

(ii) Training Scheme

1. In general there have been no serious difficulties in providing suitable training for inexperienced or partially experienced men wishing to qualify for settlement on the land. Private farmers continue to show a keen interest in the subsidized training scheme, but there has been the usual seasonal fluctuation in the number of vacancies for trainees. As at 31st March, 1947, applicants for training in the main classes of farming exceeded the vacancies, but it is expected that when the new dairy season commences the position will right itself, as was the case last year. The provision of accommodation on farms for married ex-servicemen is a continuing difficulty, and, with a view to easing the position, the Board has agreed to grant a housing-allowance to those men who are not provided with suitable accommodation on the farms where they are training and who are required to maintain a home elsewhere.

2. A close watch is being maintained on all types of farming where limited scope for expansion exists to ensure that no greater number of men are graded than can be absorbed within a reasonable time into the respective industries. Following reviews of the possibilities of settlement of the men already graded in the tobacco, fruit, market gardening, horticulture, and nursery gardening and bee-keeping industries, it has been necessary to impose a restriction on further applications by inexperienced men until the bulk of the men already graded have been settled.

(iii) Settlement

1. The Land Settlement Board is employing an increasing number of Grade "A" ex-servicemen on wages to carry out the minimum improvements required before individual units on blocks already acquired can be made available for selection. The ex-servicemen employed under this arrangement are selected by ballot, and they are given the promise of a title to a section in the block when the minimum improvements have been completed. At present 244 men are employed in this way. In so far as the acquisition and development of further blocks which will be required is concerned, the rate of progress towards completion of the programme is at present largely governed by the availability of materials which are in short supply.

2. Difficulty is also being experienced with the provision of houses on blocks which are being subdivided, and recently it was arranged that, in appropriate cases where private contractors could not be obtained to undertake contracts, the Rehabilitation Department would endeavour to assist by utilizing the services of carpentry trainees.

3. During the year the Farms Advisory Committee again reviewed farm settlement for ex-servicemen. The earlier estimate was that a minimum of 8,000 men would require to be established on farms with rehabilitation assistance, but the latest figures show that the total for settlement may be nearer a 10,000 minimum. Of this number, 3,609 men had been settled to 31st March, 1947, an increase of 1,758 during the year. With the development of settlement blocks and the purchase of existing economic single units with rehabilitation loan assistance the number of men settled on the land should reach at least 6,500 by the end of 1948-49 season.

4. Ex-servicemen settlers in certain areas suffered severely as a result of the drought conditions experienced during the 1945-46 farming season, and steps were taken to provide relief where necessary by the application of a general formula providing for no increase in an ex-serviceman's indebtedness as the result of drought losses incurred.

5. To the 31st March, 1947, 320,257 acres had been purchased by voluntary negotiation for subdivision and settlement of ex-servicemen, 36,767 acres had been acquired under Part II of the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943, and a further 85,095 acres had been taken under section 51 of the Act. The total area purchased specifically for ex-servicemen is therefore 442,119 acres. This does not include areas previously owned by the Crown, which are reviewed from time to time, and if considered suitable for ex-servicemen settlement, are handed over for this purpose.