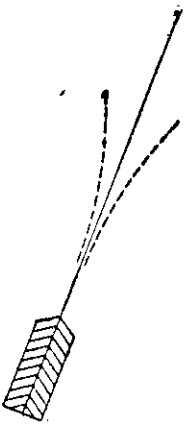


SLENDER



SY-METRA

*the full-fashioned and
true-fashioned hosiery of
quality by*

Bonds

The words Bonds and Sy-metra are the registered trade marks of Bonds Hosiery Mills (NZ) Ltd.

We Buy



CAMERAS
PROJECTORS
PHOTO
ACCESSORIES
BINOCULARS
for Cash!

KODAK NEW ZEALAND LTD.
292 Lambton Quay, Wn. 681 Colombo St., Chch.
162 Queen St., Auck. 162 Princes St., Dunedin.

POST-WAR JOBS

Well paid positions after the war will be filled by TRAINED men. Will you qualify? Start an I.C.S. Specialised Course of training now so as to be ready. Over 300 home study Courses—

Accountancy	Diesel Engineer
Journalism	Electrical Eng.
Radio Eng.	Motor Mechanic
Building	Wireman's License
Plastics	Anal. Chemistry
Story Writing	Sign Painting
Carpentry	Window Display
Draughtsman	Office Training

Send NOW for the Free I.C.S. Booklet which is well worth reading. Let us know the subject or trade in which you desire to make progress. Don't delay—write TO-DAY!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS.
Dept. L, 182 Wakefield St., Wellington.

BOOKS

DO GROWN-UPS REALLY SEEK KNOWLEDGE?

ADULT EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND:
A Critical and Historical Survey. By A. B. Thompson. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1945.

(Reviewed by Harold Miller)

IS education really popular? Is there, deep in every adult heart, a passion for knowledge and improvement which only a cruel environment prevents from finding expression? A hundred years ago it was widely believed that this was the case; and there are those who believe it still. But the evidence does not altogether support them. In the course of a hundred years the environment has become much kinder, especially in New Zealand, but there is still a stubborn resistance on the part of the public to the blandishments of the W.E.A. and similar organisations. What is the reason? Is the environment not so kind as it looks? Partly that: the mothers (and the fathers) of young children have usually neither the time nor the strength at the end of the day to go out in search of knowledge. But the reason is mainly a simpler thing: the desire for knowledge (like the desire for holiness) is a tender plant and easily discouraged, and the gardeners (like the parsons) are for the most part not so very extraordinary men and can only give what they've got. Most of them know it. They are only too conscious (*crede experto*), like the woman of Samaria, that they "have nothing to draw with and the well is deep."

A. B. Thompson's long and careful study of Adult Education in New Zealand seems to confirm this view. The New Zealand settlements, he shows in some interesting pages, were founded at a time when adult education was being vigorously promoted in England; the early settlers brought the idea to New Zealand, but it soon died. They were all too busy and too scattered. A good many Mechanics' Institutes were founded in both islands, but in 30 or 40 years nearly all were dead or transformed into pale shadows of their former selves. In the second 40 years (1870-1915) there were sporadic attempts to revive the work—Mutual Improvement Societies, Temperance Unions, Women's Institutes, the Y.M.C.A., occasional bits of university extension—but they never amounted to much. (Mr. Thompson does not discuss the work of the churches, which is surely educational work of a sort and well within the scope of his definition; but no doubt he feels that his task is tough enough as it is!) It was not until 1915 that adult education, as we know it to-day, made its appearance, when a couple of enthusiasts came over from Australia and founded the W.E.A. It is with the 30 years that followed that Mr. Thompson is chiefly concerned; and of this, on the whole, it is true to say that, although some excellent work has been done, the great mass of the population remains untouched.

Adult education began in the cities but in the last 15 years some very interesting work has been done in country districts—by the W.E.A., Women's Institutes (800 branches in 1935), the Country Library Service, one or two Community Centres (established by the Education Department), by organisations set up by one or two university colleges (mainly financed by the Carnegie Corporation and the Sarah Ana Rhodes endowment). In one South Island area there was at one time a full-time organiser, four full-time tutors, a travelling librarian and a drama tutor, as well as office assistance. Since 1935 the Government has taken more interest in the work, and further developments are to be expected.

In the cities adult education has been mainly in the hands of the Workers' Educational Association. It depended at the outset chiefly on the support of trade unionists but in recent years it has cast its net more widely and has largely lost its old trade union flavour. Its future is the subject of controversy: some desire to see it merged in a wider movement and some have desired to see it become more strictly a workers' movement with political aims. But on the whole, Mr. Thompson sadly confesses, organised labour has shown "no very great desire for adult education of this or any other kind."

Yet there can be no two opinions about the importance of adult education. If popular government is to survive, the elector must be educated; but most of the educating must be done after they have left off going to school. It is an immense task. So far we have only scratched the surface: according to Mr. Thompson's statistics the W.E.A. enrolment has never reached 8,000 and during the last 15 years it has tended to fall. It is really difficult work, requiring the very best men that we have. We already have some very good ones, but we need more—a great many more—if adult education is to do its job. Mr. Thompson seems to me to attach too much importance to organisation; the fact is that in this, as in all other educational matters, everything depends on picking good men and giving them a pretty free hand.

This book has been published as part of a forward move in adult education. A commission has been set up to hear evidence and in due time will make a report to the Government. It is much to be hoped that the Government may be persuaded to launch out in a big way. The existing annual allocation from public funds (£12,000) is simply ridiculous; many times that sum is plainly required, if adult education is to become a force on a national scale, if popular government is to survive at all in a world so full of problems. It will not survive unless a large proportion of the population add to the generous impulses which are so very widespread in New Zealand a real knowledge of the world in which they live. Those who have read Albert Mansbridge's history of the W.E.A. will remember how, on a famous occasion, the annual meeting at Reading

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JULY 27.