



COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

By 538687

ONE EVENING a few months ago, our gang wandered into the Y.M. for supper. We sat around the fire, and some one started an argument. But some one else had left a *Korero* on my seat. I flicked a page, idly, and there was a report on one of New Zealand's smaller newspapers.

Before the war it was my job to run just such a country newspaper. Smaller, in fact. It came out once a week, on Thursdays, for one of our rural towns and the farming districts nearby. Let it be nameless here. Price 2d., circulation 1,800, but don't let that give you a false impression.

It has been dead since war became more important than printing. We were a young staff and there was no alternative, anyway. The presses, the linotype, the platen, the guillotine, staplers, perforators, type cases—all these lie quietly beneath their dust covers. I like to think they are waiting for peace to give them life again.

But life will mean problems, and they face small newspapers everywhere. If the homely little journals with names like *Bugle* and *Examiner* and *Record* are to survive in a hustling world and play a useful part, they must face up to these problems. In facing up, they may lose some of their quaintness, which will be a pity, for there is charm in quaint ways. But sometimes there is decay, too. The list of such publications dwindles from year to year. I can think

of a dozen for whom the difficulties became too great.

Perhaps you live in a city and (unless you are a big shot) never see your name in print. You see *Sleepy Hollow's Bugle* only when Aunt Emma sends the family a copy with a story about her sewing circle. You study it as you would a curiosity, and laugh at the strange emphasis on small things and ordinary people. The main headlines are as far from your world as country was from city fifty years ago.

Well, there is the main problem. To-day, country is never far from city. Rapid transport, good roads, express deliveries—these things have made suburbs where before there were towns. Motion pictures, radio, mass entertainment—these things have standardized our tastes, inclinations, most of our desires. *Sleepy Hollow*, with its individual traditions, colourful personalities, and characteristic ways, is slowly losing its identity, being moulded into the same flat pattern that makes the city. And as the trend develops it will be in danger of dying spiritually, socially, and commercially.

It is a problem which causes concern in New Zealand, as it does elsewhere. Some of our leading educationists have seen the danger. They have placed the emphasis on the small community. They hope to see the day when centralization is abandoned, and we live not in crowded, hustling cities, but in separate groups in the country, where we can be close