

SEQUENT OCCUPANCE IN SOUTHLAND

THE GROWTH OF PASTORALISM IN SOUTHLAND, NEW ZEALAND:

Howard J. Critchfield, *Economic Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 4, October 1954, pp. 283-300.

Reviews of New Zealand landscapes at selected periods in the past two centuries are not unknown to students of the geography of the dominion, and regional surveys of selected areas almost invariably indicate how present man-land relationships have evolved under white occupation with changing techniques and economies. In this article Dr. Critchfield applies this latter approach to some purpose in the southernmost of New Zealand's agricultural regions.

In accepting the Southland land district as his regional unit the author is bowing to the dictates of statistical compilation and admittedly the trends he seeks are adequately portrayed in this manner. But the Southland land district has not developed in isolation, as the small influence of its own temporary provincial government on land development indicates. In particular, trends in adjacent South Otago have been similar, the present development of browntop country in this area having been already achieved on the Southland plain. However, the land district chosen does cover a wide range of physical landscapes and adds weight to the arguments that intraregional variety and stage of development is conditioned by the physical background. Only in the more favoured parts of the area has the transformation from potato patches to fat lambs, wool and dairying been fulfilled. Other stages in the sequence are still in evidence elsewhere, even to the importance of seed potatoes as a pioneer cash crop in the cutover forest areas of the Waiau Valley. In the light of his later conclusions the author might have made more of this merging in space as well as in time of the phases in the growth of pastoralism in Southland.

Squatting was never a phase in Southland's agricultural history, nor did settlement follow the organised patterns of other South Island colonies. The successful advent of refrigeration meant the intensification of trends already evident, for the activities of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company had already pointed to intensive land use and dairying by its subdivision of the Edendale estate. Refrigeration, for Southland, meant a modification of an earlier pastoralism. With smaller properties came the changes noted elsewhere in New Zealand—soil and pasture improvement, better transport, adequate drainage—but always with a difference. The harsher climates of Southland demanded supplementary fodder crops and farming techniques not always needed elsewhere. The shift of emphasis from dairying to fat-lamb farming has been a response as much to the restricted growing season as to the depleted labour force. Thus this story of the sequent occupance of Southland highlights the author's thesis that in this area man has made 'a purposeful adjustment to his physical environment'.—A. D. TWEEDIE