

# SOUTH WESTLAND



## A KORERO Report

“YES,” SAID the settler, “I suppose you could call me a pioneer. I was born in Jackson’s Bay almost seventy years ago. Arawata they called it then. My mother and father settled there under a Government scheme, but it fell through. They needed then what we need now—access.” He was off on his favourite theme—South Westland: its possibilities, roading, timber, minerals, farming, fishing, scenic attractions, &c.

He didn’t look like a pioneer—no beard or corduroy breeches—but when you heard something of his history and saw something of the country where he had lived and worked for a lifetime you realized that he had fulfilled in every detail the primary condition of pioneering—he had made a living and a home in a wilderness. A very lovely wilderness, it is true, but one as difficult and as isolated as those settled by the earliest pioneers over one hundred years ago.

South Westland is no more than a name to many New-Zealanders: To most it means the lower part of the West Coast; mountains, glaciers, and bush. They would be amazed if they were told that Ross, the southern terminal of the West Coast railway, was third on the list of live-stock exporting stations

in the South Island. They would be equally amazed to learn of the difficulties overcome by the settlers in bringing their stock to the railhead and of the romance and adventure of life in the last of New Zealand’s backblocks.

South Westland really begins below Ross, an old gold-mining town which may know a modified revival of the rush days after the war, when it is thought that the flats around the town will be dredged for the gold which the diggers passed over. From Ross a good road winds south under the shadow of the Alps through magnificent rain forests to Paringa, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. Where some of the larger rivers drop from the mountains the land has been cleared and settlements and farms established.

Harihari, Wataroa, Waiho, and Weheka are names familiar enough to any Coaster. Here on the river-flats there are cattle and sheep runs and life is not dissimilar to that of any outback farming community elsewhere in New Zealand. The service car goes through three times a week (daily in peacetime) bringing the mail, the newspapers, the meat, and perhaps a little shopping for the farmer’s wife done in Hokitika by the driver, who is postman, messenger, tourist guide, and “friend of the family” all along the