

the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Land Boards in regard to obtaining lands suitable for settlement by returned soldiers, and also in connection with the work of advising the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the soldier-settlers respecting implements and stock.

*Purchase of Soldiers' Farms for Settlement.*

On the 16th February the Board strongly recommended to the Government that a scheme should be devised by which prompt action could be taken for the purchase of soldiers' farms suitable for settlement purposes. At the request of the Government the Board submitted its views as to what was desirable, but certain objections having been raised by the Government to the proposals of the Board they were dealt with in the Board's memorandum of the 26th March, when the Board again took the opportunity of urging upon the Government the adoption of some scheme of purchase of selected farms of men compulsorily taken for military service, and added that it was unable to suggest any better proposals than those already submitted. The Board regrets that its suggestion for the purchase of farms of soldiers suitable for settlement by returned soldiers and others has not met with the approval of the Government.

*Soldiers' Mortgages.*

The Board drew the attention of the Government to the fact that injustice might be done to the soldiers who had left the Dominion through the rate of mortgage interest being increased in their absence, and without their consent.

*Financial Assistance for Soldiers' Farms.*

The Government having instituted a very beneficial scheme under which returned soldiers could, upon taking up land, receive advances up to £500, the Board suggested that it was desirable that a similar proposal should be given effect to in respect to farmer Reservists called up for military service, and who have to leave their farms in charge of friends or in the hands of Trustees appointed under the Board's scheme.

On the 30th April it was recommended—

- (1.) That upon the recommendation of the National Efficiency Board the Government should make advances upon the security of a soldier's stock, plant, and crop.
- (2.) That these advances should at all times be covered by a chattel security over the assets mentioned in clause (1).
- (3.) That the advances should never exceed 50 per cent. of the value of the security. The valuation to be approved by the National Efficiency Board.
- (4.) That every advance be limited to £500.
- (5.) That all advances be repaid within twelve months of the soldier's return.

The Board advised the Government that the risk would be comparatively small, as a security would be taken over the chattels, and the benefits to the State and to the departing soldier would be very great. It is hoped that this matter will not be lost sight of.

*Restriction of Transfer.—Soldiers' Farms.*

The Board inquired from the Government as to what were the conditions which prevent the ready transfer of State leaseholds by Reservists in the event of their being called up for active service, and learn that though the removal of the statutory restrictions was considered undesirable, the Land Boards would in many cases be willing to waive the conditions provided that such action did not admit of the aggregation of lands. The Board regrets that the Government did not see its way to deal with this matter from a more liberal aspect, and considers that the due protection of the soldiers' assets may be of greater importance than any slight aggregation which might accrue.

*Last Male Worker on Farm.*

The Board has made a recommendation to the Government, which was adopted, that the Military Service Boards should be advised not in any case to take the last male worker off a farm without first obtaining a report from the National Efficiency Board. The Board in dealing with this and similar matters has kept in mind that the production of the Dominion should be maintained as far as possible, and that every effort should be made, consistent with the military demands of the Empire, to avoid land becoming idle and unproductive. It was felt that in many cases a man working for himself and his family on his own holding was probably of more benefit to the State than he would be in camp or in the firing-line; also that such a man would render his farm far more productive than if his lands were worked by substitute labour.

*Accommodation for Married Men on Farms and Stations.*

The Board, being of opinion that a great deal of the difficulty in connection with the shortage of farm labour is caused by reason of an almost total absence on farms and stations of suitable and proper provision for married men and their families, urged the Government to take up this matter and provide financial assistance if required by the farmer for the erection of suitable quarters for married men.

*Shortage of Farm Labour and Assistance from Senior Schoolboys.*

In view of the probable shortage of farm labour for next harvesting, and of the fact that in many parts of the Dominion senior boys have in the past been employed successfully in harvesting operations, the Board issued a circular to all secondary and technical schools drawing