

living; (b) the work found in many cases is purely temporary, and the Department has assured the men that the Government does not consider its liability fully met by thus placing them. All the soldiers appear to be realizing the difficulty and are willing to accept *any work*, relying on our assurance that we will continue to do our best for them.

Apprentices.—A great number of apprentices are being assisted to complete their indentures, and it is satisfactory to note that the majority of the employers are recognising the value of the general knowledge gained by the apprentice on service by allowing a higher wage than he was drawing before leaving for camp.

General.—The Patriotic Societies have co-operated with the Department in all respects. Loans from the Department have been augmented by the Patriotic Societies, and much valuable information has been supplied by them. A great deal of time and trouble is expended by members of Local Committees in examining propositions and advising applicants. I would like also to acknowledge here the vast amount of work done by the Chairman of the District Board (Mr. Weston), who has personally gone into every case coming before the Board.

C. W. BATTEN,
District Repatriation Officer, Wellington.

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

Machinery.—The machinery set up to deal with the matter of repatriation shows evidence of having been thoroughly considered to meet the varying kinds of assistance required in successfully repatriating the returned soldier. It was claimed that the question had been so hastily and immaturely considered that no definite constructive policy had been laid down, and that the scheme was doomed to failure. Without commenting on these criticisms, I submit that the proof of any undertaking is in its results; and as to the latter, I think I may safely claim, at least for this district, that they have exceeded even the most sanguine expectations. There are always to be found critics, and constructive criticism is not unwelcome, but purely destructive criticism leads nowhere, and I venture to say that the work of the Department has so far offered very little scope for the captious critic. In speaking with a well-known journalist in this connection, he admitted frankly that he had anticipated being inundated with the usual letters of complaint about the shortcomings of the Repatriation Department, but that it was a welcome surprise to find that it was absolutely the reverse. Even the conference of the Returned Soldiers' Association held here recently did not discover much in the regulations that they considered should be improved, and the suggestions they did make were only in the way of increased advances. I submit, therefore, that the machinery provided is generous and of a comprehensive character to meet the position, as already proven by results.

Employment.—This I consider the most difficult part of repatriation. The personal element has to be so much considered when dealing with employment matters that unless time and sympathy is freely given to each applicant the best use of the country's man-power is not going to be utilized. Each case has its own peculiar atmosphere, and unless imagination and foresight are shown in dealing with them I feel sure true repatriation is not going to be attained. There are numbers of men returned disabled and unable to follow their old occupations; these have to be subsidized into trades that are most suitable to their ability, viewed from the points of physical capacity and previous training, so that they will again be able to take their part in the country's production. In view of all the foregoing, I feel that this aspect of the work in Canterbury has been singularly successful. Over two thousand men have been employed, the great majority permanently so; and when one remembers that a big proportion of men who left New Zealand had no trade to their hand, but were just "rolling stones," it must be conceded that the Department has not only been successful in getting men back to employment, but has in addition settled many into useful occupation who would otherwise have become casuals, as of yore. We are subsidizing nearly 200 men, who are either learning new trades, owing to war disabilities precluding them from following their old ones, or are completing broken indentures. I am convinced that the financial assistance provided these men will bear fruit in the form of added asset to the country's producing-power. Sustenance is provided in the regulations to men for whom the Department is unable to obtain employment. It is a wise provision if carefully handled, but experience has shown that where sustenance is freely given it kills initiative and the desire to obtain work, for I submit it is incumbent on the man himself to exert some energy on his own behalf and not leave everything to the Department. The aim must be to encourage self-reliance as far as is both reasonable and just. Having these points in view, sustenance can be provided where it is going to be a real help and not a hindrance to true repatriation.

Business Loans.—Splendid assistance has been given under this heading for the purpose of establishing men into businesses of their own. Many applicants who apply for this kind of assistance have no claim to such, and I consider the guiding principles in deciding who is or is not eligible for this assistance should be—(a) Whether already in a permanent position at least as good as the pre-war one; (b) whether unfit to follow old occupation; (c) whether, in view of experience of applicant and other special circumstances, the proposition offers a reasonable chance of securing for him a steady and profitable business. I consider it worse than useless starting men out "on their own" unless they know something of the business they wish to undertake. Generally speaking I think the Canterbury Board has been actuated by these principles when dealing with business applications, and the result so far has been eminently satisfactory, considering that £40,000 has already been granted for this purpose, and that we have had only two