

A Conference—and an Interpreter

IN May, 1948, the Social Security Correspondence Committee of the International Labour Organisation met in Montreal and recommended to its Head Office in Geneva that a Social Security Committee of experts be set up. Through B. F. Waters, its representative in Montreal, the New Zealand Government issued an invitation to the I.L.O. Governing Body to hold the first session of the newly-formed Committee in New Zealand. The Governing Body was pleased to accept.

This Conference, which is in session in the House of Representatives Social Hall, Wellington, this week, is a history-making occasion. For one thing, it is the first full-scale international conference that has been held in New Zealand, and for another, it is the first international conference that has ever been held solely to discuss social security.

The members number about fifty. The majority are delegates sent by the various national governments who have accepted invitations to attend, but there is also a United Nations representative, C. Michel, two people from the International Social Security Association, a representative of the World Health Authority, and I.L.O. Employers' and Workers' Representatives.

By the time the Hon. J. T. Watts, Minister of Social Security, has opened the Conference, and the official work starts, a lot of unofficial but vitally necessary preparation will have been completed by Mr. Waters and his staff from the New Zealand Social Security Department.

A suitable conference room had to be selected, name plates stencilled, adequate telephone communication laid on, and staff provided to handle necessary work that R. Rao, Secretary to the Conference, and his staff of three, could not do. Arrangements had to be made to meet delegates and accommodate them. In these days of air travel, when actual travelling time is short, but bad weather or the need for some slight mechanical adjustment may mean the loss of a day en route, no one is quite sure when a certain delegate may arrive, particularly if that delegate has not advised his hosts that he has left his own country.

Although it was hoped, at the time of going to press, to broadcast at least part of the opening session, the actual Conference is private, and before any information on its deliberations is published, a report will be sent to Geneva. However, it is safe to say, as a generalisation, that by exchanging information and views, the delegates hope to help their governments evolve the social security scheme best suited to each particular country.

INTERNATIONAL conferences cannot function without interpreters. English, French and Spanish are spoken here and a modified system of successive interpreting is used.

Conference interpreters do get around. One of the I.L.O. staff team, Joan Riley, left Geneva on December 26 and flew

to Mysore, India, where she attended a quarterly I.L.O. Governing Body meeting from December 29 to January 7. She then went to Ceylon, where the Asian Regional Labour Conference met at Nuwara Eliya from January 16 to 28. Owing to difficulties with aircraft reservations Miss Riley had to leave Ceylon on January 23. She flew to Australia, spent two days in Sydney, crossed the Tasman, spent two days in Auckland, and on January 30 arrived in Wellington, where she hopes to settle down for three weeks.

Miss Riley told *The Listener* that there is a very good training school for interpreters in Geneva, but she did not attend it. She was born in Chile of Irish-English parentage, speaks Spanish as her native tongue, and French and English as well as most citizens of those countries. She also gets along in Portuguese and Italian.

After her schooling in Chile, which finished with the *Bachillerato*, an examination equivalent to our university entrance, she went on holiday to New York, got a job, worked there for two years, and then joined the I.L.O. in Geneva as a researcher. During the war the I.L.O. moved to Canada, where she lived for six years, and it was at the 1948 Social Security Correspondence Committee that she first started inter-



JOAN RILEY

Conference interpreters do get around

preting. One of the usual interpreters had a breakdown.

"They asked me to interpret," Miss Riley said. "I was scared stiff, but there was no one else to do it, so I had to."

"Here," Miss Riley went on, "there will only be a fairly small number of Spanish speaking delegates, and to speed

up proceedings we'll use what is known as whispering interpreting. That is, the Spanish speaking delegates will go off into a corner with the interpreter, who will translate in a whisper, either as the speech is being made, if the speaker is easy to follow, or as it is interpreted into French."

When Miss Riley is not at conferences she continues her work at Geneva as a researcher, following developments in social security legislation all over the world, studying conference reports, writing articles in the monthly *Labour Journal*, and supplying reports to industrial committees on social security questions within their particular industry.

"For instance," Miss Riley said, "boatmen on the Rhine work in five different countries: Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Their union called for a report from us on the differences between social security measures in each country: compensation, sickness, and old age benefits, so that they could hold a conference and try to find some way of making these benefits uniform, or at least the qualifications for them."

Miss Riley, who has lived in so many places that she is at home anywhere, liked the gardens of Auckland and Wellington, and is enthusiastic about New Zealand tea, but one of the first things she did in Wellington was to buy "a sturdy tweed suit to keep the winds out."

N.Z. THEATRE

"Othello" Recorded for Broadcast

WHEN the Wellington Repertory Society presented Shakespeare's *Othello* at the St. James' Theatre, Wellington, in October last, recordings of the play were made by the NZBS through a land-line from the stage to the Production Studios. It was the first time in the Society's history that one of its complete performances had been recorded. Subsequently the play, which on the stage occupies about three hours, was abridged for radio purposes to 95 minutes, and the recordings will be heard over the four YA stations during March.

To make the recordings microphones were placed at the front of the stage and also upstage, with the result (according to the producer, Kenneth Firth) that there is a suggestion of distance between the microphone and the actor—a condition which does not exist in a studio performance. Dramatic pauses, which in the theatre are part of the general effect, are also slightly noticeable. But the experiment is an interesting one, as listeners will discover for themselves.

The principal roles were played by Selwyn Toogood (*Othello*), Briton Chadwick (*Iago*), Molly Parton (*Desdemona*), Maureen Ross-Smith (*Emilia*), Desmond Lock (*Cassio*), John Humphries (*Roderigo*), L. J. Maule (*Brabantio*), and Phyllis Jeffries (*Bianca*). The recordings will be broadcast from 3YA on Wednesday, March 1; 1YA on Friday, March 10; 4YA on Monday, March 20; and 2YA on Thursday, March 30, in each case at approximately 7.30 p.m.



BRITON CHADWICK (*Iago*) and SELWYN TOOGOOD (*Othello*) in the Wellington Repertory Society's production of "*Othello*"