

apprising him of the existence of the Returned Soldiers Department, and informing that if he wants help he should apply to Mr. Samson, and that he should keep the Department informed of his movements.

It is also settled that each man shall, prior to or immediately after his discharge from the Army, be interviewed by a public officer, who will be instructed to make a report in the annexed form marked "C," and who will hand to each man the card marked "B."

It will be noticed that if the soldier does not require the Department's assistance he will be asked to sign a statement to that effect, and then we will know where we stand with him.

It will be readily recognized that the Returned Soldiers Department will never be able to attain to a high degree of usefulness unless it enlists help from outside. We have already made arrangements with the Registrar of War Pensions to obtain from his office particulars of all cases dealt with by the Pensions Board. From this source we should be able to get accurate evidence as to a man's means and the nature of his disability.

Then again, legislation has been introduced which, if passed into law, will make it incumbent upon persons controlling war funds to notify the Department of the nature of any assistance given to men who have returned. It is obviously very necessary that this information should be supplied to the new Department.

Further, the Labour Department has been approached for help, and the permanent head, Mr. Rowley, has expressed himself as being more than anxious to place the whole strength of his organization at the service of our Department. It appears to me to be certain that the main part of the burden of actually finding suitable work for returned men will in course of time devolve upon the Labour Department.

If as the work of the Department develops it is found advisable, a central committee in Wellington may be established to assist the Department to solve any difficult problems which may arise. Upon this committee I should like to have gentlemen closely connected with State employment—for instance, the Public Service Commissioner, the head of the Labour Department, representatives of the Railway Department and the Public Works Department, the Mayor of the city, the Chairman of the Harbour Board, and some gentlemen outside of the Government service who have already taken an active interest in movements which are intended to ameliorate the conditions of the returned soldier. Even now one can see that many interesting and difficult questions will come up for solution.

The extract from a report by a committee set up by the Imperial Government (annexed to this memorandum) sufficiently indicates the nature of the cases which the Returned Soldiers Department will be required to deal with as time goes on. It is certain that many men will require surgical appliances, and the best available orthopaedic assistance and advice will have to be obtained. It is certain, too, that it will be necessary, in the case of men prevented by injury from following their former calling, to teach them some new industry. Here we would invoke the help of the head of the Technical Education Branch and the principals of technical schools, and I have no doubt but that we shall be able to secure their assistance.

We propose to ask the Mayors of towns, Chairmen of local bodies, trustees of patriotic organizations, the Board of Agriculture, presidents of Chambers of Commerce, and the general public to help the Department with its work, and the assistance asked for will be given gladly I am sure.

No doubt as the scheme materializes we will find it expedient to appoint local committees in different centres to directly look after the men residing in these centres, and through the Labour Department, or directly, these committees can be supplied from time to time with statements containing the names of men requiring employment, and describing the nature of the employment which each man desires to obtain.

A proposal has been made that returned soldiers should be settled on the land. I hope that a practicable scheme can be devised, but I must confess that the proposal appears to me to be beset with difficulties. If a soldier has been trained as a farmer and has capital of his own, arrangements can easily be made to provide for him. But if a soldier knows nothing about farming and has no capital to expend on fencing, clearing, and stocking his land, what is to be done in his case? Is the State to teach him the rudiments of farming, and is it to supply him with the wherewithal to make a start? These are questions which will have to be settled. Fruit-farming and poultry-farming have been suggested as occupations likely to suit disabled men. It is true that the disabled men will be receiving pensions, and may be able to exist upon their pensions income until the fruit-trees and poultry have reached a revenue-producing point, but the scheme is by no means an easy one to carry out. It means securing suitable areas of land; it means finding money for fencing, planting trees, and stocking poultry-farms; and it means instructing the men in their new occupations.

I hope that the Board of Agriculture will focus its attention upon this phase of the returned-soldier problem and give the Department the benefit of its experience and advice.

The Department will not have much difficulty in finding employment for soldiers who return to this country sound and well. Many of these men will not require any help from the office. Our principal work will centre round the men who return to New Zealand maimed and permanently broken down in health. It will be the duty of the Department to make a special study of these last-mentioned cases, and with the advice and assistance which it will be in a position to command it hopes to make certain that every man who has suffered through serving his country will live for the rest of his days in comfort, and that he will be made as useful a member of society as his disability will allow.

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