

The figures in connection with postponements can be given approximately only in the meantime, as the arrears at the 30th June, 1923, are subject to adjustment on reduction, and such adjustment can only be made in the District Offices. The figures shown are in respect of the full arrears and not the adjusted arrears.

Regarding arrears of rent and interest, the Dominion Board has endeavoured to give such postponement as the necessity of each case demanded, and has taken full advantage of the powers given under the Act in this connection. In certain special or necessitous cases the Board has also remitted arrears of rent and interest. These cases cover widows and orphans of deceased soldier settlers, soldier settlers in hospital, T.B. cases, and disabled men.

The powers and functions of the Dominion Board are laid down in the Act, but where the Board is of opinion that further concessions, other than those which may be made by the Board under the Act, are necessary it makes firm recommendations accordingly to the Land Board, as the Land Board has now sufficient statutory authority, with the approval of the Minister, to provide for any additional assistance. For instance, the Dominion Board has power only to postpone or remit rent or interest in arrear at the 30th June, 1923; and where the Board is of opinion that a concession is necessary regarding moneys accruing since that date a recommendation is made to the Land Board in connection therewith.

Again, it is sometimes apparent to the Dominion Board that some relief in connection with future payments is far more beneficial to a settler than any relief the Board can give under its statutory authority, and in such cases a firm recommendation is made to the Land Board. As an instance of this, the capital value of an undeveloped or partly undeveloped section might, according to valuation, be just about sustained, and the settler's chief trouble is not the value of the land, but the payment of his rent until such time as the land becomes productive. In such a case, any assistance the Dominion Board could give under its statutory authority would be of very little use to the settler, while exemption from rent for a certain number of years until the land is made productive would be very beneficial. The Dominion Board, in such cases, makes a recommendation for exemption, which can be carried into effect by the Land Board and the Minister. Such recommendations are invariably given effect to.

It will therefore be observed that the Dominion Board does not merely adhere to its statutory authority, but makes helpful recommendations which, on consideration of all the facts, it considers will place the settler in such a position as to successfully occupy the land.

It might be added that the scheme as laid down by the Act has, in actual practice, been found to meet requirements, and everything in connection with the business is running smoothly and well. The work is one of considerable magnitude, which requires the most careful consideration and attention, as each individual case presents its own particular difficulties. The Dominion Board however, deals with each case on its merits.

The Board, as well as the various District Committees, is fully alive to the necessity for expedition, as it is desirable that settlers should know their position as early as possible. Every effort is being made to expedite the work of revaluation.

The various land-district authorities have also been advised that it must not be assumed that the determinations arrived at are to be considered as having afforded the soldier settler the maximum amount of assistance he may receive. On the contrary, it must be realized that much of the relief afforded by the Board would be rendered nugatory unless followed up with sympathetic assistance from respective Land Boards by way of Current Account advances where warranted, and further postponements where necessary in the future. It is apparent that a firm hand must be kept on some men, but the endeavour of the Dominion Board has been to give all soldier settlers a fair chance for the future. No attempt has been made to bolster up Crown securities in any way, and reductions have been made as found necessary. Quite an amount of success has been met with in persuading private mortgagees to discharge or reduce mortgages held by them. The Board has also been able to obtain reductions in debts against settlers.

The Board has to acknowledge its thanks for the manner in which many of the Patriotic Societies are meeting its suggestions for discharge of mortgages.

Several of the large trading concerns have also met the Board well, and a good understanding exists in this connection.

All those dissatisfied with the determinations are assured of the Board reopening their cases and obtaining a full and impartial rehearing for them. The Board has no hesitation in altering its determination in the light of any further information supplied, and has in many instances obtained fresh valuations where not satisfied. This policy will be continued.

The 5,347 cases will require sincere consideration, and it must not be overlooked that the negotiations to be carried out between Board and mortgagees necessitate time and patience. The Board sits all day for five days in the week, and keeps right up to influx of reports as such are furnished by the several committees.

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