

centuries that saw her first rise to power in Europe, has owed so much. The human principals, too, were good New Zealanders at home or abroad—men who built things with their hands and with the patient skill of the stock-breeder, or social pioneers of the type of Rewi Alley, who is so big a man that it is perhaps impossible that he should be appreciated at his true worth in his own generation.

The second thing that was striking about that *Listener* story was that though it recorded a failure, it didn't end on a note of negation. With a sure instinct for human values, the writer finished his article with a long quotation from a letter written by Rewi Alley to his brother, but addressed through him to all New Zealand farmers—a letter that seems to me to have something of the quality of Abraham Lincoln's correspondence in its casual, wise-cracking manner and quiet insistence on the fundamental truths by which men live. I can't do better than reproduce it here.

"Kansu is the province we must do something to help with better sheep. Those here clip about 3lb. of poor wool a year. Add 1 or 2lb. to this fleece, and better livelihood comes to a great number of people. . . . The last time the (New Zealand) sheep were sent, the Ministry of Lands sent the money for purchase. My proposal now is that we do the same thing again, but *entirely as a social thing apart from Government aid*. To do this money for purchase and sending would have to be raised abroad. . . .

"It would do the average New Zealand farmer good if he put a bet on Kansu sheep and their betterment, at the same time he puts his bets on the tote at Riccarton. A sporting chance. Would the sheep get through, would they be cared for, would they stand this climate? Would they help a lot of Chinese farmers to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps?

"Sure, the whole thing is a gamble. But it is a gamble that would be good for us here and for people in New Zealand to play, for the good of their own souls. Here we should never cease trying to abolish this poverty which—if it stays—will be the breeding ground of so many new wars, so much human distress. *There, you have to realise that there are other countries in the world besides New Zealand and the Commonwealth.*"

Sheep Breeders Respond

That was written two years ago, in the last months of a confused and long-drawn struggle in the Pacific, when any attempt to send stock overseas from these islands seemed even more fantastically difficult than in 1941. But now at last it is possible to record the not unworthy sequel.

Rewi Alley's words did not all fall upon stony ground. The same New Zealand breeders and the stud-stock firm who had helped gather the first shipment of sheep for Kansu, stirred by that *Listener* article, made voluntary offers to replace the sheep that had gone astray; Wright, Stephenson's in 1945 set aside a sum of £250 to open the kitty for a second shipment, if that should ever become possible. And so the matter rested for more than a year.

The real trouble, of course, was shipping and transport. It was easy

enough to assemble sheep at a New Zealand port; but how were they to be got to Alley's Bailie School for Industrial Co-operatives, with its experimental farm at Shantan, Kansu—more than 2,000 miles inland from the China coast? Though Kansu itself, a poor under-populated province with some of the best upland sheep country in China, was not directly affected by the post-war unrest and fighting, many of the intervening provinces between Kansu and Shanghai most certainly were. The problem got no easier as the months passed.

UNRRA Lends a Hand

Then in 1946 it became known that the Department of Agriculture in New Zealand was assisting UNRRA in a major relief project to purchase and despatch pedigree stock to China. At first only cattle were mentioned; later, the order was widened to include 1,000 pedigree sheep. Everything moved very slowly, since experts had to visit China and report back on the possibilities; but at last it was arranged that the stock from New Zealand should be picked up in Lyttelton and Auckland by a special UNRRA stock ship, the *Lindenwood Victory*, in February, 1947.

Meantime, Alley had been busy at his end. In 1946 an impressive Chinese document reached Wellington, stamped with the Great Seal of the Provincial Government of Kansu. Taken to the Chinese Consulate-General for translation, it proved to be a letter welcoming the gift of New Zealand stud sheep to the Bailie School at Shantan, and recommending that they be turned over in New Zealand as a gift to UNRRA, which would then cover their transport to China and pass them on to the authorities there.

At last the stage of action was reached. The breeders, with ready generosity, provided the foundation flock of ewes and rams; and the gift sheep—all Corriedales, as more confidence was felt about this breed's suitability for north China than any other's—are now being assembled in Lyttelton to go aboard the *Lindenwood Victory* this month. Though not so large in numbers (the gift flock numbers 50 sheep) nor so fully representative in breed as their predecessors, they are still worthy ambassadors of goodwill from the farmers of New Zealand to the peasant-farmers of Northwest China.

The whole shipment of stock will be under the care of a trained crew and staff, and with them will be travelling experts from the Department of Agriculture, and a young Chinese student of animal husbandry who has recently qualified at Massey College.

By Plane to Shantan?

There is an important pendant, however, to this part of the story. These 50 stud sheep for Rewi Alley represent a gift from New Zealand breeders to a fellow-countryman in a distant land. UNRRA is covering the cost of the sea voyage—an invaluable contribution that no private agency could make. But the sheep still have to get from Shanghai to Shantan—an overland journey of more than 2,000 miles by river, rail and



A scene in Shantan Oasis

road—a journey whose considerable normal hazards are intensified by the present unsettled state of the country.

Rewi Alley himself has recommended that the most direct, the safest, and probably the most economical method of getting the sheep from Shanghai to Kansu would be to charter a special plane—50 sheep make one good plane load—and fly them in. He even knows a pilot who could land them outside the walls of Shantan, right beside the Indusco farm! Unfortunately the Bailie School has no funds to spare for special transport; and the cost of a plane would be considerable. It is estimated at C.N. \$20,000,000—about N.Z. £1,500.

A Public Appeal

So now the appeal goes over to CORSO, which is already planning to send help to the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, and is at present recruiting a doctor, a nurse and technical experts to serve for two years with the Bailie School in Shantan. In its general China Relief Fund CORSO has a special account for Chinese Industrial Co-operatives; and it is making an appeal this month for a *Chinese Transport Fund* to help out with Rewi Alley's sheep. Any contributions marked "Rewi Alley Sheep Fund" and sent to CORSO, Box 11, Government Buildings Post Office, Wellington, will be set aside for that particular purpose.

When so many difficulties have been surmounted, and now that a "replacement draft" of stud sheep for Shantan has been provided as a free gift by a few generous individuals, it doesn't seem asking too much of the general New

The story of the sheep for China will be told briefly by James Bertram in person from all National stations at 7.6 p.m. on Thursday, February 13.

Zealand public—farmers, in particular—to suggest that they might make up the sum required. For all New Zealand will be watching the progress of the *Lindenwood Victory* with her China-bound pedigree cargo; and there will be a very special interest in the fate of the 50 Corriedales consigned to Rewi Alley at Shantan.

Once more (just five years after the first one) a foundation flock of New Zealand stud sheep is leaving Lyttelton for Kansu. This time, we may reasonably hope, they will never see the monastery towers of Lhasa. But it would be nice to know that they had only seven hours' flying time ahead of them, from Shanghai to the end of their journey. That is the way it should be, in a twentieth-century world. And that is the way it will be, if New Zealanders are prepared to see this thing through.