

X-STATION TOUR

STRIDE FORWARD in SOUTH CANTERBURY

LEFT: The port and city of Timaru, with Caroline Bay on the right and the rich farmlands of South Canterbury stretching inland to the Alps

their experiment has made possible a century of others.

Experiments in the arts, in entertainment, or in business are by no means clinical. Too many human feelings are involved for that, too many complicated emotional relationships kept bubbling warmly by the unpredictable and explosive creative force. For these reasons it is exciting to be a member of a community experiment, and reassuring to visit one and have the conviction reinforced that the experimenter is the creator, and therefore a lively, worthy, and absolutely necessary member of any community.

Looking back at the development of a district, it is possible to see when a stride forward was made. In South Canterbury, two of these points of progress were the building of refrigerated ships and stores, and the construction of a good harbour at Timaru. Since World War II, production in the area has increased in an astonishing manner. Local residents seem to agree on three points of progress in this short time. First, the readiness of practical farmers to

"THERE is a great tract of sheep country lying to the South," a whaling steersman told George Rhodes in Akaroa in the late 1840s. Rhodes thought it over and decided to make an experiment. You can see the developed centre of that experiment now—Timaru. Twenty-two thousand people in familiar houses on the not-quite-level foreshore of Caroline Bay. Excellent facilities for all sports. A well-equipped hospital. The A. and P. Show in October has a high reputation and attracts many visitors. So do the bathing beauty competitions in the summer holidays. There are at least twenty-three noteworthy types of industry, including the manufacture of gloves, concrete power poles, furniture, and the only macaroni factory in New Zealand. The surrounding farms keep the port busy with their export produce. There is prosperity, although the man cannot be found who admits he himself is prosperous; it is always the other fellow. How is prosperity measured? It is no matter for rulers or measuring tapes. It is seen in faces and clothes, in full shopping baskets, or even in the complete absence of hitch-hikers or tramps along the 100 miles to Christchurch. The day *The Listener* correspondent travelled south the only tramp, near the Rakaia, turned out to be a fisherman, walking along the road in tattered clothes with his fiendishly expensive split cane rod. Serving the South Canterbury district, and the prosperity, is a daily newspaper, and a radio station, 3XC.

The radio station is a new development, one of a series of seven experiments called X stations which have been established since 1949 in a pro-

gramme of provincial expansion, stretching from Timaru to Whangarei. NZBS officers, and some of their listeners, are inclined to take a slightly pallid view of the word experiment when it is applied to their activities. It calls to mind uneasily the vivisectionist and the guinea pig. The dictionary definition unemotionally removes the curse from the word: "A procedure adopted on the chance of its succeeding," says the *Concise Oxford*. That is exactly the

THIS is the first of seven articles in which a representative of "The Listener" makes a tour of the X Stations and the districts they are serving. The articles will be published once a fortnight.

procedure adopted by the Rhodes brothers when they thought over the steersman's words and then took up 150,000 acres of South Canterbury land in the eighteen-fifties. The success of

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THE MIXED CHORAL GROUP, which has become known in South Canterbury primarily through its work at 3XC

