

FIRST CONFERENCE OF COUNTRY GIRLS' CLUBS

AT the first annual general meeting and conference of the Federation of Country Girls' Clubs at Godley House, Diamond Harbour, Lyttelton, during August 36 club members and 4 advisory members represented all clubs but two and came from as far north as Kaukapakapa, north of Auckland, and from as far south as Arno in South Canterbury.

THE federation is often known as the sister organisation of the New Zealand Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. When country girls sought to join young farmers' clubs 3 years ago the young farmers responded by helping them to form a similar organisation for girls between the ages of 14 and 30. The first club was formed in 1946. Growth in the number of clubs has been slow, but since May, 1949, there has been a marked increase. Most clubs are in Canterbury, but others are in widely-scattered parts of the North Island. The federation was established in 1948. This first conference was a most successful experiment and demands for a similar conference in 1950 indicated an appreciation by the girls of the opportunity to exchange ideas and a concern for the progress of the federation.

The programme for the first two days of the conference was designed to give training in club procedure, to indicate the scope of club activities, and possible service aims of clubs; on the last two days the annual general meeting was held.

Ideal Setting

Diamond Harbour, on the other side of Lyttelton Harbour from the port, was an ideal setting. Surrounded by tall trees, Godley House sits snugly on the brow of a promontory with Diamond Harbour on one side and the

Purau Arm to seaward. The mansion, now over 70 years old, housed the conference and most of the members. Fine weather enabled good use to be made of the wide verandas and lawns.

Mrs. B. Jarman, Dominion president, opened the conference at which the Federation of New Zealand Women's Institutes was represented by Mrs. W. Deans, and the Women's Division of Federated Farmers by a Dominion vice president, Mrs. M. Coop, of Banks Peninsula. Three field officers in rural sociology of the Department of Agriculture also attended.

Mrs. Deans, in the opening talk, described the role of the individual member, stressing the necessity for individuals to support their club officials. Unless ordinary members gave whole-hearted support to their elected officers, they could not expect their clubs to flourish. Point was made of the wide range of activities open to clubs. The value of the roll call for practice in public speaking was stressed. Mrs. Deans appealed to the girls to remember that it was their movement and that it was the individual who would make it a success.

In his address "How Country Girls Can Teach Themselves" Mr. G. W. Southgate indicated where clubs could obtain ideas for new subjects for study and discussion and mentioned facilities such as discussion topics and tutors available from the four Councils for Adult Education. Lists of plays for those interested in drama could be provided. He referred to summer schools of one and two weeks that were run as holidays and where a variety of special courses was provided. The Correspondence School provided a range of courses that anyone of any age could take up. The facilities available from the Country Library Service were mentioned as well as those of the Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch of the Internal Affairs Department. Mr. Southgate indicated the pleasure that could be found in drawing on local resources for the history of one's own district.

Mr. B. J. Dunne, who supported Mr. Southgate on the same theme, spoke on the origin of drama and the value of amateur play production and drama groups in the development of a team spirit. He illustrated the greater benefit to be gained by forming a group of people with the same interest. If a Country Girl had a hobby, she might find others who were interested and all would benefit by learning and practising together.

Meeting Procedure

Mr. G. Manning, in his address on "Meetings and Chairmanship," said that in a democratic society everyone should know how a meeting might be conducted so that a subject could be thoroughly and expeditiously discussed with everyone having the right and opportunity to express his or her opinion. It was as important for the member of a meeting to know the accepted rules of procedure as it was for the chairman. Mr. Manning worked through the agenda paper of a meeting and discussed the framing, the moving, the seconding, the amending, and the putting of a motion.

Three brief addresses on "Aims and Activities of Country Girls' Clubs" were given by Miss K. Scotter, Mrs. W. Fletcher, and Miss E. E. Unwin. Miss Scotter stressed the enjoyment of club life and illustrated her talk with her experience in Y.W.C.A. work among girls on the New South Wales coalfields and of the important contribution girls' clubs made to the life of the girls there at a time of unemployment. Miss Unwin said that where Country Girls' Clubs were close together inter-club events should be held and other organisations such as Young Farmers' Clubs might be encouraged to participate. Field days and visits to factories and farms were useful as additions to the talks and a variation from the usual club meeting. Mrs. Fletcher stressed the aims of the clubs to make country life more attractive and suggested that, since Country Girls were mostly farm girls, some emphasis should be given to farming activities in their club programmes.



Members listening to an address at the first annual conference of Country Girls' Clubs. [Green and Hahn Ltd. photo.]