

RECRUIT to FIGHTING SOLDIER



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WHAT is the significance of that small party of soldiers who march across the screen title of the National Film Review which is a feature of picture shows throughout New Zealand?

In the early years of this war men had to be trained, and trained quickly, to reinforce the Division overseas; so a plan was evolved to experiment with the training of a limited number of men from various parts of New Zealand. Under this plan each school of instruction was given a platoon of ordinary recruits for exactly one month, each platoon being trained on exactly the same lines according to a syllabus which was drawn up by the G. Staff at Army H.Q. The training in the first instance dispensed with most parade-ground movements. The recruits were taught the main elements of marching and to sling arms, but all rifle exercises and ceremonial were cut out. Discipline did not suffer. In fact, the recruits were brought as their training progressed to a very high standard of discipline, the type of discipline that a front-line soldier needs, such as physical fitness and a good mental outlook and general behaviour in all circumstances.

One day in 1942 I received word as Commandant of C.D.S.I. that a platoon of these recruits was on its way, and I was

to study the experiment very closely and eventually report my observations on the result. The men were just ordinary men in every way: they had not been hand-picked. My first job was to explain to them why they had come to Dannevirke Camp. I emphasized the need for speed in training them. I told them they must pay great attention to keeping fit, learn all they could in the limited time, and as a finale to their efforts they might possibly be called upon to march some considerable distance back to their base. They were then turned over to their instructors.

I chose for their Platoon Commander and Chief Instructor one of my Staff, a young Staff Corps Officer who was exceptionally keen, had a splendid physique, was a keen athlete, and, above all, had a sound knowledge of his job.

The days passed by. There was no time to be lost, and bad weather was ignored. Day and night these men trained, and trained hard, in all the elements of war as near to the real thing as possible. They were brought to the stage where they could stand long hours of exposure, and carry out tactical exercises in any weather day or night. They were taught to read a map, throw a grenade, crash wire entanglements, scale obstacles,