



JANTZEN DIVING GIRL No. 14

## Lin Browne

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## A "Listener" Interview

# A BIG MAN WITH A BIG JOB

AN enormous man with an enormous job was the impression left us last week after half an hour with Dr. J. W. Decker, Secretary of the International Missionary Council. But we had a corrected impression of his real work. He is not, as his title suggested to us, a collector of pennies on an international scale for the world's unconverted millions.

"So you too," he said, as soon as he saw what we were thinking, "accept those maps that colour some countries of the world white for Christian and others yellow for Buddhist or black for Pagan. Christianity is in all countries, though very much more a minority movement in some than in others. The proper way to talk to-day is about 'older churches' and 'younger churches.' Mostly the younger get missionaries from the older to help out their indigenous leaders. But more and more, supply of personnel is becoming interchange of personnel. For example, you had Dr. Kagawa visit New Zealand Christians from Japanese Christians just before the war, and have had Dr. Koo from Chinese Christians more recently. That is missionary interchange. Incidentally, I wish we could get round to a healthier use of that word 'native.' Now me, I am a native—of Virginia."

"Then where does your council, called 'Missionary' and 'International' fit into this?" we asked.

"Well," said the doctor, and sure enough his voice was Virginian, so soft that, compared with some harsh twangs New Zealand had recently heard, we had scarcely noticed it as American, "practically all the Protestant denominations of any size and some of the Orthodox ones are united—83 of them in all—in a World Council of Churches. It has hardly gotten into work as yet; but this body I represent, which has existed since 1910, does some of its jobs through having interlocking personnel. We publish professional literature—as you may call it—pool ideas, share advice, help regional groups of churches to evolve local and world Christian strategy."

### Many Problems to Solve

"And what does that mean in the concrete?"

"Take the reason why I am here in New Zealand. The 1938 World Christian Conference held in India suggested a conference in this area to clarify our intentions towards the Pacific island people. A preliminary meeting took place in Sydney last week, with New Zealand delegates present, to arrange for the big conference to take place once the war is over. As the war ends a lot has to be decided by the governments with holdings in the Pacific—who is to rule what islands; how closely are they to be tied to the Powers overseas; how much is a federation possible; what education and public health systems are there to be; how defence and trade considerations can be reconciled with the welfare of the inhabitants, and so on. They have to consider, too, what 'the welfare of the inhabitants' really

means? Should they be made brown and black Europeans? Or should their old way of life, which European contacts have destroyed, be rebuilt? Now it is the Christian churches which have done far and away most of the actual welfare work in the Pacific. We want, at this conference I mention, to hear from our men on the spot, natives and Europeans, what is possible and desirable—political, economic, educational, social—and to work on the Governments concerned—or, better still, with them—to see that it gets done. The Prime Minister of



DR. J. W. DECKER  
Some maps are wrongly coloured

Australia has said that native welfare must come before commercial profit or even defence considerations."

### Picking Up the Pieces

"You have come from Europe, doctor, and are going on to India. Policy-making and practical religious reconstruction in both places must be enormous tasks."

"Indeed. There is a new spirit in European Christianity. Put its physical body is all knocked to pieces. And I don't mean merely the stone-and-mortar churches. Community life is disintegrated through mass migrations, mass deportations, mass production for ends of total war disconnected with the ordinary life of the man tending the machines, and mass regimentation of ideas. Christians have to turn confused masses of people into persons through giving an alternative centre and dynamic to life to the big impersonal State or National Cause. They have to build up centres of real fellowship. And they have to do it without much plant left and with the young men who should be their leaders often killed. Besides, don't think that the corrupting of young people through regimentation will go out with Nazism. Some of the new liberated Governments have launched almost precisely similar youth movements already."

"India? Well, obviously independence fills the horizon there. The Christian community in India is definitely for it—even though it soberly realises that in

(continued on next page)

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