

EXHIBITION BECOMES A SCHOOL

(By O.A.G.)

ONLY a few months ago New Zealanders in their thousands made a daily pilgrimage, at a shilling a time, to view the pageant of one hundred years of industry and achievement at the Centennial Exhibition. Within the last few weeks the buildings which housed that exhibition have undergone immense changes. Today they are being transformed into another link which contributes to this Dominion's great war effort — officially known as the Technical Training School of the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

As quickly as reconstruction is achieved by the hammers and saws and machines of the Public Works Department, the Air Force is taking over, working to a training schedule in the midst of noise and confusion. Here is a striking example of a sudden change from the arts of peace to the more exacting arts of war, which this epoch has thrust upon us. When this reconstruction is complete the former Exhibition buildings will house over 700 men in training and vast quantities of Air Force stores.

Already many of the men are at work, conscientiously going about their duties while towers totter and courts are demolished, leaving a tangle of wires and pipes and broken timber which has yet to be removed or re-shaped. Already training aircraft from Britain are being assembled under the spreading roof which formerly protected numberless small courts of the local industries section. When I saw them last week they were lying like so many giant cigars, not yet fitted with engines to lift them into the air, or wings to give them stability and the appearance of powerful mechanical birds.

But the assembly of training aircraft is only one small department of this new training centre. Not all the Exhibition buildings will be used. Some have already been demolished, dividing the whole of the main group into separate blocks by the formation of fire breaks between them, for precaution against fire has been one of the essential thoughts in reconstruction.

Squadron-Leader T. W. White commands the new station, directing operations from his headquarters in the old administrative block near the former main entrance on Kingsford-Smith Street. That is only temporary. When the scheme is complete, headquarters will move to more central offices round the main hall. Gates on Titirangi Street are now the main entrance to the school.

Australian Court to Remain

The British Court is slowly disintegrating, and will eventually disappear. The Australian Court will remain as it is, though it will be altered inside to become a combined headquarters for the Air Force band and a recreational room.

All the ponds, flower beds, shrubberies, fountains and pillars which formerly lent colour and variety to the main grounds are being removed or filled in and the whole space transformed into a "tarmac." Kingsford-Smith Street will also disappear and the whole of the new Air School will become one with the Rongotai Air-drome.

When I made a tour of the buildings with Squadron-Leader White it was difficult to recognise the former Exhibition. Now there are "shops" everywhere, though they have no commodities to sell. "Shop," as far as the Air Force is

HE GAVE US A WORD



MAJOR VIDKUN QUISLING, who gave us a new word. Since he betrayed Norway, all traitors have become quislings

concerned, means work and instruction. Contrary to popular conception, there are no groups of smart young men in Air Force blue uniforms formed up in impressive line. But those smart young men fill every "shop," bending over benches and charts and mechanism, working at all those trades which go to the making of the expert mechanic or craftsman on which the efficiency of an air fighting force depends. Everyone is clad in blue overalls, none too clean, for most of the work is messy and exacting. Even the trained instructors are clad like their pupils.

Business is Brisk

Here is the engineering shop, there the carpenters' shop; grouped about are the air-frame repair shop, the fabric shop, the fitting shop, the rigging shop, and the assembly shop. And in all of

them business is brisk. Not so many months ago all those young men went peacefully about their various trades or worked in offices; some were still at school. Now the danger which threatens has brought them all into that great scheme which is our war effort.

There are lecture rooms, all neatly arranged with desks and blackboards where diagrams are displayed and problems solved by the experts. The space formerly occupied by the Samoan House and the Maori Court is now a huge hangar where several planes may spread their wings under a sheltering roof tree.

Seventeen dormitories open off the former Fountain Court, each dormitory housing 42 men and three n.c.o.'s. Nearby is a store which resembles a warehouse, filled to the ceiling with clothing, crockery, mattresses, beds, furniture, and other essential equipment. Here the air is pungent with the penetrating smell of moth-balls.

The upstairs cafeteria has become the men's mess, seating 700 comfortably at a meal; the Sergeants are installed on the same floor. A huge kitchen, complete to the last electrical and gas unit, copes with the cooking as efficiently as any large hotel. Vegetables are steamed on trays in large upright steamers. A dish-washing machine does away with the boring routine of washing and drying hundreds of utensils by hand. Now the dirty dishes are fed in along a special track on to jets of boiling water, emerging on the other side all clean and shining, to be placed in stacks in readiness for the next meal.

Recreation and Health

Underneath the cafeteria, in the former restaurant, a spacious recreation and lounge room for the men contains billiards tables, ping-pong tables, dartboards and quantities of magazines. There is no lack of space, and there will be no need to seek entertainment beyond the confines of the school.

In a separate block nearby are the cool stores for milk and vegetables, and the butchery, which are all in concrete and insulated.

An up-to-date hospital block, composed of large and small wards, and a dental clinic now occupy one side of the court which formerly housed the Local Industry Exhibits. All this is most necessary, for the school will function as a separate military establishment complete in every detail for meeting all emergencies. Here, too, will be established the Central Trade Test Board for testing all airmen in New Zealand for the various trades in which they may be engaged during the war.

Part of the former Women's Court has become a "little theatre" which will be used for the display of educational films, since the film has become an important factor in training men for the Air Force. The exhibition concert hall will remain as it is, and will probably be put to good use as part of the scheme for entertaining the men. A general library and a

THE SOLDIERS WANT THEM

Send A Parcel Of Books

"There are no books here except a dozen or so old volumes which no one wants to read and which look as if no one ever wanted to read them. . ." This sentence occurred in a letter which was received by the War Library Service. Arrangements were quickly completed and the next day 400 periodicals and books were sent to this camp.

Every week similar requests for books and periodicals are received. Libraries are being provided in all permanent camps; books are sent with all men going overseas, and escorting vessels also take their share. In addition, reading matter has to be provided for men of the Defence units, the R.N.V.R. and the minesweepers.

Over 50,000 books have been sent out in these ways since the beginning of this year, and fresh supplies are urgently needed.

Look over your bookshelves to-night and set aside for the soldiers those books which you enjoyed so much—the men will enjoy them too—but give only books in good repair. All types are required—travel, adventure, biography, novels. Every care will be taken of your gifts and they will be sent where they are most needed.

Label your parcel "War Library Service," take it to your public library or send it to the Country Library Service, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

reference library are close at hand, for reference and technical books are in great demand among the trainees.

The official reception room has now become a lounge and mess room for the officers. Two rooms in the Tower Block which served as reception rooms for a Minister of the Crown and the Mayor of Wellington during the Exhibition have been transformed into sleeping quarters for some of the senior officers of the staff. Other officers have their sleeping quarters on the ground floor, near the former Central Court.

Huge Stores Department

One of the most important parts of the new school, though the least spectacular, is a huge stores department. Here, on standard racks which can be moved and arranged like a giant Meccano set, are supplies of everything required by the Air Force in the way of equipment, from nails to spare parts for air-planes.

When the whole of the present scheme is completed, this training school will bear little resemblance to the buildings which housed the Exhibition. Grouped round the "tarmac" will be several large buildings, each housing its own department or departments. The two band shells will remain as wind breaks, but all else will be vastly changed.