

# WORLD CONFERENCE FOR CHRISTCHURCH

## Educationists Will Meet There in Centennial Year

**B**ECAUSE they live in isolated localities, or suffer from a physical handicap that keeps them at home, because their hours of work prevent attendance at technical classes, or simply because the subjects they want to study are not taught locally, over 5,000 students in New Zealand take lessons from the Education Department's Correspondence School in Wellington. This Dominion-wide service more than bears comparison with similar work being done in other countries, according to Dr. A. G. Butchers, the headmaster of the school, who returned recently from the Second International Conference on Correspondence Education held at Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.

As the representative of the New Zealand Government, Dr. Butchers carried an invitation for delegates to hold their next meeting in New Zealand, and the fact that this plan was approved reflects the great interest shown by other countries in the New Zealand scheme, and, incidentally, the work done by Dr. Butchers in describing it to them.

There were 93 delegates present, representing the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries. Because of his own service in this field, both as Convener of the Standing Research Committee and as a lecturer on various aspects of correspondence school work, Dr. Butchers was

elected first president of the International Council on Correspondence Education. In this capacity he will preside over the third world conference, which will be held at Christchurch in April, 1950.

Last week *The Listener* called on him at the Correspondence School itself, an old, many-windowed, wooden building, freshly painted outside, but inside just like any other school, with wide high-ceilinged corridors lined with glass cases of museum exhibits and hung with banners and photographs. And in the headmaster's study—again high, cool, lined with dozens of photographs, flags, and charts, and so real that one listened for the timid knock of late boys at the door—he was turning over a thick sheaf of air-mail letters.

"This is the result of two months in America and Canada," he said, holding them up. "Every night I sent home a bulletin of the day's events, and these are my only record of the conference until my other papers arrive by boat."

Was the conference a success? Dr. Butchers said it lasted from October 11 to 15. Discussion ranged over a wide field, with emphasis on problems of the curriculum, correspondence education for returned servicemen (and the implications of this for adult education), and such modern aids as mobile libraries, travelling laboratories, and other units that could actually visit the pupils.

His own role was a heavy one. On the first day he presented the report

of the Standing Research Committee, on which he had been working for some time before leaving New Zealand. On the second day he lectured on correspondence education in New Zealand. On the fourth day he talked about the country itself, illustrating his lecture with the motion picture *Meet New Zealand*. On the fifth day he gave an address as president-elect of the Third International Conference, and lectured on the organisation and administration of correspondence schools.

The Americans thought nothing of putting a prison on a tight schedule of lectures lasting from nine o'clock in the morning until late in the afternoon or evening, and "it was very hard for one person to cover it all. They would have a car waiting at the door as you finished one lecture and whisk you away to another group waiting to hear you in five minutes' time."

### Des Moines to Chicago

But the five days at the conference formed only a part of his task in America. In the two months he was abroad he had travelled over 30,000 miles, which represented an average of 500 miles a day. After the conference he went to Montana to give a series of lectures, and then to Des Moines, Iowa, to speak at a teachers' conference attended by representatives of over 10,000 teachers. In Chicago he visited the American School of Correspondence Education, a chartered institution



DR. A. G. BUTCHERS  
Five hundred miles a day for two months

run on a non-profit basis and with 65,000 students on its rolls.

This was a remarkable institution, he said, and being a non-Governmental organisation was typical of most American correspondence schools, although those in Canada were run by the State. The A.S.C.E. had a head office staff of 236, and a field staff of 200. New enrolments for the year 1947-48 had totalled 44,243.

"I was astounded by the amount of mechanical equipment they used," he said. "They had gadgets for everything, even for wrapping up a parcel of lessons and tying it with a piece of string. It was like one of these factories where everything goes along a conveyor belt and you get the finished product coming out at the end." The school catered only for high school pupils, and even their technical courses were wholly "academic," being printed as pamphlets profusely illustrated with working drawings. Students had to find their own means for practical work, and in the same way science courses were on a "non-laboratory" basis.

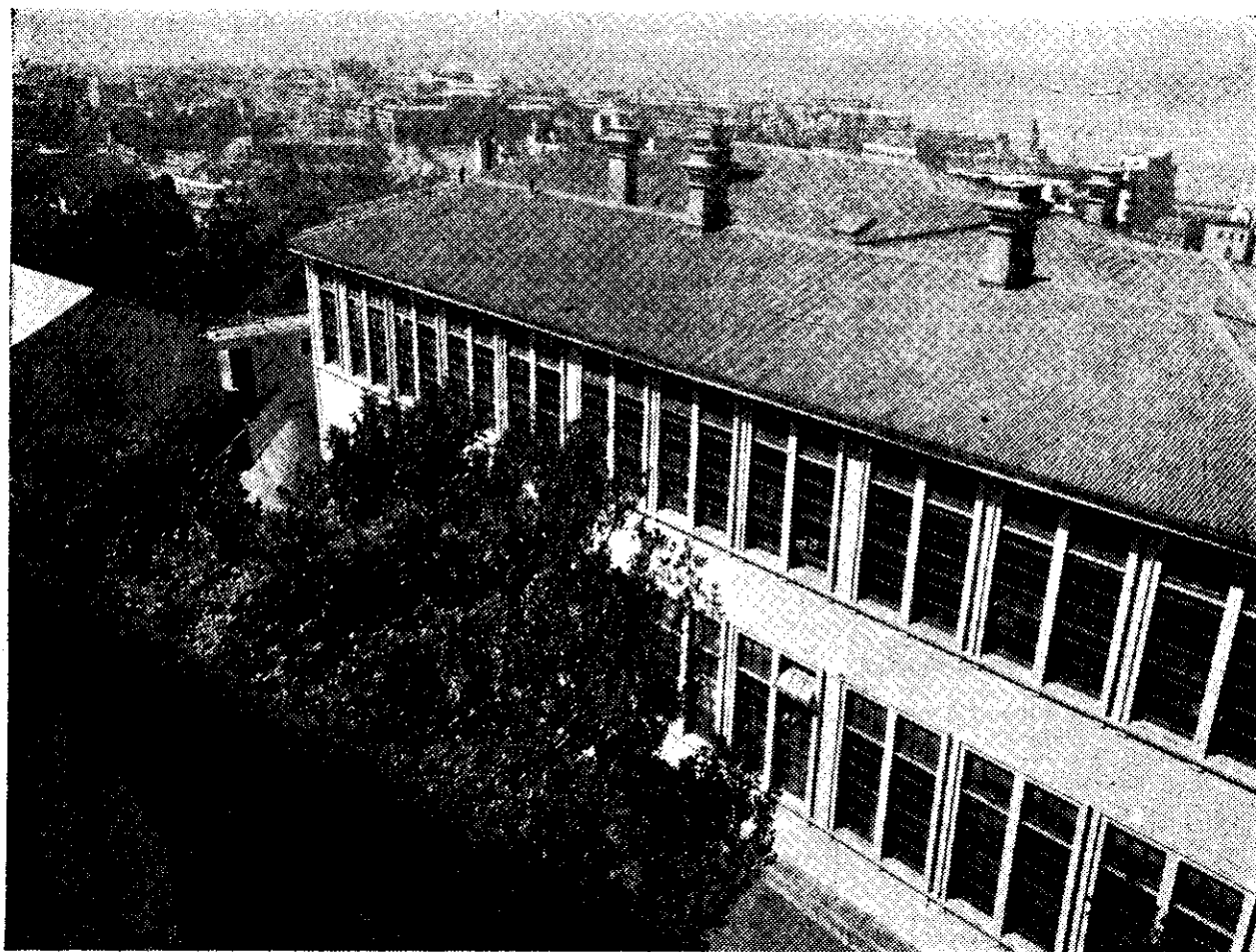
In Baltimore he visited a huge correspondence primary school, also run by a corporation on a non-profit basis. Here they taught pupils from all over the world, including Africa and China. All the courses were "tried out" first on an ordinary classroom school of 300 that was attached to the correspondence school. He also visited correspondence education organisations in Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, and at Regina, Saskatchewan, he addressed several meetings.

### American Schools

What control was exercised over the non-governmental correspondence schools in America?

A few of them, said Dr. Butchers, seemed primarily interested in fees. He had heard of one school that enrolled pupils for a four-year course and then immediately sent them all their assignments for the four years' work. Naturally, this had a disheartening effect on many of them and they gave it up after a few lessons. But there was no provision for any refund or rebate of fees. To defeat these methods the good

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CORRESPONDENCE School Headquarters, Wellington—"Just like any other school inside."