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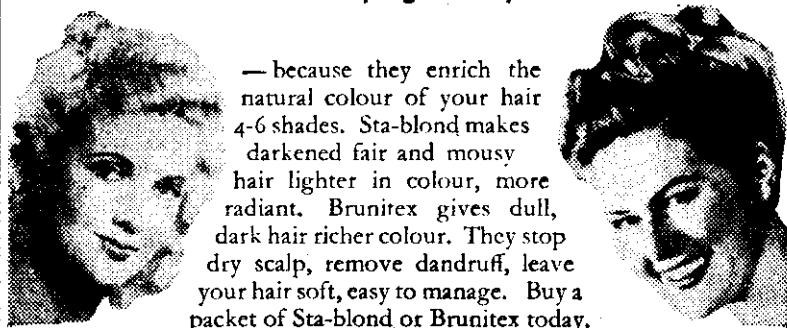
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New Beginning in the Pacific

SOME of the people who influenced the early development of the South Pacific did not go there with the highest motives. Their story was one of individual effort, unplanned, tending to extremes, the motives varying with the individuals, and the individuals varying according to chance.

Today the motives are higher, and the action is planned. The newest phase of planning for action in the South Pacific was first proposed in the Australian and New Zealand Agreement of January, 1944 (The Anzac Pact), the idea being to follow the precedent already existing in the Caribbean area, where the United Kingdom and the United States of America established an Advisory Commission in 1942.

The Australian and New Zealand Governments invited the Governments of the Netherlands, France, the U.S. and the U.K. to a conference in January, 1947, to discuss the formation of such a Commission. The formal, diplomatic end to the letter of invitation signed by Dr. Evatt, makes an unconsciously apt summary of the general aims of modern governments towards the welfare of developing peoples:

*I have the honour to be,
With the highest consideration,
Your obedient servant*

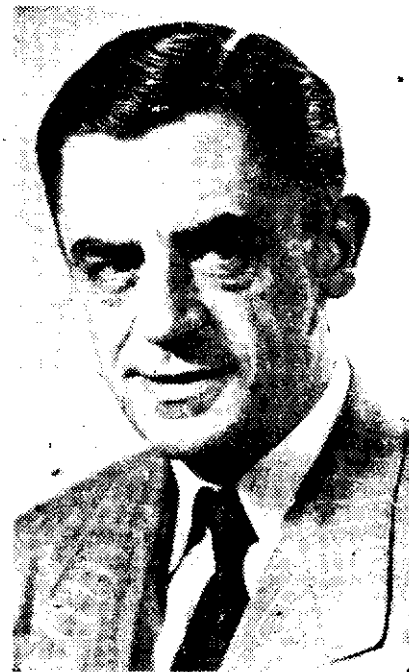
The honour, and the highest consideration, and the obedience to the needs of the dependent peoples are all implicit in the constitution of the South Pacific Commission, which was set up as a result of this conference.

W. D. Forsyth, Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, told *The Listener* about the work the Commission has done in the short time it has been operating. Mr. Forsyth, a small, dark, precisely fluent man, slightly burned by the tropics, handles in his work enough of the New Zealand taxpayer's money to make that glad giver raise his head from his income tax demand and take a little notice.

The South Pacific Commission is composed of Commissioners representing six Governments controlling 13 territories in an area from Netherlands New Guinea, east to French Oceania, and south from the Equator, an area in which at least 250 different languages and dialects are spoken. The Commission has no organic relationship with the United Nations, but it is registered under Article 102 of the Charter, and intends to co-operate as fully as possible with U.N. Its work is financed by the six participating Governments, with Australia and New Zealand bearing between them 45 per cent of the cost. If the New Zealand taxpayer had to part with ten times the amount he is at present paying for the upkeep of the Commission, it would still be very much worth his while. His own security depends on the peaceful progress of his neighbours in the Near North, and it is with their peaceful social progress that the Commission is concerned.

Besides emphasising the inter-governmental aspect of the Commission, Mr. Forsyth made two other basic points.

"The Commission," he said, "is not a super-administration. It exists to serve



W. D. FORSYTH
Honour, consideration, obedience

administrations through advice to the responsible Governments. It was conceived as a co-ordinating and liaison body, and is also concerned with research, and with assembling the knowledge already available in different centres."

The Commission is the governing body, but recommendations on which it makes decisions can come from two auxiliary bodies, the Research Council, and the South Pacific Conference. The Research Council originates investigations in such fields as health, economic development, and social development, under its Deputy Chairman, Dr. L. G. M. Baas-Becking, of the Netherlands, and three other permanent members. Besides these four men, there are 15 associate members who have special knowledge of particular localities and technical knowledge of the problems in the area.

The second auxiliary body, the South Pacific Conference, is designed to give the inhabitants of the area a voice in making recommendations to the Commission, and also to help the Commission find out what the local inhabitants think of its aims and the way it is carrying them out. The Conference will hold its first meeting in Suva next April, and it will be attended by representatives of all the territories in the Commission's area.

They already have a good deal to discuss. Thirty projects are contemplated. Two of them have been completed and most of the others are well under way. Now that difficulties of establishing headquarters in Noumea have been substantially overcome, and the Research Council's investigations are progressing, it will not be long before these investigations produce sufficient facts for the Commission to give national Governments advice. After that, Mr. Forsyth implied, it would be up to the national Governments to act on the advice.

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 24, 1950.