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## "THEY THINK MORE IN THE COUNTRY"— Says First Woman Tutor of the W.E.A.

"THE farther you get from Wellington the more enthusiastic people are about W.E.A. classes—at least that is what I have found," said Mrs. Margaret Dunningham, in an interview with *The Listener*. Mrs. Dunningham, who has recently been appointed W.E.A. tutor for the Wellington area by Victoria University College, is the first woman to have held such a position, and has just returned from a tour of her district, which included travelling as far south as Westport and northward to the Wairarapa.

"It may be that the nearer you are to a big city the more people rush about and the less time they have for thinking. There is too much for people to do and to some extent they seem to lose their detachment. Certainly I found the most response and the best W.E.A. groups in districts as far south as the Buller."

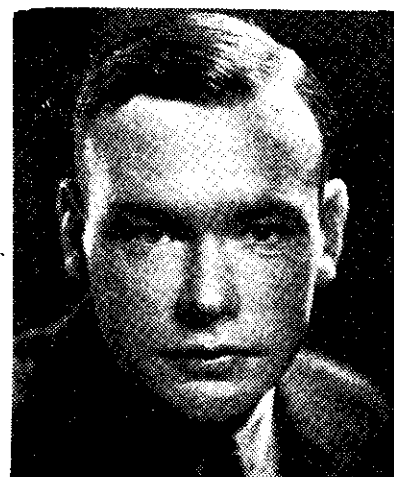
"Would you agree that the fact of living in remote country districts is likely to make a difference?" we asked. "And special types of occupation?"

"Both would account for a group having time to read, discuss, and think. Certain communities seemed to me to make good groups because of occupation. I found, for instance, a great response among mining communities, and this, I imagine, is partly because miners live and work together in a community, they know each other, they have the same times off. And incidentally the miner starts work early and knocks off at 3.30 p.m. He has his tea early and that gives him a long evening to read and to discuss. And they do read. Thanks to the Country Library Service some of these remote communities are as well served as those near town. The groups all round the Buller were homogeneous working-class groups and they were enthusiastic and critical and well read. We started six groups round Westport alone. It surprised me very much. One little group was formed at Denniston which is 2,000 feet above sea level. The people in this township live in perpetual cloud and mist, and the whole place subsists on the coal industry—but it seems to have been good for their brains. There is a great spirit of co-operation and comradeship. In another place the township runs a co-operative picture show."

wherever I went. In fact there are ways in which I would say that it was a definite advantage to be a woman. You see, travelling round in country districts one has often to depend on many people's hospitality. I enjoyed this because it was a great opportunity to meet the people in a district and to learn something about it. But at the same time, as a woman, I could also lend a hand in the kitchen, and so get to know husband and wife equally well and feel myself truly part of the family circle. I should say that this type of job is just as suitable for women as for men—provided, of course, that one is able to travel, because that is essential."

### TALENTED PIANIST BACK ON LEAVE

*Recitals by Peter Cooper*



Spencer Digby photograph

**CORPORAL PETER COOPER** (above), the young Christchurch pianist, for whom a promising career was interrupted by the war, is expected to return to New Zealand from Australia in July for a period of leave from the A.I.F., of which he is a member. Tentative dates have already been chosen for piano recitals at Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Corporal Cooper was a pupil of Alfred Bunz in Christchurch and, before the war made such things impossible, it was hoped to assist him to travel abroad for advanced study. He went to Australia three years ago, and played over stations of the Australian Broadcasting Commission many times, and also on the concert platform.

In 1941 he became accompanist to Dorothy Helmrich, the famous Australian lieder singer, and when she was in New Zealand this year, she praised his work enthusiastically. Since enlisting in June, 1942, he has been giving recitals in military camps in Australia, mainly under the auspices of Army Education.

The probable dates of Peter Cooper's broadcasts are: 3YA, July 2 and 5; 2YA, July 8 and 9; 1YA, July 11 and 14.

### Miners Prefer Topical Subjects

We asked how these groups function. "Each group chooses its subject for study. We have quite a large number of prepared Study Courses and the subject is chosen from these. We then send week by week the lectures to be read and discussed. The courses vary a good deal in length and for some subjects, such as economics, there may be several courses. If groups are very enthusiastic the members read and study the lectures before they meet and then devote the group meeting to discussion. This is really better than reading a lecture aloud, but you can't always get a number of people who will find time to do this preparatory study. As for topics, I found that the mining districts were most anxious to deal with modern contemporary events and history: the courses on Russia, Japan, and the United States were regular favourites. Nelson and the Nelson district, on the other hand, chose courses on a wider cultural basis—art appreciation for instance, language and society, economics—and there was a group of mothers who have decided to take a course in Child Psychology."

"And who prepares these courses?"

"They are mostly prepared by University lecturers and professors, although we get a variety of people to help us. Some—for example, 'Clash in the Pacific'—are prepared in Australia and are being used along with some other of our courses by Army Education. Our organisation is giving the army every co-operation it can. The courses on art, music and drama also include the sending of suitable illustrations—gramophone records, or reproductions of pictures, or plays which can be read around a group."

### "An Advantage to be a Woman"

As Mrs. Dunningham is the first woman to be appointed as tutor organiser, we asked whether she had found that her sex had in any way been a handicap on her preliminary tours.

"On the contrary," she replied, "I could not have been more welcome



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