

Calves and Concrete

By "SUNDOWNER"

I DON'T know whether the people of Christchurch drink more milk than they did a few years ago or whether they are just more numerous, but there are certainly more producers of milk

BACK TO MILK

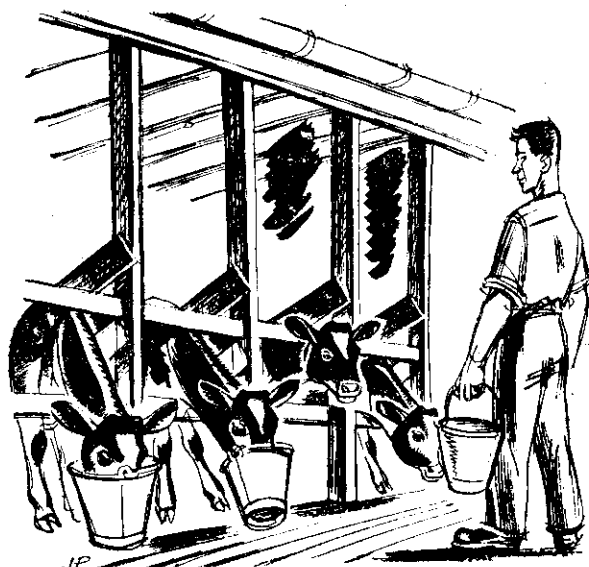
within an hour's run of the city. If the number of dairy farms has not increased, the number concentrating on milk instead of on butterfat and cheese seemed to have increased so rapidly

it continues too long. Calves mean work and a levy on the milk; later they mean grass and a hole in the hay; but even if science

COWS WITHOUT CALVES

could make cows milk without them, as science some day will, it would not be good economy to kill them indistinctly. And when that day dawns there will be very few to kill. The problem will be, not how to feed them when they come, but how to keep them coming. For the farmer then will behave as he behaves to-day—he will hope that his neighbour will breed enough to keep the herds going; and his neighbour will be just as foolish, as greedy, as feckless, and as lazy as he is.

However, when I began to look at them, I thought that those calves which had been saved were getting better treatment than calves usually get in a country where every farmer is short of labour. They had shelter, and they were fed individually; not left to shiver behind wire fences and to fight for their quota in a common trough.



"Better treatment than calves usually get in a country where every farmer is short of labour"

that I found myself a stranger among them after an absence of less than 10 years. I saw fewer Jerseys, and fewer cream-lorries, and I could not help thinking that the Jerseys there have already had their day.

What woke me up to the change was, curiously enough, the bleating of calves in May. We are so much creatures of habit that I can spend days among cows in early spring without hearing the calves, but half-a-dozen calling out together as winter approached at once caught my attention and roused my curiosity. I had noticed how numerous the black-and-whites were over the fences, but it was only when I heard young calves calling from a shed that I began to notice how many of these black-and-whites were in full milk and how many lorries there were on the roads loaded with cans.

The calves, I was told later, were not nearly as noisy as they should have been. It was so profitable selling milk that even the heifer calves were not often being saved. One man who seemed to be milking about 100 cows told me that his cheque for the month would "come near a thousand," and although I thought he was stretching the figures a little, it was excitement and not lying or brag. I could easily understand, too, why he was not interested in calves.

Whether competition will water these returns down it is too soon to say, but killing the calves must if

it seemed to me too that dairy-farming is now as completely mechanised in the South Island as it is in the North, that it depends as heavily on electric power, and rests even more firmly on concrete. Professor Hudson told me

MILK AND MECHANISATION

once that the justification for the costly byre at Lincoln College was partly its efficiency and partly its power to make farmers think. He wanted, he said, to get it into their minds that nothing was good enough but the best possible in the country as well as in the city. If it was worth while spending tens of thousands of pounds on bank and shipping offices, if insurance companies found it good business to house their employees in palatial buildings, if no big business man would sit in a dark office or stand on a bare floor, it was worth while spending a fraction of the cost of those city improvements on efficiency and comfort in the country. In other words, farmers had to get their minds as well as their hands and feet out of the wet and the cold and the mud.

But I thought when I visited Mr. C. W. Humm's farm at Coldstream that the revolution had come. I don't know how much money had been spent on his concrete fences and yards, on his limitless water supply, or on his byre and cooling rooms. It would not be

(continued on next page)



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