

1916.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY:
DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT:
REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1916.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 14 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 1st May, 1916.

In accordance with the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, I have the honour to submit herewith, for presentation to Parliament, the first report on the operations under this Act, which came into force on the 11th October last, less than six months before the close of the financial year.

I have, &c.,

T. N. BRODRICK,

Under-Secretary of Lands.

The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, P.C., Minister of Lands.

REPORT.

As it was recognized that during the war and after its termination a great demand would be made for land by soldiers who had formerly been engaged in farming or other rural occupations, and also by soldiers who, though having been formerly employed in towns, had become enamoured with the open-air life that a military campaign entails, and as it was felt that it was the duty of the State to do all that was reasonably possible for these men who had risked their lives in its defence, the Government introduced into Parliament last October a Bill to make provision for the settlement of discharged soldiers on Crown and settlement lands. This Bill was duly passed by Parliament, and is now the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915. To give further power to settle members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces on the land sections 23 and 24 were inserted in the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915.

It will thus be seen that the Government has adopted every reasonable measure for providing our discharged soldiers with a means of securing their future livelihood in a way that is in accordance with their predilections, and also an advantage to the State in bringing about the settlement of population in the country rather than in the towns.

Special attention is directed to section 13 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, under which it is provided that the right of a discharged soldier to a pension under the War Pensions Act shall not be affected by reason of any benefit he may become entitled to under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

It is gratifying to note that New Zealand legislation appears to be well designed to cope with the problems of finding suitable occupation for discharged soldiers, and this is evidenced by the fact that the Act subsequently passed by the South Australian Parliament is practically identical with the New Zealand Act.

From the extensive interest manifested by all classes of the community in the scheme adopted by Parliament last year, and the numerous inquiries regarding it that are being continually received, it is recognized that what has been done in this Dominion is a definite endeavour to satisfactorily deal with this most important matter at the earliest possible opportunity.

As time goes on it will doubtless be found necessary to widen the scope of the Act, so as to comprehensively deal with the varied classes of soldiers, their manifold requirements, and all bodies of men entitled to recognition by the people of this Dominion.

SCOPE OF ACT.

There are two means by which land may be set apart for discharged soldiers—viz., ordinary tenures and special tenures.

Ordinary Tenures.—Under section 3 of the Act any area of Crown land or settlement land may by Proclamation be set apart for selection *only* by discharged soldiers under the Land Act, 1908, or the Land for Settlements Act, 1908; and land set aside under this section of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, together with land set aside under the next succeeding section (4), has, under section 7, the advantage that the Land Board may, with the consent of the Minister, remit wholly or in part, and for such period or periods as it thinks fit, any rent payable by a discharged soldier, or may postpone the due date for the payment of such rent. In all respects save the above, land taken up by a discharged soldier under section 3 is subject to the provisions of and the regulations under the Land Act, 1908, and the Land for Settlements Act, 1908.

Special Tenures.—Under section 4, in addition to the powers conferred by section 3, any area of Crown land or settlement land may be set apart by Proclamation and disposed of to discharged soldiers under *special conditions*; and, except as may be otherwise provided by this Act or by the regulations under this Act, the provisions of the Land Act, 1908, or the Land for Settlements Act, 1908, or any other Acts relating to the administration or settlement of Crown or settlement land, *shall not apply* to lands disposed of under this section.

Land taken up under section 4 carries the same privileges as regards remission and postponement of rent as does land taken up under section 3, but a discharged soldier taking up land under section 4 of the Act may, under section 6, receive financial assistance to enable him to bring his farm into such a state that he can make a living from it.

HOW TO APPLY FOR LAND.

When a discharged soldier wishes to take up land the procedure is as follows: He obtains a provisional application form from any Land Office or from the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department, and, having answered the various questions on it and having stated the land district in which he wishes to settle, he forwards the form to the Commissioner of Crown Lands for that district. The Commissioner will then furnish the applicant with all particulars of the available lands in the locality indicated, and upon his choosing a section (provided inquiries show that he has an honourable discharge) his application for it will be placed before the Land Board for consideration. All applications are dealt with by the Land Board, and it is the duty of the Board and the Commissioner of Crown Lands to assist applicants as far as practicable in acquiring suitable allotments.

DISPOSAL OF THE LAND.

Under section 4 of the Act land may be disposed of to discharged soldiers either by way of sale or by lease, and applications must be made on the form prescribed for the respective tenures. Every applicant to purchase or to lease land under the Act and the regulations under the Act must supply with his application a statutory declaration that (a) he is a discharged soldier within the meaning of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915; (b) he is, subject to the provisions of the said Act, applying for the land described in the accompanying application solely for his own use and benefit, and not directly or indirectly for the use or benefit of any other person or persons whatsoever; (c) his answers to the questions set out in the application are true and correct in every particular.

If two or more applications are received in respect of one allotment of land, the Land Board shall determine which of the applicants, in its opinion, is most suitable to occupy the land, or is most in need of the land, and shall dispose of the land so as to comply with the direction of the said Act that the Board shall, as far as practicable, assist applicants in acquiring suitable allotments.

If the Board is unable to determine between the claims of two or more applicants it shall cause a ballot to be taken in the manner in which ballots are taken for the purposes of the Land Act, 1908.

PURCHASE OF LAND.

In the case of land disposed of by way of sale the price is fixed by the Land Board, with the approval of the Minister of Lands.

In the case of lands disposed of on deferred payment the following provisions from the regulations under the Act shall apply:—

- (a.) The purchaser shall forthwith, on the approval of his application, pay a deposit equal to 5 per cent. of the price of the land, and shall thereupon be entitled to receive a license to occupy the land.
- (b.) The license to occupy shall provide for the payment of the balance of 95 per cent. of the price by equal annual instalments extending over such period as the Board in each case determines, with the right of the licensee to pay off at any time the whole or any part of the price remaining unpaid; and shall also provide for the payment by the licensee of interest half-yearly at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum on the unpaid balance.
- (c.) Upon payment of the price in full and of all interest the purchase shall be deemed to be completed, and a certificate of title for the land shall be issued accordingly.

LEASES.

In the case of land disposed of by way of lease under section 4 of the Act, every lease shall, according to the regulations under the Act, be for such term, with or without a right of renewal, as the Board in each case may determine; but no lease under section 4 shall be for a longer term than thirty-three years in the case of lands acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, or sixty-six years in the case of other lands, with a perpetual right of renewal for further successive terms of thirty-three or sixty-six years, as the case may be.

The value of the improvements required to be effected by the lessee shall in each case be determined by the Board. Every lessee shall be required to reside continuously on the land comprised in his lease, except in cases in which the Board is satisfied that the land can be effectively used by the lessee for the purpose for which it was acquired without residence, in which case the date of residence may, if the Board thinks fit, be postponed or dispensed with.

The rent payable under any lease shall be determined by the Board, and shall not in any case be more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the capital value of the land as determined by the Board.

In the case of a renewable lease the rent payable on renewal shall be determined by the Board.

On the termination by effluxion of time of a lease, if a renewal of such lease is not granted, the lessee shall be entitled to receive from the Crown the value of all existing improvements effected by him or by a predecessor in title.

The lessee may, with the approval of the Board and the consent of the Minister, at any time during the continuance of the lease, acquire the fee-simple of the land, except it be national-endowment land. The previously described provision with regard to a deposit of 5 per cent. of the capital value of the land and the payment of the balance (relating to the purchase of land on deferred payments) shall, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the acquisition of the fee-simple of leased land. When a lease is changed for a certificate of title or license to occupy in the manner prescribed above the certificate or license shall be subject to all mortgages and other charges (if any) existing at the termination of the lease with respect to that land.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

As it was recognized that there would be many discharged soldiers wishing to take up land and who would not have the capital requisite for effecting the improvements to the land that in most cases would be necessary, section 6 provides that the Minister may, on the recommendation of the Land Board, either with or without special application, assist an applicant in the clearing, fencing, and general improvement of the land, erection of buildings, purchase of implements, stock, seed, trees, and any such other things as may be deemed necessary for the successful occupation of the land.

All moneys advanced or expended by the Minister under the authority of section 6 shall bear interest at such rate as may be determined by the Minister, and shall be secured by way of a first mortgage over the land or over the settler's interest in the land; but the Minister may, if he thinks fit, in any case of hardship, dispense wholly or in part with the payment of interest under this section.

By the regulations under the Act it is provided that any money advanced for the purchase of stock is secured by a bill of sale, which is collateral with the mortgage, to secure moneys advanced for effecting permanent improvements on the land.

The regulations also provide that the amount of any loan made for the erection of buildings, fencing, clearing, and general improvements may be advanced to the extent of 75 per cent. of the value of the work done by the mortgagor. The balance of the money will be paid on the certificate of some person appointed by the Minister that the work has been satisfactorily completed. The total of the advances made to one person shall not exceed £500.

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

Under section 8 authority is given to the Minister of Finance to raise, on the security of and charged upon the public revenues of New Zealand, such amount as he thinks fit, not exceeding in the aggregate the sum of £50,000.

Under section 11 it is provided that no land leased or sold to a discharged soldier under the Act shall, except with the consent of the Land Board and the approval of the Minister of Lands, be transferred until the expiry of ten years from the date of the sale or the commencement of the lease.

PROVISIONS OF THE LAND LAWS AMENDMENT ACT, 1915, AFFECTING MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

As an ordinary member of the community a discharged soldier may take up land under the Land Act, 1908, and the Land for Settlements Act, 1908; but under section 23 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915, it is provided that the Minister may, subject to such conditions as he thinks fit, *exempt from the payment of rent* under his lease or license any lessee or licensee of Crown land or settlement land, or any other land administered by a Land Board, who is or at any time has been a member of an Expeditionary Force raised for military service beyond New Zealand in connection with the present war.

By section 24 of this Act it is provided that any duly authorized agent of a member of a New Zealand Expeditionary Force may apply on behalf of that member for any land that may be open for application under either the Land Act, 1908, or the Land for Settlements Act, 1908, at any time while the said member is absent from New Zealand on military service. Such applicants, and also applicants who have at any time been members of a New Zealand Expedi-

tionary Force, shall at any ballot be entitled to the same preference as that accorded to married men who have families dependent on them or single men who have been twice unsuccessful at a ballot.

Discharged soldiers applying for land under this Act do not get the special advantages provided for in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

SELECTION OF LAND FOR DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.

Having decided on the advisability of encouraging soldiers to settle on the land, it became necessary to select the land suitable for their settlement and to get it ready for allotting to them. The Commissioners of Crown Lands were instructed to supply returns giving a list of all the lands suitable in their districts for occupation by discharged soldiers, and it was ascertained that there are in the Dominion a total of about 500,000 acres of land more or less suitable. This land has been provisionally set apart for discharged soldiers, but in most cases before it can be got ready for settlement road and subdivision surveys and plans of the land are required to be made: these works, however, are being proceeded with as fast as possible. Of the 500,000 acres of land provisionally set apart up to the end of March, 67,855 acres have formally been proclaimed under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915.

PREPARING FARMS.

It has been decided to cut up some blocks of land into suitable sections, and, before finally settling soldiers on them, to effect such improvements as will enable selectors to make a living off their sections. As far as possible soldiers will be employed in effecting these improvements.

FRUIT-FARMING.

In connection with the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land it was thought that there would be some who would prefer fruit-farming to the more strenuous life entailed by other forms of farming, but as fruit-farming is a business that one needs considerable experience in before starting, and also as it takes some years before an orchard becomes profitable, it has been decided to plant certain areas in fruit-trees, particularly apples.

The fruit industry is increasing with very rapid strides, and it can confidently be expected that a man with ordinary intelligence and industry can make a comfortable living from this occupation.

ASSISTANCE IN HAWKE'S BAY.

It is understood that a large sum has been set aside by the Hawke's Bay War Relief Association to assist the discharged soldiers in working their holdings, and at a recent conference of the sub-committee of the association with the Hawke's Bay Land Board it was agreed to work together in the matter of advancing money.

CONCLUSION.

Appendix A attached to this report shows the total area of lands in the Dominion that had up to the end of March been proclaimed under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915. The whole of the area has not yet been subdivided, but there are a total of 130 sections in the subdivided areas. It will be noticed that all the areas are proclaimed under section 4 of the Act—i.e., "special tenures."

Appendix B shows the number of soldiers to whom land has already been allotted in each land district. At present this number is small, but there were a number of applications under consideration on the 31st March last, and from now onwards, as the benefits of the Act become known, it is expected that a large number of soldiers will apply and be placed on the land to the mutual advantage of themselves and the State. This appendix also shows that up to the 31st March, 1916, no moneys had been spent in assisting settlers under the Act.

Appendix C is a statement of areas which, although subdivided for settlement, were not proclaimed on the 31st March, and could not therefore be included in Appendix A.

In conclusion, it may not be out of place here to remark that Land Boards have been encouraged to deal most leniently with members of the Expeditionary Force and discharged soldiers, and to assist them in every legitimate manner. That they are taking advantage of this attitude of the Government is evidenced by the number of privileges granted and by many postponements and exemptions from rent.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

LANDS PROCLAIMED UNDER THE DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACT, 1915, TO 31ST MARCH, 1916.

Auckland Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, six sections, containing 797 acres 2 roods 33 perches.

Hawke's Bay Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, thirty-seven sections, containing 16,635 acres and 20 perches; under section 4 (not subdivided), 48,395 acres 2 roods.

Taranaki Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, nil.

Wellington Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, sixty-one sections, containing 704 acres 1 rood 23 perches.

Nelson Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, five sections, containing 60 acres 2 roods 20 perches.

Marlborough Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, thirteen sections, containing 522 acres 1 rood.

Westland Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, nil.

Canterbury Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, nil.

Southland Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, eight sections, containing 739 acres 2 roods 29 perches.

Otago Land District.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, nil.

Total Area.—Under section 3, nil; under section 4, 130 sections, containing 67,855 acres.

APPENDIX B.

Land District.	Number of Applications received.	Number of Allotments disposed of by way of		Aggregate Area disposed of by way of Lease.		
		Salc.	Lease.			
				A.	R.	P.
Auckland	72	Nil	Nil			
Wellington	2	"	2	629	1	18
Hawke's Bay	143	"	Nil			
New Plymouth	13	"	"			
Marlborough	Nil	"	"			
Nelson	5	"	"			
Canterbury	12	"	"			
Otago	18	"	"			
Westland	Nil	"	"			
Southland	7	"	"			
Total	272	Nil	2	629	1	18

Amount expended for the year ending 31st March, 1916, in assisting settlers under the Act, nil.

APPENDIX C.

In addition to the lands mentioned in Appendix A, the following areas are surveyed and practically ready for allotment to eligible men :—

Auckland Land District.

Koheroa Block, comprising twenty-seven sections, containing altogether 2,213 acres. This block is situated inland from Pokeno, and is suitable for fruit-growing and for small farms.

Reynolds Settlement, near Cambridge. Eleven sections, containing 565 acres, and comprising first-class dairying-land.

Swanson Block, adjoining Henderson Railway-station, containing forty-nine sections, comprising altogether 11,068 acres. Suitable for fruitgrowing and intense cultivation.

Two sections in Clifton Settlement, containing altogether 109 acres. Good level undulating land, one mile from Tirau Railway-station; suitable for dairying.

Taranaki Land District.

Seven sections, Piopotea West, Mahoe, Mapara, Omona, and Pouata Survey Districts, containing altogether 3,122 acres. Suitable for grazing and mixed farms.

Wellington Land District.

Otamakapua Block, comprising 3,008 acres, subdivided into ten sections. Situated near Mangaweka. Suitable for grazing and dairying.

Waimarino Block, containing 40,175 acres, subdivided into about 115 sections, surveyed and now being roaded. Grazing country, bush-clad, and probably suitable for allotment only to sound men at the conclusion of the war.

Admiral Run, Wainuioru Survey District, containing 2,397 acres in five holdings. Good grazing-land, situated on the Wainuioru River.

Four sections situated in Hautapu, Retaruke, and Manganui Survey Districts, containing 1,708 acres. These sections have recently been allotted to discharged soldiers by the Wellington Land Board.

Otago Land District.

Benmore, fifteen runs, containing 21,100 acres, situated in North Otago. Suitable for sheep-farming. One of the runs has already been allotted by the Land Board to a suitable discharged soldier.

Three sections in Wakefield Survey District, containing 36 acres, situated on the Clutha River, ten miles from Cromwell. Flat land suitable for fruitgrowing.

Southland Land District.

Five sections, Milton Survey District, situated near Tuatapere, containing 648 acres. Good flat bush land suitable for general farming.

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