

## PROGRAMMES FOR BBC

### Maori Farms and Plunket Babies

EVERY year the NZBS receives requests from the BBC for radio programmes, usually documentaries or talks, dealing with some aspect or other of New Zealand life that would be of interest to English listeners. But because these programmes are never broadcast by the NZBS few people know that the BBC does get something from us in exchange for the many programmes they send out here. About two years ago, for example, a documentary series was produced by the NZBS



GODFREY WILSON

Mobile Unit for a BBC Family Gathering session. In it, a group of settlers from the North of England were interviewed and described their living conditions and impressions of the country for the folk back home. The Talks Department have also in past years prepared programmes on such subjects as "The Fat Lamb Trade," "Housing," "Afforestation," "New Zealand Poets," and so on. On Otago's Centennial Day a talk which had been recorded here on the early settlement of the Province was broadcast in the BBC's Scottish programme.

Recently two more programmes were asked for by the BBC, one, for a women's session, to include the story of our Plunket system, and the other to be a description of Maori farming methods for a broadcast geography lesson to English school-children. These programmes have just been completed, and *The Listener* was able to get the story behind their production from the people concerned.

Both programmes are of about 20 minutes playing time. The first, which was prepared by Shirley Macnab, of the Talks Department, is in the form of a dialogue between two mothers describing how their babies are looked after by various organisations. The major part of it discusses the history and function of the Plunket system. It includes sound effects recorded in Plunket rooms on a tape recorder, while a Plunket nurse is giving instructions to a mother in the care of her baby.

The Maori Farming programme was prepared by Godfrey Wilson, of the

Talks Department. Being of a more extensive scope than the other, it involved a week's visit to Wairoa with a technician and a tape recorder. The material used had to be factual, and presented in a clear and simple manner for children to understand. With the idea of getting a strong contrast between old and new Maori farming techniques a visit was first paid to two people who remembered the old customs. A 74-year-old woman told the story of the old Maori calendar (*maramataka*) which, based on the phases of the moon, was used as a guide for planting, fishing, and hunting operations in the days before the white man.

This was linked by narrative describing these old methods to an interview with the man who had designed and carved the decorations for the Takitimu meeting-house. He explained the agricultural significance of some of the carvings, and recited an old proverb



Spencer Digby photograph

SHIRLEY MACNAB

which was recorded both in Maori and English: "The warrior becomes famous and is killed, his is not a permanent fame. The cliff climber falls and is killed. The tiller of the soil has work for the whole of his life; he dies of old age."

Interviews were then recorded with several farmers in the district, who described their methods of work against an authentic background of farm noises. Men engaged in dairying, mixed farming, and cropping each told their story, and finally a visit was paid to a meat and vegetable canning works to show how the produce of some of these farms is prepared for export to Britain. Men working on a block about to be cut up under the Rehabilitation scheme were also interviewed.

In its completed form the programme should give English children a good survey of the subject both from a historical and contemporary point of view. It includes an insight into Maori folk-lore and tribal customs, and shows how the Maoris have given up their primitive agricultural methods to work European-type farms which play their part in the modern economy of the Dominion.

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