

best be reopened for ordinary civilian selection, and thus do something to meet the unsatisfied demand from others than discharged soldiers.

Condition of Established Settlements.

Most of the established settlements have experienced a fairly successful year, although the Mangateparu Settlement, near Morrinsville, and the Pakarau Settlement, in the same locality, have been somewhat severely affected by the unusually dry season at the beginning of the present year, which not only seriously reduced the dairy returns, but also destroyed much of the provision for winter feed. Both of these settlements are, however, beginning to experience the benefit of the renewal of the older pastures, and notwithstanding temporary difficulties their position is materially improved, and if next season is a good one they should recoup their present losses. The Taniwha Settlement, near Te Kauwhata, and Tapapa Settlement, near Hinuera, have been more favourably situated, and are making very good progress. The Te Miro Settlement, near Cambridge, cannot be said to be in a satisfactory condition. It consists of fair farming-land, which can be successfully handled by men with some experience and energy, but a number of the original settlers have proved themselves unsuited to the development of holdings of this class. With settlers of the right type there will be every prospect of this settlement ultimately proving as successful as some of the others. In the Bay of Plenty, the Hukutaia Settlement, near Opotiki, where twenty-four settlers are established, is making good progress, and will soon prove its success. The Waiare and Matuku Settlements, between Whakatane and Tauranga, with four and eleven settlers respectively, consist of good dairying-land; the settlers are making satisfactory progress, and have good prospects. In the Apata Settlement, near Tauranga, the eight settlers have made good progress with the erection of buildings and other improvements, and some of them have commenced dairying; this block is in a fair way to prosperous development. The Horahia Settlement, which is practically part of the Hauraki Plains, is in a good position; the holdings average 64 acres in area, and each settler is milking from twenty-five to thirty cows, and carrying a few dry stock, and they are doing well. The Puahue Settlement, near Te Awamutu, which carries twenty settlers, is making very good headway, and has every prospect of success; the land is of good quality and well situated, and the settlement owes much of its present position to the assistance which the former owner, Mr. W. G. Park, has given to the soldier settlers. The Tahaia Settlement, near Otorohanga, experienced some difficulties at the beginning, but is gaining ground, and there is every reason to anticipate its success in the near future. The smaller settlements, Kaipaki, Mangaotama, Ngahinepouri, and Tainui, in the Waikato, are developing satisfactorily, and will soon be in a prosperous condition.

The soldier settlers generally have, of course, suffered from the same disabilities as those which have affected all other farmers in the districts in which they are situated. Although the Department, in placing their orders for materials, has obtained the best possible market quotations, the uniformly heavy cost of such materials has been a serious burden to the undertaking of developing new farms; while even in the case of improved properties the high cost of manures and seeds during recent years had caused necessary top-dressing or renewal of pastures to be deferred, with the result that this work has had to be done by the new settlers in order to get the best out of their holdings. The depletion of young stock, which is deplored by all sound authorities, has, of course, caused the price of dairy stock to be very high, and, as the majority of the soldier settlers are going in for dairying, and a good herd cannot be built up without time and expense, some time must elapse before returns reach a satisfactory position. The very dry season experienced in parts of the district has materially decreased the dairy returns, and most of the dairy companies will not make their final payments on the season's output for some time. In the meantime the position of many of the settlers is one of some temporary difficulty, and reasonable consideration must be extended to them until such time as they can meet their liabilities. The majority of them are working well, and, while there are cases in which expenditure has been undertaken out of their returns, which might have been better deferred until their position was more assured, it has in most instances been in the direction of increasing the productive quality of the properties. The numerical inadequacy of the ranging and supervising staff to cope with the volume of work resulting from this development of settlement has made it impossible to exercise the close supervision necessary, or to give the new settlers the direction and advice desirable as to work to be undertaken or expenditure to be incurred.

Purchases under Section 2 of Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917.

The above remarks will apply equally to the condition of the soldiers settled by private purchase of individual farms, which are scattered over all parts of the district, this fact rendering adequate supervision a matter of extreme difficulty, although in all cases the requirements of the settlers have received attention with as much promptitude as has been possible under the circumstances. The number of soldiers who have thus been assisted to acquire farms in this district totals 692, occupying an area of 213,518 acres, the aggregate amount of advances made to them on instalment mortgage being £1,213,928 18s. 8d., while the majority of them have also received assistance for improving and stocking their holdings.

Dwellings.

Advances for the purchase or erection of dwellings have been approved in favour of 593 soldiers, the amounts paid out up to the close of the year being £325,843 5s. 3d. The difficulty of obtaining supplies of building-materials has hampered the applicants, but the inspections which are made by the Rangers during the progress of the work indicate that satisfactory value is being obtained.