

charged soldiers bought adjoining farms, each getting an advance of £2,500 under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917. A, by industry and thrift, had, before the war, saved a considerable sum, which he has put into the property, improving the Crown's security; B had little or nothing, and has not maintained the Crown's security. Under a revaluation the Crown will reduce the price of B's land. If it does so in A's case it will write down a good security; and if it does not, A can with good reason claim that the undeserving are getting most consideration.

Second Mortgages.—The Land Board agrees with the suggestion that the Crown should foreclose when the settler and the second (private) mortgagee are unable to make a satisfactory adjustment. But the Crown has no right to do so "to protect the settler," the only valid reason being to safeguard its own interests as first mortgagee. It is important to observe this distinction in order to leave no room for a charge of interference in private contracts.

The recommendation that the Government should undertake the construction of main drains in swampy settlements is a good one.

THOMAS BROOK,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

MARLBOROUGH.

4thth May, 1923.

I forward herewith, under separate cover—(1) Inquiry Board's general report on soldier-settlement (two memoranda); (2) individual reports on men requiring special assistance, with Land Board's recommendations noted thereon; (3) reports on each soldier-settlement, with Land Board's recommendation noted thereon; (4) schedule of capable men who have difficulties, and who may require consideration in the future; (5) schedule of capable men not requiring assistance; (6) schedule of vacant sections; (7) schedule of non-resident men; (8) plan of Erina Settlement subdivisions (new proposals).

JOHN COOK,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

NELSON.

26th May, 1923.

I forward herewith report of the soldiers' Inquiry Board on soldier settlements in this district, for transmission to the Minister of Lands. I also enclose copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Land Board held yesterday to discuss the report.

The statistics asked for in your memorandum of the 9th instant cannot be compiled from the report of the Inquiry Board, and I have asked Messrs. Edwards and Batchelor to attend at the office on Monday next with field-notes, &c., in order that the figures asked for may be supplied. The statistics should reach you about Wednesday or Thursday next.

H. D. MCKELLAR,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

A special meeting of the Land Board to consider the report of the soldiers' Inquiry Board was held on the 25th May, 1923, at 10 a.m. Present: Commissioner of Crown Lands (in the chair), R. Patterson, W. C. Mirfin, R. Win, C. Macmahon.

In Committee.—The Commissioner reported that the Board set up to inquire into the position with regard to soldier-settlement had completed its investigations and had furnished its report.

The report was read, and after discussion, both with the members of the Inquiry Board and in committee, Mr. Macmahon moved, That the Land Board approves of the report of the soldiers' Inquiry Board with the exception of the following points:—

- (1.) The Land Board does not agree with the Inquiry Board's general statement that in many cases the property-owners disposed of the poorer portions of their properties only, and that in other cases the quality of the land at its best was only second-class and of low productive value.
- (2.) The Land Board does not agree with the statement of the Inquiry Board that the original valuations were for the most part far in excess of the real value of the land. Loans were recommended by the Land Board on the opinion of two valuers of the value of the land at the time.
- (3.) The Board does not agree with the recommendation that values of properties be reduced. It considers it better to reduce the rates of interest and the rent from time to time until the settlers are established.

Seconded by Mr. Win and carried.

Mr. Patterson dissented to (3) urging revaluation where necessary, and objecting to the classifying of any of the men as failures or partial failures.