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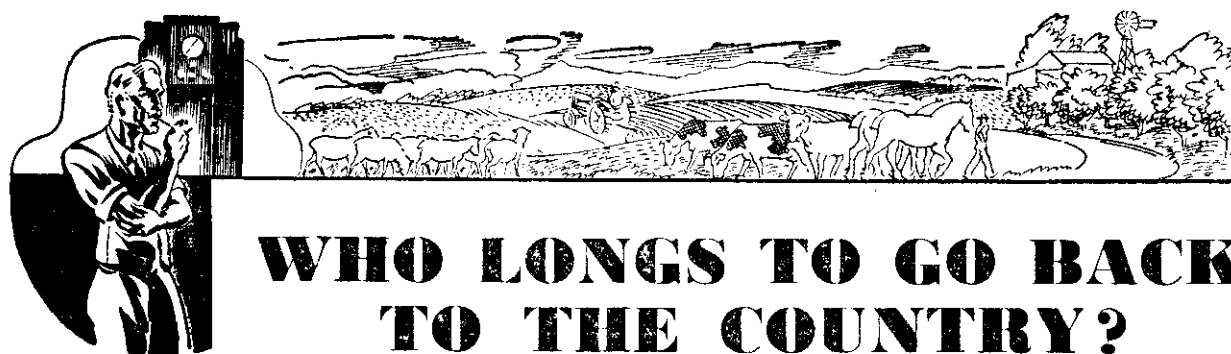
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## WHO LONGS TO GO BACK TO THE COUNTRY?

**"THE Good Earth"**—a series of talks being given from Station 2YA on Monday evenings—has been prepared, not for those New Zealanders who till the earth, but for those who may be isolated from it in the cities. It is interesting that in so short a history as ours, it should be thought to have become necessary to talk to our city people of the goodness of the earth. Whether it is true that they have a sense of separation from the soil, we do not know, for the questions that would lend to that discovery are questions that have not often been asked in New Zealand, and the answers are not readily to be had.

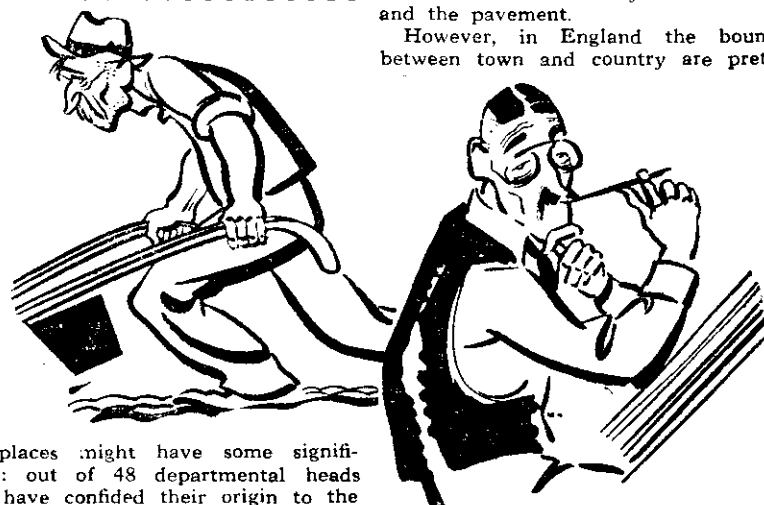
Scores of London children saw a bomb before they ever saw a cow; and then they only saw the cows because the bombs forced their evacuation from the slums. Are there any New Zealand children who are as ignorant of the shape of a cow, of the joys of sliding on straw-stacks, or of the friendship of pet lambs, as children are in really big cities? Do our suburban families already feel remote from their country cousins when by walking two miles from home in one direction they can see the small dairy farm and the market garden? If they do, is it because walking two miles in the other direction brings them to the milk-bar and the picture theatre?

Does our peace-time business-man, sharebroker, lawyer, or company secretary buy a farm 50 miles from town because it is an investment that will give him some excuse for running his car at the week-ends and at the same time keep him well supplied with cream and better vegetables than he can buy in the city? Or does he do it because he wants his children to spend their school holidays in the river-beds and riding horses on the country roads? Because he feels a craving himself to see the soil actually producing some of his bodily needs? Or because green paddocks and tussocky hills refresh his spirits and renew him?

**ANSWERS** to questions of this kind are not to be found in a Year Book. Would it tell us anything, we wondered, to find where the city people came from in the first place—how many were born in the city and how many drifted there early in life. With the aid of *Who's Who in New Zealand*, we were able to select a certain section of the population and examine its birthplace. Of course the lists of the people one can look up in reference books are conditioned by the question of who, after all, is who.

If the list of heads of Government departments is anything like a representative list of public servants in the cities, then the distribution of their

**"Most of us as we grow old discover that the mud which stuck to our boots in childhood remains for the rest of our lives."**



birthplaces might have some significance: out of 48 departmental heads who have confided their origin to the public (six or seven have not), 21 come from the town, 15 from the country, seven from England and five from places overseas.

The judiciary (judges and stipendiary magistrates) are another group of town dwellers, but not all live in the cities. No doubt many a provincial magistrate, if he came from the country and still longs for it, has his opportunity to live on the pleasant edge of a country town. However, the figures, for what they are worth, yielded this.

Twenty-nine members of the judiciary out of 40 give their birthplaces in *"Who's Who."* Of these 29, 14 were born in the cities and large towns, 13 in the country of small towns. Of course, birthplace is not necessarily an indication of home-environment; a boy from Ashburton or Gisborne may be the son of a farmer, but he may also be a parson's son or the son of a lawyer.

There is a tradition that the Police Force is recruited from country lads—not merely because they are strong and healthy, but because they are innocents, not likely to have friends among law-breakers. If that is the case, it would be interesting to have the life-histories of a reasonably large number of them, but these are not available in *Who's Who*. Only a negligible number of the police force ever get into such books, and at the present time, the number could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

It has often been remarked of England that the town dweller is also the chief country lover. It is, to a great

extent, the town dweller who subscribes to such papers as *The Countryman*. Even such papers as *The New Statesman*, whose appeal is primarily to the politically-minded, prints articles on country life. In fact, such articles appear in many of the big circulation magazines as though to remind the reader of the world beyond the office and the pavement.

However, in England the bounds between town and country are pretty

clearly defined. Within an hour's train journey of London are bare downs and open commons, woodlands, forest, and sea; but the Londoner, unless he makes a conscious effort, is not aware of them. He must think of them and think himself into wanting to get there. But there is no city in New Zealand where the city dweller cannot for a tram ride or less, spend a day on hills or by river or the sea. Without exceptional luck, he may live on the fringe of the country and keep his cow and still work in town. Even the flat dweller sees harbour and hills, cows and sheep. There are no cities where the smell of smoke and a layer of dirt make the very air of the town as different from country air as water is from wine.

**YET** living on the fringe of a town or in sight of harbour and hills is a very different matter from living right in the country. Nostalgia for the country is as much a nostalgia for country life as for country sights. In England it would probably be true to say that the nostalgia is strongest among those people who can afford to pay subscriptions to such papers as *Country Life*—people who long for the country because they have tangible roots there or a tangible country home to which they can turn.

Apart from old landed families who have old family estates where they go for hunting and shooting, where they

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