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WHY BOYS LEAVE HOME

I THOUGHT it strange a few months ago when the wife of a farmer in Northern Rhodesia told me that one of their chief difficulties is lack of labour. Cows are milked by hand and it is a problem week by week to find the hands.

But I didn't think it so strange after a month in Southland. It is copper that

COWS TO COAL

lures the labour away in Rhodesia, and in Southland it is coal. Ohai and Nightcaps are doing today what Switzers and the Nokomai were doing 50 years ago. They are robbing farmers of their sons. Just as the natives north of the Zambesi, though some of them have been herdsmen for a thousand years, will not milk cows seven days a week when they can dig copper six days a week and see a picture-show every night, so the lads of Southland will not work a long week for £5 when the mines offer them a short week for £10, with picture-shows, dances, and billiards thrown in. It must be extremely difficult for a farmer within 10 miles of Ohai to keep any of his sons at home once they leave school, and if he is closer than that his only hope would seem to be to make claustrophobes of all of them from the cradle. I would not myself work underground unless starvation left me no choice, and I suspect that those who still milk cows near Nightcaps, or thin turnips, or plough, or catch rabbits, feel as I do when they approach the mouth of a pit.

I SUPPOSE one reason why so many people think Southland a swamp is that it is not so obviously as Canterbury, a bed of shingle. Its rivers are all friendly, and although they flood sometimes they usually leave more behind them than they carry away. The Waiau must carry as much water into the sea as any river in the South Island except the Clutha, but it does not often overflow its banks, and when it does it comes back again to the old channel. Geographically Southland is a series of parallel river valleys separated by folds high enough to keep the rivers where they are but not high enough to isolate them. So with some variations is Canterbury; but whereas the rivers of Canterbury can have beds a mile wide,

By "SUNDOWNER"

and are not easily confined to half a mile, frequently jump their banks, and are always capable of doing so, the rivers of Southland do little worse when they flood than drown a careless sheep or two or hide a hungry trout.

I suspect too that one reason why Southlanders are so touchy about their territory is because they have as strange ideas about the North as they think the North has about the South. They forget that there are wider, deeper, and more



THE MINES offer a short week

intractable bogs nearly all the way along the Thames-Te Aroha highway than anywhere south of Gore, that teeth can chatter as hard in Hamilton as on the Hokonui, and that if the cows of Taranaki had to go through winter without shelter hedges, as so many cows do in Southland, their butterfat production might be 150lb. They have heard such things, but they don't take them in. If they do they don't retain them. They believe that the rest of the Dominion is pitying them, and they get angry when they ask themselves why. But they are careful not to go on asking till they find the answer and lose their grievance.

A WEEK or two before I reached Invercargill someone asked this question over the air: "When is a lamb a hogget?" It sounded simple, and I am

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NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MARCH 4