

MEDICAL

The health of the troops throughout the year has been good. The chief epidemic diseases were influenza, measles, and mumps. The total deaths during the year were 165, of which 65 were the result of accident.

A plastic surgical unit and an army optician service have been inaugurated and are now performing useful work. Two convalescent depots are functioning in New Zealand.

The following medical units, complete with equipment, have been despatched to the Pacific area: A general hospital, base camp reception hospital, malaria control unit, field hygiene section, two field ambulances, two field surgical units, and a blood-transfusion unit. In addition, reception hospitals, with necessary equipment and personnel, have been provided in areas where New Zealand maintains garrison forces.

DENTAL

Dental mechanics schools have been established in each of the three military districts. The volume of dental work done for Army personnel during the year ended 31st March, 1943, was over double that done during the previous year.

PRISONERS OF WAR

New Zealand has undertaken the custody and control of Japanese prisoners of war captured by United States Forces, and a large number of such prisoners of war have been detained in a New Zealand camp constructed for the purpose.

A Prisoners of War Section has been established at Army Headquarters to deal with all questions concerning the treatment of both our own and enemy prisoners of war.

ARMS: AMMUNITION AND EQUIPMENT

General.—Enormous quantities of equipment of all sorts have come to hand. Over 100,000 tons of stores and equipment were received from overseas, in addition to large quantities from local production.

Small-arms Ammunition.—Peacetime production in New Zealand of .303 ball ammunition has been increased over twenty times, and the quality is now higher than ever before.

Gun Ammunition.—The very large quantity of gun ammunition received from overseas during the year has necessitated a considerable magazine-construction programme, which is as yet uncompleted.

Uniform and Clothing.—Production has been well maintained. The issue of clothing and boots to the Home Guard has been completed, and a second suit of battle-dress has been issued to all mobilized Territorial Force personnel. Forces proceeding to the Pacific have been issued with drill uniforms. The introduction of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps presented unusual problems in the supply of women's clothing, but most of these difficulties have now been overcome. Large quantities of clothing and equipment have been despatched for the maintenance of 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, Middle East.

Storage.—Storage accommodation at all ordnance depots has been quite inadequate to cope with the large quantities of stores, ammunition, and equipment received. The provision of extra buildings has not solved the storage problem (which has been greatly accentuated by the reorganization of the home-defence forces), and very considerable quantities of valuable equipment and stores must remain in the open under tarpaulins.

Ordnance Workshops.—All ordnance workshops have been working at high pressure in the assembly and maintenance of equipments on issue to units. It has been necessary to make considerable extensions to these workshops, and additional plant has been installed.

Inspection Branch.—Although the inspection of munitions manufactured locally has been given prior consideration, the inspection of small arms, gun ammunition, and explosives, on issue and in store, has been carried out. This work will, however, require more detailed attention in future. Owing to shortage of trained staff, recourse has been had to the borrowing of contractors' employees for inspection work. Munition orders under action amount to 1,293, involving 271 contractors.

Staff.—The civilian staff of ordnance depots have almost universally exercised the election given them of being placed on a military basis. This has assisted in achieving a greater stability of staff.

RATIONS AND SUPPLIES

By close co-operation with the Food Controller, the Army's heavy demands, particularly of rationed and imported foodstuffs, have been satisfactorily met. In addition to feeding New Zealand troops, a considerable amount of rationing of United States troops was carried out. The greatly increased demand for vegetables was met by the encouragement of the development of camp and unit plots both in New Zealand and in the Pacific. One Pacific island garden has an area of 290 acres, with a flourishing pig-farm and poultry-farm attached, while the fish caught in fish-traps at this island averages 6 tons per month.

PETROL

Reserves of petrol on the scale laid down have been maintained in various installations, and working requirements have been met from the resources of the oil industry.

CANTEENS

The Canteen Board's business continues to be conducted on commercial lines, which permit of a nominal profit being earned. This profit accrues for the benefit of service personnel, and an amount of £90,892 has been distributed among units.

Women's Auxiliary Army Corps personnel are employed in canteens wherever possible, and have given splendid service.