

# DISPLACED EXHIBITS

## Dominion Museum and Art Gallery Await Renovation

**T**HE National Art Gallery in Wellington has been given its first Director, Stewart Maclellan, A.R.C.A., but it is still debarred from returning home. Like the Dominion Museum, it awaits the re-conditioning of the big building at "Mt. Cook," which was largely given over to the military during the war.

The National Gallery was in the worse position because it had to get out entirely. All its pictures, except a large one of Anzac Cove at the end of the tea-room, were removed. Some of them have been in storage ever since—quite a number of years; others have been exhibited at the temporary gallery at

the D.I.C. The Dominion Museum was seriously disturbed, but not thrown out. The exhibits remained in the building, but had to be crowded together. They were closed to the public, except to parties of school-children. And little or nothing could be done in the display of new material. This is still the position, and will be until the place is put in order by the Public Works Department at the expense of the Government.

### Art to the People

The appointment of Mr. Maclellan as the Director of the National Art Gallery is a step of great importance in the history of the Gallery and of art in New Zealand. He is, we believe, the first full-time professional director of a public gallery in this country. Every national gallery, every gallery of outstanding importance, has such a head. Mr. Maclellan will be more than a curator. He will be responsible for the care of the Gallery, but will be professional adviser to the management committee and the Board of Trustees, the body which controls both the National Gallery and the Dominion Museum. He is a practising artist, with a considerable experience in teaching art. Two years ago he went to the National Art Gallery as Education Officer, and as the Director he will continue to supervise this work. The National Gallery sends out illustrated lectures on art to secondary schools. This service, which was started by Mrs. Murray Fuller, is part of a new conception of the place of an Art Gallery in the community. A gallery is not merely a place to which people come to see pictures, but it tries to instruct the public, both at the gallery and outside. The idea is that art



STEWART MACLELLAN  
His appointment is important

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to the practical possibility of developing rural settlements. They should also help to establish the development of a technique for future reference.

There is no reason why these surveys should take a long time. Given willingness to co-operate and the facilities needed, the bulk of the work should be completed within a year. Then at the end of this period, if the results of the research work prove satisfactory, I believe some experiment should be made into the development of at least one little community as a test case.

I am sure that Mr. Duncan is right when he says that the labour problem in the hill country areas will only be solved when it becomes possible for married couples to settle in the country. And I believe that we will not get married couples into our back country areas until we can give them better services and amenities than we do now.

There are certainly a number of social services in the country areas to-day, but too often they are scattered and lack any sense of co-ordination. The result is that even in one small area, say a valley containing some dozen farms, the hall

will be found in one place, three to five miles further along the road may be the post-office and a store; in yet another place the church, the school. Then in another place again the piece of land used for a football field, and so on. And what is the effect of all this? That what facilities do exist have a struggle to carry on, because so few people use them. If, however, the school, the store, the post-office, and the garage and petrol station were all grouped together, it might then be worth-while taking the children to school in the car, because at the same time you could pick up the bread, the meat, the meat, that odd reel of cotton and perhaps even have a chat with some of the neighbours.

These may seem small things, but in their total it is these things which just make the difference between carrying on or giving up. Our townspeople regard these sort of facilities as a necessity. They cannot conceive how they could live without them. If, as a primary producing country, we consider our farming areas of importance, then we must see to it, and quickly, that the people who work the land for us have as good a life as we can possibly give them. If we don't then I think the answer, an unpleasant one, is writ plain.



shall be taken to the people. The temporary eviction of the National Gallery did not stop this work of education. It has been carried on ever since from the temporary offices in the D.I.C. building. This connection with the public, including lunch-time lectures, will be extended when the Gallery returns to its home.

### The National Gallery

There is a danger in New Zealand that national institutions established in the capital shall be considered by other centres to be too local in their interests. A certain degree of localisation is unavoidable, and it happens that the National Gallery owes a good deal to the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, which is the society of arts in Wellington, and in consequence the Academy has certain privileges in respect to the Gallery. Before the Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery block was built, the Academy had its own gallery in the city, and in it a collection of pictures then worth £30,000. It offered to sell the property and give the proceeds and the collection of pictures to the proposed National Gallery on two conditions: that it should have a permanent home in the new building, and that it should nominate a majority of members of the committee of management. These terms were agreed to. The Academy has its gallery in the National Gallery portion of the block, where, in normal times, it holds its exhibitions. It nominates members of the committee, and also has representation on the Board of Trustees, which is ultimately responsible for both Museum and Gallery.

The Gallery is a national institution. The Academy claims that it has never taken a narrow view of its power of nomination to the management committee, but has chosen among its representatives persons from other parts of New Zealand. Moreover, it has now no permanent collection of its own. When the Academy buys a work of art it does not do so for itself, but for offer to the National Gallery. And it has bought quite a number of works. The National Gallery includes the National Portrait Gallery, and already a considerable number of eminent New Zealanders are commemorated there. The rule is that a subject must have been dead for 10 years before his or her picture can be admitted.

The building, unfortunately not so accessible as one would wish, still looks noble from the outside, but inside much of it is sadly battered by office use in the war. Holes were driven in walls for intercommunication apparatus, and shelving nailed up on the fabric covering designed to provide the most suitable background for pictures. The museum rooms, overcrowded though they are, with staff working cramped among exhibits, are more cheerful looking than the empty, desolate, dirty pock-marked galleries. But, walking through the building again, one is impressed by its usefulness for its particular purposes. The large number of picture galleries and bays enable the authorities to segregate a group of pictures and so give them the necessary atmosphere and permit the public to study them undisturbed by works of a different kind. An overcrowded gallery is apt to confuse the visitor. The Museum, now directed by Dr. R. A. Falla (who succeeded Dr. W. B. Oliver some months ago), is considering adapting its long rooms to get a similar benefit. At present one room begins with ethnological exhibits and ends with animals, with other things in between, so that the visitor's attention possibly wanders too much. It is thought the bay system would enable a better display to be made in a given subject and make it easier for the student to concentrate.

The requisition of the building caught the Museum as it was getting into its stride—arranging its great mass of material and training its staff. Though closed for ordinary purposes, it has carried on its departments, to the benefit of many outside interests. One activity is the despatch of cases of exhibits to schools. There is a new conception of the function of a museum, as there is of an art gallery. More pains are taken to bring the knowledge that it houses under the public's notice. All the main New Zealand museums have their school districts. The Dominion Museum holds classes in the building for children of Wellington city and sends exhibits round the province. The well-designed and equipped hall is frequently used for lectures on a wide range of subjects.

There is still, however, much arranging of exhibits to be done. In the basement is a lot of stuff that awaits decision, the accumulation of many years. All the time that the Museum has been closed, new material has been coming in. And there are big questions of policy

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