

FARMERS OF THE FUTURE

A School Agricultural Club Visits The Big City



BOYS AND GIRLS of Tikorangi School recording a programme at a studio of the NBS

GRICULTURAL Clubs? Young Farmers? The backbone of the New Zealand of the future, we mused, as we made our way to the studio of the NBS, where the agricultural club of the Tikorangi School were to rehearse their broadcast, telling of the work which they and other school agricultural clubs have been doing. But if we were expecting a strong contingent of beefy boys, we were mistaken, for at least two-thirds of the Tikorangi Club were girls. It would not be polite to call the girls beefy, but they looked strong and healthy and red-cheeked, as young farmers of the future should.

The occasion was an important one for Tikorangi School. For some years the Education Department has been encouraging agricultural clubs in rural schools, and so it was arranged that one club, that from Tikorangi, should be

invited to come to Wellington to broadcast over the air something of how they got started, what they do, and how they function. For the children the visit has been more than a business trip. They came to see something of the big city, and their week in Wellington has been filled with things to do, places to see, people to meet.

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"The purpose of these clubs," we were told, "is to give the children experience of farming while they are still at school. But there is a whole lot more to it. The clubs are formed by the children and run by them. They run competitions in such things as growing root crops and rearing farm animals, and they do it well. They run their own show every year."

The Girls Took the Prizes

The children's annual agricultural show is, in fact, quite an event in the

community. They charge admittance, and with the surplus over expenses they can buy things that they need or that the school needs: for instance, in one case they helped to buy a motor-mower for the school.

"And the girls," we asked, "are they as keen as the boys?"

"Of course," came the reply, "They are just as keen and every bit as good. In fact the principal prize-winners at last year's show were girls. A girl won the calf-rearing competition, and a girl grew the best crop of mangolds. Actually her crop averaged out at 152 tons to the acre, and any farmer will tell you that that was a pretty good crop. Some of the farmers thought that the children were just playing, but I can tell you that their parents are now willing to admit that the youngsters may have something to teach them. The children learn partly by experience and partly by instruction how to combat pests and how to get the best results, which manure to use and how to cultivate the land. They should make good farmers when they grow up."

"And very useful farmers' wives," we thought, as we looked at the keen faces of the girls. "Do the children have plots of school ground?"

"No. That was tried in the first clubs that were started, but it wasn't altogether successful. You see, the most important time of the year for crops is the summer, just the time when school closes down. The children would come back to find their plots covered with weeds or discover that animals had got in and trampled over them. So now they get plots from their parents' farms, and can look after them all the year round. But apart from the agricultural side, the children get a great deal of experience in the running of the clubs. For instance, they have to manage the finances, which, by the way, can be quite considerable if the club does as well as it shows"

We watched the children preparing to make the records which will be heard over the air. The broadcast will be partly an introduction to the clubs explaining what their functions are. It will also include dramatised sketches of incidents in the history of the Tikorangi

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