

4. During the year the Farms Advisory Committee investigated all aspects of farm settlement for ex-servicemen, and it was estimated that a minimum of 8,000 men would require to be established on farms with rehabilitation assistance. The settlement of that number of men based on present standards of farm size, housing, and equipment would result in an estimated cost of £54,000,000, involving the purchase of 4,000 existing single units and the subdivision of land owned or acquired by the Crown to provide a further 4,000 units. With the unavoidable delay that must take place in development of virgin land, a large proportion of the latter 4,000 holdings will have to be provided by the purchase and subdivision of large farms on improved or substantially improved land. The Committee endeavoured to plan for the bulk of this work to be accomplished within a period of four years, and every effort will be made to keep to this programme.

5. As at 31st March, 1946, 4,823 men who had been declared eligible for assistance under the Board's Settlement Scheme and who had been graded "A" were awaiting settlement. Not all these men were particularly keen to obtain a property immediately, having obtained suitable employment and preferring to await the opportunity of acquiring a property most suitable to their requirements, while 100 men were employed on development blocks with the promise of a section.

6. To 31st March, 1946, a total of 266,415 acres had been acquired for the settlement of ex-servicemen, while negotiations were also proceeding at that date for several thousands of acres. This area for the most part had been purchased by voluntary negotiation, the balance being acquired under the provisions of the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943.

SECTION XI.—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(i) Loan Facilities

1. Table XV of the Appendix shows the total of loan authorizations from commencement to 31st March, 1946, with, in italics, the totals for the year then ended.

2. The considerable increase in the activities of the Board in the year under review is to some extent reflected in the totals disclosed. Loans for the year totalled £11,786,267, as against £4,535,159 for the previous year, an increase of £7,251,108, making total authorizations to date £18,294,166.

3. In dealing with this considerable volume of loan business throughout the year the value of the policy of decentralization by the delegation of authority for loan authorizations to District Executive Committees, which was mentioned in last year's report, has been fully demonstrated, and the work of these Committees is to be commended.

(ii) Grants

Table XVI in the Appendix shows the total of special grants authorized in cases of hardship by the Rehabilitation Board and Rehabilitation Committees throughout the year. The total is £7,679 2s. 1d., compared with £7,777 5s. for the previous year.

(iii) Rehabilitation Allowances

1. Disbursements under this heading for the year under review totalled £65,130, compared with £110,745 for the previous year. Total disbursements under this heading from the commencement to 31st March, 1946, amount to £419,257.

2. The purpose of the allowance is to provide temporary assistance pending settlement of pension claims or placement in suitable employment, and to a large extent therefore the number of ex-servicemen in receipt of the allowance at any one time is dependent upon the employment position then current, particularly in so far as it offers opportunity for the engagement of men who are fit for light work only.