

It would not be inappropriate at this stage to give honourable members a brief review of the part which New Zealand has played in the world war to date.

As you will remember, immediately on the outbreak of war New Zealand pledged the whole of her resources—men, materials, and base facilities—until the war was brought to a successful conclusion. An Expeditionary Force of a division, with the necessary reinforcements, was trained and despatched overseas, while a steady and growing stream of men joined the Navy and the Air Force. Initially voluntary recruiting was relied upon, but, following the German victories of May, 1940, conscription for military service was introduced. While our objective was to send the maximum number of men to the Middle East, proper provision had necessarily to be made for continuing and increasing our primary production, so as to meet the growing needs of Great Britain, and at the same time for the manufacture of munitions in New Zealand. So well was this objective achieved that by the end of 1941, although no less than 55,000 men and women had been sent overseas, by the substitution of women in industry, by working longer hours, by the return to work of our older men and women, and by the curtailment of non-essential industries, record production had resulted in both the primary and secondary industries.

On the entry of Japan into the war, with the danger of invasion to our shores, the building-up of a home-defence force became a matter of immediate concern. The Territorial Force was mobilized on a full-time basis, and service in the Home Guard and Emergency Reserve Corps became compulsory. So complete was this mobilization, that the numbers of men withdrawn from industry to the Armed Forces increased from 86,000 in 1941 to 170,000 (equivalent to 10 per cent. of the total population) in 1942.

Towards the end of 1942 the Allies had gained the upper hand in the Pacific, and it then became possible to reduce our armed strength within New Zealand so as to give much-needed relief to primary production and war industries generally, and to build up the New Zealand Forces in the Pacific. These Forces played their part in saving us from the threat of invasion. At this time a very considerable increase was made in the Air Force personnel in the Pacific which, with our commitments under the Empire Air Training Scheme, added to the strain on our man-power resources.

During 1943 the demands on New Zealand for increased food-production became more and more insistent. In the Pacific the Americans had built up substantial Forces, many of which could best be fed and accommodated by New Zealand, while at the same time the presence in Great Britain of vast armies preparing for the invasion of Europe, and the necessity for establishing stocks in anticipation of the liberation of Europe, intensified the need to produce foodstuffs to the limit. It was accordingly decided, with the full concurrence of our Allies, to withdraw one of the divisions from overseas, and, after negotiation with the Combined Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington, the Pacific Division was withdrawn. This decision made possible the introduction of a scheme for the replacement of those who had served in the Middle East for three or more years.

As an indication of New Zealand's military effort it might be mentioned that at the end of 1940 one man out of every five between the ages of nineteen and forty-five was in the Armed Forces, a year later the proportion had increased to one in every three, while by the end of 1942 more than two out of every five were serving. Since the war began, New Zealand has sent over 134,000 men and women overseas, of whom 6,000 were with the Navy, 98,000 with the Army, and 30,000 with the Air Force.

It is not necessary for me to remind you of the exploits of our sailors, soldiers, or airmen, Maori and pakeha, in the field of battle—all the Allied Commanders have spoken in the highest terms of their prowess, but it would be appropriate to point out that, to April last, 7 Victoria Crosses had been awarded to members of our Forces, and other awards (including mention in despatches), totalled 4,273.

These results have not been achieved without casualties. To the relations of those who have lost their lives, we offer a nation's thanks and sympathy. Those who gave their lives have made the greatest gift that is in a man's power, and it is for us who live to make ourselves worthy of that supreme sacrifice. We are also not unmindful of the debt which we owe to those who have been wounded or disabled, and to them and their comrades who have returned we pledge ourselves to do all that is humanly possible to repay them for what they have done.

Since the advent of the present Government the principle of complete equality of Maori and pakeha in wage-rates, social security benefits, education, and other fields has been firmly established.