of Shaw's statements to the press, including his replies to questions and material from his broadcasts was subsequently published as *What I Said in New Zealand* by the Commercial Printing and Publishing Company, Wellington, in 1934. His printed comments include the following:

'You have no business to let New Zealand remain dependent on what you amusingly call the Home market, or any other overseas market. The real home market for New Zealand is the North Island plus the South...Keep your wool on your own backs; harness your own water power; get your fertilising nitrates from your own air; develop your own manufactures and eat your own food; and you can snap your fingers at Britain's jollies'. On the universities: 'You seem to look on them as branches of the Church of England'. On the Turnbull Library, where he had highly praised their collection of Kelmscott Press editions, having been a friend of William Morris: 'Why, it would even make the Bodleian sit up'.



Isidor Saslav, Concertmaster of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, has a notable Shaw collection, gathered over the past 30 years. It contains what is probably the most extensive documentation in existence of the New Zealand visit. Isidor Saslav is preparing a book on this topic.

Information requested:

Isidor Saslav would be most grateful for any further information about Bernard Shaw's visit to New Zealand in 1934, and can be contacted as: Concertmaster, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, P.O. Box 6640 Te Aro, Wellington, New Zealand. Telephone: (644) 385-1735; Fax: (644) 384-2824, Home Address: 365 Ohiro Road, Wellington, 2. Telephone: (644) 389-4768.

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