

GIFT PARCELS.

In conjunction with the Provincial Patriotic Councils, the Board arranged for the despatch at quarterly periods of an unaddressed gift parcel for each member of the armed forces abroad. The work of preparing, packing, and despatching these parcels and of varying the contents from time to time is one of considerable magnitude. The many letters of thanks received by the Board indicate that the unaddressed gift parcel scheme is one of the most popular activities of the patriotic organizations. The following letters are typical examples of the appreciation expressed by men at the front:—

From Major-General B. Freyberg, V.C., in Egypt—

“Beside me as I dictate this letter is a pile of good things which might have come from a Christmas hamper—tins of barley sugar, coffee and milk, nugget, some cheese, and last but not least a cake. There is no doubt the patriotic gifts were greatly appreciated, and the day of opening the parcels was like a birthday for everybody. If those who were responsible for getting together this generous collection of gift parcels could have seen them being distributed and opened here in Egypt I know that they would have felt their trouble had been well repaid. May I also thank you for the great help your fund has been to the N.Z.E.F. as a whole. No troops are better cared for than ours.”

From a Private Soldier in Egypt—

“I wish to convey to you my grateful thanks for the very fine parcel which I received a few days ago. The distribution of the many parcels took place amid scenes of great enthusiasm, and the numerous contents of each one were greatly appreciated by us all. I would like also to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation, which I'm sure is shared by us all here, of the wonderful work which your organization, and the New Zealand people generally, are doing on our behalf.”

PROVISION OF WOOLLEN GOODS.

In the provision of woollen goods the Board has acted to some extent as the central supplying and distributing authority for the Provincial Councils, and this arrangement has been of value, particularly at times when available supplies of wool have been limited. The woollen goods supplied to the Services include gloves, mittens, balaclavas, scarves, heel-less socks, and sea-boot stockings. The Board is endeavouring to build up a reserve stock of these articles in order to meet increased demands expected during the forthcoming year. On page 8 will be found a table showing the number of knitted articles received and their distribution.

ACTIVITIES WITHIN CAMPS IN NEW ZEALAND AND OVERSEAS.

Apart from the valuable work performed by the Provincial Patriotic Councils and their many allied organizations and clubs in arranging entertainment for troops in camps and on leave in New Zealand and in providing sports gear, &c., other necessary work in camps which can more efficiently be controlled by a central organization is carried out under the supervision of the Board. The Defence authorities are concerned mainly with the provision of necessary standard service establishments for the training and accommodation of the men, and the provision of institutional huts is not part of the Army establishment. The Board has therefore undertaken the responsibility of providing and equipping institutional huts and marquees for the use of the various established national welfare organizations in camps. Up to the end of September, 1940, approximately thirty-six such huts or marquees had been erected in New Zealand and furnished by the Board, and similar establishments were provided overseas. The supply of radios, newspapers, books, and other amenities for these huts is also a financial responsibility of the Board, but much of this expenditure is of a non-recurring nature, although expense is involved in maintaining the buildings.

PROVISION OF RADIOS AND FILMS.

In order to assist in entertaining Navy, Army, and Air Force men the Board has made arrangements, where necessary, for the supply of radio sets, and has provided facilities for the screening of films. Every troopship leaving New Zealand is supplied with a selection of films. Battery radio sets have been forwarded with each echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and receiving sets have also been provided for men on minesweepers, at fortress and guard stations, and in training camps within the Dominion. The value of these radio sets supplied by the Board is evidenced by the following extract from a letter sent to the Board from an Army Officer in Egypt:—

“We get all the London and Continental broadcasts, and it certainly makes life a little more interesting. At the moment there is a bright programme of dance music coming over. If you knew what it means to have ‘swing’ in the desert—it is such a contrast to the general air of ancient mustiness and decay. The healthy modern touch makes us feel that perhaps after all we didn't leave 1940 when we left New Zealand.”

NEW ZEALAND NAVY LEAGUE WAR COUNCIL.

In making provision for naval ratings, the Board works in close collaboration with the Navy Office and the Navy League War Council. In general, the various branches of the Navy League throughout New Zealand work in conjunction with the Provincial Patriotic Councils in providing for naval ratings on shore stations and at ports in their respective territories, and the Board attends to urgent requirements for naval ratings proceeding abroad and while on active service.