

# HAWKE'S BAY HAS AN ARMY:

(By "The Listener's" Special Representative)



**A**N army without uniforms; an army that spends more time among the hills than on the parade-ground; soldiers for whom discipline means a great deal, but who ignore non-essentials; an army without many weapons; an army almost without equipment; soldiers who watch by day over sheep, make up prescriptions, add accounts, grow fruit, gather eggs, or teach in schools; an old clothes army—that is the Home Guard.

Everybody knows that the Home Guard has been the starved younger child of our military forces; not deliberately starved of course, but left hungry just the same. It has worked without nearly everything it officially has needed. It has even worked without money. It has survived successive stages of disappointment. It survived being a hopeless idea. It survived being funny. It survived the stage of wooden rifles. It survived the derision and ignominy brought upon it by a nation which then—and even now—did not fully realise that this is a shooting war in which shells burst, bombs really fall, men die, and women, too, with their children.

All these things the Home Guard survived. Not every man yet has a rifle. Only a few have uniforms, and not many of the lucky ones will agree to wear them until all their comrades are similarly provided. As this is written, the Director-General of those many thousands of men himself works in his office in a civilian's grey suit, instead of the khaki and scarlet hat-band he could wear.

Some of the men haven't even shot-guns. Until recently, no unit was adequately financed, except by its own private efforts. The list of deficiencies is a mile long and shortening only inch by inch.

But the Home Guard is dangerous. This story is written about the Home Guard in Hawke's Bay. Elsewhere there may be units more efficient, or less efficient. But it so happened recently that Hawke's Bay assembled a large number of men willing to spend their holiday period in bivouacs, and I went along to see them with the National Film Unit, which will soon release a film showing what we saw.

We saw that every man was armed. It is true that they have insufficient



"They blew up a road for us"

rifles. Those who have not been issued with rifles have shot guns, which they turn into miniature cannons by removing the shot from cartridges and substituting a leaden slug, or even candle-grease moulded in. At considerable ranges, a slug of melted candle will shatter a thick board. If they have neither rifle nor shotgun, they have a fine selection of extemporised weapons, from a knife to a home-made bomb.

## Every Man Has Something

That is the unofficial picture. That is the story of defenceless citizens arming themselves. A word about the official picture before we go on with the story.

With official impetus, the arming of the Home Guard is wonderfully improved since it came under Army control. We saw one unit with a reconditioned machine-gun. It was captured during the last war, retained somewhere as a souvenir, and has now been discovered, partly remodelled, and issued for duty. It is good. It is one of many others. In Hawke's Bay, they have searched the district for such souvenirs as that Spandau, and found many. Army armourers recondition them as fast as they are sent in, and the local Home Guard receives the benefit of its find.

Nearly all the units now have Tommy Guns. They are not issued to all the personnel, but there are sufficient for every man to learn their use, and sufficient for every company to have its fire-power multiplied considerably. These are going out in a growing stream.

**T**HIS is the story of the Home Guard of Hawke's Bay. We print it because we have been able to verify it for ourselves. But the men we have seen in action would be the first to point out that there are other Home Guard stories from other districts that would sound just as impressive.

remain uncorrected. That is only because correction is not at present humanly or practically possible.

Much is possible to the small unit or the individual that is not possible for the big organisation. That has been the strength of the Home Guard, although it has for 18 months appeared to have been its weakness. From the days of its formation until recent months the Home Guard was not officially recognised by the Army. It still keeps healthily clear of forms and the flatulence of hindering precedents and regulations. Then, it had none at all. Where men had brains and the en-



National Film Unit photos

"A raiding party successfully attacked an 'enemy' detachment"

Many times has the Home Guard been disappointed over the problem of uniforms. It is now a year since first it was announced that Territorial units would be re-clothed and the Home Guard uniformed with their service dress. Since then unanticipated difficulties have deferred the day. Now, stocks are building up so that soon there will be sufficient uniforms to make an issue worth while. It will not be long before the arm bands become superfluous.

## Weakness Becomes Strength

In this and many other details we gained the impression that things were happening in the Home Guard. A problem arises. Right, something is done about it. If it cannot be met in the ordinary way, the Home Guard throws aside the text books and does it in the usual way. It gets done. Many faults

thusiasm to use them, the Home Guard built itself, and built strongly, out of farms, and villages, towns, and townships. It grew among the hills and behind country hedges; it sprouted out of offices and schools all through the country; and it grew so strongly that it pushed aside all the growth of doubt and derision that held us back in New Zealand until last month we first were really made aware of the real war.

The result we saw in Hawke's Bay.

## Signals For 500 Miles

We saw members of signalling units that are part of a province-wide system capable of sending and receiving messages over a distance of 500 miles, from hilltop to hilltop from Gisborne to Woodville. It began with one man who found a few others to help him.

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