

In addition to this some fifty honorary committees have been established throughout the country, and further committees are being formed from time to time in smaller places as recommended by the District Boards. Up to the present honorary committees have been set up at the following places:—

Kaitia	Waihi	Marton	Waipawa	Rangiora
Whangarei	Tauranga	Bull's	Waipukurau	Ashburton
Dargaville	Opotiki	Feilding	Dannevirke	Geraldine
Helensville	Te Awamutu	Levin	Woodville	Temuka
Cambridge	Te Kuiti	Stratford	Pahiatua	Fairlie
Morrinsville	Ohura	Eltham	Motueka	Waimate
Thames	Taumarunui	Hawera	Westport	Balclutha
Coromandel	Ohakune	Patea	Reefton	Gore
Paeroa	Taihape	Wairoa	Hokitika	Clyde
Te Aroha	Hunterville	Hastings	Kaikoura	Roxburgh.

We would here acknowledge and heartily thank the various Boards and Committees for their loyal and strenuous work, which has proved of much assistance in carrying on the work of the Department.

BENEFITS PROVIDED FOR DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.

Under the Repatriation Act and the Instructions issued in connection therewith a wide range of assistance is available to discharged soldiers. This assistance may be summarized under three main headings, viz. :—

1. *Employment.*—The placing in suitable employment of all discharged soldiers who apply to the Department for assistance in that direction.

2. *Training.*—The educational and vocational training of discharged soldiers and soldiers' widows.

3. *Financial Assistance.*—The granting of financial assistance to discharged soldiers for the purpose of purchasing or establishing businesses, obtaining furniture, tools of trade, equipment, &c.

Instructions issued under the Act set out the conditions under which loans or grants might be made, and, as the powers conferred on the District Boards and Local Committees were very wide, and a good deal was left to their judgment to avoid being official and stereotyped, it was considered advisable to hold a conference in Wellington at which members of the Repatriation Board could, with the Director, meet the Chairmen of District Boards and Committees, the various District Repatriation Officers, and representatives of Patriotic Societies, War Relief Associations, and the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association. This conference was held on the 13th–14th March, 1919, and was productive of much good. The conference considered the Repatriation Act and Instructions exhaustively, and as a result decisions were arrived at which it was considered could be adopted as general guiding principles, thus enabling the work of repatriation to be carried out on systematic and uniform lines throughout the Dominion. It was felt that although it was necessary that the Boards should have wide powers of administration in order to meet exceptional cases coming within their purview, it was important to prevent as far as possible, any differentiation in the treatment of applications as between the various Boards and Committees.

SECTION I.—EMPLOYMENT.

Perhaps this is the most important section of the Department's functions and one of its biggest tasks, for, although large numbers of men will require vocational training, or financial assistance to start in business, &c., by far the larger proportion will require help to obtain suitable employment. Up to the present time no great difficulty has been encountered in this connection, the experience of the Department being that only some 25 per cent. of the discharged soldiers desire the assistance of the Government. The remaining 75 per cent. apparently either resume their pre-war billets or find no difficulty in obtaining the work they desire.

This satisfactory position indicates (a) that our men are continuing to show that spirit of self-reliance which characterized their efforts during the war, and (b) that the employers of the Dominion have risen to the occasion, are taking back their old employees (many of whom have been drawing half-pay while on active service), and in addition to this are in many cases making room for others.

These factors are of great importance, and it is mainly owing to that and to the excellent work of the Employment Committees, who have co-ordinated the loyal assistance of employers generally in the various centres, that the unemployment question is so well in hand. The men are returning at the rate of six thousand a month, but notwithstanding this and the fact that we are in the middle of winter, the number of names on the "Employment Wanted Register" of the Department throughout the Dominion is only 438, many of these having only just registered and others being in temporary employment. The number of men placed by the Department has shown a steady increase month by month, and the total placed to date is 8,867. This includes the figures of the original Discharged Soldiers' Information Department, which laid the foundation for the employment and training sections of the work.