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WHEN SOLDIERS TAKE OFF THEIR UNIFORMS

Problems Of Rehabilitation Are Discussed By The Man Who Is Handling Them

OME weeks ago a new Gov-ernment department came in-that he's in time for his meal; someback to civil life. The Director is Lt.-Col F. Baker, D.S.O., a former commander of the Maori Battalion, and The Listener called on him to get some idea of how the new department's work is getting under way, and to see what trends had already been observed in the problems being presented to it by men who are taking their uniforms off.

"I think a lot of people overlook one thing," he said, "and it's this: A man who's been in uniform for any length of time gets so used to being mothered, that 'he's bound to lose his self-confidence when he's demobilised. Say he goes into the army at 21; he's still impressionable and he gets treated in a

to being to take on the job of one sees that he's in bed again at a helping returning servicemen to get certain time and that the lights are out. If he's overseas he bundles his washing in to the quartermaster and it's the quartermaster's worry whether it comes back—not his own. If he goes on leave he's told what time his train comes back and a ticket is put into his hand. and so on. In time he comes to lean on all that. Now if he spends five years in that way and then he suddenly lands back in a world where people have spent about the same length of time taking each other down for what they can get, he's what you might call at

a disadvantage."
"It's our job to cancel out that disadvantage, and you want to know how we're getting on with it. I don't mind telling you that I've walked in to a department of which some parts have already been in operation for 18 months or so, and it will be some months yet before I pick up all the threads, before I known what so-and-so's job is, or what authority another man has, so first may I tell you briefly how we are organised and then you'll see what we're equipped

How It Works

"The Rehabilitation Board, with Major Skinner (the Minister) as its chairman, is the main executive body. Its job, I suppose, could be divided up under three headings (1) to investigate possible schemes for rehabilitation; (2) when the schemes are investigated, to co-ordinate the functions of the main State departments that will act as our agents in carrying them out and (3) to get in direct contact with the men, and keep in contact, to understand their wants and desires.

The State departments concerned are linked with us by liaison officers, so that they know what we're doing and we know what they're doing. Our links with the men who are to be rehabilitated are our own departmental officers, and the secretaries of the local rehabilitation committees. In time we hope to have trained men to work as our eyes and ears all over New Zealand, and advise us.

"Down With A Bump"

"Now you want to know the sort of difficulties to be faced? Well, take a young man who left school and joined the Air Force when he was 18; say he comes out when he is 22 or 23 years old. By attention to duty and a bit of dare-devilness he may have shot up quickly to a fairly high rank, but in that time he hasn't learnt anything that will help him, in the material way, to resume his place in civil life. Civil aviation might be afraid of his dare-devil temperament, and anyway, he is only one of hundreds. In other words, he is going to come down with a bump, and I confess I don't yet know how we're going to soften that bump. Imagine a Flight-Lieutenant on about £400 a



LT.-COL. F. BAKER, D.S.O. "We're not a charitable institution"

year, living in very good circumstances: can you imagine him as a cadet in a Government office, stuck on £4 a week for several years? I think that the general unsettlement that must follow an active and a moving life will inevitably cause a lot of men to select jobs for which they are not fitted, and we must try to guide them out.

"Men will want to enter highly-paid war industries that must cease in due course. There again we must deter them, because we want to see them in permanent jobs, so that the rehabilita-tion question is finished, for them. As you can imagine, some of them don't see our point!

"Again, there are a great many neurosis cases in this war, which will be harder still. Some men who come to us are definitely neurotics, and we must be careful; one man needs all the sympathy you can give him, the next man may need a good kick in the pants. A bit of straight talk will do the trick some-times, but not always, unfortunately!

"Maoris again, are different. As an ex-commander of their battalion I'm par-

ticularly interested, and I feel that they have earned the right to the highest standards of living they can be given.

No Land-Rush This Time

"There are other problems that are not personal. Questions of prices and values, for instance. It's not rehabilitation to lend a man £1,800 to buy a house that will be worth only £1,200 in a few years, when he hasn't got the other £600 in his pocket. I don't know the answer to that - that's for someone else to find. Again, how shall we forecast the industrial trends to make it possible to pick permanent jobs? To what extent will the Atlantic Charter be applied? To what extent might immigration be encouraged? Housing is one of the few largescale things we can be reasonably certain of at the moment. There will be a lot of work there."
"Do you think men will be as keen

to get on the land this time?"

"I doubt whether more than 10 per cent. will go on the land in the end."

"Can you say yet whether you have seen any particular preferences coming forward more than others?"

"Hardly. Our main worry at the

moment is to stop men forgetting everything for the sake of high wages. The

(continued on next page)



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