

*Meetings.*

The Board meets monthly in Wellington to determine general matters of policy, and submits its recommendations to the Prime Minister for the consideration of the Government. In the interval between the Board's meetings the Commissioners are actively engaged in their own districts, visiting various parts thereof, obtaining data, and making inquiries into various matters, the results of which are communicated by memoranda to the Chairman and other Commissioners. All communications to the Government or the Departments are passed through the Chairman, who is thereby kept in touch with the whole of the activities of the Board.

*Organization.—Trustee Boards and Committees of Advice.*

One of the first matters to which the Board devoted its attention was the drafting of a scheme for the management of farms and businesses for men leaving the Dominion with the Expeditionary Forces. The Government accepted the Board's proposals that Boards of Trustees or Committees of Advice should be formed throughout the Dominion for the purpose of giving advice to the Board, or for the management, or to assist in the disposal of soldiers' farms or businesses, or in case of death (if required) to act for the beneficiaries. These Trustees have been selected in many cases at a public meeting; in others by the District Commissioner of the National Efficiency Board, and have been approved by the Government. The Trustee Boards and Committees of Advice have been formed in centres as far north as Russell and as far south as Invercargill. There are twenty-seven Trustee Boards in the Auckland District, thirty-nine Trustee Boards in the Wellington District, forty Trustee Boards and sixty-one Boards of Advice in the Canterbury District, and 127 Boards of Trustees in the Otago District. The attached diagram (see Appendix II) sets out clearly the scheme, and shows the districts where the Boards and Advisers have so far been selected.

There has also been formed a Commercial and Professional Committee of Advice, whose members were recommended by the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce. This Committee will deal with and advise on matters relating to all commercial and professional subjects, and will also give material assistance in connection with the businesses of men of the Second Division who are called up. Similarly business Boards exist in Auckland, Wellington, and Otago, where they will be added to from time to time as occasion requires. Although the Government has been requested to approve of the appointments of the individual members of the Trustee Boards, Committees, and Advisers, the Board wishes to place on record that it has only submitted the names of gentlemen who, in the opinion of the District Commissioners, are possessed of special qualifications and business capacity.

By means of the Board's organization District Commissioners are now in a position to be kept closely informed of the requirements of their districts, and can therefore make such recommendations and arrangements as from time to time may be necessary.

Arrangements have been made by which group conferences of representatives of Trustee Boards and Committees of Advice are periodically held, at which matters of general importance and interest are brought forward and discussed, so that mutual assistance may be afforded and, as far as possible, uniformity in policy secured. As occasion requires, further Boards and Committees will be formed, especially in order to advise upon and assist in the problems arising out of the businesses of soldiers called up for service.

*Assistance to Soldiers.—Trusts.—Regulations.*

A Reservist by reason of being called up for military service may experience difficulty in providing either for the management of his farm or his business during his absence, or for its disposal if it is found that it cannot be satisfactorily continued as a going concern. The object of the Board is to render such practical assistance as may enable his farm to be managed, or his business to be maintained pending his return to it, or to have it realized without a forced sale involving undue sacrifice in connection with the realization of his assets. Widespread publicity has been given to the fact that these Boards have been created for this object, and already many farmer and business Reservists have utilized the organization to obtain advice which in many cases has resulted in the neighbours making arrangements to provide labour and assistance to carry on a farm without a legal trust under the scheme. In order to ensure publicity for the scheme, suitable posters have been prepared and displayed at railway-stations and post-offices in three of the military districts, giving the names of all Trustee Boards throughout the district.

If a soldier desires assistance he can apply to any member of the nearest Trustee Board, who will assist him to make an application on the prescribed Form A (Appendix III). The Trustee Board or the Committee of Advice, upon receipt of an application, pays a personal visit by one or more members to the farm and investigates the position and statements made, and reports as to whether the case is one in which assistance can be rendered. If the District Commissioner decides that the conditions are such that the farm or business cannot be successfully worked, then the local Board will under his direction assist the soldier, when so desired, to wind up the estate; but if it is determined to be a case where a trust could be satisfactorily constituted, the soldier, if he desires to utilize the organization, will be required to execute a power of attorney somewhat in the annexed form (Appendix IV), and a special trust will be constituted. A member of the National Efficiency Board must be one of the members of the special trust, whose work is controlled by Regulations for the Management of Soldiers' Properties made under the War Regulations Act, 1914, and gazetted on the 5th April, 1917 (Appendix V). Up till the present time no great number of trusts have actually been formed, as owing to the services rendered by the Board and Committees arrangements have in many cases been made for the work of the soldier to be carried on without the necessity for the constitution of a trust.