

BUT IT'S COLD DOWN HERE

THE four young Africans who walked into the office of Unesco headquarters in Wellington did not seem ill at ease. With their neat suits and wide smiles they might have been taken by anyone for American Negroes, but they have come out here from Liberia, a small West African republic, to study science on Unesco scholarships. Although they have only been in New Zealand for a few weeks they seemed remarkably well adjusted to their new environment. They had been selected from a number of applicants, and there was no doubt, as they talked, about their willingness to learn as much as they could while they were here, and to enjoy their new experience as much as possible.

Their names are John Freeman, Edward Sambolah, Gilbert Cole and Richard Brown. When they realised that they were being interviewed by *The Listener* the other three looked at Richard Brown and started to laugh.

"I used to be editor of a Liberian paper called *The Listener*," he said. "It's a daily newspaper published in Monrovia, the capital city, and I was its first editor."

We asked them what subjects they were studying here and what they had been doing at home before they came out.

"Edward and I are studying biology," Richard Brown said, "and Gilbert is doing mathematics."

"My subject is chemistry," John Freeman said.

Mr Brown and Mr Cole said they had been teaching in the secondary department of a Methodist Mission School in the Western Province. Mr Freeman said he had been teaching in the primary department of the Episcopal High School at Robertsport, and Mr Sambo'ah in the primary department of the Methodist College of West Africa. They were all

going to be secondary school teachers when they went home.

They explained that there is a shortage of trained science teachers in Liberia, and that they had been sent out to New Zealand for training on the recommendation of A. J. D. Barker, lecturer in biological science at Wellington Teachers' Training College, who recently returned from a two-year visit to Liberia as a Unesco representative. He had taught nature study and allied branches of science at the University of Liberia, and had also done plant research. One practical result of his visit, on the industrial side, had been his discovery of the cause of the swollen shoot disease

which has been affecting cocoa plants in West Africa.

How did they like living in New Zealand?

"Too cold," Mr. Freeman said, laughing, and added that they had flown out in a few days from a Liberian summer to a New Zealand winter.

"I like the people here," Mr. Cole said. "New Zealanders are very friendly, but some look curiously when they see us passing as if they had never seen an African before. And some people gossip. They talk about us when we pass them in the street."

Mr. Brown said: "I'm sorry I'm here without my wife. She couldn't come because she's in an essential job, training nurses." And Mr. Sambolah had one mild complaint: "Many people do not know where Liberia is; they think we come from America!"

They explained that Liberia is between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast, that it is a little smaller than the North Island in size, and that its population is about a million larger than the whole of New Zealand's. Richard Brown, the journalist, told us briefly about the political organisation of the country. He said that their republican form of government, and their constitution, were modelled on the American. They had a Senate and House of Representatives, as in America, and they had universal suffrage. The country was first established by the American Colonisation Society as a settlement for American freed slaves in 1821, and was proclaimed an independent republic in 1847. The currency is American dollars, and Monrovia was declared a free port of exchange for American aid in building the harbour. The main industries are rubber, based on a million-acre plantation concession granted to the Firestone Company in the 1920s, and more recently

high-grade iron ore production from rich deposits. Elephants are still hunted in the interior and there is a considerable trade in ivory. The staple foods are rice, tapioca, maize and cocoa.

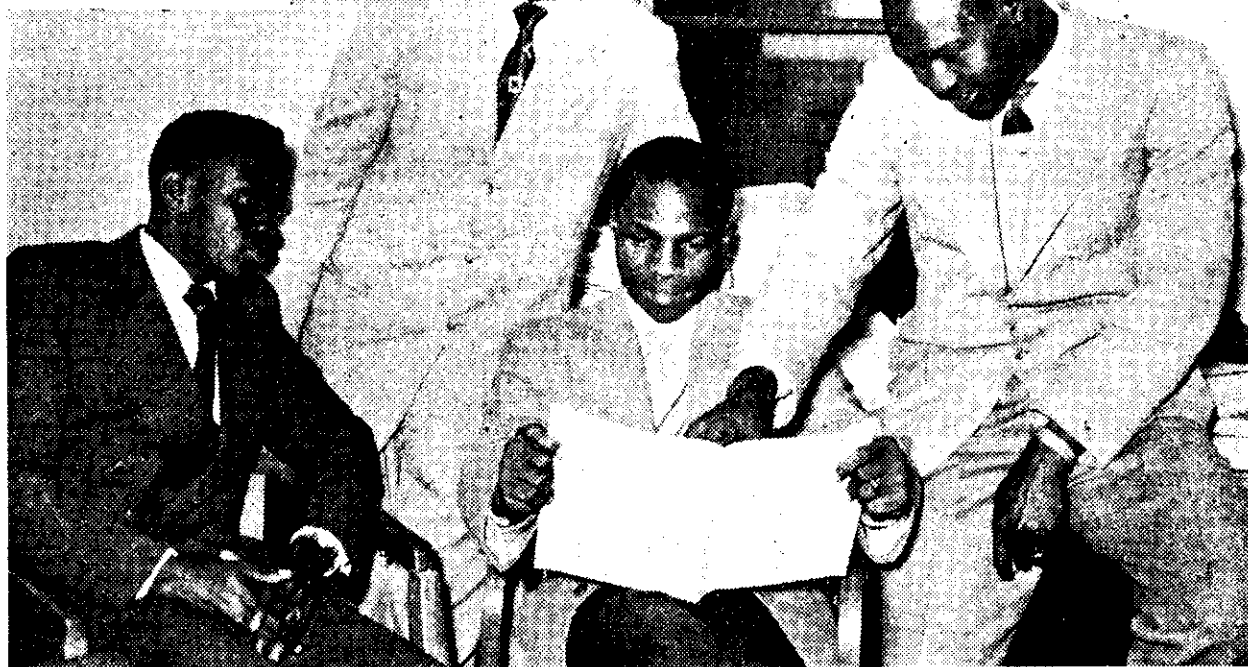
The United Nations was doing a great deal to help Liberians, they explained, in such matters as agriculture (through FAO) and health (through WHO). Liberian agriculture was being helped by better seed selection and scientific methods of farming, and there were government experimental stations where better breeds of cattle, poultry and pigs were being developed. The American Point Four plan was also doing much to help Liberia at present by financing the construction of good roads into the interior to promote education, commerce and health. At least a hundred scholarships were provided every year for Liberian students to go to other parts of the world. Many went to America, and others to Britain and Europe. Another Liberian student at present in New Zealand is Wilhelmina Bryant, a teacher who is studying training college administration here, and who will take over a new teachers' training college when she returns.

The students were all warmly appreciative of the assistance they have received from Unesco in New Zealand, especially in finding them board, and holiday entertainment, as well as providing every facility for study.

"None of us has regretted coming here," Richard Brown said.

They said they were studying very hard at the Wellington Technical College as a preliminary to university work next year. In their spare time they had hoped to be able to play soccer or basketball, though they hadn't had much spare time yet.

"Most of our spare time we spend trying to keep warm," Richard Brown said.



JOHN FREEMAN, EDWARD SAMBOLAH, GILBERT COLE, RICHARD BROWN
Liberia has its own "Listener"

N.P.S. photograph



THE main industry of Liberia is rubber. Here skilled rubber tappers are seen returning to a station with the morning's harvest