

Over eighty Boards and Committees were set up throughout the Dominion, composed of prominent local residents representative of the various social and industrial organizations, and the success achieved by the Repatriation Department is due in no small measure to the enthusiastic and devoted work of these Boards and Committees.

EMPLOYMENT.

The Department had placed 27,658 men in employment up to the 20th June last, and the total number awaiting employment at that date throughout the Dominion was 376. During the past two years it has been necessary to make unemployment sustenance allowances in only 131 cases of hardship, and the total amount expended in New Zealand as out-of-work pay is but £5,577, or an average payment of 1s. 4d. per demobilized soldier. It is interesting to note that the Canadian average expenditure per demobilized soldier in unemployment doles is £2 10s. per man, or thirty-six times greater than ours, and the Australian average is £10 per man—no less than 150 times greater than the New Zealand average. These figures speak for themselves, and are an eloquent tribute alike to the soldier, the employer, and the Department.

TRAINING.

The Department has arranged training for 7,483 partially disabled soldiers, apprentices, &c., and 7,062 of these have finished their training. No less than 91 per cent. of this number completed the full course laid down and were absorbed by the industries in which they had been trained, while a number of the 9 per cent. who discontinued before the completion of the course did so on account of ill health. The total amount expended by the Department upon facilities for training and for the sustenance of the men during the training-period is £388,348, an average cost of £55 for each completed trainee. Here again New Zealand can claim a record that challenges comparison both in respect to the percentage of failures (9 per cent. in New Zealand as compared with 18 per cent. and 30 per cent. in Canada and Australia respectively) and as regards the average cost per trainee (£55 in New Zealand against £190 and £150 in Canada and Australia respectively). We attribute these excellent results mainly to our scheme in New Zealand for training the men in the environment of the trade itself, as opposed to the idea of setting up expensive institutional training-classes. Special soldiers' classes certainly were utilized by the Department to a limited extent, and served a very useful purpose, but the backbone of our vocational training is undoubtedly the subsidized-wages scheme. Under it the employer undertakes to train the man, finds all the necessary equipment and material, and pays a wage, the Department being called upon to pay only a subsidy to the trainee in addition to his pension and the employer's wage. An institutional trainee, on the other hand, must be provided by the Department with equipment, material, expert instruction, and full sustenance during the training-period.

It is estimated that the average cost of a subsidized worker to the Department is £1 5s. per week, as against quite £3 10s. per week for an institutional trainee. Another excellent feature of the subsidy scheme is the fact that the majority of the employers desire to retain the services of men trained in their own workshops, and the serious problem of absorbing large numbers of men from special training-classes does not arise.

In last year's report it was stated that all the Department's special training-farms, owing to the decided falling-off in applications for farm training, had been closed with the exception of Avonhead, Moa, Ruakura, and Tauherenikau. During the last year training has been discontinued at Avonhead and the farm handed back to the Lands Department, and the Moa Seed-farm has been taken over by an association which is leasing the property and carrying on seed-raising as a commercial proposition. This leaves the Department with a training-centre at Tauherenikau, where men suffering from tubercular disease are taught poultry-raising, beekeeping, and horticulture; and at Ruakura, where similar instruction in light farming is provided for disabled soldiers incapable of carrying on their old occupations.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

Business loans have been granted in 6,288 cases, at a cost of £1,134,587, and 14,865 men have received advances totalling £704,956 for furniture and tools of trade. Some 4,375 others have been financially assisted in other directions, the amount paid to or on behalf of soldiers under all headings being £2,240,998. Of this sum £1,839,540 represents advances by way of loan, and the amount collected in repayment thereof up to the 30th June, 1922, is £984,348. An additional £47,744 has been collected as interest, making a total collection of £1,032,092. Assisted soldiers, in common with all other classes of the community, are feeling the present financial stringency, and it is most creditable to be able to report that the Department has succeeded in collecting, within three years and a half of the granting of the first loan, 52 per cent. of the total advances made to date. Recently the collection from soldiers has exceeded the gross expenditure by some thousands of pounds monthly, and it is estimated that the excess of credits during the financial year 1922-23 will be not less than a quarter of a million pounds (£250,000). Many of the soldiers have been extremely successful in business, and no less than 1,609 business loans have already been entirely repaid. Furniture advances to the number of 2,392 have also been fully liquidated, and many more loans in both categories are now nearing completion. There have, naturally enough, been some failures, and the Ministerial Board has found it necessary to write off deficiencies in 129 cases, the average loss being £69.