

DISTRICT NURSE

THIS article has been prepared by, and is published at the request of, the Department of Health as part of its appeal for nurses and nursing recruits. The photographs which accompany it, as well as that on our cover, are all taken from a recent New Zealand National Film Unit item. They illustrate various aspects of the work of Nurse Banks, District Health Nurse of the east coast region round Hick's Bay, Gisborne.

NURSING is not all concerned with hospitals or the curing of the sick. One branch of the profession concerns itself more with the prevention of disease and the preservation of health.

The District Health Nurse, working for the Health Department, leads a wide and interesting life either in the town or in the country.

When appointed to a country district the nurse is usually provided with accommodation and a car. She may have a large area in her care which entails a fair amount of travelling. Her work in this district is to maintain the health and well-being of the community. She's there to advise, teach, and help in whatever way she can.

To get to know the people and the children of the district the nurse takes an interest in all their doings. She attends the school sports and the local entertainments, and she makes it her business to know something about those things which are of local interest.

Part of the nurse's work consists of visiting the homes. She sees a young mother just back from the hospital, and advises her about the diet and the care of her new baby; she checks up on the baby's rate of progress at frequent intervals, and is always available for advice. She visits old people who need a little medical supervision; she keeps an eye on anyone who may have returned from a tuberculosis sanatorium, keeping a record of their weight, and supervising the necessary isolation.

Sometimes, when she visits, she finds a child suffering from an infectious disease but not ill enough to send in to a hospital. Here the nurse will demonstrate to the mother the correct method of nursing such a case; she will explain the necessity for isolation and will show her how it should be carried out and so protect the other children in the house from contracting the disease. She may find someone very ill and needing professional attention. This patient she

will arrange to send in to the nearest hospital; or she may arrange for a trained nurse to come.

In Any Emergency

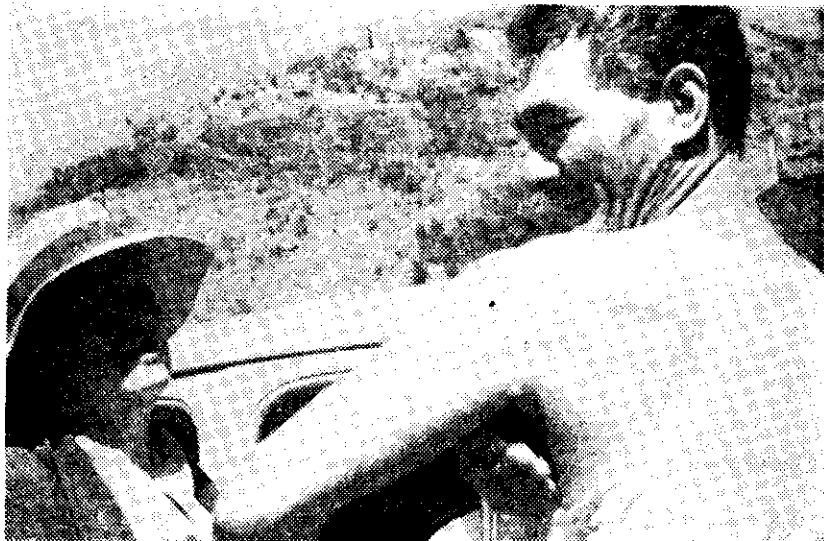
A member of the community may die. The people can send at once for the nurse, who will take the responsibility and save the relatives the worry and distress of the last rites. And in any emergency — a little child may swallow poison, or a man may chop his leg — the nurse will be sent for and will render first-aid. Often in these country districts the doctor lives far away, and the nurse is able to help him in these emergencies.

This is one side of the work. The other concerns the schools. Here the nurse gives first-aid lectures, and mothercraft and hygiene instruction to the girls, awakening in the children an awareness of health.

Periodically a doctor visits the schools. He examines all new scholars and any others whom the nurse wishes him to see. The parents are invited to attend this examination, so that the doctor is able to discuss with them any treatment he might advise for their child. These recommendations are written up on cards, and when some time has elapsed the nurse visits all the parents to see whether the treatments have been carried out. If not, she tries to impress upon the parents the need for doing so, in the interests of the child.

Tact, patience, and an infinite understanding of human nature are required when dealing with the parents. It is a task which enables the nurse to use to the full her own initiative and common-sense; she must have a genuine love for her fellows and feeling a confidence in herself. She is asked to advise on many matters, and she should be ready and capable of doing so.

The success of the work depends so much upon herself. She is in a position to do much good, to lay a firm foundation for a healthier future.



Country Towns Feel Their Oats

(Written for "The Listener")

CURRENT controversy in the daily press a few weeks ago concerned the bogey of drift from rural areas to the cities. Fears were awakened, that our national life would become top-heavy, in other words, that New Zealand's cities would be supporting, in a few years' time, a far greater population than the country towns and districts. That our commercial structure which relies basically on the land would collapse. Country centres were stepping backwards, or so we were led to believe.

Nothing could be further from actual fact. Country towns, with populations of anything between 600 and four or five thousand are for the first time in more than 20 years really beginning to feel their oats. They are to-day fast becoming bigger and better. Although there is still a drift to the city, and of course there always will be, there is a drift the other way now as well.

Why the sudden coming of city dwellers into rural centres? The facts are at

present still a little hazy. Some come with the idea that housing is easier to find in such towns as Kaikohe or Te Awamutu. In this they are wrong. Houses in the country, as in the city, are pitifully few. But there is definitely a certain something about the free and easy life of a rural centre. Dress is not so formal, people take a more friendly interest in you from the start, and although everyone knows his neighbour's business, there is nothing malicious about the neighbourly gossip. And when you walk down Main Street you call most of the people that you meet by their first name. There is something very warm and friendly about the whole atmosphere of country town life.

But whether or not this is the reason for the sudden rejuvenation of country towns is hard to say. There is a definite rejuvenation, however, and it has come about only since 1939. It is still going on too. But the reason? I really don't fully understand.

—N. B. Livingston (Kaikohe).