

(E) THE ADEQUACY OF EXISTING SOURCES AND METHODS FOR RENDERING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, SPECIAL TRAINING, AND TREATMENT TO EX-SERVICE MEN.

We have grouped these headings together, as in our opinion they are all governed by the same considerations, and they are closely related to the immediately preceding headings. The facilities for granting financial assistance are part of the scheme for land-settlement under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts, and settlement in business under the Repatriation Act, and we have already dealt with that aspect of the matter. This Repatriation Act also contains the machinery which in the past was used for special training and treatment of ex-service men at the hands of the State.

We think that for the future these activities (land and repatriation) should be made available to all approved men, but that the actual granting of assistance should depend upon the favourable recommendation of the League already referred to.

We recommend strongly that this work should be put in hand as quickly as possible, and for that purpose that, pending the passing of the necessary legislation, interested bodies should by voluntary effort procure the incorporation of the League, and begin work on some of its more urgent problems and remedies.

QUESTION No. 3.

Inquire and Report upon generally the Means by which the Remaining Capacity of such Persons as aforesaid can best be utilized so as to enable them in Whole or in Part to maintain themselves and their Dependants, and the advisability or otherwise of adopting any Particular Means which may be proposed to or by you for that Purpose.

Answer.—In our opinion no effective answer can be given to this question even in general terms without first making an occupational classification of the persons affected.

FARMING AND AGRICULTURAL.—GENERAL.

We would deal first with those who (notwithstanding their disabilities), according to their own desires or their natural abilities, would serve themselves and the community best by being engaged in farming and agricultural pursuits *on a commercial basis*. We would preface our answer to this problem by expressing the opinion strongly that more care should be exercised in the future than has been displayed in the past in choosing those who are to be encouraged to take up farming or agricultural work.

This is not intended as adverse criticism of the work and methods of those who in the past have administered the Repatriation Act and the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts. A great deal of successful work was done thereunder; but one lesson that may be learned from past experience is that farming does not offer a certain livelihood for any man who can be placed in possession of a farm with State help in his initial financial problems. Furthermore, we think it is a fact that, as suggested by several witnesses, nearly all if not all the returned soldiers who by natural bent and qualities are likely to be successful farmers have by this time found their way on to the land. We strongly recommend that no person should now be encouraged to take up farming as a means of livelihood unless by training or family connections and traditions and by physical fitness he may be expected to show himself suited to such an occupation. We think further that facilities for taking up land as farmers, with State finance and assistance, should be given only to those who have some capital either in land, stock, or cash to embark in the undertaking. We think it is exceedingly unlikely that any disabled ex-soldier now seeking assistance can be successfully embarked on a farming career on a basis that leaves him liable to pay interest on almost a 100-per-cent. advance on the value of his property. We have already indicated in our answer to the second question that the existing statutory facilities for land-settlement and special training and treatment of intending settlers on the land are adequate, and we repeat that opinion. All that is necessary is that the existing facilities and provisions should be wisely put into operation.