

[T is many years now since the Home Science Extension staff took up the task of giving regular broadcast talks to housewives on all imaginable home-making problems. The Home Science Extension itself began in November, 1928, with a burst of enthusiasm from the late Professor A. G. Strong and a liberal pump-priming of Carnegie dollars. Mrs Strong was herself American and she had seen the benefit country women in the United States derived from extension services by "home economists," and saw no reason why New Zealand women should not have the same services.

Professor Strong's successor as dean of the School of Home Science, Dr Elizabeth Gregory, has also taken a very helpful interest in the affairs of the Home Science Extension, whose twenty-fifth anniversary was marked by the erection of a demonstration kitchen, completed last year, at its Dunedin headquarters. Since 1948 the Extension has been part of the Adult Education Department, University of Otago.

So much for the setting in which Emily Carpenter, senior tutor in charge of the Home Science Extension, does her work.

Emily Carpenter was born on a sheep farm at Gretna, North Canterbury. Her childhood was passed there and in Christchurch, where she went to school. In due course she made the pilgrimage to Dunedin and took a bachelor's degree at the School of Home Science, University of Otago.

With the world her oyster, she took up teaching and by good fortune was appointed to a school with a special quality of its own, Rangiora High School. Emily Carpenter is inclined to attribute her whole philosophy of life to her good luck in going to Rangiora. Under the command of J. E. Strachan, Rangiora was a lively, progressive place with a sense of adventure and with room for the personality to grow.

Transplanted to Otago in 1948, when she took up her present position, Emily Carpenter continued to grow. Don't get me wrong—not physically: she can view her dress form without misgiving. But she has continually widened her interests and found many new ways of widening the interests of her constituents, the women of Otago and Southland and—through these broadcasts—the women of New Zealand.

In 1951 she took six months' study leave in the United States. Characteristically, she crammed an immense amount into this restricted time, visited sixteen States, attended summer schools in Ohio, a course at Cornell and another (in upholstery) in New York. From the last she brought away as trophies a Diploma in Basic Upholstery (Dip. Bas. Up. is the somewhat sinister abbreviation), and an abiding memory of the summer heat in downtown New York—thereafter Central Otago had nothing on Manhattan. She spent a further month in Canada looking over many different phases of adult education. Although a specialist in Home Science, she has not let this restrict her outlook to her specialty, many-sided as it is, but has always kept in view its relationship to the wider programme of adult education.

The broadcasts by which you know the Home Science Extension—let it be whispered, but not shouted—are only

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Back Room Girl

one of Emily Carpenter's preoccupations. In addition to the classes she takes herself, she is responsible for organising the work of five colleagues who conduct classes in everything from dressmaking and cookery to millinery and other crafts. Although she is the largest contributor to the series, the broadcasts are the product of team work. Every one of the staff has composed her quota, so it is scarcely a case of "Alone I done it." Among the present writers of talks are Dorothy Anderson, Kay du Toit, Edna Howe, Jennifer Munro and Judith King.

Listeners, incidentally, may not realise that they do not hear the voices of the people who write the Home Science Extension talks. The talks are given by readers at the eight stations which regularly broadcast them.

One of the most rewarding—although at times the most exasperating—results of the broadcasts is a steady dribble of letters of inquiry which can at any moment become a flood when some especially piquant topic is in question. These run at the rate of over 3000 annually.

The envelopes alone often raise a smile—or an eyebrow. A lot of correspondents cannot quite make up their minds how to address the Senior Tutor, Emily Carpenter: designations range all the way from "The Lady Tutor" to "The Head Cook." The staff were not quite sure how to take being called "The Home Science Block," but purred suitably when addressed as "The Home of Science." "The Sister in Charge," "The Warden," "The Dean," "The Principal" seemed to raise a level mildly depressed by "The Advisor," "The Demonstrator," "The Instructress," "The Laundry Division" or "The Furnishing Department." At least the letters do reach the Home Science Extension office, but the recent renaming of the Agriculture Department's Rural Sociologists as "Home Science Extension Officers" has already resulted in the mis-delivery of letters.

Letters from earnest seekers after truth often show a touching faith in the range of knowledge at the disposal of the Home Science Extension. They come from men as well as women. A gentleman wrote recently asking for a diet to improve his fitness for spear-fishing. A husband immobilised in bed by illness overhears a women's session and writes for a recipe sheet, "as my wife's cooking is not much dam good" and "I might be undernourished."

The telephone is, of course, at the disposal of Dunedin residents, and many are the human problems which are put verbally to the Home Science Extension tutors. A deserted husband asks advice on planning his meals. (Do not be surprised if the Home Science Extension should enter the field of marriage counselling in some future talk series. Its tutors have been teetering on the brink of this for years.) A woman rings to ask how long eggs should be boiled in a pressure cooker—it would take a clairvoyant tutor to anticipate that need in a succinct quarter-hour talk.

It is rare for a Home Science Extension broadcast to provoke adverse

criticism. But a talk by Emily Carpenter a year or two back did raise a hackle here and there. In this talk she regretted that the women of this country stuck so closely to their pots and pans and gave her opinion that the New Zealand housewife tended to be too home-centred, home-dominated.

Whatever the merits of the reaction to this opinion, it serves well enough to illustrate Emily Carpenter's own attitude to her job. A home-furnishing course is not just a cheap way for a group of women to get some loose covers made under expert supervision and guidance. It is the starting point for the study of colour in a room, the decoration of a house, a whole new range of taste and applied art in the home.

The Home Science Extension staff find the regular broadcast assignments particularly worth while because they enable them to break new ground, to study aspects of home-making which lie right outside the routine of their classes and regular programmes. The amount of research that can be put into these talks is virtually unlimited, especially now that the demonstration kitchen provides the tools for new work in the concoction of ever more interesting meals. The aromatic smells which frequently waft out through the building they share with the Home Science Extension tutors tantalise their colleagues in other branches of adult education; they have not yet fully established their right to assist in sampling the products.

Whenever Aunt Daisy comes to Dunedin she visits the Home Science Extension office, and a few weeks ago she made an approving inspection of the demonstration kitchen. Aunt Daisy has always been generous in her praise of the work of Emily Carpenter and her colleagues, and some of those letters were written as the result of something complimentary from her lips.

If Emily Carpenter is not yet your pen friend, it is probably because you cook so well the brute never emits a growl, make all your own clothes with professional competence and keep your



Campbell photo

home in a state of dazzling perfection. Don't write unless you have to. The more time the tutors spend in that back-room demonstration kitchen the happier the homes of New Zealand and the more varied and interesting the talks emanating from the Home Science Extension.

—D.H.

Next Week: Grace Green