

INTRODUCTION

THE growth and development of New Zealand's war effort during the first three years of war is best regarded as falling into two distinct phases :—

- (i) The period from the outbreak of war in Europe in September, 1939, up to the outbreak of war in the Pacific in December, 1941 :
- (ii) The remaining period, during which the war has been waged in the Pacific as well as in other major theatres.

As the war situation assumed a new and ominous aspect during the second of these periods, so the whole organization of New Zealand's war effort was directed throughout this period towards new objectives. Some phases, surviving from the earlier period, had to be rapidly accelerated ; others had to be entirely reconstructed and directed along new lines, while at the same time other and entirely new forms of organization had to be created to meet the needs of the new situation.

The functions of the National Service Department are intimately inter-woven with the war effort as a whole. Man-power pervades all phases of human activity, and the primary function of this Department is to mobilize and distribute the available resources of man-power among the many sections of the war organization as a whole so as to secure the best over-all result, the major objectives being to secure the safety of the Dominion and to make the most effective possible contribution to the total defeat of the Axis powers, without at the same time losing sight of post-war considerations.

As the war situation has changed, and the Dominion's war organization has had to be transformed to meet these changes, so have the activities of this Department also reflected these changes. The rapidity of the growth and subsequent transformations of the Department form indeed one of its most striking features.

It is proposed to divide the present report into two main sections—the first describing the inception of the Department and its activities during the earlier period up to December, 1941, and the second describing the later developments during the remaining period against the changed background of the altered war situation.

A short concluding section has been added to deal with staff, finance, and expenditure, while an Appendix containing three diagrams and a number of statistical tables relating to the whole period from the outbreak of war up to the end of March, 1943, will be found at the end of the report.

PART I.—THE PERIOD FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR UP TO DECEMBER, 1941

1. THE WAR SITUATION WHICH HAD TO BE FACED PRIOR TO DECEMBER, 1941

DURING this earlier period the war was being fought in theatres other than the Pacific. Though there were signs that Japan might possibly enter the war, there was at no time sufficient cause to prepare seriously against immediate invasion. On the other hand, the Dominion had at an early stage despatched a division to the Middle East, and the need to send periodic reinforcements to this Division, together with the requirements of the Empire Air Training Scheme and overseas Naval commitments, all combined to set up a substantial annual demand for thoroughly fit men who could be despatched to any part of the world.

At the same time it was decided that a substantial Territorial Force should be maintained in the Dominion and trained on a part-time basis. This force, which was supplemented by the National Military Reserve and a volunteer Home Guard, both of which paraded only in evenings and weekends, comprised the principal Home Defence Force of the Dominion, and as such had to be adequately provided with personnel up to the limit fixed by War Cabinet. This personnel was not required to be of as high a physical standard as applied to overseas service.

As regards war industries, the Dominion's major industrial contribution has from the outset been the provision of foodstuffs, and particular care was necessary to ensure that the farming and other primary industries, and those secondary industries engaged in the processing and transport of foodstuffs and similar products, were not unduly depleted of man-power. Even so, it may be said in general that all industries without exception were expected in the earliest stages of the war to make some contribution of man-power towards meeting the needs of the forces, notwithstanding that they were also in many cases increasing their volume of production.

The war effort over the period up to December, 1941, may be summed up therefore as :—

- (a) The provision and maintenance of the Division overseas :
- (b) The provision of a substantial Territorial Force at home, involving part-time service only :
- (c) The provision and training of Air Force personnel for home and overseas service :
- (d) The provision and training of Naval personnel for home and overseas service :
- (e) The maintenance of ancillary organizations, such as the National Military Reserve, the Home Guard, the Emergency Reserve Corps, and the Women's War Service Auxiliary, none of which involved withdrawal of personnel from industry :
- (f) The development of war industries, including the provision of increasing quantities of foodstuffs, uniforms, boots, equipment, &c., for war purposes, notwithstanding an overall loss of fit man-power.

2. INCEPTION AND EARLY FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

The progressive deterioration in European international relations in 1939 had presaged war, and for some months prior to its outbreak a Departmental Man-power Committee had been set up in New Zealand to consider, among other things, the conservation of the Dominion's man-power and its redistribution to meet war conditions.

Experience in the 1914–18 war had shown that the indiscriminate acceptance into the forces of volunteers from every industry would bring serious economic dislocation in its train, and the Committee therefore finally evolved a "Schedule of Important Occupations," which later played an important part in the determination of those who should remain in industry and those who should be permitted to join the forces.