

SECTION VIII.—HOUSING

1. One of the most difficult problems facing the Department is the housing of ex-servicemen. Even prior to the war there was a considerable demand for housing in the country, and this has, of course, been accentuated by the necessarily restricted building programme during the war years and by the present world-wide shortage of the materials required for house-construction. The position is aggravated by the fact that so many ex-servicemen were compelled to postpone their marriages and the setting-up of homes, with the result that on the cessation of hostilities the demand for houses from these men, instead of being spread over a period of years, was aggregated. Everything possible is being done to meet the position, and special facilities have been provided for those who wish to purchase or build their own homes and those who wish to rent. The indications are, however, that for some time there will be a continuing demand, and the Rehabilitation Board is constantly examining all avenues offering any possibility of alleviating the position.

2. In general, it may be said that the arrangement whereby ex-servicemen building homes receive a preferential allocation of one-half of all timber becoming available for private building within their particular districts has worked efficiently during the year under review. There is, of course, a considerable gap between supply and demand in this essential commodity despite record production, but ex-servicemen are receiving the quota reserved for them from supplies coming forward.

3. During the year a Plan Service has been inaugurated for the benefit of ex-servicemen desirous of building homes. Under the scheme each Rehabilitation Office maintains a loose-leaf volume containing a number of plans covering perspective ground-plan, and informative script of houses—both as complete units and of the expandable type—which are considered suitable for erection with the aid of rehabilitation finance. These volumes are available for study by ex-servicemen who, on expressing interest in a particular design, are directed to the source from which detailed plans and specifications may be obtained at reasonable cost.

(ii) Allocation of State Rental Houses

District Rehabilitation Committees in the year allocated 1,618 State houses and flats to eligible ex-servicemen, making a total allocation to 31st March, 1947, of 6,639 units.

(iii) Assisted Erection of Homes

1. Loan authorizations for the erection of new homes totalled £4,030,623, involving 3,057 cases in the year.

2. By comparison the figures for the year ended 31st March, 1946, were £2,342,917, involving 1,853 cases.

3. The increase for the year ended 31st March, 1947, will therefore be seen to be £1,687,706, in 1,204 cases.

(iv) Assisted Purchase of Homes

Loans for the purchase of existing dwellings were authorized in 3,707 cases to the total value of £3,523,119 in the year, by comparison with 3,242 cases, involving £3,062,752 in the previous year.

(v) Supplementary Loans

1. In addition to the interest-bearing loans mentioned in parts (iii) and (iv) above, supplementary interest-free loans have been granted in 4,012 cases to the extent of £593,289 in the year, making total advances under this class of loan to 31st March, 1947, £1,260, 812, in 8,414 cases.

2. These loans, which are not repayable so long as the ex-serviceman or his dependants continue in occupation of the property, are granted to bridge the gap between present-day costs and normal values, and each case involved is examined on its merits.