

ARTISTS

in Uniform

BY A KORERO STAFF WRITER

THE PICTURES accompanying this article are selected from the AEWS Art Exhibition "Artists in Uniform," which is expected to open in Wellington at the end of February. The works you see here have been chosen mainly because they will reproduce well on this kind of paper.

The suggestion to hold an exhibition was made in April last year, and the committee first met at AEWS headquarters in May. Its recommendations eventually found their way to units through routine orders. The results have been astonishing not so much the quality of the work, but the large number sent in—587 were submitted; 235 were accepted.

Purpose of Exhibition

The main purpose of AEWS in organizing this exhibition was to encourage men and women of the Services to draw and paint. That is why we didn't ask finally for war pictures. If a man found more interest in making pictures of neighbouring farm houses and villages than in making pictures of tanks and anti-aircraft posts, we were quite happy that it should be so. For us, the important thing was that we had succeeded in inciting him to make pictures.

Nevertheless, we did hope and expect that some men and women would, in making their pictures, be chiefly concerned to send back reports of their surroundings and of the life they were living. We were not disappointed. This exhibition portrays in great variety and detail service life in New Zealand and the Pacific. The camera cannot replace the painter

here, for the camera merely records. The painter does something more—he comments, however implicitly.

One of the best examples of this is the drawing of "Gargle Parade" at a WAAC camp reproduced here. If you saw a photograph of the same scene you would wonder why any one had troubled to take the photograph. But the drawing is both humorous and vivid. Years hence it will tell more about life in a WAAC camp than a whole album of photographs or many pages of descriptive writing.

Value of Pictures

It can be said of the exhibition as a whole that it conveys the serviceman's life and the places where he serves more vividly and instantaneously than either words or photographs can. When New Zealand war history comes to be written these pictures will put flesh on its bones.

When we organized this exhibition we had little idea what proportion of the pictures sent in would be good by ordinary artistic standards, the standards applied, say, in selecting pictures for the annual exhibition of the Canterbury Society of Arts. Nor were we greatly concerned over the question of quality. It remains to be said that the quality has been amazingly high, particularly when it is borne in mind that very few of the exhibitors are seasoned artists and that most of the pictures were painted in difficult conditions. Still fewer are by professional artists, because New Zealand society rarely gives a man enough support to enable him to write under "civil occupation" the word "artist."