

support and encouragement of the civilising arts of life as a part of its duty. Australia has already made a beginning of CEMA activities. We, in New Zealand, are groping towards these same civilising arts with lunch-hour chamber music concerts, and the activities of Repertory organisations, Pictorial Art, and Choral and Musical Societies.

Miss Dorothy Helmrich, recently under engagement with the NBS, was largely responsible for initiating CEMA in New South Wales. Many thousands of our young men and hundreds of our young women have served in the United Kingdom, Italy and the Middle East. They have enjoyed opportunities of hearing Grand Opera in the great Italian theatres; they have seen many of the world's finest paintings and have had unusual chances of seeing British drama at its best. Will this newly-found appreciation of the arts be allowed to perish through sheer inanition now these men and women are returning to New Zealand?

### Could Serve Dual Purpose

The Prime Minister, in a statement on War Memorials, made in November last, referred to the preference which he considered to be in the minds of the people in the case of World War II. for "Living" War Memorials. He mentioned Sports Centres and Community Centres as examples of probable War Memorials. Surely there is no more appropriate form of war memorial for New Zealand than the founding and the perpetual maintenance of an Arts Council of New Zealand. Its aims would be similar in all

respects to that of the Council of Great Britain — to bring the arts to the people. It should not be left to the initiative of any Government to set in motion the machinery for setting up such a Council. It should spring from the people themselves. If Governments intervene there will always be the suspicion of political bias. It should be noted that though the Arts Council of Great Britain is sustained by Treasury grant, the Government of the day has no direct voice in the conduct of its affairs. To quote Lord Keynes again, "... but we do not intend to socialise this side of social endeavour. Whatever views may be held about socialising industry, everyone, I fancy, recognises that the work of the artist in all its aspects is, of its nature, individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented, uncontrolled. The artist walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself. But he leads the rest of us into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and to enjoy what we often begin by rejecting, enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts. . . . New work will spring up in unexpected quarters and in unforeseen shapes when there is a universal opportunity for contact with traditional and contemporary arts in their noblest forms."

Here is the opportunity then, to serve a double purpose. In bringing the arts to the people the Council would be translating into positive action the thoughts which inspired those who died.

—G.H.A.S.

## LUNCH-HOUR ART IN WELLINGTON

(Written for "The Listener")

THE Wellington Public Library goes on from strength to strength. With lunch-hour music it has become one of the chief musical centres of the city; and now it bids fair to add the functions of the art gallery. It has, upstairs, a long corridor with bare walls; an inspired citizen suggested that artists should be invited to hang their pictures there; the City Fathers consented on condition that no prices should be attached; and the scheme began to work at the beginning of this month. Inability to put a price on their pictures may discourage some artists, who presumably would like to sell their productions. But the great virtue of the scheme is that it provides a sort of open forum in art, where you can see something that hasn't been strained through the sensitive eyes of the people who run the art societies; it does give the artist a chance to get out into the open.

James Bowkett Coe, for instance. Mr. Coe provides the first show. You couldn't possibly see eight of his paintings and a dozen of his drawings at any New Zealand Academy exhibition. They are worth seeing—not because they are all brilliant successes (they're not), but because they are the work of a man young, vigorous, experimental, seriously thinking in terms of paint, and driving at real problems of form and colour and design. There is not, thank God, one well-bred water-colour landscape here at all. Mr. Coe is not, as an artist,

exactly polite at all —anyhow not in oils.

There are two canvases which should certainly go into the Government collection of war pictures—*Patrol, Vella Lavella, and Ruruwai, 1st October, 1943*—obviously painted from the heart; strong design, deliberately limited range of colour, really passionate and unsparing statement. Consider the lady in her bath (unsuccessful, quite too unsubtle, paint laid on rather like thick soap, but at least with a clear, simple structure), and *Hostel Sunday* (gay, fresh, lively, not just a mass of Wellington buildings with girls sun-bathing, but light and air); consider the balance of flat-painted figure and juicy thick-petalled flowers in the portrait of Maureen Stern; contrast this with the totally-flat handling and sense of space in the low-keyed, rather awkward but pleasant *Artist and Wife*; and Mr. Coe's range will be apparent. But for sureness of touch, design and balance probably the best picture is his own sober *Self Portrait*.

The drawings are interesting, mainly very sensitive and clear definitions in outline. Oh that there was more drawing in New Zealand. Let there be drawing every day and all the year round, and we'll get somewhere. Mr. Coe, if he keeps on like this, will certainly get somewhere. Meanwhile, unprejudiced Wellingtonians may be glad of him; and grateful to the Library.

—J.C.B.



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