

My Ministers have spared no effort to give effect to the undertaking made by them on the outbreak of war that this Dominion would co-operate in the common cause to the full extent of its resources, and as soon as the necessary precautionary steps had been taken to provide for the defence of New Zealand against possible raids or attacks, my Ministers initiated the appropriate preparations to enable this Dominion to play its full part overseas.

The two cruisers of the New Zealand Naval Forces were at once placed under the operational control of the British Admiralty, and the gallant conduct in the Battle of the Plate of H.M.S. "Achilles," manned largely by New-Zealanders, has been a source of justifiable pride to us all.

Preparations were forthwith made to expand, with the utmost rapidity, the organization of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and seven new training establishments have now been provided. My Government were represented towards the end of last year at the Conference in Canada which led to the adoption of a Commonwealth Air-training Scheme of immense proportions. In this scheme New Zealand is taking its full share, and it is contemplated that when the proposed arrangements are completely in operation this Dominion will be able to supply personnel for the Royal Air Force at the rate of some three thousand annually. The magnitude of this undertaking is sufficiently indicated by the financial commitment involved, approximately £22,000,000 spread over a period of three years. Quite apart from this scheme, and from the expansion of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, there are, in addition, over six hundred New-Zealanders now serving in the Royal Air Force, some of whom have already achieved distinction.

As one of their first steps, my Ministers decided to offer a Division of all arms, with ancillary troops, for service overseas, and proceeded as speedily as possible to make the necessary arrangements for the accommodation and instruction of the large numbers of men involved. Training has proceeded rapidly and efficiently, and it is a matter of particular gratification to my Government that it has been possible to comply with the request of the Maori people for the establishment of a special battalion composed of members of their own race. The Dominion has been fortunate in obtaining the services of that distinguished soldier, Major-General B. C. Freyberg, V.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., LL.D., to command the forces in the field, and my Advisers are confident that under his leadership the New Zealand Division can be relied upon to maintain the great traditions of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force of 1914-18.

My Ministers decided to raise all forces on a voluntary basis, and the response has been most creditable. For the Army alone, 41,600 men have enlisted for service overseas, and when account is taken of enlistments for the Air Force and for the Navy more than 53,000 individual and voluntary offers of service abroad have been received, of which more than 32,000 have up to the present been accepted. Indeed, the response to my Government's call for volunteers has enabled them, to their great satisfaction, to comply with suggestions made by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that further subsidiary units in addition to the Division should be formed.

Proper co-ordination in New Zealand of the measures necessary to render the best possible help towards the joint Commonwealth effort was materially assisted by the visit of my Prime Minister (then Deputy Prime Minister) to London in October of last year, where he was afforded most generous and valuable opportunities of obtaining at first hand all necessary information and advice.

The assistance that this Dominion can render is not confined to the provision of men for the fighting services. A very important function of a country such as this is the supply of foodstuffs and raw materials, and my Ministers have accordingly arranged for the purchase of all the meat,