

X. WOOLLEN COMFORTS

A noteworthy but little-publicized feature of patriotic work is the knitting of woollen comforts by the women of New Zealand. Up to the end of the year, 764,411 sets of woollen garments, comprising 1,051,899 individual items, have been knitted and supplied to our Forces in New Zealand and overseas, and to men of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy in the North Sea and elsewhere.

Taking into consideration the number of women in the country and the number who cannot knit, the result is even more remarkable, and the Board is pleased to pay a tribute to those who have devoted so much time to this work. The letters of appreciation, frequently published, show that these garments are received in many parts of the world, and that our men on duty in cold climates derive a psychological as well as a practical benefit in such gifts from their home country.

Large stocks of khaki comforts are held in the Middle East for use when required. Navy men and airmen receive liberal issues on leaving New Zealand, and replacements are sent periodically to the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London.

Branches of the Navy League have established spinning centres where hand-spun gift wool is prepared, and the garments made at these centres, together with garments made from wool bought by themselves (in addition to patriotic wool), are also distributed through patriotic channels. The following table shows the cumulative number of woollen goods made and issued:—

	Bala-clavas.	Gloves (Pairs).	Mittens (Pairs).	Pullovers and Jerseys.	Scarves.	Seaboot Stockings (Pairs).	Socks (Pairs).	Miscellaneous.
Army	62,363	337	49,840	496	59,073	..	17,943	1,160
Air Force Relations ..	24,510	5,353	29,161	36,893	27,776	..	9,638	..
Navy Department ..	7,755	837	3,557	2,803	5,607	1,515	3,571	473
Navy League issues ..	18,973	1,786	11,168	10,698	15,807	4,946	15,622	3,913
Consigned overseas ..	86,816	235	87,150	6,420	90,234	84	20,873	7,765
Miscellaneous	259	34	294	357	227	..	89	..
Totals	200,676	8,582	181,170	57,667	198,724	6,545	97,736	13,311
Stocks on hand—								
Army	1,384	110	353	360	739	..	279	828
Navy	676	..	243	12	976	37	36	2
Air	803	40	1,265	1,655	450	..	354	66

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Made and issued: Army, 88,758; Navy, 4,599; Air Force, 15,396; miscellaneous, 25.

On Hand: Army, 730; Air Force, 733.

XI. SPECIAL PHASES OF PATRIOTIC WORK

Postal Tobacco Scheme.—In January, 1942, the Board inaugurated a duty-free postal tobacco scheme under which parents and friends of servicemen overseas could place orders with local tobacconists for a selection of any of twenty-one different brands of tobacco or cigarettes. These orders, together with the payments, are sent to the Board's office, which sends a receipt to the purchaser, and packs the tobacco in sealed tins under bond, and despatches same to every theatre of war in which New-Zealanders are engaged. The packing is arranged by the Women's War Service Auxiliary, and a band of these voluntary workers, under the charge of Mrs. B. Reid, J.P., carry out the work of packing without cost to the Board. The Board owes a sincere debt of gratitude to these women for their regular attendance and the work they have done.

U.S.A. Forces in New Zealand.—During the year large numbers of U.S.A. Marines and troops arrived in New Zealand which then became a base for offensive Allied operations in the south-west Pacific. Comforts for these men are a responsibility of the American Red Cross, which cares for belligerent and non-belligerent personnel.

As a gesture of friendship and co-operation to our Allies, and also to assist in coping with the leisure-time needs of U.S.A. men, in addition to our expanded personnel, the Board offered full co-operation in entertaining the American Forces, and established the Allied Services' Club in Wellington, and assisted a hospitality service and information bureau conducted by the British-American Co-operation Movement. The club was opened on the 14th July, 1942, and has proved popular with the American and New Zealand Forces. In Auckland and elsewhere general facilities of New Zealand Service clubs were extended to U.S.A. servicemen.

XII. APPEALS FOR FUNDS

As the raising of funds is a responsibility of Provincial Patriotic Councils, the Board did not participate in fund-raising activities, other than to offer assistance in co-ordinating appeals of a national character. Each Council adopts methods to suit its own purpose, having regard to the periods in which the majority of contributors receive their income. The Board, in conjunction with the National and Commercial Broadcasting Services and the Post and Telegraph Department, co-operated with Councils in a national Comforts for Fighting Forces Appeal from the 3rd to 15th August, which culminated in a radio telephone appeal on the last night. The amount raised during that period was £176,000.

XIII. PERSONNEL OF BOARD

The Board regrets to report the passing of two of its members, Mr. C. Todd and Mr. J. Read, both of whom had given of their best in helping to provide comforts for our service men and women.

XIV. CONFERENCE OF PATRIOTIC BODIES

On the 20th November, 1941, a conference of representatives of all patriotic organizations was again held in Wellington, and as a result several recommendations were made to the Government regarding the welfare of our service men and women, and, in addition, uniform procedures were adopted to make for the smoother working of the patriotic organization as a whole.