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2014 Annual subscription (+ GST):

Individual: RRP A\$40.00 (new), A\$350.00 (renewal).

Institutions: on application.

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Highlights from our 1940 archives



This advertisement from our 20 February 1940 issue illustrates Australians' ongoing and, some would say, inexplicable devotion to yeast extract pastes.

The medical profession and the future

While we abhor the ruthless methods and insensate cruelties of Nazism and are tempted to look on everything of Nazi origin as being necessarily evil, we have need to beware lest we credit ourselves with nothing but virtue and try to hide our deficiencies under a cloak of self-righteousness.

While the British race is doubtless more advanced than some others in the provision of means by which the individual may enjoy freedom and develop his personality, we have not always been ready to legislate for the less fortunate members of the community and there are still to our shame many inconsistencies in our national life and many gaps to be filled.

That in our so-called democracy many people barely exist is a national disgrace and something of which the nation should be ashamed.

We aim at a freedom of thought as well as of speech and action: and for many in the community this is impossible because they are struggling to live.

They must be given an opportunity of decent living before they can be taught to use opportunities that are provided to them.

Medicine can help people in their way of living, and this is known to every medical practitioner.

If Australian medicine is to take its place in the constructive work that lies ahead, its followers will need to take stock of themselves, of the objectives, of their ideals and of their very reason for existence.

They must show by their actions — by their plans for the future and their deeds in the present — that they recognise their duty to society as servants of the community and not as trying to bend society to their own service.

By making it clear that the welfare of the community comes first in all its plans and its own comfort second, the medical profession may set an example in the moral rearmament about which a great deal is talked at present.

Individually and collectively we need to become better men and better women; otherwise, as has so well been put, we may win the war and lose the peace.

Alternative to war

Sir: Your readers must agree with you that "we need to become better men and women". Good men, however, did not prevent the American Civil War, nor the Boer War, nor the Great War, nor the present war; indeed they fought in them because they had no alternative to war.

It is not enough to desire to be good; one must have the technique to practise goodness. Are our social tools in good order? What of our methods of exchange, of our monetary system, built as it is on the urge of profit, of exploitation, of one another?

Australians must seek and find the right way of life for individuals, communities and nations; free from the bodily fears and dangers of the Europeans, we can give attention to such long-range problems.

I myself believe that only a practical and spiritual change in our monetary system ... can enable us to achieve a community goodness; and that all reformers should demand a thoroughgoing investigation by royal commission into our financial system and the theory on which it is based, and that no suggestions should be regarded as outside the terms of reference.

*Marcy C De Garis, Geelong
20 February 1940
(edited extract)*