

In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the National Council of Physical Welfare and Recreation, an advisory body, was set up, in association with the Department of Internal Affairs. This Council consists of the Minister of Internal Affairs (Chairman), the Under-Secretary of Internal Affairs (Deputy Chairman), the Director-General of Health, the Director of Education, a representative of the Defence Services, and members appointed by the Minister. These appointees, representative of areas ranging from Northland to Southland, are well known for their active interest in physical welfare and recreation and for their ability to give good advice. The Council was helpful in planning the preparations for a wide range of progress, and has well won a right to the country's gratitude.

District Committees were also set up to co-operate with the Council and with the Department's Physical Welfare Officers, but before this basis of organization had time to make itself widely felt the war broke out, and necessarily the great majority of members of the Committees found themselves fully occupied with duties connected with the war effort. However, the Committees have good service to their credit.

NO REGIMENTATION

For some time there was a baseless fear among some people that the Government had a secret, sinister purpose with the Act—a scheme of regimentation of youth and a sort of bureaucratic control of recreation and sport. Again and again I had to rebut such allegations, which had no foundation in the letter and spirit of the Act. Happily, the great majority of hostile critics have seen at last that they were mistaken in their hasty suspicion, and many of them have been pleased to work in active goodwill with the Department's officers.

The Act makes provision for the greatest possible co-operation of the Department of Internal Affairs with elected local authorities and voluntary organizations. The Department's service is at the call of all. The Department assists importantly in the pooling of knowledge and the results of experience for the benefit of the whole community. Thus the Department is equipped to act as friendly adviser and practical helper whenever such assistance is desired. That fact is being appreciated by an increasing number of people throughout the country.

In this national movement New Zealand is in line with Great Britain, which has its Physical Training and Recreation Act; with Australia, which has its National Fitness Act; and with Canada, which has its National Fitness Act. The principles and the practice with this legislation are similar in the four British countries. Differences are mainly in procedure, according to local conditions. Regimentation is just as absent from the New Zealand Act as it is from the other British countries' Acts.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

The outbreak of war had two effects on the physical welfare and recreation scheme. It necessitated a concentration on physical-fitness programmes for groups linked with the war effort, and it prevented expansion of the field staffs. For the sixteen districts (nine in the North Island and seven in the South) the highest total of officers was 47 (31 men and 16 women). Two of 13 men who joined the Armed Forces were killed in action. Some of the others helped to organize and maintain physical training for the forces in New Zealand. Three of the women officers were attached to women's units of the Armed Forces for physical-training duties. The limitation of staff has to be duly considered in the review of progress in a very extensive field.

War Organizations

Apart from direct service for the Armed Forces, the Department's officers organized and supervised physical training and recreation for about 100,000 members of war organizations, comprising the Home Guard, Emergency Precautions Services, Fire Service, the Air Training Corps, and Women's War Service Auxiliary. Much of this work was with classes for the training of instructors until they were qualified to take classes themselves. Some of those classes especially in country districts, developed into community clubs, whose programmes combined social entertainment with the physical activities.

The service for the Air Training Corps throughout the Dominion was particularly important. In addition to the special physical exercises for these Cadets, sixteen to eighteen years of age, the Department's officers gave keen and continuous attention to creating and maintaining an active interest in seasonal games and other recreation. Many youths who had been inclined to become spectators rather than players were persuaded to change their attitude to their own satisfaction.

It was found that an astonishing proportion had not learned to swim. In Dunedin, a city well known for active interest in swimming, the percentage of Cadets who were not able to swim a stroke when they joined the Corps, ranged from 33 to 40, and there was a similar percentage of poor swimmers. Even higher percentages of non-swimmers were reported from other towns. The Department's officers gave the necessary lessons, and a good standard of swimming was achieved. The officers also helped in the promotion of social entertainment for the Cadets.

Service for Women and Girls

The women officers have brought benefits to many organizations of girls and women, including numbers who have reached or passed middle age.

Special mention is due to the Auckland Women's Recreation Group (formerly known as the Auckland Splash Club) because it indicates a very desirable kind of activity which can be developed wherever and whenever the conditions are favourable. Swimming, with keep-fit exercises, was the first objective for this women's club, which