

the Universities are preparing to cope with greatly increased rolls of students, and the Government is prepared to make bigger grants. Education has now become a Federal problem for the first time. It never was before. Subsidies for educational institutions were always a State concern, with the exception on some grants for research work, but now there is a Federal Minister of Education, Mr. R. C. Mills, and he will co-ordinate the work of the State Governments, while they will remain the chief authorities."

Second cups of tea were poured out, and Professor Copland began to rove over other topics that came into his mind as he thought of the advance of educational movements. He mentioned CEMA, and asked whether we had the same sort of thing in New Zealand.

The Higher Life

"CEMA has come quite naturally in Australia at the right moment, and it is going ahead very well, livening up music and drama. Concerts have been crowded throughout the war, and local orchestras are being helped. It is the same with the repertory societies. All that is very encouraging, because after all man doesn't live by bread alone."

Professor Copland took another scone. "Mind you," he added, "we're not very far ahead, by the standards of older countries, but there's a healthy growth beginning. Painting in Australia is already very individual and vital, though, and in general all the arts are going ahead well in spite of the heavier war burden in Australia than in New Zealand."

"In farming too, there have been quite important developments. The use of machines has developed, and farming is much more prosperous. A lot of this is due to wartime conditions, and difficulties will return as peacetime conditions return, but some of the good factors will remain. All round, there's a greater confidence in the future of Australia than there was in the years after the depression. In spite of the war, I'd say there's more hope felt for the future of Australia."

The Housing Shortage

We finished our tea and lit cigarettes. Professor Copland remarked that there was much more drinking being done than there was when he was here 15 years ago. Then he asked, "How's housing here?" We told him, as briefly as we could, but plainly.

In Australia, he said, housing was also a terrible problem. Private building had almost ceased to exist during the war, and thousands of houses were needed now. We talked of the typical Wellington problem of "roomers" who are beyond the scope of controls, because they are not simple tenants.

"It's beyond human capacity to control that side of the problem," he said. "The only answer is more houses. That's just one of the costs of war."

Why Stop Now

"But still, it is absurd to talk of abandoning controls now," he went on. "How can you talk of abandoning control of prices and priorities for commodities when they are still in short supply? It wouldn't give us more houses. The average person believes in the need for control. We lifted the control from tomatoes a little while ago and the price immediately shot up to twice what it had been. The public at once saw the

IN THE POST OFFICE

Written for "The Listener" by "DUKIE"



I HAVE, at times, heard hard things said about post office officials. I have even said a few myself, when, having waited in a long queue, I am sent back to start all over again because I failed to dot an "i." At least, that is how I feel about it. My brother-in-law, who is a post office employee, calls it "educating the public," but at the same time insists that he would not notice an undotted "i."

"I have been sent back for things that were just as trivial," I stoutly declare.

"Well, just imagine," he tells me severely, "what would happen if we filled in details for every person who brings a form uncompleted."

"They would all say, 'What a nice young man.'"

"Not at all! Next time they'd bring the form along and expect us to do the whole thing for them. We are not paid to do that, and we'd have to keep those at the back waiting all the longer if we did each person's job—and they would not like that!"

"But if I just forget one teeny weeny little thing . . ."

"You should not forget. The public should examine their forms carefully before presenting them. If you are sent back to fill in even a minor detail it will make you more careful and save time next time."

"Somehow it doesn't," I sighed.

A Question of Rudeness

"That's the trouble. You think the onus is all on us. It isn't. You must do your part."

"But sometimes you people are so rude."

"RUDE!" he snorted. "It's the public who are rude. Why, one man told me in a loud voice the other day, 'Hurry up, young man! What do you think I pay your wages for?' 'You pay my wages?' I asked in some astonishment. 'Yes, I

value of price control, and for a while the merchants themselves put in an unofficial peg by agreement with the producers. Which tended to prove the point! The reaction to that experiment did more to establish the need for controls than almost anything else. People believe in the need for price controls just as they believe in the need for rationing. The two are inter-dependent."

pay your wages,' he insisted. 'After all I pay taxes and your wages are paid from the taxes.' 'In that case I must pay myself,' I told him. Then an elderly lady came along. 'And to think my son went away to fight for the likes of these!' she said in an audible voice to her neighbour in the queue—just because she did not get immediate attention.

"But . . ."

"Yes, I know. I had my R.S.A. badge on, but she didn't bother to look for that. Because I was in civvies she decided that I had been behind the counter all through the war. No, don't talk to me about the public! It's a wonder we don't lose our tempers oftener. The majority just treat us like lower-class servants."

"Well, you are supposed to be civil servants!"

"That's feeble," he replied. "But seriously, if they would use their brains and try to co-operate. Do you know that when I was in the mail room I saw black-currants come through posted in a cardboard box? And, of course, every person who received a parcel stained with black-currant juice blamed the post office!"

"But couldn't you—well—sort of come off your perches sometimes and be a little more friendly—a little less haughty?"

"We don't dare be! Don't you see—can't you understand? In that case the public would impose. Why, we have to make them keep their distance or we'd simply have them wiping their boots on us. We have to fight every inch of the way to preserve our dignity and our identity as it is. Be friendly with the public! It couldn't be done. The next thing you'd have them telling you all about grandmother's illness and baby's new tooth, and we simply haven't got time. I tell you we are busy people, with a tremendous amount of work to do. And we bring in a huge revenue. Don't you realise that we bring in the biggest revenue of all government departments? No one need think they pay our salaries. We earn them—every penny of them!"

A Troublesome Type

"Oh, I think some of you do very well," I told him. "But post office officials usually make me feel like a worm!"

"You aren't one of those assertive people. They are what we have to guard against. Some of them would wipe us off our stools if they could. I'm afraid I'll have to report you to the Chief Postmaster," they say very haughtily, thinking to put the fear of death into us, and waiting to see us tremble. You've no idea how many people have an assertive streak in them. People who ordinarily are quite mild and well-behaved become most aggressive when they are dealing with government employees. They think we are the servants of all and sundry—to be bullied and ordered about and brow-beaten."

"Bullied?"

"Yes."

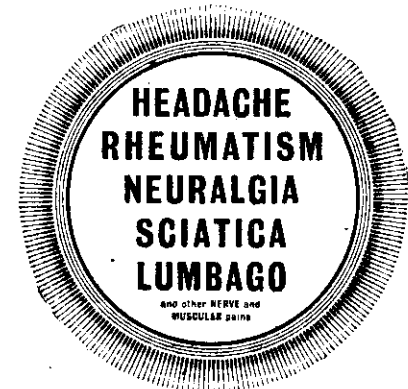
"Oh, I wouldn't dare do that," I said. "You wouldn't, but many try."

"Goodness! Do they really?"

"Absolutely! So now you see what I mean about the whole position, don't you? We have to behave as we do. The public force us to by their own conduct."

"Perhaps," I doubtfully surrendered, feeling painfully aware that I was one of "the public."

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