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SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

One Man, One Farm?

by "SUNDOWNER"

I WISH I could still get enthusiastic about the suggestion of a speaker at Lincoln College the other day that workers should be settled in villages at key points to help on one-man farms. It seemed a sensible idea to me 40 years ago, and still worth consideration 30 years ago; but I have no enthusiasm left as I enter 1954.

The first problem would be to find a one-man farm, and the second to find the money for extra labour on a one-man-one-woman farm. If the money were available the labour might still be difficult to find; but such places are struggling to balance their budget now, and have usually sunk all their available credit in implements to replace men. The nominal owner is lucky if he is not tied up in time payments for seven or eight years ahead. In any case, it is one thing to build the cage and another to trap the bird.

Where would the men come from for these villages? If they are working on farms now it would be a waste of time and money to move them. If they are in the cities, they are there in nine cases out of ten because they are getting better wages for shorter hours in an environment more congenial to them, and especially to their wives and children, than they think the country would be. In a few cases this is not true. It saddens me personally to think that it is ever true. But I have lived 30 years in the country and 40 years in the city and would not know where to turn to find more than an individual here and there anxious, and still not able, to change his place.

New Zealand is dotted—on survey maps—with village settlements in which no one was ever anxious to live. Now it is not necessary to live in them, since most people have more work than they are willing to do at their own back doors, and good transport if they think they can earn more money a mile or two away. They have also a deep, often foolish, but in general firmly based historical suspicion of anything that

looks like walking backwards. If the world must still have peasants, it must not try to perpetuate them in New Zealand.

A CLINTON correspondent tells me that her mother, who came from the north of Ireland, would say "Weigh there" if a cow lifted its foot when being milked; meaning "Stop it!" Now her daughter at Otago University says "Weigh there" when she means "Steady there," or "Gently there," or "Stop." Her mother, she thinks, brought the expression with her from Ireland. But I think someone took it to Ireland. My father usually said "weigh" (or "way") for "wo" (or "whoa"), and he came from South-

ern England. I have not tried to find out where "weigh" came from, or how old it is, but I can't doubt that it is a variant of "wo," "woa," or "whoa," and at least as old as Shakespeare. But I should like to know what Shakespeare would have said if he had been told that the call his yokels used to stop their horses would be heard on the other side of the world 400 years later "curbing excessive exuberance in square dances," "tempering a wild kick in football," and sometimes "indicating an erratic stroke in golf." The north of Ireland lady, I suspect, would have been pleased to think that such kittle cattle as undergraduates could still (in Otago at least) understand, and now and again obey, the language of the cowshed.

IT was a relief, when Jim shored my sheep for me the other day, to discover that they had no ticks. It was better luck than I deserved. A week or two before they began to lamb they were badly infested, and as I did not wish at that stage to throw ewes into a plunge dip, I handled them one by one in the yards, applying the dip with a pint mug. Everybody, of course, laughed; but since one of the purposes

(continued on next page)

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"All available credit has usually been sunk in implements to replace men"

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 15, 1954.