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Idea For a Living War Memorial

(Written for "The Listener")

DR. J. R. OPPENHEIMER, a distinguished United States physicist prominent in the development of the atomic bomb, recently told the Senate Committee on Control of Atomic Energy that forty million Americans might be wiped out in a single bomb attack at the start of another war. Dr. Irving Langmuir, Nobel Prize Physicist, said "the only defence against the atomic bomb once it is dropped is not to be in that place."

Translating these startling statements into New Zealand terms it means simply this—that a single light carrier could stand off New Zealand and by means of atomic bombs wipe out Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin in the course of half-a-dozen hours. Gone are the days of building huge bases, of the marshalling of millions of men, of the manufacture of jeeps by the thousand, landing craft, tanks and so forth. In one epochal stroke all are rendered as obsolete as the armoured knight of the Crusades. Nor can we any longer shelter ourselves behind the belief that, as we hold the secrets of the bomb and the other fellow does not, we have nothing to fear. From all of which it seems that we must as a matter of life and death begin thinking in world terms. No longer can we afford the luxury of leaving diplomacy to the great, or the near-great. No longer can we afford to have even our good friends referring to New Zealanders as "a complacent lot." The might of the British Navy, on which this country has relied since its earliest days, no longer avails us.

* * *

WHAT are we to do about it? We shall take our part in current efforts to place the bomb under some form of international control—that goes without saying. What else? After the hardship and the bitter grief of the past six years would it not be a good thing to feel that we must in all things be abreast of the leaders of world thought in whatever field? As fighters, by common consent, we have few peers. In politics and in the arts we have yet to make our presence felt. A fertile soil and an easy climate has bred, it seems, a race of likable, easy-going Britons who are content to leave anything that looks awkward to anyone who is prepared to do the worrying. So we have become complacent. The atomic bomb apart, then, we dare not settle back into the old grooves. Perhaps it might be as well if the notion of training for war were carried back into these present days of uneasy peace. Why not train for peace?

One of the last official acts of the Churchill Coalition Government was to decide that the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), with a new name and wider opportunities, should be continued into peacetime. The new body is known as the Arts Council of Great Britain. It is presided over by Lord Keynes, the eminent economist. In the words of Lord Keynes the purpose of the Arts Council

is "to create an environment to breed a spirit, to cultivate an opinion, to offer a stimulus to such purpose that the artist and the public can each sustain and live on the other in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at great ages of a communal civilised life."

CEMA came into existence in the early days of the war, "when all sources of comfort to our spirits were at a low



LORD KEYNES
A measure of the importance

ebb." Originally it was sustained by grant from the Pilgrim Trust. It was the task of CEMA to carry music, drama, and pictures to places which otherwise would have been cut off from all contact with the masterpieces of happier days: to air-raid shelters, wartime hostels, factories, mining villages. ENSA was charged with the entertainment of the Services; the British Council kept contact with other countries overseas; the duty of CEMA was to maintain the opportunities of artistic performance for the hard-pressed and often exiled civilians. The time soon came when CEMA, started by private aid, was sponsored by the Board of Education and entirely supported by a Treasury Grant.

"Henceforth," continues Lord Keynes, "we are to be a permanent body, independent in constitution, free from red tape, but financed by the Treasury and ultimately responsible to Parliament."

"Strange Patronage"

I do not believe it is yet recognised what an important thing has happened. Strange patronage of the arts has crept in. It has happened in a very English, informal, unostentatious way. A semi-independent body is provided with modest funds to stimulate, comfort, and support any societies or bodies brought together on private or local initiative which are striving with serious purpose and a reasonable prospect of success to present for public enjoyment the arts of drama, music, and painting. The public exchequer has recognised the

(Continued on next page)

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