

so the smell of the port is chiefly the smell of engine smoke, coal smoke combined at times with smoke from ships in the harbour.

An easterly breeze carries the smoke to the western hills, where it sometimes obscures the houses for a time before it is swept upward and dispersed; a light southerly brings it more to the middle of the town. But when the nights are calm the early mornings may show a bank of smoke lying like fog over the port just below the topmost fringe of houses. It disappears, of course, when a breeze gets up. But it is years of smoke which has stained the corrugated iron, the brick, and the wood, and deepened the lines of age in the town. Yet if the women sometimes complain it is hard to keep their curtains clean and to get their washing white, minor disadvantages like these are really to many of them of little account. They have lived in the port all their lives and their affection for it is the kind that grows from intimacy.

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The early settlers began the work of establishing Lyttelton on its present site before there was any development to speak of on the other side of the hills which divide the port from the Canterbury Plains. For many years now the limitations of access to the port and of the methods which have been necessary for handling inward freights have been considered by the people of Christchurch and, indeed, of other parts of the South Island as an obstacle to the Island's development. Lyttelton is not only the port of entry for imports for Christchurch and other parts of the Canterbury Province. It handles the greater proportion of farm produce sent to the North Island. And, in addition, more than £3,600,000 worth of wool, meat, butter, and cheese left there every year before the war for markets overseas.

In the early days of settlement, the South Island got a flying start in agriculture. In the eastern, southern, and northern parts were large fertile plains, rolling downs, and hills without the forests which in a large part of the North Island had to be cleared before the land could be used by the farmer. There have been nearly one hundred years of

development since then, and now the land you look down upon from the top of the hills above Lyttelton, the Canterbury Plains extending one hundred and fifty miles north and south and forty miles inland from the sea, is the principal crop-growing area in the country. It produces more than 70 per cent. of New Zealand's wheat, 53 per cent. of the oats threshed, 65 per cent. of the barley yield, 73 per cent. of pulse crops, and the bulk of the commercial potato crop. It grows also some of the finer wools, raises fat lambs for the frozen-meat industry, and produces some butter and cheese.

Before the war, Lyttelton's annual wool exports averaged 93,431 bales, valued at £1,712,178. Her meat exports averaged 581,138 cwt., worth £1,611,427; her butter exports 76,065 boxes, worth £244,234; and her cheese exports 17,160 crates, worth £74,026. In 1939, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,275 ships called at Lyttelton to discharge imported goods and lift these exports. They had a tonnage of 2,198,480, which was 14.4 per cent. of the total tonnage calling at Dominion ports. The manifest tonnage of cargo handled in Lyttelton was 731,189, or 8.8 per cent. of the New Zealand total. Judged by any of these standards, the number and tonnage of the shipping visiting the port and the tonnage of cargo handled over the wharves, Lyttelton was then the third port of New Zealand.

For a long time the people most active in the campaign to improve access to the sea from the plains divided themselves into two main groups—those whose remedy was to build a new port on the Christchurch side of the hills (and there were subdivisions of this group), and those who wanted a road under the hills to Lyttelton. The supporters of this latter plan seem to have won the day, for, though Cabinet has not yet given its approval, the Public Works Department is now preparing preliminary plans for the tunnel and working out the route of the proposed road. What this work will cost is not yet known, but a preliminary estimate is about £750,000.

The future of the port after the tunnel road is through is a subject in which many people show a lively interest.