



The public service at war series

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1. The public service in 1914 – Tim Shoebridge

1a. The development of the public service

In 1914 the public service had 33,000 permanent employees, including railway workers, post and telegraph staff, teachers and police, and 16,000 temporary employees, mainly in the area of public works and railways. The 42 government departments ranged in size from the Cook Islands Administration Department's handful of staff to the Railways Department's 14,000.¹

Most public servants were male, and viewed the service as a skilled, lifelong profession. Applicants for permanent employment were required to pass an entry examination and to put their personal political convictions aside in the interests of a non-partisan public service. Employees ranged from highly skilled senior administrators to technical specialists, from typists and teachers to labourers digging roads and quarantine officers inspecting animals at the ports.

When New Zealand's public service was founded in 1840 it comprised just 39 individuals. Slow growth during the Crown Colony period (1840–53) preceded more rapid expansion during the provincial period (1853–76), and by 1866 the central government had 1602 employees. The state served the basic needs of a colonial society, providing a judicial and penal system, machinery to manage and record land ownership, taxation, postal services, public works, mental hospitals, and a few other basic functions.² On the abolition of the provinces in 1876 many of their functions were taken over by the central government.

The Liberal government of 1891–1912 expanded the role of the public service dramatically. The Liberals created 12 new departments to implement and manage its ambitious legislative programme. These aimed, among other things, to correct injustices in the industrial system, raise standards of living, and expand the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors.³

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1b. Across New Zealand

The public service of 1914 was scattered from one end of the country to the other, with each department managed by a ‘permanent head’, a chief executive based in a Wellington headquarters with his staff. Most public servants worked a long way from Wellington, in small branch offices grouped together in a ‘departmental building’. Some regional staff worked for more than one department. Samuel Tyson of Nelson, for example, doubled as factory inspector for the Labour Department and Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Internal Affairs.⁴ Many more public servants could be found in the schools, post offices and police stations dotted across the country, all of which were operated by government departments.

In some senses the public service was a united and coherent whole, its work overseen by ministers and funded by annual parliamentary appropriations. In practical terms, however, it was divided between ‘trading departments’ and ‘core departments’. The Railways and Post and Telegraph departments – the two trading departments – were by far the largest government agencies, able to earn significant revenue by charging the public for their services. Both had their own staff grading systems and unions, and maintained facilities across the country. The ‘core departments’ – the rest of the public service – provided regulatory services and were mainly funded directly from public revenue. Police officers and teachers had different conditions of employment but were also paid from public funds.

The public service absorbed 68% of expenditure from the consolidated fund in the 1913/14 year (another 24% was taken up by servicing public debt and the remainder went on pensions and payments to local bodies). The Railways Department absorbed over a quarter of all government expenditure, the education sector and the Post and Telegraph Department 10% each, Defence 5%, judicial and legal functions 3%, and all the remaining departments 15%.

Business operations made a substantial contribution to the funding of the public service. The two trading departments provided 43% of all government revenue. Customs duties brought in another 28%, with the remainder coming from taxation and income from Crown land rentals.⁵

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1c. Building and maintaining infrastructure

The central government took charge of large-scale infrastructural development, working to transform the country from the initial development phase of the late 19th century into a modern, productive society participating in the global economy. The Public Works Department was its principal tool in this endeavour, extending the national rail and road networks, employing engineers, draughtsmen, overseers and clerks in large and small depots across the country to plan and undertake the new work that was funded by Parliament each year. It was one of the largest areas of state expenditure.

Public Works handed roads to local bodies on completion, and rail lines to the Railways Department. Railways, with its 4600 km of track, 1100 stations and stops, 534 locomotives, and 21,000 carriages and wagons, was one of the largest businesses in the country.⁶ A large workforce of station-masters, engine-drivers, inspectors, engineering tradesmen, foremen, labourers, storekeepers and clerks kept this vast machine working.⁷

Public Works also maintained the ever-expanding network of public buildings and facilities. Every district needed new post offices, schools, hospitals, railway stations, departmental buildings, courthouses and police stations, and wharves, irrigation works, lighthouses and other structures were regularly requested. Once built, all required ongoing maintenance.

The country's postal system was a key factor in plans to modernise national infrastructure. Like Railways, the Post and Telegraph Department was a sprawling operation with bases in almost every corner of the country. In 1914 the 'P & T's 8136 staff managed 2466 post offices, and delivered more than 180 million items of mail and more than 10 million telegrams. People could send each other post office money orders and invest their savings in post office accounts.⁸

Post offices provided a government presence in areas where no other public servants were based, and conducted much work for other departments. They collected customs duties, taxes, and other government fees, sold fishing licences, paid out pensions and government advances, and acted as agent for the Public Trustee and government insurance.⁹

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Coastal shipping was another key component of national infrastructure. All international and interisland, and much internal movement of people and goods was by sea. The Marine Department monitored harbour safety facilities and managed unincorporated harbours in the interests of safety and efficiency. Marine Department officers were based at all significant ports.

1d. Education and healthcare

The government introduced compulsory free, secular primary school education for all citizens in 1877, and by 1914 the Education Department was maintaining 2449 primary, secondary and Native schools in which 5672 teachers taught 187,060 pupils.¹⁰ Regional education boards managed public schools on the government's behalf, while the Education Department managed Native Schools directly. Maintaining schools was a huge ongoing burden, and new schools were constantly required in newly settled areas. Education's school inspectors were tasked with ensuring a high standard of teaching. Schools, like post offices, were an omnipresent symbol of the state in all but the most remote regions of the country.

The Public Health Department was responsible for stopping the spread of infectious diseases and providing a few basic hospital facilities. The department divided the country into four 'sanitary districts', each presided over by a district health officer with the authority to declare buildings, animals or objects diseased or unsanitary and order their destruction. They could also limit the movement of sick people or animals, order water supplies to be purified, prevent the discharge of waste into waterways, and declare any place an isolation hospital.¹¹ The department employed a number of sanitary inspectors to assist the district health officers, as well as district nurses who worked in Māori communities and the staff of St Helen's maternity hospital in Auckland and Te Waikato Sanatorium near Cambridge.¹² Its work was supported by the Dominion and Bacteriological laboratories in Wellington.

The public hospital system, like the education system, was maintained by local bodies under government supervision, but the government managed the mental hospital system directly through its Mental Hospitals Department. Maintaining the Avondale, Tokanui, Porirua, Nelson, Sunnyside and Seacliff hospitals, Mental Health was one of the largest core government departments.¹³

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1e. Justice and defence

Several government departments existed purely to maintain law and order, both through internal policing and by managing external threats from other nations. The Police Force manned hundreds of police stations across the country, while the Justice Department supported the court system in which only the judges were not public servants. Gaolers and warders maintained large prisons in the four main centres, a network of smaller regional prisons and a handful of prison camps.¹⁴

The Defence Department managed the nation's defence network, which in 1914 was focused on a national territorial force fed by compulsory military training. Defence Headquarters in Wellington oversaw the work of the four military districts based in Auckland, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Dunedin. The department's offices were mainly staffed by members of the New Zealand Permanent Force, military officers supported by civilian public servants in administrative roles. The Royal New Zealand Artillery maintained and manned the coastal fortifications which protected the four main harbours and Westport. From 1913 the aged cruiser *Philomel* was stationed in New Zealand as a seagoing training vessel for the newly created New Zealand Naval Forces.

1f. Managing agriculture and industry

By 1914 agriculture was bringing in 87.5% of New Zealand's export revenue, and a large public service apparatus had developed to support its expansion and promote and protect the New Zealand brand.¹⁵ Expansion could best be stimulated by increasing both the numbers of settlers and the number of farms. The Native Department's ongoing efforts to purchase Māori land kept 'new' land flowing onto the market, with the Lands and Survey Department surveying and subdividing the blocks for 'selection' by aspiring farmers. Cheap development finance from the Advances to Settlers Office allowed the land to be brought into production. The 'opening up' of Crown land was accompanied – at least in theory – by the arrival of Public Works Department gangs to build roads, bridges and sometimes branch railways to

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connect the new farms to the outside world. To help promote economic development, the government repeatedly cut the rates the railways charged for carrying agricultural products.

Local Agriculture Department officers played an educative role, teaching farmers about pasture development and stock management with the goal of increasing production. The department operated six experimental farms to promote scientific farming, with their findings disseminated through the departmental *Journal of Agriculture*. The Agriculture Department also policed the farming sector. Its stock inspectors could fine farmers and require them to destroy diseased livestock to stop illness spreading, while weed and rabbit inspectors could demand the eradication of those pests. Orchards and apiaries were subject to similar inspections, and plants and animals arriving from overseas were inspected for signs of disease. Livestock inspectors and government veterinarians inspected meat for export, while dairy inspectors examined and graded butter. Dairy factories and abattoirs were licensed to operate only under strict regulations.

Public servants played a similar role in enforcing workplace safety and streamlining relations between employer and worker. An army of inspectors ensured that the many rules dictating working conditions and safety were observed. The Arbitration Court and regional conciliation boards determined rates of pay, hours and other conditions according to the cost of living in each area and the unique circumstances of each industry. These determinations were policed by the Labour Department, whose factory inspectors were legally entitled to enter any workplace to ensure compliance, with employers obliged to open their doors and their records under threat of prosecution. The department also registered workers' unions and factories, and managed aspects of the female labour market, rural employment and rent control, all with the broader goal of easing industrial tensions and increasing the efficiency of New Zealand's industry.¹⁶

The Marine Department, too, was charged with ensuring workplace safety. Its inspectors could enter workplaces and demand, for example, that flywheels or steam engines were fenced off to protect passers-by. They inspected boilers and checked the competence of those operating machinery.¹⁷ The marine inspectors based at major ports oversaw the management of ships and their crews. They had similar powers to factory inspectors, being permitted to enter any ship and inspect the people, equipment and records aboard for breaches of the relevant Acts. They checked crew numbers, certificates of competency, the appropriateness

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of pay and the suitability of quarters. Ships were also checked for seaworthiness and proper equipment.¹⁸ The Marine Department also employed fisheries inspectors who ensured that fishing boats were licensed and that restrictions on the fishing industry were observed.¹⁹

The Mines Department maintained offices in all the main coal-mining regions and inspected private coal mines to ensure they were being operated safely.²⁰ The Liberal government, dissatisfied with the high prices it had to pay for coal, had also established a State Coal Mines Department in 1901 to operate collieries on its behalf.²¹ Coal was critical to the operation of the railway system, and was also used for heating, cooking and generating electricity. Of the 112,605 tonnes of coal produced by the state mines in 1913/14, 62,343 tonnes was used by government departments and the rest sold to private customers.²²

1g. Other government services

The public service maintained a number of registration systems to ensure standards prescribed by law were being met and to keep track of key information. Various departments kept tabs on responsible professions, ensuring, for example, that medical professionals were properly qualified to practise in New Zealand. The Lands and Deeds Department maintained a registry of land ownership in conjunction with the records of titles to Māori land maintained by regional Native Land Courts. The Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, now within the Department of Internal Affairs, had maintained a register of Pākehā vital records since the colony's early years. The Patent Office registered developments in intellectual property, while the Electoral Branch of Internal Affairs took charge of maintaining the integrity of national elections.

Some departments existed purely to serve the complex internal needs of government and public service. Several collected revenue from the public, with the Customs Department raking in the greatest amount. The Land and Income Tax Department taxed some assets and high incomes, while the Stamps Department taxed legal transactions. The Government Printing Office, one of the larger departments, existed solely to print official publications such as statutes, parliamentary debates and the *New Zealand Gazette*. The Crown Law Office advised departments on legal matters, while the Audit Office and Treasury managed departmental expenditure. The Valuation Department ensured consistency in land values as

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the basis for central and local government taxation. The Public Service Superannuation Department offered pension schemes to police, teachers, railways employees and general public servants.

Several departments provided affordable financial services to the public. The government operated two insurance companies, Government Life Insurance and State Fire Insurance, which offered policies to poorer people and kept private insurers honest.²³ The National Provident Fund, a superannuation scheme for the less well-off, was subsidised by the state and administered in conjunction with the registration and supervision of friendly societies.²⁴ The Public Trust, which employed more than 200 people across the country, administered private estates and funds on behalf of the public.²⁵ The Pensions Department issued pensions to the elderly, widows and Pākehā veterans of the New Zealand Wars.

New Zealand conducted no foreign policy independent of Britain and had no department dealing specifically with diplomatic relations. It had, however, annexed the Cook Islands in 1901, so a small Cook Islands Department was based in Wellington, from where a single clerk corresponded with a string of New Zealand public servants scattered across the islands. The Cook Islands and Niue had Resident Commissioners, while the smaller ones had Resident Agents. The Cooks also had two medical officers, a registrar of courts, a collector of customs, an engineer, a clerk to the local government and a fruit inspector. A seconded New Zealand constable headed the local police force.²⁶

New Zealand's Tourist Department promoted overseas interest in New Zealand's natural attractions, operating transport and accommodation facilities which enabled visitors to reach and enjoy beauty spots. It invested in the thermal attractions of Rotorua and Hanmer Springs, and built facilities around Mt Cook. Nine dedicated staff managed the Dominion Museum, which was located in Museum St behind Parliament.

1h. The Public Service Commissioner

'Scientific management' was all the rage in the two decades before the war, and reformers worked to instil the passion for 'efficiency' popularised by the American Frederick Winslow Taylor into the New Zealand public service. In 1913, most of the public service was put

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under the control of a Public Service Commissioner. Departments had been operated in close co-operation with their political overlords since the early colonial period, with ministers playing a central role in daily management and the hiring and firing of staff. This hampered co-operation between departments and allowed ministers to employ political supporters. This ‘political patronage’ was a particularly potent issue during the Liberal government’s tenure, and the commission of inquiry it launched in 1912 recommended change.

In January 1913, the Reform government which had succeeded the Liberals appointed Donald Robertson as Public Service Commissioner, entrusting him with responsibility for the management of public service personnel. The public service would still serve the needs of the government of the day, but ministers would no longer play a part in its recruitment and management. This move helped ensure the service’s political neutrality and ‘permanence’, and meant it could not be packed with political supporters after a change of government.

A few individual officers, such as private secretaries to ministers, were exempt from the commissioner’s control. The Railway Department, sworn police officers, teachers and members of the armed forces fell outside the commissioner system, retaining their existing management structures and systems of job classification.

Robertson set about bringing consistency to the public service. He reconfigured records management systems, introduced a service-wide recruitment process – and restricted the public service entry examinations to male candidates. Robertson inspected every department and quickly launched a service-wide system of job classification with a consistent pay structure. His decisions on classification, appointments and promotions could be overturned by an Appeals Board.

1i. Public service unions

By 1914 a number of employee organisations existed to present the concerns of public servants to the Public Service Commissioner and Parliament. The Public Service Association (PSA), with 4000 members, represented all the core departments, while the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants – representing most railways employees – had 8000 members.²⁷ Other railway workers were represented by the New Zealand Railway Officers’ Institute and

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the New Zealand Locomotive Engine Drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association. Post and Telegraph staff were represented by the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Officers' Association, and teachers by the New Zealand Educational Institute. Police were eligible for membership of the PSA, but the Police Commissioner took a dim view of 'combination' and few officers joined up before 1916. The public service unions tended to be moderate in character and had few connections to the more militant private sector unions. They worked within the system to secure benefits such as superannuation and seniority-based promotion and pay.

1j. Female staff

Like most professions, the public service was predominantly male in 1914. Most of the core departments in Wellington employed a few female clerks and typists, and some employed charwomen to clean their offices. Departments generally considered women most suitable for duties aligned with traditional female domestic and nurturing roles. The Prisons Branch employed matrons to care for female prisoners, and the Mental Hospitals Department employed a large number of female nurses to care for patients. State farms and industrial schools for wayward youths employed women as cooks, laundresses, seamstresses, and maids and female masseuses and bath attendants assisted at the government baths at Rotorua. A few women had charge of small nursing units or industrial schools for young women, while the Government Printing Office employed a 'forewoman' in its Binding Branch and the Government Museum a female 'Museum Assistant'. Miss Hester Maclean, the Assistant Inspector of Hospitals in charge of St Helens maternity hospitals, was the only woman in a position of any authority.

On his appointment as Public Service Commissioner, Robertson had excluded women from public service examinations and ruled that the few in clerical roles should be paid less than their male counterparts. This move reflected that era's belief that men would stay in a single workplace for most of their working lives, gaining experience and acting as their household's chief breadwinner. Women who married were expected to resign and become financially dependent on their husbands.²⁸

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1k. On the eve of war

The New Zealand public service of August 1914 was a well-organised bureaucracy, dispersed geographically but managed by a highly centralised leadership. Its staff was unionised but generally interested in working within the system. Its hierarchical structure reflected the contemporary enthusiasm for scientific management and gave its military-aged staff some sense of what life in uniform would be like. The state had a more active infrastructural and economic development role than in most other countries, reflecting Pākehā society's push to move the country from its pioneering roots to efficiency and competitiveness in the global marketplace. It wasn't specifically prepared for war, but its bureaucratic values and structures were a foundation for large-scale organisation that could be adapted to other uses.

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11. Biography: Donald Robertson (1860–1942)

Donald Robertson was the first person to hold the office of Public Service Commissioner, serving in the position from January 1913 until April 1920. Robertson set out to quickly and decisively reform the the public service, but his tenure as commissioner was defined by the war and the brake it placed on all his plans.

Robertson was born in Dunedin in 1860, the son of draper Charles Robertson and his wife Margaret. He joined the Post Office Department as a cadet in 1873, and steadily worked his way up. He served in the Auckland and Wellington offices of the combined Post and Telegraph Department, in which he was appointed chief clerk in 1892, assistant secretary and inspector in 1906, and secretary (the permanent head) in 1907. In 1912 he was awarded the Imperial Service Order ‘in recognition of long and faithful service ... to the Crown.’²⁹

A well-known proponent of public service reform and businesslike administration, Robertson travelled to the United States and Europe in 1909 to examine post and telegraph methods abroad. The reforms he introduced on his return were estimated to have saved the Department £10,000 per year, equivalent to \$1.6 million in 2015.³⁰

These credentials made him a natural fit for the newly created position of Public Service Commissioner, and he embraced the challenge with gusto. He rapidly issued new Public Service Regulations and set to work reviewing each department. He toiled to reduce specialisation and enable public servants to move more easily between departments. He revised record-keeping strategies, entrance examinations and classification schemes, and generally worked to create greater overall consistency across the public service.

Some departments resisted Robertson’s innovations and persuaded their ministers to intervene to thwart them. His autocratic manner made him difficult to deal with, and his relations with the public service unions were often strained. Historian Bert Roth notes that the PSA found him ‘a crusty, authoritarian personality, whose contact with the outside world was through a curling ear trumpet.’³¹ Robertson often threatened to withdraw recognition of the PSA, but never followed through on this threat.

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Robertson worked hard to force change upon the public service and made many improvements to management and strategy. From 1916 he had to largely suspend his reform programme as the growing requirements of the war trumped other concerns. His efforts to merge departments came to little, and the government took away some of his powers in the later war years. By the time of his retirement in 1920, Robertson had nonetheless helped raise professional standards within the public service.³² He retired to Whanganui, where he died on 31 May 1942 at the age of 82.

2. Getting the men to war – Tim Shoebridge

The public service was the engine of New Zealand's military war effort between 1914 and 1918. It took charge of signing up – and later conscripting – men for service abroad, training them, clothing them, housing them, and transporting them to the northern hemisphere, where they became the responsibility of the British.

While the Defence Department was the arm of the service most directly responsible for getting the men to war, the Census and Statistics Office, the Post and Telegraph Department, and the newly formed Munitions and Supplies Department played essential roles in supporting the process. By the end of the war they had located, trained, equipped and transported nearly 100,000 men to the northern hemisphere. This feature examines how this massive task was accomplished.

2a. Preparing for war

By 1914, New Zealand had been actively preparing for war for five years. In Europe, the darkening geopolitical skies of the century's first decade had led all the major powers to gear up for a conflict. Since 1907 Britain had been lining up its dominions to assist in a major war, and New Zealand agreed to play its part.³³ From 1909 it undertook a major reorganisation of its military forces to bring them into line with British practices and formations, which would enable its fighting units to slot seamlessly into a British expeditionary force.

New Zealand needed to transform its loose network of local volunteer units into a single Territorial Force with a clear chain of command and manned through a system of compulsory military training. The Imperial General Staff loaned British officers to New Zealand to help the dominion reorganise its defences, and to make detailed preparations for a major war. Mobilisation and home defence plans were drawn up, and a large training and education infrastructure was created.³⁴

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This ambitious and complex task fell to the Defence Department, which was reorganised into a national command along the lines of the British War Office. The Defence headquarters in Wellington's Buckle St supervised four district commanders, who in turn controlled a series of smaller sub-districts (there were initially 16 of these, growing to 21 in 1916). The 1912 Public Service Commission (Hunt) Report described the department as 'an entirely new organization' following the 1909 reforms.³⁵

The Defence Department had a highly unusual leadership structure. It was headed by senior military officers subject to military discipline and regulation, not by traditional public servants. Lieutenant-General Alexander Godley was both General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Forces and (effectively) the administrative head of the department. To further confuse matters, many of the department's clerical staff were conventional public servants working under the more lenient but less remunerative Public Service Regulations. It was a sometimes awkward hybrid of two quite different working cultures and traditions. This didn't stop Defence from performing its functions as a department of state, and was probably a difference of style as much as substance.

2b. The outbreak of war

The pre-war preparations allowed the Defence Department to quickly and efficiently create an expeditionary force in 1914. A 1400-strong Samoan Expeditionary Force was despatched almost immediately, and volunteers flooded Defence Department offices in the hope of becoming one of the 8000 men needed for the Main Body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force that was expected to be sent to Europe.

The department obtained much of the necessary equipment from the Territorials, and moved quickly to purchase other items or find people willing to donate them. Each military district accommodated its section of the Main Body in a temporary camp, while they waited to sail for the front. Refresher training filled what turned into two months of waiting before the men boarded newly fitted-out troopships.

The department had managed to contract enough vessels from the main shipping companies to transport the Main Body. These ships were stripped and fitted out to accommodate troops

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and horses, a process which would have to continue if reinforcements were to be supplied. In late 1914 the department established a Transport Board, chaired by its director of movements and quartering, which was responsible for chartering suitable vessels and getting them fitted out for the troops. Most of the ships were refitted at the Union Steam Ship Company's yard at Port Chalmers, where the old fittings were stripped out and hammocks slung up for the men.³⁶

Territorial Force training would continue throughout the war, but now the department would have the far greater additional challenge of finding, equipping, training and transporting regular drafts of reinforcements to keep the expeditionary force up to what from early 1916 was divisional strength. The pre-war plans had worked well, but maintaining the supply of reinforcements would test them to the utmost.

2c. The 1915 crisis

Keeping the NZEF reinforced was a straightforward business in late 1914 and early 1915, when volunteers were still rushing to enlist, but managing the process grew more difficult as the number of men needed to maintain the NZEF grew. Every man who donned a uniform had to be provided with basic military training, clothed, fed and transported, and much would go wrong before the Defence Department mastered this massive task.

The task of despatching reinforcements should have dropped to the manageable proposition of supplying two-monthly drafts of about 776 men after the Main Body left. The department opened a national training camp at Trentham in the Hutt Valley. This was designed to accommodate no more than 1500 men in tents, but by November 1914 the government had already raised the size of reinforcement drafts to 3000 every two months. The number of troops in camp at any one time crept up steadily in the following months, as new units for the expeditionary force were established.³⁷

By May 1915 Trentham Camp housed 7000 men, and its basic facilities were soon overwhelmed. The ground dissolved into mud, and the manufacturers supplying uniforms and other gear were unable to keep pace with the ever-increasing numbers. Disaster struck that winter, when 27 recruits at Trentham died of infectious disease.

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The Trentham crisis created a major scandal and undermined faith in the Defence Department at a time of public anxiety about the growing Gallipoli casualties. In early July, Defence Minister James Allen ordered the evacuation of the camp. Thousands of men were moved to a string of impromptu canvas camps during heavy winter rains.

The department quickly began rebuilding Trentham and constructing a larger camp at Featherston to share the load. The Public Works Department assembled massive teams of carpenters who assembled the camps within a few months under the supervision of the Railways Department's E.H. Hiley.

The overhaul of the camp system was supported by the creation of a Munitions and Supplies Department to relieve some of the Defence Department's growing responsibilities. Munitions and Supplies completely revised the process of purchasing uniforms and stores, signing up manufacturers to a new system which quickly relieved the camp shortages. It also supplied food, drugs, forage and other items to the camps and troopships.³⁸

2d. The standing camp system

Featherston Camp and the remodelled Trentham Camp were extensive and modern facilities. With a combined capacity of 17,000 men, the two camps would provide for all foreseeable needs and train the bulk of the recruits for the remainder of the war. Each covered hundreds of acres, and maintaining these pop-up towns was a logistical exercise without precedent in New Zealand history.

The two camps included a wide range of buildings, training grounds, rifle ranges, and infrastructure such as roads, railways, electricity, water supplies and underground drainage. Guardhouses at the gates kept the public out, and nearby roads and private homes came under military control.

Both camps had their own dedicated staffs. By 1918 Trentham had 967 staff and Featherston 1183, only a small proportion of whom were actually involved in training. They were a mixture of clerical workers maintaining records and pay arrangements; quartermaster's staff

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responsible for provisions and food; workshop staff maintaining camp equipment; and others responsible for maintaining weapons and buildings, transporting the men and looking after their teeth and general health.

Most of the camp food was purchased locally from farmers and merchants. Both camps set up pig farms to dispose of food scraps and raise some income, while huge incinerators burnt their general rubbish. By the end of the war the government had spent £227,388 14s 2d on these two camps (equivalent to more than \$23 million in 2015).

The 'standing camp' system was completed by two much smaller specialist camps. From 1915 medical recruits trained at Awapuni Camp, at the Awapuni Racecourse in Palmerston North. Narrow Neck Camp, on a military reserve near Takapuna, accommodated Māori, Pacific and Tunnelling Company recruits.³⁹

2e. The paper trail

Keeping track of all the men who had enlisted, entered camp, departed overseas and been wounded, killed or demobilised was a massive task. By the end of 1914, 12,500 men had left the country. The figure climbed to 30,000 by the end of 1915, 61,000 by the end of 1916, 88,000 by the end of 1917, and nearly 100,000 by the end of the war.⁴⁰ The department maintained a separate personnel file for each soldier. This outlined his allocation to different units, his health and casualty status, his misdemeanours and promotions, his movements, and so on.

The challenge of maintaining this system grew as more and more men were sent overseas. Each file had to be accessible to document the movements of each individual, and the scale of this process was soon far beyond the capacity of the five clerks who had maintained all the Defence Department's records at Buckle St in 1914.

The job of processing the Gallipoli casualty lists quickly forced an expansion of staff, and in June 1915 the department rented an attic office in Brandon St in downtown Wellington to house its ever-expanding Records Office. Files lined all the walls. 'Every name has to be checked carefully, for mistakes are not allowed in this branch', wrote the *Sun*'s reporter;

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‘telegrams are sent to the next-of-kin of the wounded, sick, or killed men before the lists are handed to the newspapers.’⁴¹

The ballooning work prompted the department to create a separate ‘Base Records Branch’ in November 1915. This soon moved into a third, larger office, which it again quickly outgrew.⁴² In March 1916 the department drew up plans for a purpose-built two-storey Base Records building lined with corrugated iron that was erected immediately behind Parliament Buildings. A large public enquiries area occupied much of the ground floor space, while a pool of typists replied to about 500 letters from anxious relatives each day.⁴³ At the time of its completion the building seemed massive and adequate for all conceivable future needs, but within a year its record room had been enlarged and further extensions were in the works.⁴⁴ Base Records’ staff numbered 160 in mid-1917 and 230 a year later, by when more than 1000 letters were being received each per day.⁴⁵

2f. National Registration

Recruitment all but took care of itself until the spring of 1915. Initially a steady stream of men presented themselves at the local Defence office for consideration. From early 1915 they filled out an enlistment form at their local post office and sent this in. A medical examination identified those who were fit to fight. Each military district had a quota to fill, and each group of recruits were be called to camp in time to fill the next reinforcement draft.⁴⁶

This system worked well as long as men kept coming forward, but the number of volunteers was starting to fall short by the winter of 1915. In October the government introduced National Registration, whereby all men of or near military age had to fill out a card giving personal particulars and stating whether or not they were willing to serve in the NZEF. This process would provide the government with information about the number of potentially eligible men who had not signed up.

Government Statistician Malcolm Fraser was entrusted with the task of compiling the register. In October/November 1915 Post and Telegraph staff personally delivered registration cards to every household in the country.⁴⁷ A staff of 244 clerks processed the cards to produce the statistics the government desired and 300 rolls listing the military-aged

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men in each county. These were supplied to local volunteers, who hammered on the men's doors to urge them to enlist.⁴⁸

2g. Conscription introduced

National Registration – and the associated door-knocking campaign – failed to solve the recruiting crisis, and by early 1916 the government was moving towards conscription to solve its problems. Conscription had been introduced in the United Kingdom – with the exception of Ireland – in January. The Military Service Act passed on 1 August 1916 established that any man of military age could be balloted for active service abroad, subject to an appeals process and passing a medical examination. The compilation of the National Register, with its voluminous paperwork and interdepartmental co-operation, had suggested just how complicated the recruiting process would soon become.

Fraser and his team were once again entrusted with managing the exercise, which this time had an overlay of legal process and public scrutiny. The new system was based on the National Register, from which clerks removed the cards of those who had already enlisted or were otherwise ineligible. The cards were divided into classes - single men would be called up before married men – and by district so that local quotas could be maintained. Working on the assumption that many of those balloted would be medically unfit, the authorities planned to call up three men for every man needed by the NZEF.⁴⁹

The Defence Department bombarded the public with information to ensure no one could claim ignorance of his legal obligations. It placed posters in every post office, police station and railway station; at wharves, shipping offices, shops and factories; and in tramcars, railway carriages and coastal vessels. In the cities, post office staff hand-delivered the posters to every home. They were even projected from lantern slides onto cinema screens.⁵⁰

2h. The ballot

In 1919, Director of Recruiting Captain David Cossgrove wrote of the first ballot: 'For the first time in the history of the English speaking peoples of the world the single men of

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military age of a British community found themselves subject to a lottery, the prizes in which might be anything from Home Service in New Zealand to death on the battlefield.’ The publication of the first list of names ‘was awaited with breathless interest by all, and with trepidation by some.’⁵¹

Fraser supervised the first ballot of just over 4140 men on 16 November 1916. The process took more than 20 hours. Choosing each man involved rotating two drums containing marbles. The marble he chose from the first drum directed him to a drawer, and the marble from the second drum denoted a card in this drawer. Each card was turned upright in the drawer before a magistrate removed it and attested that it had been fairly balloted. The mayor of Wellington and a representative of the local Trades and Labour Council were present as observers on behalf of the public⁵²

Fraser’s staff quickly assembled lists of the balloted men, despatching one set to the pool of typists in the Defence Department’s new Recruiting Branch. The branch issued each man with a notice stating that he had been balloted and ordering him to report to camp on a certain date. It was a lengthy process carried out under crippling time constraints, since the men had to be delivered the notices in time to appeal within 10 days if they wished to. The branch typically received the ballot cards at 8 or 9 on a Friday evening and worked in shifts for the next 36 hours to complete the job.⁵³

The Recruiting Branch grew from five staff in mid-1916 to more than 230 by the end of the war.⁵⁴ Cossgrove remembered that they developed systems by trial and error. What they were doing was ‘without precedent in the military history of the Empire. Everything was new’.⁵⁵ The growing scale of the task forced the branch out of headquarters and into a series of commercial buildings in the city, each of which it outgrew before finally settling in Clarkson’s Building in Taranaki St.⁵⁶

The ballots were held almost every month for the rest of the war. Like the Base Records process, they generated a huge quantity of paperwork. Fraser noted after the war: ‘The cards in the Register, which weigh approximately 2¾ tons, if placed end to end would extend over 38 miles, and if opened and spread out would cover an area of some 18,765 square yards.’⁵⁷

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2i. Enforcing conscription

The introduction of conscription made recruiting considerably more complicated. For one reason or another, many conscripts did not want to go to war. Under the conscription system they were able to appeal on the grounds of ‘undue personal hardship’, because their departure from their job would be ‘contrary to the public interest’, or on the basis of tightly defined religious objections. A Military Service Board was set up in each district to adjudicate upon appeals.

The government recognised that the key to making conscription work was punishing those who tried to evade the system. Under the Military Service Act, balloted men who failed to present themselves for service could be imprisoned with hard labour for up to five years, and businesses could be prosecuted for employing them. Men who failed to enrol at all were subject to fines and imprisonment. Fraser recalled that these penalties were ‘drastic and in every case ... immediate proceedings were instituted.’⁵⁸

Those who were legitimately enrolled for the ballot were issued by the Census and Statistics Office with a ‘certificate of enrolment’, which they could present on request as proof of meeting their legal obligations. These were given to each man at their local post office, so the staff could ensure he really was who he said he was.⁵⁹ It was worth carrying this document on your person, as section 44 of the Act empowered the police to stop any man ‘who may reasonably be supposed to be of military age’ and demand proof of enrolment. From July 1918 they could arrest anyone not carrying their papers on the spot and imprison them for 48 hours.⁶⁰

The government had been gradually clamping down on the movements of military-aged men since late 1915. In July/August 1916 it banned men as young as 15 leaving the country without a permit. From February 1917, Customs and Marine Department officers interviewed male British subjects of military age on their arrival in New Zealand. Anyone planning to stay for more than three months would have to become a permanent resident. From December 1917, the police were empowered to arrest and deport any man arriving from an Allied country in which conscription was in force.⁶¹

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Balloted men who failed to appear when requested presented the greatest challenge. They fell into two main categories: those who turned up for their medical examination but did not go to camp, and those who never appeared at all. The Recruiting Branch gave these men the benefit of the doubt, but when their district office was unable to find them their cases were referred to the new Personal Services Branch.⁶²

Created in February 1917, Personal Services investigated each case and reported back on those men it considered to be deliberately avoiding service. By March 1919 it had investigated 10,737 men, of whom 1294 remained at large. 2211 Of those located, 2211 had been found to be eligible for service; 580 men had been arrested for breaches of the Military Service Act and 1133 warrants were outstanding. District Defence offices arranged arrests with the police.⁶³

Arrested defaulters passed into military custody and were imprisoned after a court martial (being balloted put them under military rather than civil jurisdiction). They served their sentence in either a military or a civilian prison, and at its conclusion they were drafted into the NZEF or, if they were medically unfit, into a Home Service role.⁶⁴

2j. The end of the war

At the end of the war, A.W. Robin, the General Officer Commanding, was satisfied that the Defence Department had performed well. ‘The Expeditionary Force ... was fully and efficiently maintained’, he wrote, ‘having at no period during the war been below strength, or short of equipment, Reinforcements, and supplies.’⁶⁵ This glosses over much of the strain and complexity of the war years, but is broadly accurate. The department and those assisting it had adapted and co-operated to efficiently manage the difficulties of wartime administration.

The Defence Department was finally able to return to a peacetime footing, rapidly dispensing with large numbers of temporary staff and wartime branches for which there was no need in peacetime. It learnt lessons from its wartime experiences, and soon moved to reconfigure its practices, its camp system, and its Territorial Force arrangements. It expanded its rehabilitation system for returned servicemen, at least for a few years, and helped manage the medical problems of those who had returned injured. It continued to search for those who had

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refused to serve. In May 1919, Defence published a list of 2600 defaulters, all of whom were deprived of their civil rights for 10 years and banned from returning to New Zealand for the same period if they had been abroad in December 1918.⁶⁶

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2k. Biography: Malcolm Fraser (1872–1949)

Scotsman Malcolm Fraser was one of the most important public servants in New Zealand's military war effort. As government statistician he was directly responsible for devising and administering the conscription system.

Born in Inverness in 1872, Fraser emigrated to New Zealand and joined the public service in 1893. He was a clerk with the Land and Income Tax Department until 1908, when he joined the Public Service Superannuation Board as an accountant. The Census and Statistics Act 1910 created the position of government statistician with responsibility for administering the census and collecting official statistics. Fraser was appointed to the role.⁶⁷

Fraser's experience of organising and collating the five-yearly census was no doubt what prompted the government to assign him the similar job of managing National Registration and then the conscription ballot. It was complex and demanding work, and by law all ballots had to be conducted by Fraser personally. He was also entrusted with collecting statistics on the cost of living, and later with registering enemy aliens. The growth of his branch necessitated nine shifts of office between July 1916 and November 1918, and his staff swelled from 14 in August 1916 to a peak of 162 in early 1918.⁶⁸

Fraser noted at the end of the war that the work had been complex. His office was bombarded with letters from the public exposing would-be draft-dodgers, claims which were difficult to authenticate or disprove.

'[F]requently enquirers gave very imperfect information', Fraser recalled, 'often with inaccurate spelling and in a large proportion of cases stating initials only, and when in conjunction with this it is known that reservists with the surname of "Smith" numbered 3,799, "Wilson" 2,075, "Brown" 1,929, "Jones" 1,562, "Williams" 1,495, and "Robinson" 998, and that a search where initials only were given for a common name like say, "J. Smith" would involve the examination of 704 cards, for "A. Wilson" 262, and for "J. McKenzie" 160 cards, it will be seen that these enquiries were not so simple as they appeared.'⁶⁹

In June 1918 Fraser had the novel experience of drawing his own card in the ballot. The story made good copy for the press, but journalists pointed out that Fraser, at 46, was only

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technically eligible for military service. The rules allowed men aged up to 46 to enlist, but the Medical Boards who inspected them rejected all men over 44 for active service abroad.⁷⁰

The last round of men were called up in September 1918, and with the war's end in November the Census and Statistics Office soon returned to its normal peacetime work. By February 1919 Fraser's staff had shrunk to eight.⁷¹ His mastery of the balloting process earned him an OBE, and he remained Government Statistician until 1930, when he was appointed Commissioner of Unemployment to help manage the official response to the Depression. He was Under-Secretary of Internal Affairs from 1932 until his retirement in 1934. He then served as chairman and director of the Equitable Building and Investment Company, and from 1938 to 1947 as a Wellington City Councillor. Malcolm Fraser died in Wellington in 1949 at the age of 76.⁷²

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2I. Biography: Alfred William Robin (1860-1935)

As General Officer Commanding the troops based in New Zealand, Alfred Robin was the person with the most direct overall responsibility for New Zealand's military war effort other than the Minister of Defence. A strong and capable officer, Robin was unhappy about being stuck at home while war raged elsewhere.

Robin was born in Victoria in 1860 and came to New Zealand as a baby. His early interest in the military drew him into volunteer units in Otago and Southland from the late 1870s, and by the 1890s he was commanding officer of the Otago Hussars. Robin commanded the First Contingent despatched to the South African War in 1899, and from 1900 the 1st New Zealand Regiment. On his return to New Zealand he moved into national defence administration and was Chief of the General Staff from 1906..

Appointed adjutant and quartermaster-general under Major-General Godley in 1910, Robin helped bring the 1909 defence scheme to fruition. From 1912 until early 1914 he was New Zealand representative at the War Office in London. On his return to the dominion in early 1914 he resumed his earlier role as quartermaster-general.

From the outbreak of war in August 1914, Robin worked hard to provision the Main Body for overseas service. When Godley left to lead the NZEF overseas, the government appointed Robin acting Commandant of the Forces. The departure of so many officers meant that Robin was obliged to also remain quartermaster-general. This 'temporary' measure remained in place throughout the war. It was, he noted in 1918, 'just possible to carry on' by 'using every day of the week (Holidays and Sundays), and taking no leave.'⁷³

As well as being in overall charge, Robin had direct responsibility for a third of the department's work – keeping the camps supplied with equipment and food. In early 1918 the government appointed a Defence Expenditure Commission to review the whole system. While complimentary about Robin personally, the Commission concluded that the department was over-centralised and excessively dependent on him.⁷⁴

Robin told the Commission that being stuck at home rather than commanding troops at the front had been 'a serious blow' – he had had to set aside years of training and military

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experience to serve as an administrator.⁷⁵ Promoted several times during the war, he stayed on only long enough to see the department's war work completed. Robin resigned in late 1919 and retired a year later after a brief stint as acting administrator of Western Samoa. During the 1920s he was active in veterans' associations, the Boy Scouts and St John. Robin died in Wellington in 1935.

3. Feeding Britain – Gavin McLean and Tim Shoebridge

In March 1915 the British government started purchasing New Zealand's entire output of frozen meat, to help ensure a regular flow of food to the British public and the British Expeditionary Force in France. Over the remaining years of the war, this bulk purchase arrangement – known variously as the 'requisition' or 'imperial commandeer' – was gradually extended to cover most of New Zealand's other primary products. It rapidly grew into an industrial counterpart to the work of sending men abroad to join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF). To co-ordinate the process, the New Zealand government created an Imperial Government Supplies Department which linked the scattered local producers with the British government's supply chain.

3a. Meat and dairy to Britain

In 1914, the export of meat, dairy and other agricultural products generated about 90% of New Zealand's export income, with a further 5% generated by the mining industry. Over 80% of this output crossed the oceans to the United Kingdom, where it helped sustain a British population increasingly dependent on imported food. The New Zealand government facilitated the expansion of agricultural trade by building roads and railways, making land – and the means of developing it – available, and by inspecting agricultural products before export to ensure a high-quality New Zealand brand. The government took no role in the trade itself, however, with private dairy factories and freezing works selling New Zealand produce directly to British distributors. Private shipping companies carried these exports to the waiting consumers in Britain.

The health of the shipping industry was therefore key to the entire process: nothing could happen without enough ships being available to transport these goods at a viable cost. In 1914 a large number of ships handled New Zealand's trade with Europe (mainly with the UK). Most belonged to three British-owned companies: the New Zealand Shipping Company and Federal Steam Navigation Company alliance; Shaw Savill & Albion; and the Commonwealth & Dominion Line (the Port Line). Later generations would call them the Conference Lines, but insiders then referred to them as the Direct Lines or simply 'the Liners'. To many New

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Zealanders these ships, often household names, were simply the 'Home boats'. The Union Company held a small share of the trade and the Vestey-owned Blue Star Line would break into the business during the war, but it was generally a tightly-run oligarchy, overseen by the New Zealand Overseas Shipowners' Committee (NZOSC) and in many cases linked closely to the freezing works companies. Competition was far less vigorous than exporters, politicians or the public assumed.

3b. The commandeer begins

The outbreak of war in August 1914 changed the situation. It disrupted international trade and made the sea lanes used by the 'Home boats' vulnerable to raids by enemy warships. It also increased the British demand for agricultural imports to help fuel the war effort. New Zealand had contributed to the South African War more than a decade earlier, supplying soldiers, horses and foodstuffs, and even turning several freighters into troopships. But the demands of the First World War would be much greater. The need for food grew steadily as the number of soldiers – and the pressure on the British economy – increased. Wartime demand soon forced the British government to bypass ordinary business channels to get the goods it needed, and it introduced controls over both the imported food trade and the shipping industry which facilitated it.

In early 1915 the British government introduced a commandeer system, agreeing to buy the entire national output of certain commodities beyond the requirements of the domestic market. Frozen meat was commandeered first, in March 1915, followed by the tungsten ore scheelite, used in armament manufacturing (September 1915), cheese (November 1915), wool (December 1916), sheepskins (February 1917), hides and slipe wool (March 1917), and finally butter (November 1917). The United Kingdom made similar arrangements with Australia, India, Ceylon, Egypt, the United States (from 1917), the Philippines, Russia, and even France.⁷⁶

The government created a Department of Imperial Government Supplies (initially known as the Imperial Government Meat Supply Branch) to facilitate the process. The new department was outside the control of the Public Service Commissioner and was intended to last only as long as the war. Head office in Wellington would oversee the work of the many staff in the

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regions who liaised with local firms. By 1918, the department was co-ordinating the work of 85 wool and skin brokers, 40 freezing works, 33 wool-scouring works, 23 fellmongeries and a number of other industries in order to keep the commander running smoothly. In turn, it distributed British payments to the producers.

3c. The department at work

The Department of Imperial Government Supplies started work on 3 March 1915, the day frozen meat was first requisitioned. Everything was done in a rush. Robert Triggs, an assistant public service commissioner, headed the branch, which was squeezed into Room 64 of the General Post Office Building. For his key staff he chose F.H. Taylor from Dalgety & Co's shipping section, D. Rutherford from the Post and Telegraph Department and – under agreement with the livestock division of the Department of Agriculture – Chief Veterinarian C.J. Reakes. They had to work hard, for on 9 March, the liner *Ruahine*, the first imperial food ship, slipped out of Wellington bound for London with a cargo of 4324 carcasses of mutton and 22,975 of lamb, all paid for by the British government (£24,562) and all tallied up by the new unit. For the rest of the life of the scheme the prime minister, ministers and interested parties would be given returns showing the tallies of shipments by every vessel.

Staff numbers grew along with the work. Initially, when the purchasing scheme covered only frozen meat, a little cheese and sheelite, the staff was just six-strong. Life grew steadily more cramped as mail sacks flooded the department's small office. The department had 11 staff when it moved to bigger premises in Norwich Chambers on Customhouse Quay in December 1916, and 44 when it moved again in September 1917 to Lambton Chambers on Lambton Quay.⁷⁷ By 1918 there were 59 staff in head office, although Triggs assured his minister that only six were on the public service's permanent payroll.⁷⁸ In 1917 they had taken over the outside work previously done by the New Zealand Government Requisitions Committee, mainly valuing wool and sheepskins for the British government. This brought in a large number of wool inspectors who were supported by three additional clerks.

Triggs' enthusiasm for automation meant that telephones, mechanical calculators and adding machines competed with staff for office space. While some worked with the shipping companies, valued wool or inspected farms and woolstores alongside people from

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Agriculture and Customs, most departmental staff sat at their desks processing information and accounts. Newspapers reported that £1.25 million (equivalent to about \$163 million in 2015) was passing through the office every week by mid-war.

The department set prices, allocated customers and enforced markings and logos on goods. Its staff also worked closely and co-operatively with other departments, overseas governments, and with the agricultural and shipping sectors. It worked most closely with the Department of Agriculture, Industries and Commerce. In 1917 Agriculture's livestock division formed a committee to carry out the enlarged scope of business now that wool and sheepskins had been added to imperial purchasing duties; this had taken up considerable staff time.

3d. The shipping crisis

The demands on the available shipping increased as ships were taken over for use as hospital ships and troop transports, and for other purposes. Britain began requisitioning insulated spaces in ships for the carriage of meat, breaking the old arrangements between shipping companies, shipping agents and their customers such as freezing companies and wool brokers. From 1915 the Wellington-based NZOSC (with Triggs as the government representative) worked with like bodies in Australia and Britain. The NZOSC met daily, depending on Imperial Supplies for information on the quantities of meat held in the freezing works and estimates of future killings. That data flow increased as other commodities were brought into the scheme.

The commandeer drove an increase in primary production despite manpower shortages, and many dairy factories and freezing works were established or expanded to meet the increased business, some with government subsidies. Production only slowed in the later years of the war, when the demand for shipping space outstripped availability, thanks in part to attacks on British shipping by German U-boats. In 1918 the department reported that refrigerated tonnage with a carrying capacity of 1,761,800 standard carcasses of meat had been lost during the war.

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The number of ships calling at New Zealand ports dropped, and meat and dairy products piled up in the cool stores while they waited for transport. New Zealand producers and politicians worried that ships were being diverted to Argentina and Uruguay, from where they could make two shorter voyages for every single long trip from New Zealand. When Britain's Shipping Controller took over all the empire's deep-sea shipping between 1917 and 1919 under the Liner Requisition Scheme, Prime Minister William Massey protested strongly, but with limited success. Despite prime ministerial requests, sailings from New Zealand to the UK fell from 99 in 1914 to 78 in 1916 and 62 in 1917, while carcass numbers shipped dropped from 8.8 million to 5.6 million over these years.

Britain's orders kept the department's staff busy, but they occasionally did some purely local work. Late in 1916 Cabinet fixed the price at which butter could be sold in the dominion and imposed a levy on butter and cheese factories to ensure that butter sold locally was just as profitable as the export product. Imperial Government Supplies' work was made more complicated by the government setting the levy too high and having to refund more than £50,000. Two years later the department found itself in the business of buying cheese for the Defence Department, about the same time as it purchased Australian wheat on behalf of the Board of Trade.

3e. Praise and brickbats

Most farmers liked the commandeer, which guaranteed good prices for all they could produce. They had to put up with some extra bureaucracy, but that was nothing new for people used to having their produce inspected, wool brands registered and products packed and marked to purchasers' requirements. People from the shipping and storage industries also appreciated the commandeer. W.S. Bennett, Wellington manager for Dalgetys, claimed that 'God only knows what would have happened to New Zealand if the Imperial Government had not taken over our produce. It practically saved this country from bankruptcy.'⁷⁹

There were some complaints. In 1915 Poverty Bay farmers fearful of losing trade to South American competitors wanted more ships to call. At Wairoa in December 1917, farmers complained not about purchase prices but about the size of deductions to cover the cost of extracting seed from fleeces – some districts had seedier wool than others.⁸⁰ In March 1920,

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woolgrower W.D. Lysnar, noting that the war was well and truly over, complained that farmers were being denied the higher prices a free market might offer.

A stronger cause of grievance was the shortage of shipping and its allocation to ports. By mid-war Home boats were permitted to call at no more than four ports – only one if the ship had loaded in Australia before coming to New Zealand. Under this policy, ports such as Oamaru lost their UK trade during the war while others such as Tokomaru Bay boomed. Other ports and local producers grumbled that they were not getting their fair share of the reduced number of ship calls. In November 1917, for example, the secretary of the Otago branch of the Farmers' Union complained that too much power was being exerted by the Shipping Controller in London. While Triggs had been appointed to the tonnage committee of the NZOSC, this had limited influence and allocations were almost always made in London. The Otago farmers' leader suspected that Wellington's central geographical position gave it an advantage over ports such as his own.⁸¹

Woolgrowers were probably the stroppest farmers. Wool had not been commandeered until December 1916 and growers, buyers and brokers were concerned about the impact on their incomes and businesses. In fact co-operation between government officials and the sector proved strong and enduring. A new Dominion Woolgrowers' Committee advised officials and the brokers rationalised valuation points to wool stores in Auckland, Gisborne, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.⁸²

Away from the farm, others sometimes criticised the scheme. Trade union leaders unhappy about rising prices sometimes looked askance at farmers' incomes, although the historian James Watson observes that all prices rose during the war and that 'the commandeer kept those [already high] prices down and assured supplies for the empire and some of its allies at the expense of other markets.'⁸³

3f. The end of the commandeer

The war's influence lingered long after the signing of the Armistice in November 1918. Shipping was still in very short supply and it would take many months for New Zealand's soldiers to be returned to the dominion. Government departments took their place in

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increasingly long queues as governments and shipping lines juggled their requirements, handling repatriations, ship refits and the ordinary needs of vital trades such as coal.

While the final tally for the commandeer would be nearly £160 million, a table published just before the Armistice sums up the story of its busiest years. Note the importance of meat and wool. The figures are in pounds sterling (£):

Frozen meat	27,916,676
Cheese, 1915-16 season	917,748
Cheese, 1916-17 season	3,295,557
Cheese, 1917-18 season	4,811,228
Butter, 1917-18 season	2,816,457
Scheelite	122,917
Wool	24,849,966
Freezing Cos' slipe wool	3,270,332
Sheepskins	1,121,066
Hides	704,577
Other business	1,230,747
Total	71,057,271

As business wound down departmental staff were laid off or transferred, although a few appointments such as that of George Christie as auditor in mid-1919 continued to be made to fill vital roles. During the Second World War Britain would again commandeer New Zealand's major export commodities, but the main business would be handled by producer boards working with the shipping lines and other government departments rather than by a specialist government department. The first such board, the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board, hired Thomas Lees in 1922 as its first secretary.⁸⁴ For a short while Lees also retained the position of Controller of the Department of Imperial Government Supplies, which he had taken up in April 1921 following Triggs death a few months earlier in order to wind it up after seeing off the final imperial wool shipments.

The steamer *Westmoreland* sailed from Wellington in September 1922 with the last bales of wool purchased by the British government. The 1921/22 season had seen 314,903 bales

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shipped, nearly half to London and the remainder to Liverpool, Hull and Manchester.⁸⁵ The commandeer was officially over.

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3g. Biography: Robert Triggs (1856–1920)

The main man in the Department of Imperial Government Supplies for much of its short existence was Robert Triggs. A life-long public servant, he had a background that was no doubt useful in his new role. Born in Sudbury, England, in 1856, he came out to Canterbury and was educated at Christ's College. Triggs started his working life with the Railways in July 1877, filling several clerical and accounting roles before crossing the Tasman to serve as chief accountant first of Western Australian Railways and then of the new Commonwealth's Post-Master General's Department. In 1913, aged 57, he returned to New Zealand to become one of two assistant public service commissioners. An obituary said that in this role, while 'strictly systematic, he broke through much red tape method' and was 'chiefly responsible for the introduction of Labour savings throughout Government Departments'.⁸⁶

Triggs kept his Public Services Commissioner responsibilities while managing Imperial Government Supplies. In October 1917 he resigned as Assistant Public Service Commissioner to take up the role of Public Trustee, in which he made major changes. He was still carrying out two jobs when he died in Wellington on 12 November 1920 at the age of 63.

4. Maintaining public services – Tim Shoebridge

The government immediately re-set its priorities on the outbreak of war in August 1914. Everything else was subordinated to winning the war. The public service, responsible for enacting the government's wishes, would have to both refocus its energies on new wartime activities and find a way to carry on with business as usual in the face of declining manpower and public revenue and endlessly rising costs.

4a. Departmental war work

The public service shifted quickly into war mode, and many departments found themselves with new responsibilities. The Defence Department shouldered the heaviest burden, organising the recruitment, training, and outfitting of the country's soldiers, and later enforcing the conscription process as well. The Railways Department transported men to camp, around the country on leave, and finally to the wharves for embarkation. The Post and Telegraph Department acted as an information bureau and point of contact between the government, soldiers, and their families. It also took charge of press and mail censorship. The Police Department monitored enemy aliens, helped track down those who wished to avoid military service, and worked to maintain the peace. The Discharged Soldiers' Information Department, established in 1915, served the needs of men returning from the front.

The commander also placed great demands on the public service. The Department of Imperial Government Supplies was created to manage the process, drawing staff away from other departments to carry out its work. Agriculture Department staff took charge of inspecting goods for export, and the Mines Department inspected scheelite, which the British used to make armaments.

The Public Trust took charge of administering soldiers' wills and property, while Government Insurance was kept busy processing and paying out life insurance claims for

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deceased soldiers. The Health Department oversaw the treatment of soldiers who returned to New Zealand with injuries requiring longer-term treatment.

4b. Business as usual?

There was no appreciable drop in departmental performance during the first two years of the war, with departments taking pride in their ability to keep going as usual despite the diminishing numbers of men. The challenges were only to grow, with revenue and manpower dropping simultaneously. Customs revenue and railways profits were important sources of government income, and both dropped substantially from the early months of the war while the costs of labour and materials steadily grew. Government borrowing, too, became difficult as the London money market rebuffed requests for loans from New Zealand to focus on funding the British war effort. The New Zealand government was able to raise some revenue through internal borrowing, but the overall picture was bleak. This would be a period of austerity and retrenchment, with the government committed to preventing the public service from growing except to serve the war effort.⁸⁷

The government initially re-prioritised manpower and expenditure by cutting back on large infrastructural projects. A major development of rail facilities allowed for in the 1914 estimates was suspended indefinitely soon after the war began. The Public Works Department, responsible for building roads, railways, and other large-scale development work, was one of the largest areas of government expenditure and borrowing. The department cut its programme dramatically, completing current projects but spreading its 1914 appropriation over several years.

Public Service Commissioner Donald Robertson's programme of reform and rationalisation, begun in 1913, soon ground to a halt. 'With 1319 officers absent with the Expeditionary Forces the time has not been opportune for readjustments of staff, and important reforms have been temporarily arrested', he reported in 1916. 'The number of officers with the Expeditionary Forces represents approximately 45 per cent of the total number of single men of military age in the Public Service.'⁸⁸

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By 1918, all the larger departments had surrendered a large proportion of their permanent staff to the war effort. Six departments had more than a third of their staff absent on military service: Native, Pensions, Public Trust, State Advances, State Fire Insurance and the Dominion Laboratory. Another eight had at least a quarter away: Audit, Government Insurance, Justice, Lands and Deeds, Lands and Survey, Public Works, Railways and the Registrar-General's Office.⁸⁹ The large Post and Telegraph Department had contributed 22% of its staff.⁹⁰

4c. Public servants at war

The public service embraced the principle that, wherever possible, its employees should be released to join the NZEF. They would serve the government's war aims more directly at the front than by remaining at their posts. The departments promised to keep the men's positions open for them, replacing them with temporary. Staff who enlisted would also retain their seniority and superannuation rights, which would be subsidised by the department. The Public Service Commissioner ruled that absent staff would be automatically considered for any promotion and would continue to accrue leave at full pay during their absence.⁹¹

The only department which refused to give its staff leave was the Police Department – police officers were needed at home to maintain the peace. Police officers had to resign in order to enlist, losing their benefits and pay grade position if they ever re-applied. In practice, Parliament voted to reinstate these conditions for returning officers at the end of the war.

4d. Feeling the pinch

Until 1916, the public service was able to maintain most services by cutting leave and extending working hours. Then conditions began to tighten. Like many other enterprises, departments were finding it harder and harder to function with their diminished staffs. The public service found itself competing for staff with better-paying private employers. Robertson noted that the large number of enlistments was creating 'exceptional difficulties'.⁹²

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The introduction of conscription in August 1916 added to the problem, because the defence administration had to expand dramatically to cope with the new work. This drew staff away from other departments. Conscription itself would also remove more men from the public service – and diminish departmental influence over who should stay behind in the public interest. The government did its best to keep the remaining staff by blocking retirements and preventing transfers between departments from October 1917, but the pressure remained.⁹³ Most departments made few requests for exemptions from military service. Railways, however appealed against the calling-up of 569 of 826 staff balloted between November 1916 and May 1917. These call-ups were all deferred.⁹⁴ In total 810 men were exempted on the grounds of ‘Public Services’, but it is unclear if all these men were public servants.⁹⁵

The public was mainly affected by the diminishing numbers in small ways. Some public services, especially in rural areas, began to slip. The Agriculture Department agonised that the depletion of its army of inspectors was diminishing its ability to influence the agricultural sector. In the absence of inspectors and the threat of prosecution, farmers were growing lax in uprooting noxious weeds and rabbits were getting out of control, especially in Otago and Southland. The commandeering was absorbing so much of inspectors’ energies that they could not maintain their normal work. Dairy returns were incentivising farmers to run more stock instead of growing wheat, and food prices were creeping up as a result. The department also worried that the commandeering was encouraging farmers to butcher potential breeding stock.

Other departments also complained that staff attrition was hindering their ability to do their work. The Mines Department noted in 1919 that the war had so diminished its staff that its functions ‘cannot be adequately and satisfactorily performed’.⁹⁶ The number of police officers fell from 1916 despite the appointment of temporary constables. The police training college closed in December 1916 for want of recruits.

The greatest pressure fell on the two largest departments, Post and Telegraph and Railways, which struggled to maintain essential services throughout the country. Post and Telegraph had a heavy load of war work on top of a steady increase in the volume of mail – in 1916 the volume of mail for a month exceeded that for the whole 1912 year. Railways had lost thousands of men to military service by 1917, and had run 5000 special military trains in addition to normal services by the end of 1916. Civilian passenger numbers and freight

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volume were dropping, while the costs of both materials and labour were soaring as both became scarce. Sooner or later, something would have to give.

4e. Temporary employees

The public service did its best to ameliorate these difficulties by employing temporary staff, especially in the departments most closely involved in the war effort. Defence had one temporary staff member in 1914 and 863 in 1918. Internal Affairs, with its responsibility for the Government Statistician's Branch, had climbed from 32 to 608, and Public Health, managing soldiers' hospitals, had from 80 to 228. The Public Trust had no temporary employees in 1914 but 179 in 1918. Public Works, by contrast, had 6899 in 1914 and just 90 in 1918.⁹⁷ Some of these new employees were recruited from the general workforce, while others were men rejected for military service on medical grounds but able to perform clerical 'Home Service.'

Many temporary employees had neither the skills nor the experience to carry a full workload. 'The loss of the services of permanent officers of experience is felt in every office in the Dominion,' noted the head of Post and Telegraph in 1918, 'and as the same skill and local knowledge cannot be expected of the temporary substitutes, it is felt seriously. Controlling officers, working with depleted and inexperienced staffs, find their duties most exacting and responsible and their executive abilities tried to the utmost.'⁹⁸

4f. Woman-powering

Many of the temporary employees were women. Uncommon at the beginning of the war, the employment of women quickly gained popularity as a means of maintaining the public service. By 1916 women were filling gaps in many professions, including banking and other clerical occupations, so the public and private sectors were competing for their services.⁹⁹ In the United Kingdom and other combatant countries women were being drawn more actively into agricultural and industrial work.

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Employing women in the public service was a logical step, but a conceptual shift. ‘The employment of women has assumed a new aspect,’ Robertson wrote in 1916, ‘and Departments which prior to the war objected to female officers are now utilising women for such work as assisting auditors, ledger work, and other minor accounting and clerical work.’ Among these departments was Defence, which had previously preferred not to employ women ‘partly owing to want of proper accommodation and partly owing to hesitation on the part of the Department.’¹⁰⁰

Departments such as Defence on which the burden of war work weighed most heavily were probably the first to welcome women into their offices, however hesitantly. These organisations probably had the greatest culture of expectation that male staff would enlist – and they also needed to expand rapidly. The Post and Telegraph Department, likewise, increasingly turned to women to work on counters and in telephone exchanges, roles in which they already had a niche in 1914. Robertson noted that by 1916, 513 women had been appointed as temporary employees across the public service in place of men who had enlisted.¹⁰¹ Women were soon employed in many departments.¹⁰² Robertson reported in 1918 that 873 of the 1207 public servants working on directly war-related activities were women. Overall there were now 4153 women in the public service, compared to 1826 before the war.¹⁰³ The proportion of female teachers increased as men left to fight, accelerating an existing trend. By the end of 1917, 750 male teachers had enlisted. In 1914, 63% of teachers were women; in 1918, 72%.¹⁰⁴

In 1915, as the number of female staff began to climb, Robertson appointed Daisy E. Platts-Mills as medical officer to the women of the public service. She inspected government offices to ensure they had suitable facilities for women, including workspace, cloak and toilet rooms and rest-rooms (sick bays). The Post and Telegraph and Public Trust departments were models in this respect, while the relevant Defence offices were especially overcrowded and uncongenial. Several departments appointed their own matrons, while others elected welfare committees to handle women’s concerns. Platts-Mills expressed concern that the influx of female public servants in Wellington had severely strained the available private accommodation – the government should step in to protect young women from the ‘difficulties and temptations which are detrimental alike to health and to morals’. Robertson arranged financial help for organisations such as the YWCA which supported ‘young girls living away from home’.¹⁰⁵

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Few of the incoming women had any experience or training in office work. Director of Recruiting David Cossgrove, who supervised the issuing of call-up notices, described his female typing staff as enthusiastic rather than competent. They were ‘of the very poorest quality’, he complained in 1919, many of them ‘school-girls learning typing and their work bristled with errors.’¹⁰⁶ Government Statistician Malcolm Fraser was also frustrated by their inexperience, but noted that ‘all were imbued with an ardent patriotic desire to “do their bit” in the crisis facing the country, and looking back at what was accomplished under the trying conditions it must be admitted that they did wonders.’¹⁰⁷

Women would, however, have to remain at the bottom of the career ladder. Cossgrove asserted in 1918 that ‘women clerks cannot withstand the strain in responsible positions – quite apart from the fact that my experience has been they have not the ability to deal with responsible work in this branch.’¹⁰⁸ Robertson noted the additional problem that male officers would refuse to be managed or trained by a woman.¹⁰⁹ The average annual pay for female public servants in 1917 was £117, compared to £173 for males, an inequity the PSA fought to remedy during the war years without success.¹¹⁰

Robertson noted that, despite their lack of experience and departmental ‘hesitation’, the employment of women had been a successful experiment: ‘the Commissioners record that women are now satisfactorily performing work which Departments would have hesitated to entrust to them before the war. The zeal, diligence, and good conduct of the large number of women, of whom the greater proportion had no office experience before joining the Service, merits praise.’¹¹¹

4g. The cost of living

The cost of living climbed steadily through the war, with rising prices for food and goods pushing down purchasing power. In April 1916 the government suspended its regular public service pay regrading on the grounds that too many staff were away on active service – there would be no pay increases until the war ended.¹¹²

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The government tackled the cost of living problem by awarding public servants a one-off bonus in each of the remaining years of the war. When these were announced, some newspapers complained that the government was indulging public servants at the expense of the rest of the community. The *Public Service Journal* responded that public servants were in general worse paid than their private sector counterparts, and their fixed incomes made them more vulnerable to price rises.¹¹³

Public servants felt the bonuses were too small to make an appreciable difference to their financial circumstances, and many struggled with the rising cost of living. This quickly became the most pressing issue facing the public service unions. In November 1916 the Public Service Association, the Post and Telegraph Officers' Association, the three railways unions, and the New Zealand Educational Institute teamed up to form a Council of New Zealand State Service Associations with a total membership of 26,000. A deputation from the council which met acting Prime Minister James Allen in June 1917 urged the government to work harder to hold down the cost of living. The government responded with another war bonus; it had little else to offer.¹¹⁴ The public service, like the rest of the country, would have to knuckle down until better days arrived.

4h. Endgame and aftermath

By 1918 shrinking manpower and revenue was forcing some hard decisions upon the public service. The Post and Telegraph Department cut back its services from 1 July as the conscription of the Second Division – men with wives and families – began, tipping the workload beyond what the remaining staff could absorb. The department reduced post office opening hours and the frequency of mail delivery. This reorientation allowed more women to be employed, as working at night was thought unsuitable for them.¹¹⁵

Despite its many successful appeals, the Railways Department was also affected by the introduction of conscription. From November 1916 it experimented with ways to meet the needs of the NZEF while maintaining the railway timetable.¹¹⁶ In May 1917 it cut services in order to release more workers. By now coal shortages were being felt, and coal was formally rationed from October 1917. Although passenger numbers and freight volumes were dropping dramatically, the coal and manpower shortages and rising maintenance costs

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severely tested the viability of the rail system. Reduced train timetables prioritised moving troops and serving the needs of the war effort. The coal shortage also exacerbated the shipping shortages which were inhibiting farming exports and economic development.

The November 1918 Armistice did not immediately relieve the strains on the public service. The influenza pandemic struck simultaneously, hitting public servants as hard as every other part of the community. Several departments had 60% of its staff on sick leave at one time, and 114 public servants died. It took three months for most departments to get back on top of their work.¹¹⁷

The public service slowly returned to normal over the next two or three years. A continuing rise in the cost of living was offset by the reintroduction of regrading in early 1919.¹¹⁸ Railway timetables returned more or less to the pre-war norm in December 1919, as did postal services as men returned from the NZEF.¹¹⁹ Demobilised men gradually returned to work across all departments, while former soldiers were given preference for new positions. The number of temporary employees dropped from 2089 in April 1919 to 583 in November 1921, when 159 of them were still employed on specifically war-related work such as auditing, pensions and soldier settlement.¹²⁰

Although he praised the contribution of female staff at the end of the war, Robertson's view of the place of women in the public service hadn't changed since he excluded them from entrance examinations in 1913. In normal circumstances, he considered, 'the employment of women as clerks is satisfactory only to a limited extent.' Men must be encouraged to join the public service, and promoting women – who would only marry and leave – would be 'likely to have far-reaching results'. If they were to be employed in the public service, Robertson thought, women should focus on shorthand and typewriting, which they 'have made practically their own.'¹²¹ By 1924 only four female clerks remained in the Defence Department.¹²²

4i. A good war?

Overall, the public service successfully met the unprecedented demands of the war on its resources and ingenuity. Manpower shortages were met by reconfiguring and reducing

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services, and by tapping into under-utilised sections of the labour market – women chief among them. High costs and limited resources forced the prioritisation of activities, with inessentials cut to the bone. New departments were created and several existing departments expanded massively. With a few exceptions, government services were successfully adapted and maintained in trying circumstances.

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4j. Biography: Mary Mulcahy (1892–1966)

Mary Mulcahy was one of the many women who worked on the conscription ballot for Government Statistician Malcolm Fraser in the second half of the war. The daughter of a railway worker, she was born Mary Greaney in Balclutha in 1892. The family followed railway work around the South Island before settling in Wellington by the beginning of the First World War. Mary married Audit Department clerk James Mulcahy in Wellington on 10 October 1916, while he was in camp preparing to join the Wellington Infantry Regiment. James sailed for the front on 15 November.

Mary joined the Military Service Branch of the Government Statistician's Office on 1 April 1917 as a temporary employee. Initially based in the Public Trust building in downtown Wellington, she moved with the branch to Routh's building. Mary worked on the conscription ballot process, selecting cards during the ballots and processing and updating files.

James Mulcahy was wounded at Messines in June 1917 and spent a long period in hospital in England. In August 1918 he was classified as unfit for further service owing to 'hysteria neurasthenia' (shell shock).

Mary resigned from the Government Statistician's Branch as soon as James arrived home in October 1918. He spent much of the following year in and out of the shell-shock hospital at Hanmer Springs, but eventually returned to work in the Audit Department. The couple subsequently settled in Palmerston North, where Mary died in 1966 and James the following year.¹²³

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4k. Breakout: Isabella Palmer, Canterbury's Public Service Queen

Thirty-nine-year-old Isabella Palmer was one of eight women nominated for election as the Queen of Canterbury in January 1916. The candidates were not 'beauty queens' in the modern sense, but figureheads for a section of the community – trade and industry, professions and commerce, wholesale and retail, the various suburbs encircling Christchurch city. An industrious campaigner for patriotic causes, wife of Dr James Palmer and mother of one, Isabella was nominated as 'Public Service Queen' – the candidate representing public servants and local-body employees.

The organising committee hoped that the Canterbury Queen Carnival, like its Auckland and Wellington predecessors, would raise a significant sum for the relief of soldiers and their dependants. They hoped to raise £100,000 by charging threepence for each vote. The winning candidate would be the one who raised the most money.

Palmer and her fellow queens spent a feverish three months moving between fetes, garden parties, concerts, plays, cooking competitions, athletic events, art unions, and a bewildering array of other events. A flag representing each candidate was hoisted in Cathedral Square each morning, their positions on the pole reflecting their current ranking. The total number of votes and overall total raised were chalked up on a signboard, but the total raised in the name of each candidate was withheld. Observers were stunned by the rapidity of the voting and the interest the 'Queen Election' generated. A million votes had been registered by mid-February, many through large individual and corporate donations.

A stream of decorated cars drove into Christchurch city on the afternoon of 29 April 1916. The parade celebrated the triumph of the Queen of the Hills, Miss M. Rutherford, who had raised a staggering £27,140, 20% of the £134,781 total. Palmer, feted by railway workers and telegraph operators, had initially made a strong showing, but she progressively dropped down the polls and finished in last place, having raised £8341. The first three places were taken by suburban queens, with the city votes split between occupational groups.

There were, presumably, far fewer public servants in Christchurch than industrial workers or suburban residents.

5. Policing the war effort – Tim Shoebridge

In 1914 the New Zealand government moved quickly to strengthen the rule of law and keep the country focused on winning the war. It used the Post and Telegraph and Defence departments to monitor mail communications and newspaper reporting, and gave the police and courts broad powers to arrest and punish those who obstructed the government's priorities. From late 1916 the Police and Defence shared responsibility for enforcing conscription, with defaulters ultimately facing incarceration in a public prison. These enforcement efforts took all those involved into new territory.

The War Regulations Act, passed in November 1914, extended the government's ability to monitor and suppress activities which might undermine the war effort. The Act allowed it to issue regulations prohibiting 'acts ... injurious to the public safety, the defence of New Zealand, or the effective conduct of the military or naval operations of His Majesty during the present war.'¹²⁴ Dozens of new regulations under this Act appeared in each year of the war, each outlining new control measures.¹²⁵

5a. Mail and press censorship

Post and Telegraph began censoring telegrams and wireless messages as soon as the war began, appointing censors at the main cable and wireless stations, which were placed under armed guard. From December 1914 censorship was extended to regular mail, and envelopes were henceforth delivered stamped 'Opened by the Military Censor'. Censors were instructed to stop any communications which could compromise the imperial war effort by giving the enemy information of value.

The Chief of the General Staff, Colonel C.M. Gibbon, acted as Chief Censor, supported by a Naval Advisor and a Deputy Censor based in the General Post Office in Wellington who oversaw day-to-day management. Assistant censors managed teams of clerks at the four main post offices and two main cable stations, their work cloaked in secrecy. The censors were a combination of Defence and Post and Telegraph staff, though they were directed exclusively

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by the Defence Department.¹²⁶ As the war progressed the censors added names to the list of banned correspondents, mail addressed to whom would not be allowed to leave the country.

Gibbon's role extended to press censorship. News of military campaigns was already heavily censored by the time it reached New Zealand, but now details of local military activity and shipping movements – things which would normally be reported in the local newspaper – were also restricted. Gibbon issued memos to newspaper editors outlining their responsibilities, but many inadvertently published stories the Defence Department found unacceptably informative (such as the arrivals and departures of troopships). Defence discouraged such offences by instigating prosecutions under the War Regulations. From July 1918 Gibbon could order editors to submit their entire publication to him before it was printed.¹²⁷

5b. Suppressing sedition

The War Regulations gave Defence and the Police broad powers to root out all forms of possible sedition or espionage. From November 1914 police (and military police) could arrest any suspicious person at will, and search any building or ship suspected of being used for illegal purposes. Anyone could be arrested for spreading 'false reports', trespassing on military land or a telegraph station, possessing telegraph equipment without permission, signalling with lights at night, or publicising information of value to the enemy.¹²⁸ The regulations were extended in September 1915 to cover those inciting 'lawlessness' or carrying guns or explosives without permission.¹²⁹

The introduction of conscription in August 1916 created a new atmosphere of resistance to military service in some parts of the community. Anti-militarists, particularly labour leaders, criticised the government for infringing civil liberties and exploiting the working class. Desperate to prevent large-scale public resistance to conscription, the government moved to silence its critics by classifying criticism as 'sedition', thereby preventing public debate of the issue.

In December 1916 the government broadened the definition of 'seditious' activities to include creating 'hostility between the classes', interfering with the manufacture of goods for the war

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or the recruitment, training, or despatch of troops, and ‘excit[ing] disloyalty’ in general.¹³⁰ This was extended over the next two months to banning places from being used for ‘disloyal’ meetings about the war, and classifying strikes which might undermine the war effort as seditious.¹³¹ The police quickly arrested many of conscription’s most prominent critics, and constables attended public meetings to shut down ‘seditious’ discussions. The police investigated 36 ‘disturbing meetings and congregations’ in 1916/17 and 52 in 1917/18.¹³²

5c. Enemy aliens

The government believed that Germans and other enemy nationals based in New Zealand posed a significant threat to the empire’s war effort, and moved to restrict their ability to aid their home nations. Mail censorship and the posting of armed guards at vulnerable places was increasingly complemented by supervision of individual ‘aliens’ as the war progressed.

Any person born in a country at war with the British Empire – including those subsequently naturalised as British citizens – was classified an enemy alien. From May 1916, so were their New Zealand-born wives. From December 1914 they were expected to register with the police and inform them if they were intending to travel more than 20 miles from home.¹³³ Centralised registration of all enemy aliens was introduced in September 1917.¹³⁴ All enemy aliens were liable to summary arrest and detention if suspected of espionage, and faced execution if convicted.¹³⁵

Aliens lived in a climate of suspicion and dread, viewed with fear and, in some cases, hatred, by a nervous public. The government convened an Alien Enemies Commission in June 1915 to consider public claims about ‘disloyal’ enemy aliens, and from that September the Minister of Defence had the discretion to intern any enemy alien at his pleasure.¹³⁶ By the end of the war around 500 aliens had been interned on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour and Motuihe Island near Auckland. Most of those detained were reservists in enemy forces, passengers and crew from visiting ships, and locals suspected of sympathising with the enemy.¹³⁷

From early 1916 the government began to restrict the property rights of enemy aliens in New Zealand, reasoning that under certain circumstances assets should be liquidated to help fund

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the British war effort. Regulations issued in February 1916 banned the redistribution of enemy property through wills, and from April the Attorney-General (a Cabinet minister) was empowered to appoint the Public Trustee as custodian of enemy property. Aliens were required to register their property with the Public Trustee, and ‘enemy companies’ had to surrender their income to the government (these were mainly overseas companies with interests in New Zealand).¹³⁸

5d. Policing the recruits

The Defence Department believed that training military recruits in New Zealand was key to maintaining the flow of volunteers. Because reinforcement drafts overlapped, the ‘discipline and soldierly spirit’ inculcated in each intake would influence the next, and in turn act as a positive influence on men who had yet to enlist. ‘This aspect of the problem [of discipline] is a most important one’, C.W. Gibbon noted in May 1918, ‘since the slightest tendency towards disorderly conduct reacts unfavourably on recruiting throughout the Dominion.’¹³⁹

The department was therefore eager to ensure soldiers behaved themselves on leave, a logistical challenge given the large number who descended on Wellington and Auckland cities every weekend, particularly on Saturday nights. Some inevitably drank to excess and caused disturbances about which residents complained in letters to the editor. Military police accompanied each group of troops on their evening leaves, patrolling the streets and pubs to pick up troublemakers.¹⁴⁰

The government used the War Regulations to restrict soldiers’ drinking, generally by limiting how and when alcohol could be sold to them. From February 1915 soldiers in uniform could only consume alcohol on the premises where it was bought, and from August 1916 no one could ‘shout’ soldiers a drink (this was thought to be a major cause of drunkenness). The task of enforcing these restrictions fell to the police, who patrolled the pubs and asked licensing boards to revoke the licences of publicans who ignored transgressions.¹⁴¹

The police attributed the decline in alcohol-related convictions from mid-1916 to the influence of the War Regulations. The police strictly enforced the anti-shouting regulation, and magistrates imposed heavy fines on those caught breaching its provisions. The Police

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noted that drunkenness prosecutions dropped by more than 2000 between 1917 and 1918, through a combination of the War Regulations, the introduction of 6 o'clock closing, and the steady drop in the number of young men in New Zealand.¹⁴²

Prostitution presented another problem, since men infected with venereal disease could not be sent to the front until they were cured. The authorities grew concerned that prostitution was increasing, and with it cases of venereal disease amongst soldiers. Once again, the War Regulations were used to clamp down on the problem. From August 1916 no woman could enter or remain near a bar after 6 p.m., and legal loopholes allowing prostitutes to evade prosecution were closed. The police watched and raided brothels, and by the end of the war felt they had significantly reduced the problem.¹⁴³

5e. Policing conscription

The introduction of conscription in August 1916 brought a new dimension to the process of recruiting men to fight. So long as enlistment was voluntary, a prospective recruit could change his mind at any point until he had signed up for the duration of the conflict. The conscription system, on the other hand, had to have provision for rounding up absconders and ultimately for imprisoning them if they could not be persuaded to serve.

The Defence Department required all men of military age to be registered and thus available for calling up. The police were empowered to demand that any man present his military paperwork and – from July 1918 – to arrest him on the spot if he could not. Military-aged men were banned from leaving the country without permission, and Customs and Marine Department officers kept an eye on comings and goings at the ports.¹⁴⁴

Men who failed to appear when called up were investigated by regional Defence Department officers. If these inquiries drew a blank, Defence issued a warrant for the man's arrest and police officers executed it. The police also kept an eye out for men who had gone into hiding after their number came up in the ballot. By March 1919, police had arrested just over half of the men for whom Defence had issued warrants (580 of 1133).¹⁴⁵

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5f. Maintaining the police force

The war placed a huge burden on the Police. Superintendent Wright of the Dunedin district spoke for all officers when he noted ‘the enormous amount of extra work which has been thrown upon the Force in connection with the war ... What with inquiries respecting returned soldiers, inquiries for shirkers and deserters, making inquiries for Military Service Boards, and many other inquiries too numerous to mention, the police have had a busy time.’¹⁴⁶

Alongside schools and post offices, police stations were one of the most visible signs of the public service in New Zealand communities. Many stations employed only one or two officers who, like the local postmaster, represented the greater public service in a variety of ways. Police Commissioner O’Donovan referred to the Force, with some chagrin, as ‘the “handy men” of the whole Government’. Other departments regularly called upon officers for help, and in rural areas they often doubled as factory or fishery inspectors, as registrars of births, deaths and marriages, as bailiffs, Customs officers, registrars of electors, Crown Lands Rangers, or a range of other positions.¹⁴⁷ These roles multiplied during the war.

Enforcing conscription and curbing drinking by soldiers were two important new areas of policing. Early in the war they registered and monitored aliens, but as the complexity of war administration increased, so did demands on police time. The Police helped the Department of Internal Affairs control war-related charitable funds from October 1915 and issue passports from November 1915.¹⁴⁸ Officers also helped administer the wartime beer duty and collect agricultural statistics.¹⁴⁹

The police had to meet these additional challenges in an environment of ever-decreasing manpower. The Police Force refused to give officers leave to serve in the NZEF, forcing those determined to enlist to resign. In doing so they lost their official ranking and superannuation benefits.¹⁵⁰ Between 20 and 40 officers ‘resigned voluntarily’ in each year of the war, presumably in most cases to enlist.¹⁵¹

Recruitment also diverted young men from the police training programme, making it increasingly difficult to fill vacancies. In December 1916 the department stopped recruiting military-aged men and closed its training depot.¹⁵² Since that August it had been authorised to enlist temporary constables ‘to assist in the preservation of peace and order, the prevention of

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crime, and the apprehension of offenders.¹⁵³ This was a useful stopgap, but – like the other temporary public service employees – many were untrained, too old, or otherwise unsuitable.¹⁵⁴

The Police Commissioner warned in 1917 that, despite the employment of temporary officers, ‘a critical condition will be reached if the regular Force suffers further depletion’.¹⁵⁵ The Dunedin superintendent noted that only a drop in drunkenness and other petty crimes had allowed his office to stay on top of the work. ‘Were it not for the decrease in what may be termed police work proper the depleted staff would not have been able to cope with the inquiries which are daily undertaken for nearly every branch of the military organization.’¹⁵⁶

5g. Back to business

Police numbers reached their lowest point in late 1918 and early 1919. Police Commissioner O’Donovan felt that this decline had vindicated the decision to ban police from serving in the NZEF. Permitting enlistment would have seen the Police Force ‘practically reduced to the residue consisting of men above the military age or otherwise disqualified. I need not point out what straits the public services would be placed in had any different policy been pursued.’¹⁵⁷ By the time of the Armistice in November 1918, it was clear that the reduced Police Force had, by and large, successfully maintained peace and good order.

Demobilisation in 1919 – and the appointment of more temporary constables – enabled the ranks of the Police Force to be slowly replenished. Former officers who had served in the NZEF were invited to rejoin the force, and in November 1919 Parliament voted to restore the rights and superannuation benefits of those who did so within six months of their discharge from the military.¹⁵⁸

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5h. Biography: Eberhard Focke (1852–1936)

Wartime censorship triggered a rapid decline in the fortunes of Eberhard Focke, a respected Wellington businessman and German consul. Born in Bremen, Germany, in 1852, Focke moved to London in 1873 and from there to New Zealand in 1879. He formed a partnership with fellow German A.F. Castendyk in 1884. Castendyk and Focke traded in wines, spirits and general merchandise through much of the lower North Island from their Wellington headquarters.¹⁵⁹

Focke replaced his business partner as Wellington vice-consul for Germany after Castendyk's death in November 1897.¹⁶⁰ A consul represented German interests in each of New Zealand's four main centres, under the general supervision of a consul-general based in Sydney. Focke, who became a naturalised New Zealand citizen in October 1893, conducted his consulate duties from his Wellington business premises.¹⁶¹

Focke and his fellow consuls, the enemy's official intermediaries, were in a precarious position when war was declared in August 1914. Were they friends or enemies? Focke had been well-liked, and most people were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, at least initially. Someone smashed his office windows and levered the brass consulate sign off his door, but sympathetic non-German friends quickly paid for the damage to be repaired.

The government suspended the work of German consuls and seized their official papers, but Focke continued to support the local German community in an informal capacity. He worked with Wellington Mayor J.P. Luke and the former consuls in other New Zealand centres to support the families of German nationals imprisoned on Somes Island. He visited the prisoners and acted as their informal representative on the mainland.¹⁶²

The tide began to turn for Focke in November 1914, when the Sydney censor intercepted a letter he had written in violation of the ban on corresponding with enemy nations. The content was innocuous – Focke was telling his brother that they would not be able to correspond during the war – but the Minister of Justice ordered his immediate arrest. The Wellington police placed him in custody on 26 November.¹⁶³

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Solicitor-General J.W. Salmond, the senior lawyer in the public service, concluded that though there was no evidence on which to base a conviction, Focke should be retained in custody indefinitely. Despatched to Somes Island, he protested his innocence and complained about the conditions. His health soon suffered, and after reviewing the case Salmond took a lenient view and allowed him indefinite parole from January 1915.¹⁶⁴

Focke remained at home with his family until early 1916, when Cabinet, apparently under public pressure, ordered that he be re-interned on Somes Island if his health permitted. Wellington constables arrested him in Chews Lane on 17 May. His file shows that he continued to work for the welfare of other prisoners, whose anti-British sentiments prevented him working overtly with the authorities.¹⁶⁵

Focke's fortunes continued to decline. His initial arrest had reduced his ability to get credit for his business, and in July 1916 the Crown Law Office banned Castendyk and Focke from engaging in foreign trade – a crippling blow for an importing firm.¹⁶⁶ In June 1918 the government revoked his naturalisation.¹⁶⁷

Focke was not released until December 1919.¹⁶⁸ With his business now defunct, Focke and his wife settled in Te Awamutu with their son. In 1929 the government refused his application to have his naturalisation restored – and the German authorities declined him citizenship. To enable him to travel to Honolulu, Internal Affairs issued Focke a 'certificate of identity' that declared him to be 'without nationality.'¹⁶⁹ Eberhard Focke died in 1936 at the age of 83.

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5i. Arrested under the War Regulations (mug shot mosaic)

George Ernest Billings

Electrician, born 1892, England

Tried: 7 December 1917, court martial, Auckland

Charge: Disobeying a lawful command

Sentence: Two years' imprisonment

Electrician George Billings was one of the several hundred men called up for military service who refused to serve on moral grounds. Balloted on 20 August 1917, Billings failed to appear for his medical inspection and the Defence Department ordered his arrest. He was court-martialled on 7 December along with his brother Joseph and a man named Colin Robertson.¹⁷⁰ The press labelled Billings, a member of the Brotherhood of Reconciliation religious sect, a 'defiant reservist'. Explaining that his rejection of military service represented a choice 'between weak and inconsistent human law and divine law', Billings insisted that 'all the glory and honour claimed by the nations engaged in the war was not worth one single human life.' The officer conducting the court martial ruled this explanation – and its criticism of British law – irrelevant and inappropriate. Billings, unrepentant, told the court, 'I am not looking for this to do me any good. I don't care if I get ten years for it.' The court sentenced him to two years' imprisonment, the maximum available, which he served in Christchurch's Papanui Prison.¹⁷¹

Domingo Carlos

Seaman, born 1892, Spain

Tried: 6 September 1919, Wellington Magistrate's Court

Charge: Boarding a ship after being served with an exclusion order

Sentence: Seven days' imprisonment

In May 1917, Spanish seaman Domingo Carlos was imprisoned in Wellington for six months for assaulting and injuring another man. On his release he was classified an undesirable enemy alien and banned from visiting the Wellington wharves under the War Regulations. The security of the country's ports, its main transport hubs, was critical during the war, and access to them was strictly controlled. Carlos' exclusion order was still in force in September

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1919, when he was arrested for working on the steamer *Orari*. The magistrate sentenced him to seven days' imprisonment.¹⁷²

Joseph Edward Clapham

Tailor, born 1888, New Zealand

Tried: 28 April 1919, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Illegally supplying liquor to a soldier

Sentence: Fine or one month's imprisonment

Tailor Joseph Clapham caught the train from Te Kuiti to Auckland in April 1919 for a week of big-city revelry. On Sunday 27 April, police found him drinking illegally at the Alexandra Hotel. Worse, he was handing out drinks to soldiers in a back lane nearby. Under the War Regulations, civilians could supply alcohol to soldiers only on the premises on which it was sold. Sentenced to pay a fine or serve a month in prison, he chose prison. Clapham was a returned serviceman himself, having served in the Senussi Campaign in Egypt before being discharged in June 1916 with 'traumatic neurasthenia' (shell shock).¹⁷³

Freda Clive

Domestic and prostitute, born 1879, New Zealand

Tried: 27 September 1916, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Keeping a brothel

Sentence: Two months' imprisonment

War Regulations issued on 21 September 1916 gave the police new powers to close down 'houses of ill fame' (brothels) and imprison those running or living in them for up to six months. Auckland constables Potter and Clifford carried out their first raid a week later, bringing in five women from three central-city brothels. They charged Freda Clive, who was about 37, with keeping a brothel in White St. The papers described her as well-dressed, though police records noted she had a broken nose, a broken cheek bone, and no teeth in her upper jaw at the time of her arrest. The police had had her house under surveillance from 6 September, and had observed men, including soldiers, coming and going, drinking and carousing. Clive's husband John was serving overseas in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, and

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she claimed to be living on her 5s daily military allowance. After Constable Clifford testified to Clive's 'prior history of ... immoral life', the magistrate dismissed her protestations of innocence and sentenced her to two months in prison.¹⁷⁴

Alfred James Davis

Labourer, born 1891, New Zealand

Tried: 27 May 1918, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Giving false answers (Military Service Act)

Sentence: Three months' imprisonment

In early May 1918, policemen Cummings and Kyne arrested labourer Alfred Davis in Auckland. The War Regulations empowered the police to order young men to present their military papers on request, and Davis was unable to produce his when asked. He eventually admitted that he had lent his certificate, which exempted him from service on medical grounds, to his brother Richard – a military deserter who had escaped from Trentham Camp six months earlier. Richard had used Alfred's certificate to escape detection when he was stopped by police a few weeks earlier. The constables arrested Richard soon afterwards and charged him with desertion, and the pair appeared before the Auckland magistrate on 27 May. Viewing the case 'as a conspiracy to shield the brother, Richard, from military service', the magistrate sentenced both men to three months in prison.¹⁷⁵

Peter Fraser

Labourer and union leader, born 1884, Scotland

Tried: 23 December 1916, Wellington Magistrate's Court

Charge: Seditious utterances

Sentence: One year's imprisonment

The government's limited tolerance for dissent disappeared completely after the introduction of conscription in August 1916, and on 4 December 1916 it issued War Regulations banning 'seditious utterances' in the public sphere. The regulations targeted those publicly opposing conscription, particularly the union leaders who were holding public meetings and publishing protests. On 20 December, Wellington detectives Cox, Mason and Carney arrested Social

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Democratic Party secretary Peter Fraser and ex-president Thomas Brindle for making seditious (anti-conscription) remarks at a public meeting 10 days earlier. The Wellington magistrate sentenced both men to one year's imprisonment. Fraser subsequently became a leading figure in the New Zealand Labour Party, serving as New Zealand prime minister from 1940 until 1949. He was responsible for the introduction of military conscription during the Second World War.¹⁷⁶

Joseph Herbert Jones

Labourer, born 1886, Australia?

Tried: (1) 19 January 1917, Wellington Magistrate's Court; (2) 20 September 1918, court martial, Trentham Camp

Charge: (1) Seditious utterances; (2) disobeying a lawful command

Sentence: (1) One year's imprisonment; (2) two years' imprisonment

On 7 January 1917, watersider Joseph Jones rose to address a crowd of 500 people at an anti-conscription rally in Dixon St, Wellington. He told them:

'I want the working class to say to the masters: "We don't want war. We won't go to the war." Standing as I have done, and seeing the troopships going away, I often wondered what they were going to fight for. We are not going to be gagged, no matter what the consequences may be. They can send us to the dungeon. You know, as well as I do, that your liberties are at stake in this country. Listen, fellow-workers! I know my risk, but remember this – they cannot kill the spirit of a true-blue rebel. If I have to go behind the bars, I know before many weeks are over I will have plenty of mates to follow me. If I am imprisoned, other men will find their way into this country, and they will carry on the work to fight the master class.'¹⁷⁷

The meeting came scarcely a month after the government issued new War Regulations providing for imprisonment for those making 'seditious utterances', so Jones' comment about prison was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Sergeant Wilcox stood in the crowd taking notes, and Jones was soon arrested and arraigned before a Wellington magistrate. The prosecutor described Jones as an Australian socialist agitator who had made similar speeches in Sydney and was well-known to the police. Jones remarked that he'd just wanted 'to make a little

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protest', and read a long anti-conscription poem to the court before being sentenced to a year in prison.¹⁷⁸

To add to Jones' problems, his name had – rather conveniently for the authorities – been drawn in a conscription ballot on 8 January 1917, the day after his Dixon St speech. The Defence Department activated his calling-up notice when he was released from prison, but Jones now claimed that he was a conscientious objector and unwilling to serve in any capacity. The Defence Department incarcerated him in the Wanganui Detention Barracks, which became a byword for brutality after *New Zealand Truth* broke a story about the violent mistreatment of conscientious objectors by its warden, Lieutenant J.L. Crampton. In August 1918 Jones was transferred for medical treatment to Wellington, where observers noted he had lost a lot of weight and was suffering from respiratory illness. When *Truth* accused the Defence Department of negligence and indifference, the department responded that it had taken appropriate care of Jones' health.¹⁷⁹

On 20 September 1918 Jones was court-martialled for refusing military service and sentenced to two further years in prison. In 1919 he was classified as a military defaulter and deprived of civil rights for 10 years.¹⁸⁰

Mati Jujnovich

Labourer, born 1890, Dalmatia (Croatia)

Tried: 3 April 1919, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Failing to do national service

Sentence: Fined £5

In the latter part of the war, public indignation grew as young Dalmatian men were able to exploit their ineligibility for military service (because they were foreign nationals) by demanding high rates of pay in the manpower-starved workforce. In late 1917 the government introduced a 'national service' work scheme which forced these men to work on national development projects, often in rural areas, for low wages. This scheme continued well after the war.

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Twenty-nine year old Mati Jujnovich resented this forced labour and abandoned a public works scheme at Maungaturoto in Northland in early 1919. Chafing under the conditions, Jujnovich returned home and urged his friends to work so slowly they would get fired. The police tracked him down and hauled him before the magistrate, who fined him for abandoning the job and ordered him to pay a fine and return to work immediately.¹⁸¹

Rua Kēnana

Labourer, born about 1869, New Zealand

Tried: 17 October 1916, Auckland Supreme Court

Charges: Sedition, resisting police, counselling persons to murder, counselling persons to discharge arms with intent to resist lawful apprehension, counselling persons to wound, counselling persons to assault police, counselling persons to do bodily harm

Sentences: Acquitted of sedition, one year's imprisonment and 18 months' reformatory detention for resisting police; the jury disagreed on the other charges and they were dismissed by the court

The wartime arrest and prosecution of Rua Kēnana remains one of the most controversial episodes in New Zealand's history. Rua, a Ringatū prophet, was the leader of the small and isolated Tūhoe village of Maungapōhatu, which developed its own institutions and practices separate from the New Zealand authorities. Officials and some Māori leaders regarded him with suspicion and attempted to undermine his position by various legal means, without success.

Rua was arrested in 1915 for selling alcohol illegally at Maungapōhatu and summonsed to appear before a magistrate in January 1916. He requested a delay during harvesting season, but the magistrate denied this and issued a warrant for his arrest when he failed to appear. Rua's prosecution appears to have been influenced by a perception that he was encouraging his community to resist recruitment and so constituted a threat to the war effort in addition to his broader challenge to settler authority. Police Commissioner John Cullen led an armed police expedition which reached Maungapōhatu on 2 April 1916, occupied the marae and arrested an unarmed Rua. Someone fired a shot, and Rua's son and another Māori man were killed in the ensuing firefight.

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The Auckland Supreme Court heard Rua's case in October 1916. He was accused of sedition for speaking against conscription and urging his followers to resist the police. The jury couldn't reach a verdict on the charge of resisting the police; some observers claimed that the police action had been both illegal and excessive. The jury rejected the sedition charge and noted that he was only 'morally' guilty of resisting his initial arrest in 1915. The judge nevertheless sentenced Rua to one year's imprisonment with hard labour and another 18 months' of 'reformatory detention', a sentence so harsh that eight members of the jury protested publicly and petitioned Parliament about it. Rua remained in prison until April 1918.¹⁸²

Roy James Lambess

Labourer and jockey, born 1893, New Zealand

Tried: 7 March 1919, court martial, Featherston Camp

Charge: Deserting Expeditionary Force

Sentence: 18 months' imprisonment

Some men rejected military service on grounds of political principle or religious belief, while others appear to have done so out of a more generalised disdain for authority and organised society. Roy Lambess, a man rarely out of trouble with the police, is an example of the latter group.

Lambess enlisted at Trentham in November 1915, giving his last 'employer' as a billiard saloon and his last address as 'Police Station Auckland' – from which it might be inferred he was spared prosecution on the condition that he enlisted for military service. At some point after his initial medical inspection he was diagnosed with gonorrhoea, and he was on his way to the venereal disease hospital on Quarantine Island (Otago Harbour) when he first escaped from military custody in May 1916.¹⁸³

This escape set the pattern for three more. When Sergeant Vyvyan Tayler arrested Lambess in Whanganui on 9 August 1916 for being 'Idle and Disorderly', he discovered a forged letter asserting that he was exempt from service on medical grounds. Tayler advised 'that this man is a regular waster and not a fit & proper person to be associated with other men in any camp'.¹⁸⁴ Whanganui magistrate William Kerr condemned Lambess as 'the worst of

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shirkers', noting that he had been convicted on five occasions in 1913 alone for avoiding Territorial service, and since 1914 had been on the 'untraced list'. Kerr deprived Lambess of all civil rights for five years, bemoaning his inability to further punish him beyond a few days in prison.¹⁸⁵

Lambess was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and returned to Quarantine Island in May 1917. He escaped again in June, possibly by swimming to the mainland, and settled in Dunedin with a prostitute who had helped him get away.¹⁸⁶ Back on Quarantine Island by mid-July, he was punished for 'conduct prejudicial to military discipline' and sentenced to a further six months' imprisonment there. Sent back to Featherston Camp, he escaped yet again in March 1918.¹⁸⁷

Lambess once again used forged documents to remain at large for three months. When the police received information in July 1918 that he and another deserter were stowed away on a mail train heading for Taranaki, the Stratford constabulary ran the pair down in the Empire Hotel. They were arrested and returned to camp. The Defence Department, ever-hopeful, returned Lambess to Quarantine Island – from where he escaped once again in September.¹⁸⁸

In December 1918 Lambess was arrested yet again and returned to Featherston Camp. A military court martial sentenced him to a surprisingly lenient 18 months in a civil prison, possibly taking into account the time he had already served for all his other desertion convictions. He was released from Kaingaroa Prison in July 1920.¹⁸⁹

Ernest Lynd (alias Lind, alias John Jacobson)

Labourer, born 1878, Russia

Tried: 19 July 1917, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Publishing a disloyal statement

Sentence: 11 months' imprisonment

Wartime conditions generated a profound suspicion of foreigners at large in New Zealand, and any overheard making controversial comments were likely to attract the attention of the police. Constables brought Russian watersider Ernest Lynd before the Auckland magistrate in July 1917, alleging he had 'published a statement indicating disloyalty or disaffection in

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connection with the war.’ The ‘publication’ was in fact a series of remarks he had made to fellow watersider Joseph Owens, claiming that the British were ‘all bluff’ and if they ‘fought hand-to-hand against Germany they would be wiped out’. Lynd proclaimed himself a socialist, and wished he could be back in Russia to help ‘stir things up’ during this year of revolutionary upheaval. Owens reported these remarks to Constable Gourley, who arrested Lynd.

Lynd told the magistrate that Owens had provoked him into making the comments by insulting Russia – he had been trying to ‘scandalise’ Owens with his rejoinder. He claimed that, as a foreigner, ‘the police were continually picking on him’. The magistrate took the view that Lynd’s comments had been disloyal; his record of brawling and status as ‘a foreigner of doubtful antecedents’ left him no choice but to sentence him to 11 months in prison.¹⁹⁰

Terrence John McKenna

Labourer, born 1901, New Zealand

Tried: 12 September 1918, Auckland Magistrate’s Court

Charge: Illegally wearing military uniform

Sentence: Fine or seven days’ imprisonment

A military uniform was a valuable commodity in conscription-era New Zealand, prima facie evidence that a young man was doing his duty to King and country and therefore worthy of esteem. The police were responsible for ensuring that uniforms were worn appropriately, and the charge against Terrence McKenna of illegally wearing a uniform was one of many prosecuted during the war. Chief Detective McMahon arrested McKenna in Auckland in September 1918, noting that he had been discharged from camp a few months earlier when it was discovered he was well below military age. McKenna kept his uniform and paybook, which he had updated to create the impression he had been on active service overseas. The magistrate sentenced him to pay a fine or spend a week in prison (he chose prison).¹⁹¹

John Patrick O’Neill

Slaughterman, born 1892, New Zealand

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Tried: 11 August 1917, Rotorua Magistrate's Court

Charge: Sedition

Sentence: 11 months' imprisonment

The conscription system could be used as either carrot or stick in the complex game of forcing reluctant men into uniform, as the case of slaughterman John O'Neill illustrates. O'Neill's card was pulled in the 5 March 1917 conscription ballot, but he failed to appear at the appointed time and place for military service and was placed on the wanted list. The Defence Department's claim on him was, however, pre-empted when he was arrested with two other men in August 1917 for sounding off about the war in a Morrinsville pub. O'Neill was sentenced to 11 months in Kaingaroa Prison for sedition, though he served only till April 1918.

Defence reactivated O'Neill's calling-up on his release from prison, but he once again eluded the authorities and was classified as a deserter in May. Masterton police tracked him down on a farm in October 1918, and he was evidently given a choice between further gaol time and immediate enlistment in the NZEF. O'Neill enlisted 'under grant' and entered Trentham Camp on 4 November, perhaps realising that the war would soon be over. The influenza pandemic hit soon afterwards, however, and O'Neill was among the many afflicted. He died at the camp hospital on 20 November 1918, aged 27, and was interred in the soldiers' section at Karori Cemetery under an official 'war graves' headstone.¹⁹²

Thomas Henry Simpkins (alias Jack Murtagh)

Bushman, born 1879, New Zealand?

Tried: 13 May 1918, Whanganui Magistrate's Court

Charge: Failing to enrol

Sentence: 12 days' imprisonment

Government Statistician Malcolm Fraser estimated in 1918 that between 3500 and 5000 men of military age had never registered for the ballot. The police were given broad powers under the War Regulations to stop men and demand to see their papers proving registration.

Itinerants who regularly changed their job and address, presented a particular administrative challenge for the police.

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One such man was bushman Thomas Simpkins, a drifter who had regular brushes with the law on charges of drunkenness and petty theft. Senior Sergeant Bourke brought him before a Whanganui magistrate in May 1918 for failing to register for military service. Simpkins told Bourke that he had registered while incarcerated in Napier gaol a few months earlier. The sergeant established that while the Napier police did supply registration papers to all prisoners on discharge, Simpkins' name was not among them. The Government Statistician's branch confirmed that Simpkins had not used these papers to register for service, and the magistrate sentenced him to a brief term of imprisonment.¹⁹³

Robert Strachan

Marine fireman, born 1874, Scotland

Tried: 27 July 1918, Auckland Magistrate's Court

Charge: Obstructing military guard

Sentence: Fine or one month's imprisonment

When the government placed military guards at the major ports to protect shipping and commerce from enemy espionage, seamen were issued with military passes to allow them to come and go. A scuffle between Lance-Corporal Hough and two seamen in Auckland in July 1918 typifies the minor problems that arose. When Scottish seaman Robert Strachan attempted to smuggle another man past the guard onto the wharf, Hough demanded that the second man stop and show a pass. In response, Strachan and his friend threatened and abused Hough, allowing a number of men passed through the checkpoint unsupervised. Hough then placed the pair under arrest. The magistrate found them both guilty and sentenced them to pay a fine or serve a month's imprisonment.¹⁹⁴

William Thomas Young

Union secretary, born 1870, New Zealand

Tried: 4 October 1917, Wellington Magistrate's Court

Charge: Inciting a seditious strike

Sentence: Three months' imprisonment

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Pressure on the economy grew as the war went on, and the government responded by using the War Regulations to curb industrial action that might undermine the war effort.

Regulations passed on 17 April 1917 classified strikes in the shipping industry as ‘seditious’ and punishable by a period of imprisonment.

On 7 September 1917, a group of seamen refused to go on watch on coastal steamers unless two deckhands shared this duty at all times. The relevant industrial agreement prescribed that only one deckhand was necessary, and discussions between the union and the shipping companies about adding a second had ground to a halt a few days earlier. However justified the union’s position may have been, refusal to work constituted an illegal strike under the War Regulations. The authorities set about establishing who was responsible for ‘inciting’ it, with Detective Carney visiting ships and interviewing crew, captains and witnesses.

In early October, Wellington magistrate S.E. McCarthy heard the Crown case against Federated Seamen’s Union secretary William Young and his assistant Frederick Howell, who stood accused of issuing the instructions to strike. Several strikers called to give evidence denied that the union had ordered them to stop work – even though Howell had been seen visiting the men shortly before the strike began.

Young, presenting his own defence, argued that no strike had taken place; the hold-up had been caused by the shipping companies firing individual seamen who had refused to work – a ‘seditious lockout’. The police had searched the union office and spoken to witnesses, yet still had no definitive evidence to present against Young and Howell. McCarthy dismissed this defence, siding with the shipping companies and concluding that Young and Howell had instructed the seaman to strike. He sentenced both men to three months’ imprisonment.

Young protested that the lower evidential standards of the War Regulations – guilt need not be established beyond reasonable doubt, merely on the balance of probabilities – were being misused to ensure successful prosecutions. Young contended that the National ministry, directly opposed to the principles of organised labour, was cynically using the War Regulations to persecute the Seamen’s Union despite the absence of admissible evidence.¹⁹⁵

6. Repatriation of returned servicemen – Tim Shoebridge

If recruiting, training and despatching to the front nearly 100,000 men had been an unprecedented logistical challenge, reintegrating them into the civilian population after the war presented a new set of problems. Cabinet minister A.L. Herdman wrote in 1916 that the issue should be tackled methodically, both because of the moral debt the nation owed the soldiers and because ‘the more rapidly and efficiently the reabsorption takes place the speedier will be the recovery from the losses resulting from the war’.¹⁹⁶

To address the issue, in 1915 the government created a small specialised department which would eventually expand into a large and complex apparatus dealing with the varied issues facing returned servicemen. It worked with existing departments to ensure that the needs of every individual soldier were considered. The public service assisted soldiers by treating their ailments, facilitating training in civilian occupations, and providing cheap loans and land to those who requested it. On one estimate, by 1921 the public service had loaned money or granted land to 43,000 men, and helped a further 31,000 to find work through various means.¹⁹⁷ By the end of the 1920s, however, critics were complaining that returned servicemen had suffered because the repatriation apparatus had been prematurely dismantled.

6a. Repatriation begins

Most of the 24,000 soldiers who returned to New Zealand during the war were suffering from illness or injury that left them either permanently unsuitable for further service or in need of recuperation (1555 men returned to the front after medical treatment at home).¹⁹⁸ The *Athenic*, the first troopship to return with invalided men, arrived in New Zealand in January 1915, and the initial trickle became a steady stream once the NZEF went into battle.¹⁹⁹ By the winter of 1915 New Zealand had sent around 20,000 men overseas, and it was becoming obvious to the government that an administrative system would have to be created to manage their return home – especially once the war ended.²⁰⁰

6. Repatriation of returned servicemen

The most pressing priority was catering to the ill and wounded, and as Gallipoli casualties multiplied it became clear that the public hospital system could not manage either their numbers or their specialised requirements. These men were treated in public hospitals before being sent to either the King George V Hospital in Rotorua (opened in January 1916) or the Queen Mary Hospital in Hanmer Springs (May 1916) to recuperate. These hospitals were run jointly by the Defence and Health departments and operated under military law.²⁰¹

About 700 men had returned to New Zealand by the time the government opened the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department (DSID) in August 1915. The department was managed by John R. Samson, previously a senior clerk in the Government Life Insurance Department. Returned men remained the Defence Department's responsibility while they underwent medical treatment, leaving the DSID to focus on finding employment for discharged men who were able to work. Because of the growing shortage of manpower, the government was eager to return men to gainful employment as soon as possible.²⁰²

DSID staff personally interviewed each man to clarify his intentions. This information was added to a card index compiled with the voluntary assistance of Samson's Government Insurance colleagues. These cards were sent to voluntary committees around the country which attempted to find suitable work for the men. The government also instructed the Labour Department to give priority to returned servicemen for any local job opportunities.²⁰³

After the Public Service Commissioner told government departments to consider returned servicemen for vacancies whenever possible, the public service absorbed many veterans. This evidently created an expectation of public service appointments for all, prompting Herdman, the minister in charge of the DSID, to clarify in 1917 that 'While the State will help to the utmost of its ability, it is impossible to supply every one with a Government billet – that way lie disappointment and disaster.'²⁰⁴ Just under half the 908 men appointed to the public service between 1917 and 1920 were returned servicemen.²⁰⁵

The DSID also arranged training opportunities which helped younger men learn a trade and those incapacitated by war find employment fitting their reduced physical capabilities. It arranged free places for soldiers in technical school classes, and created opportunities for farm training and for training in office work and accounting. The department urged the government and other public bodies to undertake major public works schemes after the war,

6. Repatriation of returned servicemen

to employ tens of thousands of men while they decided what they wanted to doing the longer term.²⁰⁶

The duration of the war at least gave the DSID a useful period of preparation for the inevitable influx of returned soldiers at its end. With the signing of the Armistice in November 1918, New Zealand prepared itself for the imminent return of the 56,000 servicemen still overseas. In early December the government re-launched the DSID as the Repatriation Department, which was managed by a board comprising the ministers of Repatriation, Railways, Agriculture, Education and Lands, the departments most closely involved in the process. The Repatriation Department oversaw an expanded and streamlined version of the old DSID programme, and functioned as an information bureau publicising the assistance and opportunities offered by the public service.²⁰⁷

6b. Getting back to work

The government's wish to reintegrate able-bodied men back into the workforce underpinned much of its repatriation work. The sooner the men were back at work, the sooner the national economy could return to maximum production. The government decided it could best encourage this by helping men into private employment. Herdman had noted in 1917 that 'When peace is declared and our men return to their homes it is essential that every one should realize that the speedy recovery of the country from the sacrifices it has made is in reality dependent on every one setting about his own individual duties with all the energy and ability that he is capable of.'²⁰⁸

The Repatriation Department worked in collaboration with local boards and committees in the main centres and regional towns to find employment for those requiring assistance. The government feared a period of major unemployment and discontent when the men returned, but thanks to labour shortages most men were reabsorbed without difficulty. Initially about 15% of the men sought the Repatriation Department's assistance, but by August 1921 its local offices had placed nearly 25,000 in employment.²⁰⁹ Of these, some 8000 had been absorbed by the various branches of the public service.²¹⁰

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The Defence and Repatriation departments shared responsibility for delivering vocational training opportunities to returning soldiers. In December 1918 Defence appointed a director of vocational training to oversee the training of men before they were discharged. In practice this mainly meant working with men who were recovering in hospital and would not be discharged from the army until they were able to rejoin civilian life. Hospitals and convalescent homes hosted classes in low-impact trades such as leatherwork, basketmaking, woodcarving and weaving for the seriously incapacitated, alongside carpentry and farming for those with more physical capacity.²¹¹

The Repatriation Department offered an expanded post-discharge training programme at technical schools and other training institutions. Here men could enhance their knowledge of a trade or learn a new one better suited to their reduced physical capabilities. More than 90% of the 7193 men who took these courses completed them successfully.²¹²

Other men chose to take up the rural training opportunities offered at state farms or the ‘repatriation farms’ which specialised in branches of farming suited to men incapacitated by war. The department also subsidised the wages of semi-trained men in private workplaces, making it more practical for employers to take on men who were not yet fully efficient, and issued more than 19,000 cheap loans to assist the setting up and equipping of small businesses.²¹³

6c. The soldier-settler scheme

The Lands and Survey Department administered what would prove to be the most ambitious strand of the official repatriation programme. In October 1915 Parliament passed the Discharged Soldiers’ Settlement Act, which allowed returned servicemen to be granted farmland on generous terms and apply for cheap finance to develop it. This extension of existing land settlement programmes diverted the greater part of the land administration infrastructure towards the needs of soldiers for a few years. The government emphasised that, like all the repatriation schemes it offered, success in the soldier-settler scheme would ultimately depend on the hard work and initiative of the men themselves in converting these initial benefits into long-term successes.²¹⁴

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Lands and Survey initially set aside a number of large land blocks to be subdivided into smaller farms and allotted to individuals as a 'soldier settlement'. During the war years the government gradually expanded the scheme, extending eligibility to those in camp at the time of the Armistice, war widows, camp instructors, nurses, and men serving in other forces. It also allowed applicants to purchase farmland anywhere, meaning that soldier settlers were soon scattered from one end of the country to the other rather than clustered in 'soldier settlements'. Applicants could also purchase established homes or building sections in towns under this scheme.²¹⁵

More than 12,000 people applied for land during the three years after the Armistice.²¹⁶ Potential applicants visited a Lands and Survey office to be apprised of the relevant regulations and given information about the land available. Their application was forwarded to the district's commissioner of Crown land, a senior departmental official, who decided whether the applicant had the ability to succeed as a farmer. He forwarded the approved applications to the local Land Board, which either allotted land or held a ballot where there was more than one suitable applicant.²¹⁷ Of the 15,060 applicants between 1915 and 1930, only 4018 were allotted land under the scheme.²¹⁸ The scheme also placed new demands on the Valuation Department, which set the values of the properties; Public Works, which built the roads to them; and Agriculture, which provided support and advice to the farmers.

The greatest burden fell on the Lands and Survey Department, which, like the rest of the public service, was under-staffed after four years of war. Returning staff were rapidly re-posted to departmental offices, and many junior employees of other departments were drafted in to Lands and Survey.²¹⁹ The work of the Crown land commissioners expanded dramatically as they took on wide new responsibilities for managing securities, mortgages, title registrations and a myriad of other legal and financial tasks associated with the scheme. The department appointed supervisors of soldier settlements in each district to visit the farms and make recommendations for pasture development, stock purchase, and other practical matters. Other district officials managed the scheme's financial aspects.²²⁰

The annual number of land applications under the scheme peaked in 1921 with 5396, and steadily declined thereafter. In 1935 there were just eight new applications.²²¹ By 1926, Lands and Survey had made loans totalling more than £22 million to 22,483 returned soldiers, to finance land development and purchase land and dwellings. From 1926 it was

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forced to limit its loans to a few seriously disabled men.²²² Shortly thereafter, the residual work of the soldier settlement scheme was absorbed into the department's normal work.

6d. Healthcare and pensions

The public hospital system had dealt with returned servicemen during the war years, despite criticisms that civilian surgeons lacked expertise in soldiers' injuries. The government had encouraged local patriotic societies to establish 'convalescent homes' supported by public funds, and many had sprung up by the war's end. From early 1918 the Defence Department began to take more direct control of veterans' healthcare, taking over the King George and Queen Mary hospitals and operating them under military discipline. It began closing most of the smaller convalescent homes shortly after the Armistice so it could implement its own dedicated medical system.²²³

Under the Defence Department's post-war system, Trentham Camp hospital became a diagnostic centre where the health needs of returning men were appraised as soon as they marched – or were carried – off the hospital ships and troopships. Soldiers with orthopaedic problems were referred to the newly specialised King George V Hospital in Rotorua, or to Trentham Camp hospital, Chalmers Hospital in Christchurch, or Dunedin Public Hospital. Sufferers of pulmonary tuberculosis were referred to the Pukeora Sanatorium, a military hospital opened near Waipukurau in late 1919, or to the military wing of Cashmere Sanatorium in Christchurch. Featherston Camp and Narrow Neck camp hospitals treated men with heart problems. Reconstructive surgery was carried out at Dunedin Hospital, while Queen Mary Hospital at Hanmer Springs treated psychological and nervous conditions. Many men were treated as outpatients at public hospitals for some years after their ostensible recovery.²²⁴

By 1921, the majority of ill and wounded men had been discharged from the military hospital system and returned to private life. Civilian sufferers were being accommodated in the military hospitals, and during 1921–22 the Defence Department transferred its hospitals back to the Health Department. These hospitals continued to treat soldiers, but only in their capacity as private citizens.²²⁵

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In August 1915 the government decided to grant 'war pensions' to veterans who returned disabled by their military service, and to the dependants of those who died while enlisted. Veterans and their families applied to the local registrar of pensions, who referred the application to head office for investigation through military records.²²⁶ The pension rates for incapacitation were calculated according to the severity of the injury – the loss of two limbs warranted 100% of the pension, total deafness 70%, the loss of a right hand 65% (a left hand was only worth 60%), and the loss of an index finger 20%.²²⁷ A War Pensions Board would ultimately approve or reject each case.

The volume of applications exploded during 1919 as men were demobilised. By 1920 the Pensions Department had received nearly 55,000 applications, mainly in the previous two years, all of which had to be investigated. It was paying out 34,571 pensions, more than two-thirds of which were temporary pensions for men recovering from injury or illness.²²⁸ The volume of work placed great pressure on the Pensions Department, and some soldiers complained of long delays in getting disability pensions.²²⁹ Applications slowed significantly after 1920, and by 1930 just under 21,000 pensions were still being paid.²³⁰

6e. The end of repatriation

By 1922 most returned servicemen had been reabsorbed into civilian life, and fewer and fewer required the services of a specialised repatriation system. The Repatriation Department reduced its staff by almost half between 1921 and 1922, closing all its branches outside the four main centres. The government then decided that since 'the work of re-establishing our discharged soldiers in civil life is nearing completion', the Repatriation Department would close in December 1922.²³¹ Its functions as an employment bureau and overseer of training programmes would end, while its financial assistance role would, at least in part, be taken over by the State Advances Office.²³²

Most of the remaining repatriation services were gradually folded into the general business of government departments in the early 1920s. The Defence Department shifted its military hospitals and their patients to the public health system, and as soldier-settler applications dropped away it was easier to run this programme through Lands and Survey alongside normal Crown tenancies. The Pensions Department and its successors would continue to

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support disabled soldiers and their dependants for the rest of their lives, and to oversee medical treatment for war-related illness and injury.

The 1920s proved to be a rocky decade for both veterans and the rest of the community. Many soldier-settler farms failed, other veterans fell on hard times, and the plight of unemployed veterans became a national scandal. In 1929 the government appointed an Ex-Soldiers Rehabilitation Commission to ‘inquire into and report upon the position of physically and economically incapacitated soldiers’, and if necessary recommend action to help them.²³³

The commission found that the closure of the Repatriation Department in 1922 had left the remaining repatriation functions scattered across various government departments, without the overall co-ordination necessary for the system to function efficiently and in the best interests of the men. It proposed the establishment of a Soldiers’ Civil Re-establishment League to carry out some of the Repatriation Department’s former functions. Parliament obliged in 1930, with the league coming under the authority of the Minister of Pensions. It would reintroduce some of the vocational training schemes abandoned in 1922.²³⁴

The problems the commission investigated, weighty as they were, concerned only a relatively small proportion of veterans – around 6%, it estimated. The broader picture was one of success, with the men using the opportunities and advantages offered by the repatriation system to re-establish themselves in civilian life. The programme had been a major challenge for the public service, but – as with the recruitment and mobilisation process – several departments had rallied under difficult circumstances to produce a system that worked.

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6f. Biography: Joseph E. Dempsey (1890–1940)

Postal clerk Joseph Edward Dempsey was one of the many returned servicemen who struggled to re-establish their civilian careers while continuing to suffer illness as a result of the war. Born in Onehunga in 1890, Dempsey joined the Post and Telegraph Department as a message boy in June 1906 at the age of 15. He was promoted to postman two years later, to clerical cadet in Hamilton in May 1913, and to clerk in Wellington in December 1914.²³⁵

Dempsey enlisted for military service in July 1915 and was posted to the Army Service Corps (ASC) as a sergeant. He participated in the Senussi Campaign in Egypt in late 1915 before being despatched to the Western Front with the New Zealand Division in April 1916. He served with the ASC and the Field Ambulance until September 1917, when he was hospitalised with conjunctivitis, which soon developed into (or was re-classified as) oritis. . He was also treated for jaundice in mid-1918, and his discharge from the NZEF on health grounds followed.²³⁶

Dempsey returned home and resumed work at the Post and Telegraph Department in Wellington on 9 November 1918, just before the Armistice. He soon transferred to the Blenheim Post Office, where he worked hard to improve his qualifications by sitting competitive examinations. In August 1920 he married and started a family, but the work placed an ever-greater strain on his delicate health. On his doctor's advice he resigned from the department in December 1922.²³⁷

Dempsey soon discovered that working as a salesman was no easier, and after 18 months he had a 'breakdown' which resulted in a period of hospitalisation for psychiatric problems at Hanmer Springs. The family moved to Dunedin and then to Auckland in search of new opportunities, but Dempsey's health remained fragile and he was in and out of hospital throughout the 1920s.²³⁸

In October 1929, Dempsey gave evidence about his situation to the Ex-Soldiers Rehabilitation Commission in Dunedin. He was out of work and struggling to maintain his family of five on a weekly pension of £4. 'I have given practically everything a trial', he told the commission, 'but feel that I have, or am, losing confidence in myself'. He believed the solution to his problem was a return to the Post and Telegraph Department, where he 'could,

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after a few months work at my old position (P&T Dept.) hold down the position with the next officer.' He had applied repeatedly for reinstatement but been rejected.²³⁹

Separated from his wife, Joseph Dempsey spent his final years working as a salesman in Auckland. He died there in September 1940, aged only 50, succumbing to kidney problems and congestive heart failure. He was buried in the veterans' section of Waikumete Cemetery.²⁴⁰

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