

These Y.M.C.A.s were completely outfitted with comfortable furnishings (such as easy chairs, oak tables, floor coverings, &c.), information bureaux, home hospitality service, canteens, ironing-rooms, libraries, billiard and table-tennis tables, indoor games, writing-rooms, cinemas, and sewing and mending rooms where a group of voluntary ladies undertook the repair of clothing for the men.

The Y.M.C.A.s were barely established before the first repatriates began to arrive. Many of them had been on forced marches through Germany and were in very poor shape. In some drafts as many as 35 per cent. went directly to hospital, mostly suffering from starvation and exposure. They arrived at all hours of the night and day, some scarcely able to walk and too ill to eat. The Y.M.C.A. Secretaries did a sterling service in making and serving hot cups of milk and keeping the men round a good fire until the ambulances could convey them to the hospital.

On arrival at the reception camp each man was issued by the National Patriotic Fund Board with the following: 40 cigarettes; 1 patriotic parcel; 4 pairs socks; 1 pair pyjamas; 6 handkerchiefs; 1 toilet outfit; 1 scarf; and 200 cigarettes were issued to each man monthly.

The following amenities were provided at the Y.M.C.A.s free of charge: cafeteria service (morning and afternoon teas and suppers); writing-paper, envelopes, pens, and ink; concerts and cinema programmes; libraries; indoor games; sewing and mending uniforms.

The quantity of food sent by the Board and given free of charge in all Y.M.C.A. cafeterias is shown as follows: 29,200 lb. fruit cake; 16,500 lb. biscuits; 7,200 tins coffee and milk; 4,800 tins unsweetened milk; 4,800 tins sweetened condensed milk; 7,200 tins Highlander milk; 1,600 lb. cocoa. In addition, the sum of £1,405 was expended on the purchase of tea, sugar, and fresh milk.

The British Y.M.C.A. made available six tea-vans for the New Zealand Y.M.C.A., and these were used to serve refreshments at sports gatherings and at all railway-stations where repatriated prisoners of war left for ports of embarkation.

Fernleaf Club.—Apart from the activities mentioned above, the Fernleaf Club was established in London. This was the direct result of the visit of Lady Freyberg and Colonel Waite from the Middle East, and was started from funds drawn from the club funds of the 2nd Division. The Fernleaf Club was staffed almost entirely by 2nd N.Z.E.F. personnel and W.A.A.C.s specially selected for the purpose. The club consisted of about six houses taken over with the consent of the British authorities, and contained sleeping accommodation, dining, library, and entertainment rooms, and information bureaux.

Mention of the successful repatriation of our prisoners of war would not be complete without drawing attention to the wonderful hospitality extended to our men by the people of England. Their homes were thrown open over the length and breadth of Great Britain, and, despite very short rations, they entertained our men royally. To allow gifts to be made to these people, the repatriated prisoners of war were able to purchase canteen goods specially sent for the purpose—chocolates, sweets, and tinned and other goods—over and above the ordinary ration scale.

In addition, a consignment of New Zealand paua shell and disabled soldiers' work was sent from New Zealand and was available to New Zealand repatriated prisoners of war for presentation purposes.

India

The Anzac Welfare Centre, Calcutta, jointly controlled by the Australian Comforts Fund and the Board, continued to provide comforts for New Zealanders in India. Mr. C. R. C. Gardiner, the Board's honorary Commissioner, ably supervised the Board's work there and elsewhere in India.