authorized for the purchase of stock. Upon a loan being authorized it is quite a common occurrence for the vendor to give up possession of his farm in anticipation of legal settlement being effected immediately, and for the soldier settler to make purchases of stock, &c., for the property of which he is not for the time being the legal owner. Obviously, advances for which no adequate security is forthcoming cannot be made. The responsibility of obtaining legal possession of a property purchased privately rests with the purchaser.

In order to facilitate settlement of advances for the purchase of stock, &c., and for improvements, subsequent to the execution of the necessary security, it is proposed to institute a system whereby Supervisors of soldier settlements and some of the Crown Lands Rangers may issue drafts on the Commissioners of Crown Lands, the proceeds of which may be collected through the banks.

The following statement briefly indicates the number of returned soldiers to whom advances have been authorized, showing under each heading the totals authorized and advanced from the inception of the Act to the 31st March:—

	Number of Returned Soldiers.	Advances authorized.	Advances made.
		£	£
Current Account ..	1,945	1,718,362	1,016,048
Section 2, Amendment Act, 1917			
Farms, market-gardens, orchards, &c.	4,107	6,754,836	4,855,457
Dwellings, &c.	6,363	4,137,056	2,987,668
	12,415	12,610,254	8,859,173
Repayments of advances, &c.		..	182,477
Balance outstanding on mortgage		..	£8,676,696

The sum of £2,492 was expended in the purchase and maintenance of motor-cars used by Supervisors, and £562 in the purchase of a "Parrett" tractor for use in breaking in and ploughing the Swanson Block, North Auckland District. The sum of £612 has been written off by way of depreciation of plant.

Statements of accounts attached to this report disclose the extent of the financial authorities issued and the actual transactions on the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account.

Authority was given to the Chief Drainage Engineer to drain and reclaim the low-lying portion of the Orongo Estate (Auckland District), which was purchased under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act for subdivision and settlement of returned soldiers. In addition a considerable portion of the estate will be ploughed, so that the coarse feed and tall fescue may be eradicated and the land put down in permanent pasture. The ploughing is being done by two tractor ploughs purchased for work of this nature. The cost of improving the estate will be added to the capital value thereof, while any expenditure incurred in connection with the erection of buildings and fences will be debited later to the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account and form portion of advances on Current Account upon the sections being taken up. (For full report upon the operations during the year see Lands Report, C.-1, page 21.)

APPENDIX.

REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(R. P. GREVILLE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

THERE has been a very great volume of work transacted in this office in connection with the settlement of discharged soldiers.

Operations under Section 2 of the Act.—The provisions of this section, enabling soldiers to purchase farms and houses in towns, have been availed of to an extent which has exceeded all expectations, and during the twelve months under review the Land Board has considered no less than 1,288 applications for assistance to purchase farms and 1,924 applications to purchase dwellings. Of these, 778 farms and 1,342 houses were recommended for approval, requiring a total advance of approximately £2,190,000.

In addition to this large sum £246,497 was advanced to soldiers to enable them to buy stock implements, seeds, manures, &c., and effect improvements in bushfelling, grassing, fencing, &c.

During the past year the Land Board held twelve ordinary meetings and twelve special meetings. These meetings usually occupied two days, sometimes three, and on special occasions four. The work of considering applications for advances by discharged soldiers for purchasing either houses or farms, under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, was one requiring the greatest care and attention by the Board. Where so much money was involved, the work could not be either delegated or perfunctorily performed. Every application for a loan was fully discussed by the Land Board, and the valuers' reports given careful consideration. In all cases where there had been no recent Government valuation of the property two independent valuations were obtained, with the result that the Board was fully seised of all facts affecting the security before making a recommendation