

New Zealander from



Of the New Zealanders at present overseas, few are doing work of greater international importance than the agricultural and pastoral specialists. One of the most widely-travelled of these men, Dr. C. S. M. Hopkirk (right), slipped unobtrusively home the other day after 18 months in the still little-known land of Ethiopia. The work he was doing there is described below.

THE problem of feeding the world is one in which New Zealand, as a major exporter of meat and dairy produce, is largely concerned. But it has become a special problem for Dr. Hopkirk, formerly Director of the Animal Research Station at Wallaceville, who since the war has done much work as a top United Nations representative in advising Governments on livestock welfare and guiding the people of backward countries towards a more efficient agricultural production. From 1945 to 1947 Dr. Hopkirk travelled to many countries of Europe, and spent some months in Ethiopia and China as chief veterinarian for Unrra, working to eliminate stock diseases. From 1948 to 1952 he was veterinary adviser to the New Zealand High Commissioner in London, after which he went to FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations).

For the past 18 months he has been head of a 12-man FAO mission to Ethiopia. The mission included four veterinarians, as well as experts in forestry, cotton, coffee, hides and skins, seed propagation, small tools, and home economics. When he came into *The Listener* office the other day we asked him about the work he had been doing there.

"Ethiopia could be one of the wealthiest countries in Africa—it could be the wealthiest," he said. "It could be the bread basket of the Middle East. And besides its agricultural resources it has large mineral deposits which aren't being mined at present.

"One of our main objectives has been the elimination of rinderpest, which FAO regards as an international problem. We have divided the country up into areas and are inoculating beasts with serum manufactured in local factories. Fifty teams of Ethiopians are working in the field at the task of inoculation. We're saving animals, but what we are saving them for is what I want to know. There are no meat works yet, and the more we save from rinderpest the greater is the death of animals from starvation. No real advance will take place in the cattle industry until the farmers can export their meat."

"Wouldn't there be a ready market for any surplus beef?"

"No, because it would have to be tinned meat, which isn't so easy to sell. Since they have no selective breeding the cattle suitable for killing would be from nine to ten years old—not suitable for the frozen meat trade.

"But all aspects of their agriculture need improving. They need better range management, better grass, water, fencing, as well as selective breeding. They could improve their wheat, barley and oil seed crops out of sight with better seed, which they could import from neighbouring countries like Kenya.

"The real problem is education. That is their main need. We've shown them the way, and I think it would probably

be better now if FAO rested for a while. On the day they have their own agricultural college turning out students, and an extension service for farmers—that is when they should begin to get results. We must wait for a new generation to come along. The intelligentsia of the last generation were killed off in the war with the Italians, but the new generation coming along are avid for education. The Ethiopian wants to learn, particularly the farmer in the field. It is an extraordinary sensation to go out in the fields and see how keen the farmers are to hear what we can teach them. But as very often happens



A.P.S. photo



DR. HOPKIRK (left) and the FAO Forest Policy specialist, Dr. E. H. F. Swain (right), farewell three young Ethiopian trainees who are to complete their forestry studies in Australia

LEFT: There is nothing alien-looking to a New Zealander in this view of the Ethiopian plateau

the difficulty lies in getting the tools and information through to the man who is doing the job.

"Our expert in small tools, for instance, had a great success in demonstrating the advantages of the scythe. The farmers were delighted and enthusiastic to find that they could harvest double the crop with a scythe in the time it formerly took them using a reap-hook, yet there seemed to be no one willing to take the risk of importing scythes and selling them to the farmers."

"Did you notice much improvement since your last visit in 1946?"

"There has been very little general improvement, except in transport. When I left they were just clearing up Addis Ababa, and they are perfectly ruthless in tearing down houses to make room for new roads and buildings. They make no provision for the occupants after they have turned them out. But there you are, that's the feudal mind.

"There has been improvement in schools, with Point Four aid, and there is a university now. But I want to repeat that the great difficulty from our viewpoint is the lack of agricultural education. The Emperor, Haile Selassie, is very keen on agriculture, but before there is any real improvement they must have their agricultural schools and they must have trained staff. They are making a start by sending agricultural students to overseas institutions, and next year 12 are going abroad."

"You mention Point Four aid. Are there other missions at work in Ethiopia?"

"Yes, there is a 40-man Point Four mission from the United States, which is working in education and industry. There is also a small mission from WHO, the United Nations World Health Organisation, which is working to combat tuberculosis, venereal disease and leprosy."

"Was yours an international mission?"

"Very much so. There was an Australian, a Dane, a Norwegian, a Peruvian, a Scot, a South African, a Canadian, a Swiss, and a Haitian. There was another New Zealander besides myself, Jack Baker. He is home on leave now, but he is going back there soon to continue his work on rinderpest."

Dr. Hopkirk said he was not sure what he would do now that his work on the FAO mission to Ethiopia had ended. The work in Ethiopia would go on, but on a reduced scale.

"My main regret on leaving was that I did not get my leopard," he said. "I spent most of my time there working in an office in the capital and talking to Ministers and officials, so whenever I could get away I went out shooting in the country. I got plenty of other game, but my ambition was to get a leopard, and I had to come away disappointed.

"But Ethiopia is going to be a great country—a wealthy country and a wonderful agricultural country. And it will be a great stock-breeding country. I give it five years, and then Ethiopia will begin to go ahead."