

In regard to poultry-farms, the Land Board has never been keen on making any advances for this purpose. There were a great many soldiers, however, not physically strong, to whom poultry-farming seemed to offer a means of making a livelihood within their physical powers, and it was deemed advisable to give these men a chance to prove their capacity. In all cases these men were urged to act under expert advice, and for the last two or three years any soldier who has started poultry-farming has generally been compelled to put a little money into the venture himself and to commence his operations under the guidance of Mr. Jarrett, Poultry Instructor for the Department of Agriculture. Indeed, for quite a long time, before starting any man in poultry-farming Mr. Jarrett has been good enough to inspect the land and advise as to whether it was a suitable place for carrying on a poultry-farm.

*Fruit-farms.*—The Land Board has never been eager to make advances for the purpose of purchasing fruit-farms, knowing full well the difficulties of the business, and many a man who has been keen to go in for fruit-farming has been dissuaded by me from doing so. However, many soldiers were so anxious to go in for fruit-farming that the Land Board assisted them to purchase farms for the purpose. Owing to the marketing-conditions many of these men, though making every endeavour, found it difficult to pay their way; others have failed mainly through their own fault. But, although the Land Board has had considerable diffidence in recommending advances on these fruit-farms and small suburban farms generally, experience has shown us that in the event of a soldier making a failure we have been able to dispose of the farm, either to a soldier or to a civilian, without making any serious loss on the transaction, and it is a remarkable fact that the new man has always made a success of his venture.

One case may be quoted as typical: A soldier had a poultry-farm at Henderson, but could not make a success of it; he virtually abandoned the property, leaving arrears of interest and a deficiency in his current account. This property was eventually sold to another soldier, who took over all liabilities and paid up the arrears. The new man has made a great success of the farm. I am informed by Mr. Jarrett, of the Agricultural Department, that whereas this man has been running two hundred fowls during the past season, he is going to double his numbers for the coming year. It is, of course, manifest that to make a success of poultry-farming, like making a success of any other business, depends very largely on the man who is conducting it.

#### *State of Properties at Time of Purchase.*

The Inquiry Board makes the following assertion in regard to this: "A great proportion of the properties purchased were in the condition expressed by the term 'gone back,' and were not capable of carrying sufficient stock to meet instalments until the pastures had been renovated and manured."

The Land Board does not agree with this general conclusion. A careful inspection of our records and reports of the valuers at the time of the purchases does not afford any evidence supporting the Inquiry Board's conclusions.

#### *Term for Repayment on Buildings on Settlement Lands.*

*Re* the Inquiry Board's reference to the short-dated term for repayment on buildings: this is a point worthy of consideration. There is no doubt that the repayment for the buildings presses very heavily on the settlers, and the Land Board thinks it desirable that the term for building repayments should be extended, in the case of farm properties, to the longest practicable limit—that is, to the limit of the life of the building. In the past this has not been done. The settler in the initial stage of his operations is faced with heavy repayments for his buildings, which he can ill afford. The buildings might be well regarded as part of the capital value of the farm, and any repayments should be made wherever possible on a 36½-years term. Even though the building may have become dilapidated or have even perished by the end of the term, it does not very much affect the security. It is not like the case of a residential property, where the value of the buildings represents so material a portion of the total value of the security.

The various findings and recommendations of the Inquiry Board are given in schedule form. A summary of the recommendations is as follows:—

	Number.	Amount involved. £
Under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act—		
(1.) That instalments and arrears be cancelled .. .. .	129	21,768
(2.) That the valuation of the property be reduced and the mortgage reduced accordingly .. .. .	27	9,880
(3.) That instalments in arrears be capitalized .. .. .	52	10,673
(4.) That current-account arrears of interest be remitted .. .. .	1	50
(5.) That rent be remitted .. .. .	7	493
(6.) That the capital value of the lease be reduced .. .. .	1	200
Settlement lands—		
(7.) That rent be remitted .. .. .	37	5,344
(8.) That capital value be reduced .. .. .	9	4,450
(9.) That arrears of rent be capitalized .. .. .	7	820
(10.) Where no recommendation is made .. .. .	108	..
Totals .. .. .	388	£53,678