

# Wellington's Farewell

## To New Zealand's Second Expeditionary Force

### Magnificent and Inspiring Spectacle

Not since the last war has Wellington given such an enthusiastic public demonstration as that which tens of thousands of its citizens gave to the First Echelon of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, which passed through the City streets last Wednesday week.

The march of the young soldiers was a brilliant and impressive scene, one of deep emotion; of deeper thought, tinged with a sadness subservient to a thrilling and involuntary surge of patriotism. The fact that this is the Dominion's Centennial year increased the poignancy of the parade of young men who are freely giving themselves to safeguard the country's progress New Zealand is celebrating. The ceremony over, and the men off on their march through the city, and the full immensity of the crowd became apparent. Lambton Quay, its thousands swollen by the swarms disgorged from the grounds where the ceremony had taken place, was a drifting river of people, building to building; and when eventually motor-cars and trams tried to reclaim thoroughfare, the scuffle and murmur of the crowd were overlaid by a blanket of sirens and gongs.

More than an hour before the ceremony was timed to begin, practically all points of vantage had been taken. A huge crowd had taken possession of the ground in front of the Government Buildings. Molesworth Street had been transformed into a solid mass sliced by a ribbon of roadway, and the grounds themselves were held by an expectant multitude. But still people arrived, cramming the steps leading to the plateau and controlled by patient police.

In the sultry warmth of the summer morning there was that hush that comes with crowded humanity waiting for something to happen. Burst of cheering and clapping rose spontaneously as the first of the bands swung the marching men into view, marching three abreast in precise columns across one of the few cleared spaces before being engulfed by the thousands of watchers. Only the muzzles of the rifles, with occasional flashes from band instruments, marked the progress of the troops until they began to mount the winding carriage-way. Cheering was renewed when at last the men were freed from the flanking lines of well-wishers, and echoed from the street below as a second unit appeared. Whistles of officers shrilled and orders were rapped as the soldiers passed before the

columns of Parliament Buildings.

As a background to this moving scene of willing sacrifice were the three grey and graceful funnels of a waiting troopship, the sternmost of which fumed idly, and, further away, the tall control tower of H.M.S. Ramillies, grimly capable.

The tall buildings surrounding Parliament Buildings had been utilised as an effective gallery. Heads packed the higher windows of Government buildings, a few of the more intrepid watchers clung to the sloping iron of the roof, and copings, roofs and window-sills of other buildings each bore their burden of people. Under the effect of foreshortening, the railway station seemed girdled with flags, some drooping, and the lighter standards fluttering weakly.

The background spoke of New Zealand determination to carry on.

#### THE OFFICIAL STAGE.

Before the main steps of Parliament Buildings was the official staging, studded with the white crowns of naval hats, and flecked with many colours, but none brighter, at the moment, than the Union Jacks that draped the boxed sides. Microphones bristled, cameramen made the only movement that disturbed the ordered appearance of the ground occupied by the soldiers, now at ease, and a movie camera mounted on a van whirred softly. The buildings were surrounded by flags; indeed, from that corner of Wellington all the city seemed beflagged.

And the tramp of the feet and the shrill of whistles continued. Yet another band wheeled smartly, with "Keep the Home Fires Burning"; more orders ripped out, more expert rifle drill. And when at last the long rank of men were ready, trim in their khaki, the colours of their puggarees the only distinguishing feature, cheering broke out anew as the Prime Minister descended the steps.

A sharp order, the bayonets rattled as they were fixed. A voice made stentorian by a loud-speaker called the parade to order, and in perfect unity arms were presented for the Royal salute. The strains of the National Anthem, never more impressive and inspiring, spread with dignity through the grounds, and as arms were again sloped, clapping that could not be checked came from the crowd in appreciation of the expertness of the troops.

None watched the young soldiers of to-day with more interest and more feeling than the returned men who fought in the last war. Themselves in the parade, they stood in fours in Molesworth Street, hundreds who gave of their best in the last war. Medals

were mute evidence of deeds of bravery and service, and it was when the Prime Minister mentioned Major-General Sir Andrew Russell, their leader in the Great War, that they led the applause.

While the speeches of thanks, praise and farewell continued, the statue of Richard John Seddon, overlooking the gathered people, assumed a greater significance. The upraised arm seemed to be raised in exhortation, appealing to New Zealanders to follow the soldiers in their patriotic efforts.

At last the farewell was over. The first lines to move off were the returned men, and the rest of the units followed in the order in which they arrived. Military bands played the first of the marching, and then the band of H.M.S. Ramillies, stationary opposite the Government Buildings, took up the playing.

## Marching Through City

### SPLENDID SIGHT.

Over the whole of its route from Parliament Buildings, down Molesworth Street, along Lambton Quay, Willis Street, Mercer Street, Jervois Quay, Customhouse Quay, and Waterloo Quay to the Railway Station, the procession of returned soldiers and men of the First Echelon of the Special Force were greeted with applause and cheering of a sincerity which not even a Royal visit has aroused.

Punctually at 10.45 the parade began to move off from the grounds of Parliament Buildings, down Molesworth Street, and as the head of the procession reached the War Memorial the crowd there was increased by hundreds who deserted their posts in the Parliament Grounds after the speech-making was over.

The officer commanding the parade, Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Varnham, M.C., E.D., Officer Commanding the 19th Wellington Battalion, marched at the head of the parade immediately behind the Artillery Band.

#### TRIBUTE AT WAR MEMORIAL.

As each unit of the parade passed the War Memorial, where the band of H.M.S. Ramillies was stationed, silent tribute was paid to the memory of those who did not return from the last Great War, officers giving the salute and men the "eyes right."

Preceded by a traffic officer on a motor-cycle and two mounted constables, the parade left the War Memorial to the martial strains of "Colonel Bogey," played by the Boys' Institute Band. As the long line wound its way up the Quay its approach was heralded by a buzz of excited applause, which travelled all the way a hundred yards or so ahead of the leading units, and crowds which had previously been contented on the footpaths pressed forward suddenly to join the ranks of those already lining the tram rails. Opposite the Magistrate's Court the crowd was eight deep on both sides of the road.

Given pride of place by reason of sacrifices already made, the returned soldiers who led the procession were

a stirring sight, and they received a measure of applause that was their due. Hundreds of them participated in the parade, the very great majority wearing medals, some limping, keeping pace with the rest, and some few in Army and Air Force uniforms of to-day. Behind the ranks of returned men in "civvies" marched the coastal battery returned men, wearing again the khaki with which they first became familiar more than years ago. They, too, were given a rousing reception at different points along the route.

The ex-servicemen, with their bands, the other being the Nicholson Band, took seven minutes to pass the War Memorial.

#### MARCHING IN THREES.

Then came the men of the First Echelon, led by the band of the Second Field Brigade, New Zealand Artillery. Except for one small section they marched in threes, in a contrast to the fours formation of preceding parts of the parade.

Stretching as far as the eye could see along the curve of the Quay, shouldered rifles made a splendid impressive sight. The men marched with precision, some with serious faces as if mindful of the serious nature of their mission, but the majority more cheerful countenances, their greetings to friends in the crowd.

Midway in the procession came the Band of the 1st Battalion, Wellington Regiment, and after it was the conspicuous figure in the parade, half-proud, half-bewildered white, the unofficial mascot of the 19th Wellington Battalion of the Special Force. Though he was rarely in the he kept station faultlessly, conducting himself throughout his ordeal with the soldierly bearing expected of

More troops were followed by pipes and drums of the First Battalion, Wellington Regiment, and came the final sections of the parade.

People stood or clung precariously to every possible vantage point on car roofs, trucks, and tramcars stationary, of course, were far from grandstands. Hardly a window on the Quay and Willis Street was without its spectators.

Streamers were freely used long after the parade had passed. Cheers of thousands of them from overhead bore testimony to the enthusiasm of the people. All along the route the parade was cheered and applauded the occasion being one to arouse the Wellingtonians from their resignation.

As soon as the last of the parade had passed from Lambton Quay towards the heart of the city, the thousands of people who had watched the beginning of the march from the grounds of Parliament Buildings streamed across to Waterloo Quay to be in readiness for the return of the soldiers to the Railway Station. They had not long to wait, for the procession was so long that its head had turned north along Jervois Quay very few minutes after the parade had entered Lambton Quay.

The men marched straight on to platforms, where three troops were waiting to convey them to camp. The entraining was done out quickly and without fuss, but a final example of the care and efficient organisation that was maintained throughout the whole of