

VI. PRISONERS OF WAR

Further information came to hand concerning New Zealand nationals in the hands of the Japanese, and the details received were communicated to the next-of-kin or nearest relative in New Zealand.

Many inquiries were received from persons in New Zealand in an effort to trace relatives or friends missing in the Far East, and these were passed on to the proper authorities for inquiry. In a number of cases it was possible to obtain authentic information for the inquirers.

In view of the growth of this work, discussions were held between the responsible Departments with a view to establishing a more central and co-ordinated authority to deal with all matters concerning prisoners of war, civilian internees, and interned merchant seamen. As a result of these discussions the New Zealand Missing and Prisoner of War Agency was set up under the control of the Director of Base Records, and that Agency now carries out the functions previously handled by this Department in regard to civilian internees. The Marine Department has taken over the administration of matters relating to missing and interned merchant servicemen.

VII. PHYSICAL WELFARE AND RECREATION

The Department continued to strengthen its position in this field. Good will with the public increased appreciably, and a favourable attitude was shown by leading newspapers to the principal features of the policy outlined by the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs in his statement to Parliament in November.

Despite limitation of staff due to war conditions, the men and women officers gave a wide range of service, regarding which this report mentions only the main activities. They continued to assist local recreation organizations, clubs, and Councils of Sport. Leaders were trained and demonstrations arranged.

Officers continued to organize physical-training programmes for the Air Training Corps. A high standard has been achieved in this work, and the value of the training given is recognized by the Service authorities.

"Learn to Swim" campaigns were conducted in various areas of the Dominion in co-operation with local swimming and life-saving organizations. As a result, some two thousand five hundred persons in rural areas, where there are normally no facilities for learning to swim, were taught the fundamentals of swimming and reached a satisfactory standard.

Six complete recreational layout plans were drawn up for Borough Councils and Town Boards, these being prepared in the light of the latest information from overseas and modern trends in recreation facility construction.

Despite transport conditions, the huts and tracks operated in the Harper Pass area attracted many trampers. The parties using the huts included several whole families which desired a recreative holiday rather than an arduous tramping tour.

Discussions took place with the New Zealand Youth Hostels Association regarding the development of a system of youth hostels throughout New Zealand. A strong organization is being set up by the association for this purpose.

A conference of women officers was held to correlate and improve the work for women's organizations throughout the Dominion. As one result the Department, in co-operation with the National Council of Churches, instituted a thirty-hour recreation leaders' course, which will enable the churches throughout the country to obtain training for the leaders of their youth organizations, thus qualifying them to carry out effective programmes of recreational activities. In addition to this scheme, 540 personnel for church organizations were in training and some of these have already completed part of the examination for the Recreation Leaders' Certificate.

Women officers assisted the formation of an Inter-house Marching Association to promote girls' inter-house marching contests throughout the Dominion, and also a Women's Indoor Basketball Association.

Arrangements were made with several of the nations interested in the promotion of physical welfare and recreation activities—namely, England, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Russia, and the United States of America—to exchange information and details of current programmes and projected plans.

Much thought has been given to the prospective expansion of the Department when staff and finance permit. A scheme of proposed developments was submitted by the Hon. the Minister in his statement to Parliament. The main points were:—

- (1) The provision of facilities for holidays for industrial workers :
- (2) The development of the group-travel service on a national basis :
- (3) The construction of mountain track systems and encouragement of youth hostels and tramping clubs :
- (4) The establishment of holiday camps where desirable :
- (5) The provision of greater opportunities for recreation at tourist resorts :
- (6) The improvement of the beaches of New Zealand and encouragement of surfing and swimming :
- (7) Co-operation with the New Zealand Council of Sport to encourage sport :
- (8) Encouragement of local authorities to equip and maintain community centres :
- (9) The publication of up-to-date information on sport and recreation through a magazine, pamphlets, and sports manuals :
- (10) Extension of the services of District Physical Welfare Officers.