

B. GRANTS**(i) Facilities available and Procedure**

193. It has not been necessary to vary the extent of assistance available through the medium of compassionate grants since the Board's last report was prepared. Cases of indigence or particular hardship may be assisted by a special grant provided that there is no alternative method of repairing the situation. Where financial assistance is desired to purchase farms, businesses, dwellings, tools of trade, furniture, or other property necessary to the rehabilitation of the ex-serviceman it is expected that the loan facilities already referred to will be availed of.

194. Local Rehabilitation Committees continue to exercise the powers of making grants of up to £10 on hardship grounds and of recommending to the Board the making of any grants in excess of this sum. Grants of up to £10 are disbursed by the appropriate Rehabilitation Officer as soon as the Rehabilitation Committee decides to make them, and this procedure meets the most urgent cases satisfactorily.

(ii) Grants made

195. Fortunately, provision by way of grants above mentioned has had to be made in only a relatively small number of cases. To date a total of £2,378 has been disbursed, and all of this amount was paid out during the last twelve months.

196. Table XIX of Appendix II details the grants made by Committees and by the Board during the year ended 31st March, 1944.

SECTION XIII.—HOUSING AND FURNITURE**(i) General**

197. The housing situation for ex-servicemen, as for civilians, remains most difficult. The considerable number of building-trade workers who are still in the Armed Forces; shortage of labour in all constructional trades as well as in feeder industries; the near impossibility of obtaining certain necessary supplies from overseas; and the rapidly increasing number of ex-servicemen seeking housing accommodation combine to provide the explanation for this situation.

198. Partial alleviation of the housing situation for ex-servicemen has been made possible by the allocation to ex-servicemen of 50 per cent. of all State rental dwellings becoming available; the granting of financial assistance to ex-servicemen for the erection of new dwellings or the purchase of existing ones; and, finally, by the actual erection of State houses by ex-servicemen building trade trainees.

199. The outlook is for a persisting shortage of housing for some time yet to come, although the part which an intensification of building activity and trade training can play in overtaking the shortage is obvious. Accordingly, the Board, in co-operation with the Ministries of Works and National Service, is sponsoring all measures ensuring the availability of greater stocks of building materials and a greater supply of building trades and allied workers.

(ii) Allocation of State Rental Dwellings

200. Local Rehabilitation Committees have continued to allocate 50 per cent. of all State rental dwellings becoming available to those ex-servicemen whose cases are most urgent and deserving. Between September, 1942, when the preferential allocation of dwellings to ex-servicemen was introduced, and the 31st March of this year a total of 1,429 dwelling units had been allocated. Despite this, however, there remain 2,678 unsatisfied ex-servicemen applicants for State houses. The fact that unsatisfied ex-servicemen applicants numbered only 619 on 31st March, 1943, measures the increasing seriousness of the housing problem, as it affects ex-servicemen.

201. Table XX of Appendix II gives details on a district basis of the number of State rental dwellings allocated to ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen to date and during the twelve months ended 31st March, 1944.

(iii) Assisted Erection of Dwellings

202. Loan accommodation with a limit of £1,500 is provided to approved ex-servicemen applicants for the purpose of erecting new dwellings. Inside this limit the Board is, where necessary, granting by way of loan up to 100 per cent. of the ruling pre-war cost for such a house and is also granting a supplementary loan to cover any increase in building costs arising out of wartime conditions. Supplementary loans are discussed more fully in Section XII of the report, which deals with financial assistance. At present there is some restriction on building activity on behalf of individuals, but the Government has directed that the Building Controller give special consideration to applications for building permits received from ex-servicemen. Provided the proposed dwelling does not exceed the actual space requirements of the ex-serviceman and his family, and subject to the use of certain materials, there is little difficulty in his obtaining a permit. Again, in the supply of timber, which is also subject to control, the ex-serviceman who has been granted a building permit receives special consideration.

203. To date 122 private dwellings have been erected by ex-servicemen assisted by the Board, and 103 of this number have been erected during the last twelve months.

204. Table XVIII of Appendix II apportions between districts the number of new dwellings erected with the assistance of the Board.