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NEW ZEALAND

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DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY:  
  
DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 1918.

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

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SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 1st June, 1918.

In accordance with the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, I have the honour to submit herewith the report on the operations under the Act for the year ended 31st March, 1918.

I have, &c.,

T. N. BRODRICK,

Under-Secretary.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands.

## REPORT.

## PART I.—SETTLEMENT DURING YEAR.

1. SETTLEMENT during the year has steadily progressed, as may be seen by reference to the attached tables, although in a comparatively small proportion to the extent that may be expected when the Main Body of the Expeditionary Force returns to New Zealand. On the 1st April, 1916, only two soldiers had been settled; on the 1st April, 1917, there were 344, who had acquired 166,526 acres of land under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act and other Acts; whilst on the 31st March, 1918, twelve months later, there was a total number of 638 discharged soldiers who held between them 257,943 acres, showing that nearly 300 more soldiers had taken up land and were eligible to obtain advances from the Government under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

2. In addition to the foregoing figures, sixty-nine members of the Expeditionary Force have acquired 138,452 acres of land under the Land Act.

3. It is noticeable that there is a much greater demand from soldiers for land in the North than in the South Island. In the former all that is acquired is taken up readily, but in the latter much good land is awaiting settlement.

4. Some very good settlements were opened for selection during the year, and in accordance with the law were offered to the settlers at the cost of acquisition, plus necessary expenses. The tenures under which land may be held are specially suited to meet the needs of the settlers. The rentals payable under the leases represent but a moderate rate of interest on the Government's outlay. The settlers have the right to acquire the freehold either by payment in cash or on deferred payments. This freehold provision does not however apply to cases where the land is national endowment or education reserve.

5. The progress made by settlers throughout the Dominion has been generally satisfactory, and in the majority of cases they appear to be of a good stamp and likely to make successful use of their holdings. The reports of the Commissioners of Crown Lands, published in the appendix to this report, show what has been done in each district, and contain some interesting particulars as to the progress of soldier settlements generally.

6. Very great interest is taken by the Returned Soldiers' Association Clubs and Settlers' Associations of various classes in the general question of land-settlement, and many divergent views have been forwarded to the Government. These have all been considered, and where valuable suggestions have been made they have been adopted. It must, however, again be reiterated that it is a practical impossibility to settle all soldiers in the same manner. Some associations are of opinion that soldiers should only be placed on improved lands; others urge that if they are placed on unimproved and bush lands the settlers' efforts in clearing will materially enhance the value of their land and give them a better opportunity; and there are others again who are of opinion that fully equipped fruit-farms, dairy farms, &c., should be provided for the soldiers. The policy of the Government has always been to provide as far as possible land suitable for all classes of applicants, and in accordance with this policy suburban lands suitable for market-gardening, small farms, dairy farms, fruit-farms, areas for bee-keeping, pastoral country, unimproved country, and partly improved country have been made available, and the Land Boards, when dealing with applications from returned soldiers, endeavour to settle them on holdings suitable to their experience and training. In settling valuable land it is desirable that as far as possible the settlers should be able to utilize it to the best advantage from the beginning of their tenancy, but in some cases it has been found that their farming qualifications have not been sufficient to enable them to do this, with the result that discontent has been expressed with holdings which in more experienced hands would have provided an ample livelihood.

7. There is a tendency amongst some of the soldier settlers to rely too much on outside labour to do the work for which Government advances have been made, instead of doing it themselves wherever possible, as "improved-farm" settlers would do. This should be discouraged, or the soldiers will soon find themselves at the end of their resources. This advice particularly applies to bush farmers, who should earn the advances by felling and grassing the land themselves, by which means they will gain experience in the management of land as they progress and their future will be assured. On the other hand, with labour so dear the money that may be advanced will soon fritter away, and the soldier with very little experience and no money will not be able to make the best use of the grass he has grown by contract labour.

8. As directed, two blocks of bush land in the Mongonui County have been subdivided into farms and withheld from settlement, with a view to their prior improvement by soldiers working under a good practical manager before the allotment of the sections to them takes place. So far there is no indication that a sufficient number of the already discharged men are willing to work on the terms stated. The blocks referred to are the Takahue-Whangape Block, of 6,855 acres, subdivided into twenty-five sections, and the Pareokawa Block, of 3,698 acres, subdivided into fourteen sections.

9. The Homebrook Estate, situated at Southbridge, in Canterbury, containing 1,130 acres, was, after subdivision into sixteen farms, withheld from immediate settlement because of its suitability for training soldiers to farm under a manager. In this case, as in those referred to

above, the discharged soldiers at present have shown no inclination to submit to training before taking up land. I understand also that the offer by the Department of Agriculture to train men on their agricultural farms met with little or no response.

10. By direction the reservation of the Swanson gum area, containing 1,109 acres, situated not far from Auckland, was uplifted. It was subdivided into fifty sections, and tenders were called for ploughing it with a view to giving fruitgrowing settlers a start, but the prices asked were too high for acceptance. In the meantime the roads are being formed.

11. Advice has been given to soldier settlers whenever practicable by experts of the Agricultural Department, Crown Lands Rangers, and other officials of the Lands and other Departments of the State, and by private individuals. This advice is of great assistance, and every endeavour will be made to see that all new selectors are given practical advice to enable them to deal with the particular class of land allotted. The purchase of stock is supervised most carefully, so that advances made for this purpose may be expended to the best advantage. In some cases settlers have purchased out of their own funds implements and machinery in excess of their requirements, and it has been pointed out to them that where several small farms adjoin a system of co-operation is advisable wherever possible in the purchase of expensive implements, with a view to avoiding waste of money. This, however, is largely a matter for the settlers themselves, and the Department does not desire to interfere beyond giving practical advice on the subject, but it does not make advances where the requisitions are in excess of what is reasonable for working the sections.

#### LANDS OPENED FOR APPLICATION.

12. During this year 36,677 acres of ordinary Crown land were proclaimed under the Act, as were 25,384 acres of settlement lands and 8,821 acres of national endowment, making a total of 70,882 acres set apart for settlement by discharged soldiers. The setting-apart of an area of 14,624 acres was, however, revoked during the year, and, as 337,961 acres had been proclaimed previously, there is a gross total of 394,219 acres which has been made available under the Act. As previously stated, this embraces various classes of land, which are surveyed and subdivided into holdings suitable for the maintenance of a settler and his family. The disposal of such lands is a matter for the various Land Boards, who in some cases allot the holdings to individual applicants without competition, or, if a number of applications are received for any particular block, the disposal of the land is usually decided by ballot amongst eligible applicants. It is, however, often the case that local bodies and associations in a particular district desire that lands in their district should be made available for settlement by the soldiers who have gone therefrom. This wish is very natural, but in the interests of the soldiers themselves it is not advisable to restrict applications for land to soldiers from any particular locality, for to do so would deprive many of opportunities of settling elsewhere should they desire. However, the provisions of the Amendment Act of last session to a large extent meet the case by enabling a soldier who wishes to settle in his own district, or in any desired locality, to obtain an offer of sale from a freeholder, and, if the price is reasonable and the holding is considered suitable for the applicant's requirements, there is power either to assist the settler to obtain the freehold title by the Government advancing the greater part of the purchase-money on first mortgage, or else for the Government to purchase the land under section 3 of the Amendment Act, 1917, through the Board of Land Purchase Commissioners, and allot it to the applicant. Many applications under the section of the Act quoted have been made, and there is every indication that the provision will be largely made use of during the coming year.

13. Every effort is being made to prepare all the suitable Crown land in the Dominion for settlement by soldiers, and to this end Chief Surveyors have been instructed to apply for authority to employ private surveyors whenever their own depleted staffs are unable to push on the work of subdivision with sufficient expedition. Large areas of Native land purchased during the year have swelled the area of Crown land to be dealt with eventually, but it is not advisable at the present time to proceed with the subdivision of a large part of it until further purchases now being negotiated have been completed.

#### OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE AND DONATIONS.

14. Mr. George Hunter, M.P., has very generously made a gift to the Government of portion of his freehold property at Porangahau, comprising 2,535 acres, to be subdivided and disposed of to discharged soldiers. The land is to be subdivided and prepared for settlement so that it may be balloted for within six months after the termination of the war. The conditions upon which this land will be offered for settlement by discharged soldiers have not yet been decided upon, but the revenue derived from the sale or lease, as the case may be, will be utilized for the betterment of the conditions of discharged soldiers or their dependants. The land will be disposed of and administered by the Crown, but the Crown will not benefit by the gift except to the extent of having more good land available on which to place soldier settlers when the war comes to an end.

15. Sympathy with returned soldiers found practical expression in the action of the settlers located in the vicinity of the Stalker Settlement, at Seaward Downs, in the Southland Land District. It was necessary that an area of 180 acres, comprising portions of each of the allotted sections, should be ploughed, and the work was taken in hand by the neighbouring settlers, with the result that the whole area was ploughed in less than two days. While ploughing operations were in process it was also decided to make provision for the necessary seed, and upwards of £100 was subscribed for the purpose. In many other settlements the soldiers have received practical assistance and also valuable advice from the local patriotic societies.

## AMENDMENT OF ACT.

16. The Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act extends the previously existing powers of the Minister to make advances of money for the purpose of assisting discharged soldiers. The additional purposes for which advances may be made are—

- (a.) The purchase of the fee-simple of any private land or Native land, together with the improvements thereon :
- (b.) The acquisition by assignment or transfer of any lease of any Crown land, settlement land, or other land administered by a Land Board :
- (c.) The clearing, fencing, draining, and general improvement (including the erection of buildings) of any land owned in fee-simple by a discharged soldier :
- (d.) The discharge of any mortgage affecting any land owned in fee-simple by a discharged soldier, or affecting any land administered by a Land Board and held by a discharged soldier under lease or license :
- (e.) The purchase of plant, implements, stock, seeds, plants, trees, and such other things as may be deemed necessary for the successful occupation of any land owned in fee-simple by a discharged soldier.

17. Another important provision in this Act relates to the acquisition by the Crown on behalf of individual discharged soldiers of privately owned land in cases where such soldiers are not in a sufficiently good financial position to themselves purchase without the assistance of the Crown.

18. Provision is also made in this Act for the acquisition of land for soldiers' dwellings, the erection thereon of suitable houses, and the letting thereof to discharged soldiers on terms somewhat similar to those adopted in the case of what are generally known as workers' dwellings.

## REGULATIONS.

19. Regulations have been issued providing for the making of advances authorized by section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. Under these regulations an amount up to £2,500 may be advanced to a discharged soldier to assist him in acquiring freehold land or land held under lease from a Land Board, the advance with interest at 5 per centum per annum being repayable by instalments over a period of 36½ years. The opportunity thus offered to discharged soldiers to select and negotiate for the purchase of their own holdings is much appreciated, and transactions have been numerous.

20. Under section 4 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917, power is provided to erect dwellings in towns and dispose of them to discharged soldiers. The necessary regulations have been issued, but on account of the present high cost of building no dwellings have yet been erected.

21. Important amendments were made to the regulations governing the making of advances, with the object of affording to soldiers assistance in the manner that would prove most useful and convenient to them. The necessity for obtaining separate approval to every transaction has been overcome, and advances on current account substituted up to a limit to be fixed by the Minister. This has been found to greatly simplify transactions. Provision was also made for extending the limit of advance to £750 in cases in which there are special circumstances to justify it.

## LAND FOR MAORI SOLDIERS.

22. During the year 35,583 acres of Native land in the Owhaoko A East, A1B, B East, D1, and D7 Blocks has been proclaimed under section 368 of the Native Land Act, 1909, and section 4 of the Native Land Amendment and Native Land Claims Adjustment Act, 1917, which authorizes owners of Native land to donate it to the Crown for settlement by discharged Maori soldiers under section 3 or 4 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915. As it was donated for a special purpose, it is proposed to subdivide and settle the land when a demand from returned Maori soldiers warrants such action.

## PART II.—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

## ADVANCES.

23. The total amount raised by issue of debentures at the 31st March amounted to £160,000, of which sum £36,000 was raised during the year ended 31st March, 1917.

24. For the past financial year the sum of £113,318 was advanced on mortgage, for the purpose of assisting soldiers to erect dwellings and effect general improvements to their holdings, as well as enabling them to purchase stock, farming implements, &c., and cultivate their lands for the purpose of cropping. The whole of the advances for the erection of buildings, the carrying-out of other improvements, and the purchase of stock, chattels, &c., were made on the certificates of the Crown Lands Rangers.

25. A substantial portion of the total amount advanced was earned by the settlers putting their own labour into improving their sections instead of letting the work out on contract. This enabled them to obtain a means of livelihood during the period that their lands were not in a position to wholly support them.

26. Under the amended regulations of the 18th October, 1917, readvances may now be made by the Commissioner of Crown Lands against credits derived from the sale of stock or produce

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.

## APPENDIX.

## REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

## AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKEET, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

THREE new settlements purchased under the Land for Settlements Act have been offered for selection by discharged soldiers during the year—namely, the Streamlands Settlement, of 1,467 acres, near Warkworth, of which 1,287 acres is now occupied; the Tapapa Settlement, of 1,185 acres, near Hinuera, of which the whole was immediately taken up; and Te Miro Settlement, of 11,789 acres, near Cambridge, out of which 8,604 acres was offered for selection and 4,720 acres taken up. In addition to these an area of 25,165 acres of ordinary Crown land was offered, 6,658 acres of which was selected.

As in the previous year, although there is a large number of prospective soldier tenants on our books, all of whom are supplied with particulars of lands offered, the actual number of applicants is limited in comparison. The actual number of selections during the year was ninety-one, comprising 15,880 acres, and the total area held by discharged soldiers at the end of the period was 27,935 acres, occupied by 164 selectors; while ninety-five sections, of a total area of 30,335 acres, were still available for immediate selection. A number of these sections are, however, only suitable for men able to undertake a certain amount of pioneering work.

Advances made during the year for buildings and other improvements and the purchase of stock and implements totalled £32,161, bringing the amount of outstanding advances at the 31st March (less repayments) up to £36,496, in addition to which further advances of £15,991 had been authorized but not paid over.

The progress made by the soldier settlers has been generally satisfactory, and in the majority of cases they are taking a keen interest in their holdings, and give every promise of proving permanent and successful settlers. In the Reynolds Settlement, near Cambridge, experience showed that a portion of the block is not yet suitable for occupation in small holdings by soldiers, and the selectors have therefore been allowed to surrender their leases, and are being transferred to other lands which will give an immediate return. The other holders on this block are, however, doing well. The settlers on the Pakarau Settlement, near Morrinsville, and the Taniwha Settlement, near Waerenga, are doing good work, although the former have met with difficulties owing to the need for renewal of some of the pastures and provision of water-supply, for which funds have been made available. Of the three settlements established during the year, the Tapapa Settlement, near Hinuera, has given the best immediate result; the Streamlands Settlement, near Warkworth, will take longer to bring in; and Te Miro Settlement, near Cambridge, was only just being settled at the close of the year. The early settlers at Mahoenui are making fair progress, as are the few scattered holders.

During the year the Land Board made a personal visit of inspection to the Reynolds, Pakarau, Tapapa, and Taniwha Settlements, and interviewed a number of the settlers, being well pleased with the evidences of progress. As practical farmers who have themselves experienced the difficulties of starting farming under less advantageous conditions of settlement than now prevail, the members of the Board could not, however, help noticing a tendency to purchase expensive and unnecessary implements, which had been neither authorized nor paid for out of advances by the Department, the equipment being in some cases more suitable to a property of much greater scope. The erroneous assumption that such had been purchased out of advances has led to a certain amount of ill-informed criticism, which is helpful neither to the settlers themselves nor the Department. The general policy in these matters is, so far as possible, within reasonable limits, to allow the settler a free hand, and let him be guided by the practice and advice of more experienced settlers in the locality.

A number of applications under the provisions of the Amendment Act of 1917, enabling the purchase of freehold and other properties for individual soldiers, have been received and are under investigation.

## HAWKE'S BAY.

(W. F. MARSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The past year has witnessed the opening of the Watea, Marakeke, Mangaorapa, Porangahau, and Awa-o-totara Blocks, all of which except the latter were wholly settled, and, with previous experience in the matter of examination to guide the Land Board, by a very good class of settler.

Awa-o-totara is a somewhat diversified block, the result being that those sections only which promised an easier and earlier return with the least work met with any demand, and the balance of about one-half were turned down, inquirers frankly stating their preference for chances with the better lands in the more southern part of the district. The sections still open are quite capable of development by the right man, but it is unlikely that serious eyes will be turned towards them until the supply of more acceptable lands is exhausted.

On the blocks settled during the previous year considerable improvements have been effected, and there is every probability that a large proportion of the holders will come safely through

their ordeals. Failures there undoubtedly will be, but they may generally be ascribed to the unsuitability, from various causes, of the settlers, and only rigid unsentimental examination and selection of applicants will tend to minimize the evil.

Grazing-lands in this district attract most attention, and those of a high carrying-capacity and a capital value in conformity have been eagerly sought after—in a great many instances by those who did not or would not recognize that in such cases the land was entitled to as much consideration as the prospective tenant.

It is becoming very noticeable that nearly all applications are now from men who have in some manner been closely connected with agricultural or pastoral pursuits, and who fully realize that patience, labour, and industry, in conjunction with a financial standing, are indispensable factors in the making of a successful settler.

#### TARANAKI.

(G. H. BULLARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year the activities of the staff have been largely occupied in dealing with inquiries and applications from intending soldier selectors, the establishment and oversight of soldiers already on land, and the making of advances for stock, buildings, and improvements for the development of holdings. In this district there are returned men placed on three different classes of land—namely, small dairy farms, mixed farms, and unimproved bush lands—most of whom it may be claimed are still on their trial, but who, with the usual exceptions, give promise of making good settlers.

Present indications are that mixed farming in this district under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts is hardly likely to be so successful as either dairying or grazing; but in the end the type of the soldier selector himself, his experience, energy, and adaptability, must always be a strong factor in the ultimate success or otherwise under any of the classes of farming referred to. Under section 108 of the Land Act, 1908, which is applicable to soldier selectors, the Land Board is empowered, before taking a ballot, to “inquire into all matters affecting an applicant’s suitability or his right of preference”; and it is evident from past experience that the Board will have to exercise that power more rigidly, as much in the interests of the would-be selector as for the welfare of the State. There is sometimes a tendency, especially on the part of those applicants lacking farming experience, to regard the acquisition of a section much in the way of an independence or as an end in itself, and so “rest on their oars,” with a minimum of exertion and apparently little incentive, with the State assistance by way of advances, to carve out the future for themselves. This, happily, is not generally the case, but, as the tendency is in evidence, the only way to combat it will be for Land Boards to exercise their discretionary powers to the full in the matter of giving preference in ballots.

The 1917 amendment of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act has enlarged the scope of soldier settlement in no small degree, and the assistance now afforded by the State under sections 2, 3, and 4 of that Act in the way of financing soldiers to take over particular Crown leases, private or Native lands, secure workers’ dwellings, &c., is now claiming the attention of the men more and more, as evidenced by the large number of inquiries and applications dealt with by the office month by month since the Act came into force. This newer method of placing men on land chosen by themselves will in some respects be quicker in its operation than under the older method, where the Crown first acquires a block, then subdivides, advertises ballots, &c., under the Land for Settlements Act; and at the same time selection in this manner will relieve ballots of a large number of applicants who would otherwise have been competing under the latter system of selection.

#### WELLINGTON.

(G. H. M. McCLURE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Five estates, aggregating an area of 2,673 acres, were acquired during the year. These were subdivided into thirty-eight allotments, principally dairy farms, and all were selected. In addition, twenty-two allotments in estates purchased in the previous year were selected, comprising an area of 7,314 acres. To this may be added thirty allotments of ordinary Crown lands which were selected, comprising an area of 15,860 acres, making a total for the year of ninety allotments, aggregating 25,847 acres. Six allotments, comprising an area of 5,233 acres, were surrendered and not reselected during the year; and the applications for eight allotments, of an area of 3,008 acres, were not completed by payment of half-year’s rent. At the close of the year there were no dairy lands available for selection, the only lands open being 24,515 acres grazing country covered with forest, and 1,240 acres open land, principally improved sheep-country. The provisional applications lodged during the year numbered 500. By forfeiture and surrender for various reasons thirty-two holdings, aggregating an area of 13,134 acres, reverted to the Crown, but during the year twenty-three persons reselected 6,692 acres of that area, the remainder being practically all bush country.

Of the 199 selectors shown in the table as holding allotments, sixty-four are dairying and sixty-seven are grazing sheep and cattle. During the coming season another eighteen will be dairying, and possibly twenty-five will be added to those using their holdings for grazing. One small holding near the Lower Hutt is used for market-gardening, and the remaining twenty-four are practically all bush lands in the early stages of improvement. An area of 1,715 acres was felled, and grass-seed supplied by the Department for sowing that area. It is considered that probably 13 per cent. of the selectors in actual occupation will not make a success of their holdings, owing altogether to their inability to recognize the fact that it is absolutely necessary, if they wish to succeed, to devote the whole of their time and energies to the work of their farms. These essentials were pointed out in my previous report, and cannot be too strongly impressed upon the soldier who wishes to take up farming pursuits for a livelihood.

Most of those settlers supplying milk to the factories have now surmounted the initial expenses and difficulties, and, provided they devote their whole time and energy to effecting improvements, next season should see them well established on their holdings. The dry summer seriously affected their returns. In one settlement (Putorino), which was only allotted as the season was about to commence, a temporary water-supply was put in which afforded relief, but not before it became necessary for some of the settlers to arrange with neighbouring farmers for their stock to be depastured on their farms. A very creditable amount of improvements was effected on this settlement during the first eight months of occupation.

Experience has shown that this class of farm must be stocked to its full carrying-capacity, and after effecting necessary improvements the advance of £500 in most instances is found to be inadequate to purchase the additional stock required so as to get the best results out of the farm.

Those selectors whose farms are used for pastoral purposes have been well stocked up with sheep and cattle, and they have all made steady progress, though the high rates ruling for labour and materials have prevented them from effecting more than the most urgent improvements. They are making the best possible use of their holdings, and once the expenses of the first year or two are over and the farms are in working-order it is confidently expected that the settlers will succeed in making a comfortable living.

#### NELSON.

(F. A. THOMPSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Under the powers provided in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, a fair amount of land in the Nelson Land District has been set aside for selection exclusively by returned soldiers.

An area of 2,892 acres, comprising ten holdings, is available for selection on the special tenures provided in the Act quoted, and an area of 10,170 acres, comprising twenty holdings, is available for selection on renewable lease, these latter lands being either in mining districts or within the national endowment.

The number of discharged soldiers who have selected land on all tenures in this district is fifteen, and the area held by them is 16,623 acres. No settlements have been purchased for returned soldiers here, and the lands which are now held are isolated sections which for the most part were picked out by the men themselves.

Our soldier tenants appear to be good settlers, and with some financial assistance, and in some cases better access, should in a few years make comfortable livings.

It must be noted that the lands available for soldiers are, generally speaking, bush lands that require a good deal of development, and these do not appeal to men who have returned from the front wounded or with health undermined by disease. These areas will, however, probably be readily selected when the men return home at the conclusion of the war.

#### MARLBOROUGH.

(H. D. McKELLAR, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Since the passing of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 8,682 acres have been opened for selection, comprising twenty-eight sections, from 7 to 760 acres in area.

On the Wither Settlement, out of the twelve small sections suitable for fruitgrowing or market-gardening, four have been taken up, but so far do not show any marked success.

On Brina Settlement, which is pastoral land, seven sections are now selected, leaving five yet available. With one exception these selectors are doing good work, and should make satisfactory settlers. One selector has re-enlisted and returned to the front, having made arrangements for the working of his section. The demand for this land is not yet pressing, though there are many inquiries which do not result in applications.

#### WESTLAND.

(THOMAS BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year areas aggregating 7,717 acres were opened for selection by discharged soldiers, and five sections, of a total area of 2,114 acres, were selected. Two of the settlers are making good progress, but the other three have not yet entered into possession of their holdings.

The number of inquiries is increasing, but intending selectors show a preference for land which will give a quicker return than the heavy-bush country we have to offer.

#### CANTERBURY.

(W. H. SKINNER, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

On the 31st March, 1917, an area of 38,003 acres had been allotted to fifteen returned soldiers, and at the close of the present year further allotments had been made to thirty-seven, containing a total area of 57,467 acres.

The larger proportion of this land is pastoral country, for which the soldiers in the Canterbury District show a decided preference. The remainder comprises country suitable for mixed farming; only a very limited area was available for dairying, and few inquiries were made for this class of land.

Taken as a whole, a good class of settler has made these selections, and so far their work and progress have been satisfactory. With ordinary precautions and energy this could scarcely be otherwise, in view of the favourable weather conditions that have prevailed in this district since the soldier settlements were initiated. Particularly has this been so in the cases of those selectors who have taken up pastoral lands. The real test for these settlers will arise if they are overtaken by one or two bad seasons before they are well established, but this is all in the game, and so far fortune has smiled upon them.

One valuable estate in the Southbridge district, which has been acquired for discharged soldiers and surveyed ready for allotment, is being held back temporarily pending the possibility of an arrangement being made with the Canterbury Patriotic Association to establish a training-depot for those soldiers who are desirous of going on the land but who are lacking in farming experience. The estate is well adapted for this purpose, containing as it does various qualities of soil, where dairying, agricultural, and other experience could be gained. The farmhouse, outbuildings, &c., are ample and convenient, and the property is most conveniently situated to the railway.

On the 31st March the number of applicants for financial aid was twenty-nine, and the amount authorized £11,727. The actual amount advanced at that date was £5,169 6s. 6d.

A greatly increased amount of work and responsibility has fallen on the staff in connection with the applications and granting of financial assistance to the soldier tenants. Where the advances are made for permanent improvements, fencing, buildings, draining, &c., the risk and responsibility are light as compared with the cases where the security has to be taken over stock and crops, but all possible care is taken to safeguard the State's security.

It is early yet to say definitely whether the soldier settlements in this district will be either unqualified successes or failures, but I will venture the opinion that by far the greater percentage of them will come out successfully. The men themselves, with just one or two doubtful cases, are of the right stamp. Most of them have a little capital, and have had farming experience. A certain percentage have not sought the financial aid of the State, but are being financed by their relatives or friends. All the soldier settlers are more or less indebted to the Patriotic Associations, which have given monetary assistance on the most liberal and generous terms, besides affording the means for obtaining expert advice. I would here like to place on record this office's appreciation of the sympathetic and practical assistance so freely given by the Canterbury Patriotic Association in helping returned soldiers to make a success of their selections. The thanks of the office are also due to the Returned Soldiers' Association for the helpful manner in which it has replied to the numerous inquiries made from time to time regarding the character and fitness of many of the applicants. This information has been most valuable to the Board when doubtful cases were under consideration.

To show the possibilities in some of the settlements I might state that in one considerable area of sheep-country a number of the soldiers have intimated their intention of refunding the advances made by the Patriotic Association, the outcome of their first year's work, thanks to a most favourable season, having been successful beyond their expectations. Another case is that of an agricultural farm taken up by a returned Gallipoli man with practically no farming experience. This man had the sense to be guided and advised by practical men of the district. His efforts were rewarded by a fine crop of wheat now safely harvested. An intimation has been received that he hopes to repay the major part of the Government advance, make good his rent, and start the coming year on his own account. The past favourable season was the main factor in these cases, but these examples, however, go to show that there are decided possibilities in the soldier settlements, where the individual is possessed of energy, enterprise, and common-sense.

Solid progress has been made in the laying-down of permanent improvements in the Lees Valley Settlement. At the close of the year the settlers were depasturing between them 10,044 sheep, 292 cattle, and 26 horses. The land was only allotted on the 1st March, 1917, so the progress made has been rapid and satisfactory.

#### OTAGO.

(ROBERT T. SADD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Up to the end of the year twenty-seven discharged soldiers have been settled on an area of 31,342 acres, and the majority of them are making a success of their holdings. So far there has not been much demand for land by returned soldiers, and the preference is for sheep-country, very few being desirous of going in for dairying or mixed farming. Owing to the high prices for all materials and stock, the advances made to the soldiers do not go very far.

#### SOUTHLAND.

(H. D. M. HASZARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are now twenty-six soldiers' holdings in this district, thirteen of which were selected during the year, the aggregate area held being 8,100 acres. Five are on settlement land which was purchased by the Crown, and this number includes one whose holding was purchased at his own request under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. In nearly every instance these soldier farmers are shaping particularly well, and in the majority of cases ultimate success should crown their efforts. Every consideration consistent with reason is extended to these settlers, and on the whole they appreciate the advantages extended to them. It is very satisfactory to be able to submit this favourable report in connection with these men, who are deserving of the best the country can give them. Forty-two tenants have been granted remissions of rent, either wholly or partially, during their absence on active service. Others whose number it is impossible to state (as in many cases the Department has not been advised) have made suitable arrangements for their holdings to be worked and the rent paid while they are serving their country. Some have made the supreme sacrifice.

The supervision of soldier purchases, inspection of improvements, &c., creates a large and growing demand on the time of the officers and Rangers. I estimate that the work in connection with one lease under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act is equivalent to five times that of an ordinary Crown tenant.

TABLE 1.

AREA OF LAND PROCLAIMED FOR SETTLEMENT UNDER THE DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACT, 1915.

District.	Under Section 3 of the Act. (Ordinary Tenures.)		Under Section 4 of the Act. (Special Tenures.)		Total Area proclaimed.	
	For the Year ended 31st March, 1918.	Total to 31st March, 1918.	For the Year ended 31st March, 1918.	Total to 31st March, 1918.	For the Year ended 31st March, 1918.	Total to 31st March, 1918.
<i>Ordinary Crown Lands—</i>	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Auckland .. ..	18,541	25,366	1,893	34,673	20,434	60,039
Hawke's Bay .. ..	9,251	13,812	34	58,048	9,285	71,860
Taranaki .. ..	..	8,340	..	..	..	8,340
Wellington .. ..	..	884	2,447	52,487	2,447	53,371
Nelson .. ..	906	9,494	..	3,786	906	13,286
Marlborough .. ..	..	..	708	1,192	708	1,192
Westland .. ..	377	5,959	..	149	377	6,108
Canterbury .. ..	..	..	..	253	..	253
Otago .. ..	..	..	619	23,852	619	23,852
Southland .. ..	296	296	1,605	3,301	1,901	3,597
Totals .. ..	29,371	64,151	7,306	177,741	36,677	241,892
<i>Cheviot Estate, Canterbury ..</i>	..	2,097	..	1,356	..	3,453
<i>Land for Settlements—</i>						
Auckland .. ..	..	..	11,715	16,196	11,715	16,196
Hawke's Bay .. ..	..	..	3,733	5,445	3,733	5,445
Taranaki .. ..	..	..	1,126	1,126	1,126	1,126
Wellington .. ..	..	707	2,689	20,116	2,689	20,823
Nelson .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Marlborough .. ..	..	..	..	7,490	..	7,490
Westland .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Canterbury .. ..	1,255	44,661	124	732	1,379	45,393
Otago .. ..	53	5,201	2,592	2,678	2,645	7,879
Southland .. ..	..	745	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,842
Totals .. ..	1,308	51,314	24,076	55,880	25,384	107,194
<i>National Endowment—</i>						
Auckland .. ..	6,444	6,444	..	..	6,444	6,444
Hawke's Bay .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Taranaki .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Wellington .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Nelson .. ..	..	2,856	..	..	..	2,856
Marlborough .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Westland .. ..	1,758	2,533	..	..	1,758	2,533
Canterbury .. ..	..	14,770	..	..	..	14,770
Otago .. ..	..	14,275	..	..	..	14,275
Southland .. ..	619	802	..	..	619	802
Totals .. ..	8,821	41,680	..	..	8,821	41,680
Grand totals .. ..	39,500	159,242	31,382	234,977	70,882	394,219

NOTE.—The setting-apart of an area of 784 acres of ordinary Crown land in the Hawke's Bay Land District for disposal on special tenures, and 13,840 acres of ordinary Crown land in the Otago Land District for disposal on ordinary tenures, was revoked during the year. These areas are not included in the above return.

TABLE 2.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AND LAND ALLOTTED DURING THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1918, UNDER THE DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT ACT.

District.	Number of Applications received during the Year.				Under Section 3 of Act (Ordinary Tenures).						Under Section 4 of Act (Special Tenures).						Totals.					
	Under Section 3 of Act (Ordinary Tenures).		Under Section 4 of Act (Special Tenures).		Sale (including Deferred Payment).			Lease and License.			Total.			Sale (including Deferred Payment).			Lease and License.			Total.		
					Number of Allotments.	Area.	Number of Allotments.	Area.	Total.	Number of Allotments.	Area.	Total.	Number of Allotments.	Area.	Total.	Number of Allotments.	Area.	Total.				
Ordinary Crown Lands—	Auckland ..	21	10	31	Acres.	..	524	3	Acres.	18	2,887	19	2,897	Acres.	1	10	21	3,411	Acres.	22	3,421	
	Hawke's Bay ..	26	13	39	..	..	11,788	16	..	15	11,677	15	11,677	..	..	..	31	23,465	..	31	23,465	
	Taranaki ..	..	..	..	..	..	684	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Wellington ..	..	45	46	..	..	..	1	..	29	15,176	29	15,176	..	..	..	30	15,860	..	30	15,860	
	Nelson ..	..	4	4	..	..	..	..	..	1	517	3	517	..	..	..	1	6	..	3	517	
	Marlborough ..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	708	1	708	..	..	..	1	708	..	1	708	
	Westland ..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	149	
	Canterbury ..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	149	1	149	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	252	
	Otago ..	..	6	7	..	..	..	1	170	2	2,333	2	2,333	..	..	..	2	2,333	..	2	2,580	
	Southland ..	..	11	11	..	..	..	..	..	1	156	4	738	..	..	..	4	582	..	5	738	
Totals ..	49	92	141	1	170	20	12,996	21	13,166	71	33,621	78	34,524	8	1,073	91	46,617	99	47,690	99	47,690	
Settlement Lands—	Auckland ..	..	77	77	..	..	..	..	..	58	8,196	59	8,251	..	..	..	58	8,196	..	59	8,251	
	Hawke's Bay ..	..	40	40	..	..	..	..	..	26	5,307	26	5,307	..	..	..	26	5,307	..	26	5,307	
	Taranaki ..	..	57	57	..	..	..	..	..	10	1,123	10	1,123	..	..	..	10	1,123	..	10	1,123	
	Wellington ..	..	130	130	..	..	..	..	..	60	9,987	60	9,987	..	..	..	60	9,987	..	60	9,987	
	Nelson ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Marlborough ..	..	5	10	..	..	2,321	4	2,321	4	42	4	42	..	..	..	8	2,363	..	8	2,363	
	Westland ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Canterbury ..	..	4	27	..	..	6,416	15	6,416	4	250	4	250	..	..	..	19	6,666	..	19	6,666	
	Otago ..	..	4	5	..	..	275	2	275	3	161	3	161	..	..	..	5	436	..	5	436	
	Southland ..	..	3	3	..	..	..	..	..	3	259	3	259	..	..	..	3	259	..	3	259	
Totals ..	29	320	349	..	..	21	9,012	21	9,012	168	25,325	169	25,380	1	55	189	34,337	190	34,392	190	34,392	
National-endowment Lands	Auckland ..	3	..	3	..	..	4,208	10	4,208	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10	4,208	..	10	4,208	
	Hawke's Bay ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Taranaki ..	..	1	..	..	..	1,050	1	1,050	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1,050	..	1	1,050	
	Wellington ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Nelson ..	..	8	..	..	..	1,293	4	1,293	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	1,293	..	4	1,293	
	Marlborough ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Westland ..	..	4	..	..	..	1,715	4	1,715	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	1,715	..	4	1,715	
	Canterbury ..	..	1	..	..	..	7,780	1	7,780	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	7,780	..	1	7,780	
	Otago ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Southland ..	..	6	..	..	..	5,234	4	5,234	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	5,234	..	4	5,234	
Totals ..	23	..	23	..	..	24	21,280	24	21,280	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	21,280	24	21,280	24	21,280	
Cheviot Estate—	Canterbury ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
	Canterbury ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Grand totals ..	101	412	513	1	170	65	43,288	66	43,458	239	58,946	247	59,904	9	1,128	304	102,234	313	103,362	313	103,362	

TABLE 3.

TOTAL LANDS ACQUIRED FROM THE CROWN BY DISCHARGED SOLDIERS, AND HELD AT THE 31ST MARCH, 1918.

Land District.	Sale (including Deferred Payment).			Lease and License.			Totals.	
	Number.	Area.	Price.	Number.	Area.	Annual Rental.	Number.	Area.
<i>Under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, and Amendments.</i>								
Auckland ..	3	Acres. 427	£ 1,350	155	Acres. 26,028	£ 7,219	158	Acres. 26,455
Hawke's Bay ..	..	..	..	110	45,713	15,348	110	45,713
Taranaki ..	..	..	..	17	4,803	1,433	17	4,803
Wellington ..	2	13	191	195	50,185	23,325	197	50,198
Nelson ..	1	11	80	4	2,818	116	5	2,829
Marlborough ..	..	..	..	14	4,769	1,065	14	4,769
Westland ..	1	149	150	4	1,715	64	5	1,864
Canterbury ..	..	..	..	38	57,468	6,995	38	57,468
Otago ..	3	247	160	24	31,095	1,536	27	31,342
Southland ..	1	156	430	24	7,884	952	25	8,040
Totals ..	11	1,003	2,361	585	232,478	58,053	596	233,481
<i>Under other Acts. (This includes lands selected at ordinary ballots, leases and licenses purchased at auction, and holdings acquired by transfer or otherwise.)</i>								
Auckland ..	..	..	..	6	1,480	185	6	1,480
Hawke's Bay ..	..	..	..	7	3,404	911	7	3,404
Taranaki ..	1	1	13	7	3,170	178	8	3,171
Wellington ..	..	..	..	2	410	97	2	410
Nelson ..	1	500	188	9	13,294	114	10	13,794
Marlborough ..	..	..	..	2	1,236	50	2	1,236
Westland ..	..	..	..	2	250	3	2	250
Canterbury ..	..	..	..	4	655	278	4	655
Otago ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Southland ..	..	..	..	1	62	8	1	62
Totals ..	2	501	201	40	23,961	1,824	42	24,462
Grand totals ..	13	1,504	2,562	625	256,439	59,877	638	257,943

LANDS SELECTED BY MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Sixty-nine members of the Expeditionary Force have selected 138,452 acres.



REVENUE ACCOUNT AS AT 31ST MARCH, 1918.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Balance brought forward from previous year	135	7	5	Interest on mortgages .. .. .	4,269	18	3
4 per cent. interest on debentures (£160,000)	3,855	4	4	Miscellaneous receipts from sale of stock			
Printing debentures .. .. .	0	17	6	on abandoned sections .. .. .	49	9	1
Balance .. .. .	327	18	1				
	£4,319	7	4		£4,319	7	4

BALANCE-SHEET AT 31ST MARCH, 1918.

Liabilities.				Assets.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Debentures issued .. .. .	160,000	0	0	Advances secured on mortgage ..	134,894	6	5
Interest on debentures paid to 1st March, 1918, out of Consolidated Fund ..	4,158	13	3	Arrears of interest .. .. .	2,606	16	11
Accrued interest from 2nd March, 1918, to 31st March, 1918, not yet paid ..	473	8	5	Fencing-wire on hand—			
Accounts not entered in Treasury at 31st March, 1918, but charged up in District Office books—				Head office .. .. .	67	15	0
Advances .. .. .	4,042	18	10	Auckland .. .. .	344	6	0
Fencing-wire, purchase of .. .. .	344	6	0				
	4,387	4	10		412	1	0
Balance from Revenue Account ..	327	18	1	Cash in hand in Treasury .. .. .	31,434	0	3
	£169,347	4	7		£169,347	4	7

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITIES AT 31ST MARCH, 1918.

District.			Number of Soldiers.	Amount authorized.	Amount of Advances outstanding on Mortgage.	Balance available for further Advances.
				£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Auckland .. .. .			228	54,383 0 0	36,495 15 7	17,887 4 5
Hawke's Bay .. .. .			84	36,982 6 9	28,549 17 6	8,432 9 3
Taranaki .. .. .			16	8,015 10 0	5,758 9 7	2,257 0 5
Wellington .. .. .			253	58,032 0 0	44,775 17 3	13,256 2 9
Nelson .. .. .			8	3,200 0 0	1,195 18 1	2,004 1 11
Marlborough .. .. .			12	3,783 10 0	2,843 1 5	940 8 7
Westland .. .. .			1	250 0 0	100 0 0	150 0 0
Canterbury .. .. .			29	11,727 0 0	4,946 1 7	6,780 18 5
Otago .. .. .			18	7,038 0 0	6,509 2 5	528 17 7
Southland .. .. .			19	7,500 0 0	3,720 3 0	3,779 17 0
Totals .. .. .			668	190,911 6 9	134,894 6 5	56,017 0 4

Loan authority under Finance Act, 1917 .. .. . £500,000

T. N. BRODRICK,  
Under-Secretary for Lands.  
J. H. O'DONNELL,  
Chief Accountant.

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