

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE DISTRICT REPATRIATION OFFICER, AUCKLAND, AS
AT 20TH AUGUST, 1919.

Employment.—Although the number remaining on the Employment Wanted Register shows a slight increase (172 as against 156) the position must be considered satisfactory. The railway cut has seriously affected the labour-market, and large numbers of men have applied for employment. The total number of applications received during the month of August was 455, but by vigorous efforts 325 men were definitely placed in employment; 114 failed to apply for over a month and are presumed to be in employment. A total of 110 men were sent to employment in the country, mostly to public works. When it is noted that there were 200 men on the Employment Wanted Register when the Department commenced operations, and that, although thousands have returned since then, the number of men seeking work is now less, the employment question must be considered fairly satisfactory.

Sustenance.—The number of sustenance cases dealt with shows a satisfactory decrease. During the month ending 20th July ninety cases were approved, involving an expenditure of £364 12s. 3d., as against fifty cases approved, at a cost of £196 3s. for the August period. In most cases sustenance was only required for one or two weeks. It is a valuable means of assistance when properly applied.

Training.—The number of men working under the Department's subsidized-wages scheme, or receiving sustenance while attending technical classes, was considerably increased during the month, 208 cases having been approved, bringing the total number of trainees in the district up to 556, six having completed their courses. Reports received show that 518 are making satisfactory progress. The training section of repatriation work has been very aggressively dealt with during the past two months, and while many men have been placed provision has been and is being made for future needs. The "light employment" problem is being gradually overcome by the extension of training facilities, and incidentally a saving is being effected in unemployment sustenance grants. Two of the four schemes which were in course of solution in July have become workable propositions—namely, the motor-driving and running-repairs class, and the extension of the commercial-instruction class. New quarters have been found for the whole of the latter, which will come directly under the control of the Repatriation Department on the 1st September. The motor-driving and running-repairs school is accommodating seventeen men. The sheet-metal workers class is about ready to commence operations, and it is expected that during September the bootmaking class will also commence a section of its work. The motor-engineering class is carrying on satisfactorily at the Technical College.

Very little difficulty is experienced in placing men in private workshops and factories. A conference was held during the month between myself and the Vocational Officer, representing this Department, and representatives from the Federation of Labour and various trades-unions. As the result of that conference a number of minor points which were not clearly understood were explained, and further proof was given by the representatives of labour of their anxiety to assist in the repatriation of soldiers. We have recently had some notable examples of the success of the subsidized-workers scheme. I might mention one case in particular. A seaman had practically lost the use of his left arm as the result of gunshot wounds received in action. He was placed as a boot operative, and at the end of twelve months was given a position in a factory at the award rate of pay. A further gratifying feature in his case was that his training was curative, and he has not only learned a new trade in twelve months, but his arm has almost regained its pre-war usefulness. There are other, perhaps better, examples of the success of the scheme which might be mentioned.

The apprentice question is not giving much trouble in Auckland, employers in practically every case having increased the amount due under the award rate without being approached by the Department. There have been some employers, however, who have not agreed to increase the rate even after they have been approached by one of our officers. We are experiencing some trouble with law students and chemists' assistants. We have approached the Law Society, and have been assured of its support in our efforts towards repatriation.

Financial Assistance.—The statement of expenditure for the month ending 20th August shows that a total amount of £41,663 4s. 10d. was disbursed, as against £26,634 8s. 3d. for the previous period. The principal item of expenditure was the sum of £31,092 16s. 5d. for business loans, as against £17,829 9s. 2d. for the previous month. Loans for the purchase of furniture show a slight decline, but loans and subsidies for tools of trade and training show increases, the latter in a marked degree. Of the 534 applications received during the month 510 were approved, fourteen refused, and five withdrawn. While applications for loans to purchase businesses are increasing in number, those for furniture have remained stationary for the past two months.

An analysis of the Receiver's cash-book shows that for the months of June, July, and August approximately 83 per cent. of repayments has been made. Of a total sum of £2,026 7s. 5d. due, approximately £300 will remain unpaid at the end of the month. Most of this sum has been accounted for in the usual business way, applications having been received for an extension of time in which to make repayments. Our inspecting officer reports that during his visits to the business places of soldiers who have been assisted by the Department he has found most of them contented and pleased with their prospects. Some, however, have complained that the railway restrictions have affected business, and others who have gone in for seasonable businesses report that they are having a struggle to make ends meet, but hope to do good business in the summer-time. There have been but three cases so far of men giving up business, and in only one do we expect a departmental loss. It is probable that losses will be made on others, but as each successful applicant for a business loan is now given a small journal in which to record his daily cash receipts and disbursements, and as our own system of inspection is fairly complete, we hope to