

CHILDREN FROM MANY LANDS

NINETY children from 20 different countries recently gathered in Christchurch for what is believed to be New Zealand's first International Children's Party. The gathering was organised by Edna Neville, known as "Aunt Haysl" to thousands of young radio listeners from North Cape to Bluff. Miss Neville has conducted her own weekly children's session from 3ZB for nearly 13 years. Her motto, "Give to the world the best that you have, and the best will come back to you," was illustrated happily by the expressions on the youngsters' faces that morning.

Heralded by a piper, and led by a Scottish lad carrying a United Nations flag, the children—aged four to 15 years—marched up the stairs to the roof of a large Christchurch departmental store. There they all signed a special scroll, and it was while this was going on that I talked with some of them.

First to catch my eye was seven-year-old Frits van Tulder. Frits, who arrived here from Holland four years ago, was dressed in traditional Tyrolean costume, and wore a Sherwood green cap with a large and colourful patridge feather extending from the top.

Frits assisted the magician during his act later in the morning. Standing alongside him was another young chap who introduced himself to me as "Allan McCagherty, from Belfast, Ireland." Allan is seven years old, and when asked whether he liked living in New Zealand, said, "Mum wants to go back, but I don't." Then after a short pause he added, "But I suppose it would be good to see Belfast again."

Next to sign the scroll was a little Samoan girl aged five, with long black hair tied back by two blue ribbons, smooth dark skin and sparkling hazel eyes. Almost inaudibly she told me her name was Teresa Tiwer.

A brother and sister, Bruce and Susan Kaldor, were next in the line. Susan, who is eleven, and Bruce, eight, were born in India. They have lived with their parents in many countries, including Malaya, Australia, China and England. However, Susan admits quite confidently, that "New Zealand is the best of them all."

"Somebody's taken my bottle tops," was the tearful greeting I received from four-year-old Dianne Jones. However, smiles soon replaced tears when I admired her doll, which was tucked under her arm. The doll's name was Myfanwy, which in English means "my rare one"; but, according to Dianne, most dolls in Wales are called Gwinnith.

Diane's birthplace was Portmadoc, North Wales, which she left to come here nine months ago. She was dressed in the Welsh national costume, which included a red shawl, flannel apron, and black shoes with large silver buckles.

A display of dolls from all nations was set up in Miss Neville's office, and it was there that I met a 14-year-old lass with flaxen hair, from Norway. Her name was Dagmy Kleiven, but she explained that in New Zealand her friends call her "Karen." Karen was dressed in a Norwegian traditional costume. "The costume is one of many, and it depends on where you come from, because each district has its own particular design," she explained. "The material is hand-woven on looms and embroidered afterwards in colourful patterns." Karen said that in the cities of Norway the traditional costumes are almost a thing of the past, though they are still worn in country areas.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 18, 1957.



EDNA NEVILLE, who as Aunt Haysl has conducted a weekly children's session from 3ZB for nearly 13 years, talks to children from Poland and Wales at the International Children's Party—believed to be the first of its kind in New Zealand—held in Christchurch recently. On the right of Miss Neville is J. L. Hay, who was host at the party.

At this stage I decided to sit and watch the floor show, which was about to begin. First, the ventriloquist; then the magician; a Czecho-Slovakian dance, a Sean Truibhais, a sailor's hornpipe, and a Hungarian ballet. The whole programme provided the youngsters with amusing and interesting entertainment. During the ventriloquist's performance I couldn't help noticing that, although many of the children knew very little English, they all knew how to laugh.

The host, J. L. Hay, said afterwards that the occasion had a personal interest for him, as he is Acting-Chairman of the Local Immigration Welfare Committee. "Our job is to encourage persons who are new to New Zealand to meet as many people as possible," he said. "The whole trouble is that they are inclined to stay in small groups."

Paula Gross, an Austrian, presented the signed scroll to Mr Hay, and thanked him and Miss Neville for making the gathering possible.

The party ended with the children singing their own National Anthems in turn. These included "Wilhelmus van Nassauwe" (Dutch), "Ja vi Elsker" (Norwegian) and the American "Star Spangled Banner." All the children finished by singing together "God Save the Queen."

Miss Neville's last words to me before I left were: "The world is one home, and that is why all the boys and girls of other lands should meet one another. Gatherings such as this will develop understanding, sympathy and co-operation among the peoples of other countries, and will help to make the Earth a better place to live on for the younger generation—and the generations to follow."

—L. R. Bloxham

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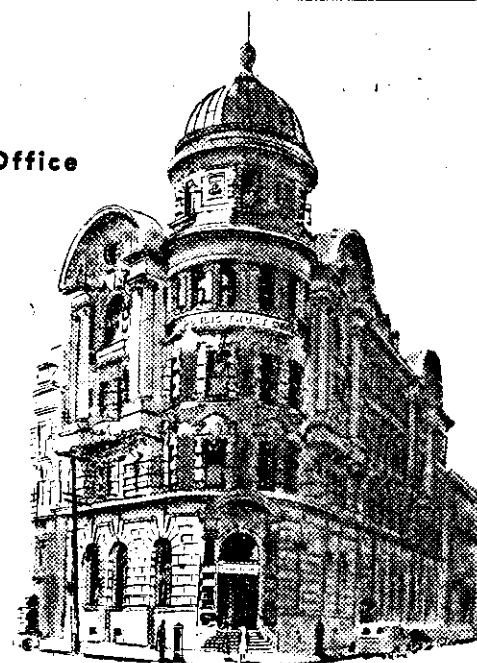
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