

more dangerous. In wartime there is a burning interest in facts on which depend the well-being of our families or our country; at the same time access to these facts becomes more difficult. Events, taking place on distant battlefields, cannot always be reported for a long time; analyses of events on so huge a scale is difficult; and, of course, any news which would help the enemy must be withheld. Thus we have a combination of a greater and more urgent need for information and a lesser possibility of its being satisfied. Where information ends, imagination is apt to take over. The gate is left wide open.

Emotional causes make for the spread of rumour. Anxiety (which is always easier to bear in company, when there is always the hope of having that anxiety allayed); annoyance with apparently carefree people (make them worried, too); know-alls who wish to be importantly first with the news (and if the story isn't startling, embroider it until it is); the wish to be important; wishful thinking in its many senses. It can be seen that rumours are passed on because they give expression to conscious or unconscious emotions in the people who repeat them. This is also why they become distorted in their passage from mouth to mouth. Each individual in the sequence has his own special set of emotions which colour the form in which he relays the story. Add to this the use of spurious authority and circumstantial detail, and it is not hard to imagine how rumours can soon become far removed from their original source and any truth.

Information is the cure, accurately and quickly made available; unfortunately, in wartime that is not always possible. Scepticism, ridicule, and humour, and the use of common-sense, are the effective antidotes. Scotch the rumour, squelch the person who doesn't. You will be doing a service to the war effort.

In New Zealand, according to rumour, there was to be no opposition from the Government to a Japanese invasion; the Maoris had been promised the return of their lands for help to the Japanese, help approved by chiefs and leaders; crews



of New Zealand naval ships have mutinied and been shot; coastal vessels have been sunk; women have been found scalped; there have been fights in the streets involving (according to the numbers killed) most of the population of certain cities. Everybody has heard some of the stories; and they have not always been treated with the contempt they deserved.

The United States Office of War Information has published a set of rules for checking the rumour-spreader. They are worth remembering:—

Never repeat a rumour.

Do not repeat a rumour even to deny it.

If you know the facts which can spike a rumour, tell the facts promptly.

If you do not know the facts which can stop a rumour, ask the rumour-teller where he got his facts.

Don't give a rumour the benefit of the doubt.

In the United States, "rumour-clinics" gather and analyse the most dangerous of current rumours; where possible, refutations are published in the newspapers. *Desert Saws*, the newsletter of the 6 (N.Z.) Infantry Brigade when it was in the Alamein Line, dealt similarly with what it called "latrinograms"; military camps and stations often have rumour boards. Remember, if a report is not published through the official sources, it is probably either untrue or there is a security reason for suppressing it.