

life of that city. Branch sponsored and assisted trade-union and mercantile basketball leagues flourish in Dunedin and Auckland, while a recent innovation in Wellington is the Trades-union Recreation Group, which was brought into existence, with the active support of the Branch, to provide eventually for all forms of recreation for employees as required.

An Auckland experiment was the commencement of lunch-hour recreation programmes by a large industrial firm. Should the initial success in this direction be maintained, expansion to other firms will undoubtedly follow.

RURAL RECREATION

The Branch is aware of the very urgent necessity to assist recreational activities in rural areas. Apart from the importance of the sympathetic consideration given to requests for financial assistance from rural areas, valuable work was carried out by individual officers. Plans for the formation of rural recreation clubs in all areas have been made for some time, and though considerable progress was achieved, difficulty of access and shortage of staff have mitigated against the full programme being carried out.

GROUP TRAVEL

Most of the field officers organized and conducted group-travel trips in the past twelve months. The aim of the Branch is in no way to compete against the commercial agencies, many of which are supplying a very real recreational need, but to introduce and encourage the idea of group travel in localities where, as yet, this popular form of recreation is relatively unknown.

MOUNTAIN TRACKS AND HUTS

The policy of facilitating safe and relatively comfortable back-country travel has been restricted in scope owing to difficulties of supply of material for huts and the general labour shortage. The chain of huts established by the Department in the Harper Pass was used extensively, and several conducted trips which were well supported were organized by the Christchurch Physical Welfare Office. In other areas, assistance has been limited to financial aids on a favourable basis to assist the individual projects of tramping, mountain, and ski clubs.

MARCHING

As in past years, assistance was rendered, whenever possible, to the New Zealand Marching and Recreation Association in the conduct of its recreative programmes. Special displays were organized to popularize this form of recreation in the few areas where it is not yet firmly established and general assistance given by individual officers to the officials administering a sport which continues to grow in popularity.

The New Zealand Marching Championships, held in Dunedin in February, 1948, under the auspices of the New Zealand Marching and Recreation Association as a part of the Otago Centennial Celebrations, were a great success, and were witnessed by a very large audience which included the Governor-General and Lady Freyberg, the Prime Minister, several Ministers of the Crown, the Leader of the Opposition, the Mayor of Dunedin, and many other leading citizens.