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INTERVIEW

COWS AND CARAVANS

IF you look at the *School Journal* you will be almost sure to find pieces of verse in it about the lure of the open road. This verse is read and chanted by boys and girls alike. Boys and girls are therefore equally likely to grow up with the roaming urge strongly developed.

How does our civilisation cater for this urge? In the case of men something can be done. They can become commercial travellers or big business men tripping from conference to conference. But what of our girls? Similarity of taste may lead them to marry commercial travellers or big business men. But instead of tripping round the country they find themselves staying home to cook the week-end meals.

It was with some excitement therefore that I noticed in the papers last year that applications had been invited from women for a herd-testing course at Massey College. Since then several two- or three-week courses have been held, both at Massey College in the North Island and Lincoln in the South Island. The first annual report of the Women Herd Testers' Reserve was presented at the Re-union last June, and there were then 54 women actually in the field.

The General Idea

The idea of the course was to train women as herd-testers to replace the men who were in camp or overseas, and to assist in the war-time increase of production. Now, however, it is felt that many will remain on after the war, as the increasing awareness of the possibilities of herd-testing will lead to a demand for more and more trained workers.

"But what is herd-testing?" I asked one of the girls who has just completed her course and is out in the field. "What are you supposed to do?"

"The general idea of the whole thing," she said, "is to test samples of the milk that comes from each cow, in order to find out which cows are giving the best milk. The best milk from the farmer's point of view is that with

the highest per cent. of butterfat. You see, nowadays most farms have milking machines, and as all the milk goes straight into the separator there is no way of telling which cows are giving the best milk. Even in the case of hand-milking mistakes can be made, as the cow that gives the most milk may not necessarily give milk with a very high proportion of butterfat. Knowing the actual performance of each cow enables the farmer to improve his herd by weeding out the less desirable cows.

Tattooing Calves

"It's a help in regard to the calves too. We individually tattoo each calf and keep a record of its parentage. The farmer can therefore form an estimate of its possibilities."

"And can the farmer choose whether he wants his herd tested or not?"

"Yes, those farmers who want to belong to the Herd-testing Association pay a small sum each year and then get visited by us once a month. Each of us has her own special district, usually consisting of not more than 26 farms. We test a herd a day, which means that each cow gets tested once a month."

"How do you get from place to place?"

"All the girls have cars or horses and gigs, and one or two of us have caravans. The procedure is briefly as follows: We start out after dinner and reach our next farm about afternoon tea time. We unpack the gear, change into gumboots and overalls, and go out into the shed for weighing and sampling. This takes several hours. Then we spend the night at the farm house. Next morning we're up at five o'clock and test all the samples from the night's and morning's milking. By the time we've finished testing, clearing up our apparatus, working out our returns, and re-packing the car it's dinner time, and then we get into the car and drive to the next place."

Social Occasions

"Then you don't get time to be lonely?"

"No, and you soon get to know all the people on your particular route. It's really fun, because your arrival is always

(Continued on next page)

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Lady Kinross is the wife of Baron Kinross. Before the war she studied painting in London and abroad. Now she has taken up nursing.

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A RECORDING ANGEL: One of the herd-testing girls enters up the results of her morning's work