



Left: MOLESWORTH HOMESTEAD — a photograph which well illustrates the isolation in which most New Zealand high-country farming is carried out

without thought to other development which will be required in the future? No matter how dire our need is for houses, we should not lose sight of the fact that the provision of a house does not automatically mean the provision of a good life. We need other things too. To safeguard ourselves against this sort of thing, there is, in country areas, a course of action which, I think, we should and could take now. That is to carry out some experiment into the development of small settlements in rural areas. This could be done as follows:

- (1) By the co-ordination of all research work so far completed.
- (2) By the initiation of further research where necessary.
- (3) By the appreciation of the fact that if the results of the research work are ever to mean anything, they must ultimately be translated into terms of physical development and land use.
- (4) And in particular by undertaking "sample surveys."

These surveys should be undertaken by a team of people representing the different interests and sciences of the job. The team might well consist of the following: a practising sheep farmer, a geographer, a civil engineer, a sociologist, an agricultural economist and a technical town and country planner. If such a team could carry out research work in three areas, representing three totally different aspects and types of sheep farming, analyse the results of their work and draw up sample schemes for development, much useful information would be gained. Such surveys should be able to establish the fact as

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Homes in the Hill Country

I WAS interested to an extraordinary extent to read, in *The Listener* of April 9, what A. B. Duncan, of Scotland, had to say about hill-country farming in New Zealand. In his opinion, he said, there were two things which — more than anything else — would put hill-country farming in New Zealand back on its feet: first, the freeing from direct taxation of all moneys spent on re-establishing land that has gone out of production, and secondly, the provision of adequate housing in outlying districts to encourage the settlement of married shepherds. Later in the article he was quoted as saying "... that although the agricultural industry had in the past relied to a great extent on single men, that day was now past, and if the labour problem was to be solved it must be along the lines of more families settled in the country. This meant more and better housing in the country, and more and better facilities for people in the country ..."

I must say it gave me very great pleasure indeed to read this, derived no doubt from that weakness known as human vanity, because I couldn't agree with him more. In particular, I was interested in his remarks about settling married families in the country and giving them better housing and better facilities than they know now in New Zealand. This is not because I think his other remarks were of less importance, but because I, as a town and country planner, do not feel myself qualified to express a considered opinion about the technicalities of farming. I do, however, consider myself qualified to express an opinion on settlement and the environment needed to provide the means of living a full and happy life. This is the job of the planner.

Written for "The Listener"
by NANCY NORTHCROFT

I have, myself, for some time thought that we needed to do a little re-thinking on the development of our country areas, particularly the hill country areas, from the point of view of human settlement. Generally speaking the life in sheep farming districts is one of isolation. This, in the first place, is not a natural way of living, because the human animal is a gregarious one. In the second place, it is interesting to note that this isolated type of life, as expressed in the scattering over the land of individual houses, has no historical precedent. In the past all healthy and prosperous agricultural societies were based on a system of grouped settlements. Admittedly these originally grew up as a form of mutual protection, but when the need for this passed, the people of the older countries continued to live in their village communities. This gave them the comradeship they needed and provided the means for a free exchange of ideas, on which all progress depends. In addition, it is much easier and cheaper to provide services and amenities for a group of families living together in one community, than it is to provide them for individual houses scattered about all over the countryside.

Community Advantages

It appears then that the development of little communities throughout our sheep farming areas would have several advantages.

- (1) They would provide a pool of labour, both permanent and casual, for the farmer and for his wife.
- (2) They would make it possible to group and co-ordinate those services and facilities which are more easily provided and more satisfactorily used by larger groups of people than by the single family unit.

- (3) They would serve as a focal point for social activities.
- (4) They would provide small oases, in scale with human conceptions, amongst the wilder and more remote areas of the countryside, and so help to mitigate the sense of loneliness and isolation, particularly for the women.

I know that there are objections, and reasonable objections, to this type of development and there are many difficulties to be overcome. But I do believe that, if the problems are tackled sincerely, tolerantly, and scientifically, they can in fact be overcome.

I do not think that there can be any argument about the fact that life in the hill country areas, particularly for the women, is indeed a hard one and a lonely one. Admittedly it has its compensations, but I see no reason why we should let these blind us to the more unpleasant facts.

Houses are urgently needed at the moment. Some are already building and many more, with the high priority placed on housing, will be going up within the next few years. Would it not be possible to see that when these houses are built that they are of the right type and put in the right place? Could we not, for once, think first, and not scatter our houses haphazardly about



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