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has been a forum for debate for our best brains. I am glad to have the minutes thrown in for threepence. I am glad I kept them. They are hot stuff, and my fire was hot enough without them.

People Who Come and Go

Curnow wrote a couple of lines some years ago about important people who come to this country. As I recall them:

"... foreign visitors are nevertheless polite;
they arrive in the morning, and leave at night."

Most of us have no chance of seeing visitors of that kind, and probably don't want to. But there is the visitor who has something to contribute; the kind of visitor who can tell us about things, or play or sing for us. In the ordinary way we would lose him in the day's news, but *The Listener* gives us a regular eavesdropping service! So skimming through my file I find a personal interview with Mrs. Roosevelt, making her human and friendly because a human and friendly person interviewed her. Whoever it was was a New Zealander interested in people, interested in distinguished people because distinction doesn't spring from accident, but not overawed by it or by anyone, and least of all by anyone as friendly and as charming as Mrs. Roosevelt. And interviews with Noel Coward, Friedman, Edith Somerskill, Goodman, Malcolm Sargent, Sir Angus Gillan were the same. *The Listener's* interviews were conversations in passing with almost everyone who had something to say. They brought one nearer, broke down an isolation, kept one in touch in a way no daily can do, and no other periodical in New Zealand attempts to do.

And *The Listener* has kept us informed about what people in England and elsewhere have been saying. The war news was curbed by circumstance. The peace news in the Victory Number is still the best summary issued in this country. The articles on other countries, on Germany, Russia, China, and the United States especially, have had a sanity often lacking in the daily press. If there has been any "line" or bias, it has been for tolerance, for national and international understanding, for caution in criticism, for firmness but kindness in action. We could be proud to have *The Listener* cited overseas as representative of New Zealand Public Opinion.

Exploring New Zealand

Perhaps *The Listener* hasn't sent enough people out looking for New Zealand. Some of the best articles are a record of looking and finding in nooks and byways, in town and country; but especially the country. A land needs to be loved, and to be loved it must be understood. This land of ours needs interpreters. *The Listener* has always understood that need, but could make more of it yet. "Who Longs to Go Back to the Country?" was one article which pleased me very much, perhaps because it struck responsive chords. But the best article of all was "Back in My Tracks," on the return of a native to Otago after many years of absence. Do you remember it? And do you remember the vivid illustrations by Russell Clark? I have always felt that we readers were lucky to have Clark at our disposal. Now that his official army tour

WOMEN IN DENIMS

(Written for "The Listener" by HERD-TESTER)



THE women of the fighting services are getting the praise due to them. For my part I present this inadequate praise to the outback dairy farm women, the women in denims, who carried on a service second only in importance to the fighting. I know that many of these women were often sorely tempted to pull out; many younger ones did; but the great majority stuck it out, without the glamour, without the lime-light, without the social excitement attaching to the services. They carried on through all weathers, seven days a week, sick or well.

There is no absenteeism on an understaffed dairy farm. Benzine restrictions and the migration of the young folk to the towns and services brought social life to a standstill, adding a dreariness that made life hard indeed.

I give these few factual cases as being typical of almost all outback dairy farm life during the war years.

A man, 63, and a wife, 60, milking 70 cows and feeding a large number of pigs. Two sons fighting and a daughter a hospital aid. Coming in at night too tired to prepare a meal. A cup of tea and a scone and to bed.

A young mother crying over her 10 months baby at 4.30. on a cold wet morning as she took it from its cot to carry it to the cowshed half a mile away. Baby six hours a day in the cowshed for three years, a cruel anguish for the overworked mother.

A frailish wife managing 45 cows while her husband is overseas, her only help an eight-year-old son. Swinging a brute of a diesel engine to life twice a day. On cold mornings, when the engine

of the Pacific is cleared up, he might do a civilian tour of New Zealand on our and your behalf. What about it? Perhaps he could call at the schools as he went, to draw our children and show our children art.

Hard to Conclude

I find I haven't even done what I set out to do. As I write I am turning over the pages of my files, and every page has a new topic and a new interest. I am glad they didn't go up in smoke. Thank you, *Listener*. You have given us much food for thought, much provocative argument, much sound sense. You have kept us interested. You have made us smile. You have worn much better than we had a right to expect. You have been a singularly good threepence worth.

—ENTHUSIAST.

refused to start, milking the 45 cows by hand. Each morning stopping everything at the shed to run back to the house to see to the children and start their breakfast so they could get away to school. Then back to the shed. Never telling her husband she was without help because it would worry him.

And the results? The production results, I mean, not their physical and mental results.

The returns from a farm run solely by a man and wife both over 50 show that in 1943 they produced enough butterfat to give 650 workers eight ounces of butter a week for a year; 15 persons 1 pound of meat a week for one year; 20 persons two pounds of mutton a week for a year; and calves to make 1,600 eight ounce jars of meat paste. As the meat weights are the dressed weights, there were also the skins, the hides, and the tallow.

And behind the production always a woman: for when the woman quits, the man quits also. Women in denims, unromantic, unhonoured, deplorably tired, but they stuck to it.

Thank God they did.

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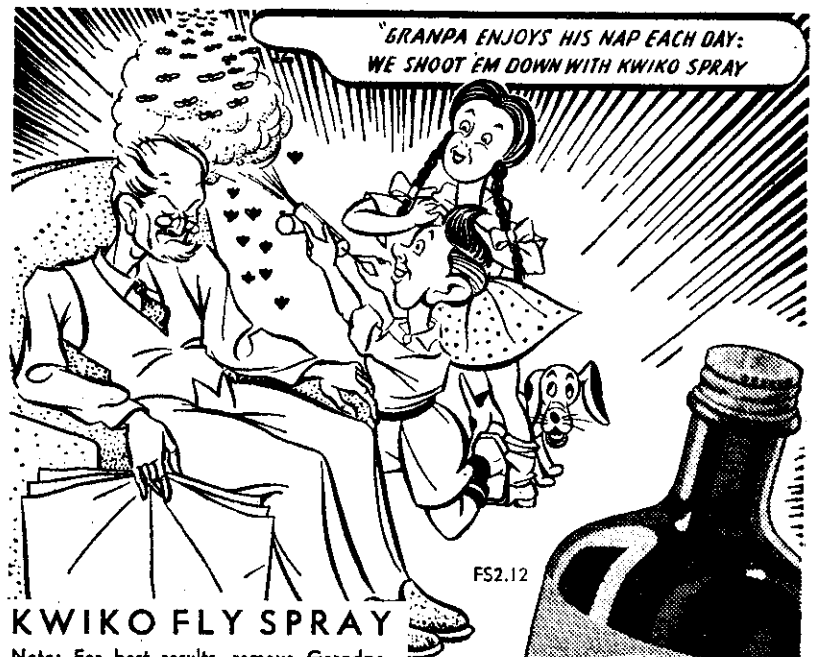
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