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# CHRISTMAS CAN BE

stopped. The man next door leaned over the fence. "What's your programme this Christmas?" he asked. I intended to stay at home, I told him, "Same here," he said. "I've been away the last four years, and celebrations.

THE pleasant Saturday morn- harbour works inspections, and having ing sound of the lawnmower to stay there for a couple of days because of a sudden storm. But their families were not worried. The island's radio gave them the news. And it is radio that keeps the lighthouse man and his family in constant touch with the cities. Through it, he can join in the seasonal



CHRISTMAS on Campbell Island. J. H. Sorensen, whose articles on wild life in the Sub-antarctic will be remembered by readers, is on the right

lamb and green peas, a bottle of something off the ice and a game on the lawn with the kids will suit me fine. Then a lie-down in the sun-porch." And, as an afterthought, "if it's wet, a liedown anyway.'

And that, probably, is how a good many family men in New Zealand will spend this Christmas-which is very nice for the men and the families. Loneliness at Christmas time is uncommon in this country. The solitary homestead in the bush and the prospector's hut by the creek have grown, in a few generations, to villages and towns. Or, if they have been abandoned, are no more than a name on the map. Yet there are some New Zealaders who, because of their occupations, spend Christmas almost entirely alone.

Round our coasts there are about 60 lighthouses, 20 or so of them tended by keepers (the rest are automatic). At one, on the East Coast of the North Island, there are three keepers in three cottages, with their families. Their supplies reach them by launch, when the weather is suitable. I recall members of a now defunct harbour board taking a trip to

But modern communications that have taken the loneliness out of so many occupations have created it in others. For this, weather forecasting must take some blame. In the Pacific there are islands which are no more than scattered coral banks a few feet above the sea. Here men work in a climate which, for eight months of the year is stiflingly hot; the other four months make up the hurricane season. The only living things besides themselves are the sharks swimming in the lagoons and the giant land crabs which feed as often as possible on tins of biscuits and pairs of boots. And places like these are not ideal for Christmas celebrations.

Weather forecasting is so important to us to-day that there is a chain of observation stations, at Aitutaki, Penrhyn, the Kermadecs, and so on right down to the Campbell Islands in the sub-Antarctic. So a handful of New Zealanders, radio-operators and weatherobservers, have of necessity to spend their Christmas in these places. How do they celebrate?

One sidelight came from a diary in the possession of Leslie Clifton of the the island during one of their periodic Aerodromes Service of the Public Works