

off the farms. Formerly it was necessary for the Land Board to recommend the Minister to approve of readvances being made against cash receipts. The present system simplifies matters, and now places a settler's account on the footing of a current account.

27. The total amount which may be advanced for the purpose of improving or stocking a section has been raised from a maximum of £500 to £750, it being found that the lesser amount was insufficient to provide some of the settlers with a fair start to make a living from their holdings. Before the increased amount can be authorized it is essential that special circumstances must be shown justifying a recommendation, and a report must be submitted indicating the manner in which a section has been farmed and the advantage to be gained by the additional advance. During the year the maximum amount has been advanced to several settlers.

28. Owing to the difficulty experienced in obtaining fencing-wire and roofing-iron at reasonable prices, 234 tons of No. 8 galvanized wire were ordered from America, and 125 tons of corrugated roofing-iron from England. Owing to the restrictions placed upon the export of steel products by the Governments of the respective countries and the shortage of shipping from New York, none of the goods ordered reached the Dominion at the end of the financial year. Since then, however, 50 tons of wire have been received and retailed at about £15 per ton less than the prices quoted at date of arrival of shipment. The Munitions and Supplies Department has been requested to endeavour to arrange for freight for the balance of the goods ordered for this Department, and it is anticipated that the whole of the wire and iron now on order will arrive in the Dominion in the course of the next few months.

29. The statement of accounts attached to this report shows that a sum of £110,063 was accounted for by the Treasury as advances made during the year, but the advances actually made amount to £113,318. The difference arises through additional cash advances made by the District Offices not being accounted for in the Treasury books at the 31st March, 1918.

30. For the year ended 31st March, 1917, the sum of £62,421 was authorized to be advanced to 199 settlers, and £30,956 was actually advanced to 143 settlers. During the past year the total authorities have increased to £190,911 for 668 settlers, and the total advances to £144,274 against claims for improvements, purchase of stock, &c, made by 423 settlers. The following statement gives an indication of the financial assistance rendered to soldier settlers, and their obligations to the Department, since the inception of the Act:—

	£
Advances authorized to 668 settlers	190,911
Advances made to 423 soldiers towards the improvement of their lands, the erection of buildings, and the purchase of stock and farming implements, &c., upon certificates of the Crown Lands Rangers	144,274
Repayments on account of principal	9,380
Balance remaining on mortgage in respect of principal at 31st March	134,894
Total interest accrued to 31st March, 1918	4,912
Less amount received on account of interest	2,305
Balance owing for interest at 31st March...	2,607
Total amount raised by debentures issued under the Act	160,000

REMISSIONS AND POSTPONEMENTS OF RENT, ETC., GRANTED TO DISCHARGED SOLDIERS AND MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Up to the 31st March, 1918, remissions of rent amounting to £2,196 have been granted under section 7 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, in seventy cases. The remissions of rent granted under section 23 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915, and section 13 of the War Legislation Amendment Act, 1916, to Crown tenants who are members of the Expeditionary Force amount to £15,695, the number of tenants affected being 719. The postponements granted during the year amounted to £9,610 to 119 discharged soldiers, and £788 to twenty-five members of the Expeditionary Force. The total amount remaining postponed at the close of the year was £10,024, covering postponements granted to 141 discharged soldiers, and £1,997 in respect of forty-two holdings held by members of the Expeditionary Force.