

In the last report it was mentioned that arrangements were being made with Victoria University College for the holding of short courses of three weeks' duration to bring ex-service personnel up to date with recent economic, social, and administrative developments in New Zealand. The first course started in September, 1945, and three more were held before the end of that year. The courses are being continued this year at regular intervals. Lectures are given by members of the Victoria University College staff and by senior members of the Public Service. Each lecture is followed by a discussion period. There is provision also for reading periods and for visits to Parliament and to Government Departments. The men who are brought from outside Wellington are accommodated in a Government hostel. It is apparent that the courses are proving of great value in informing men of the changes which have taken place during the war years, in acquainting them with present trends in public policy, and in giving them a wider horizon.

These short courses, while stimulating interest in public administration, cannot provide an officer with a detailed knowledge of what has happened in his own Department during his absence and fully bridge the gap in his departmental experience. This need is catered for in the staff training programme drawn up in each Department. A number of Departments have already held short courses as part of their staff-training activities. There is no doubt that the departmental short course is a speedy means of bringing ex-servicemen up to date and enabling them to face their tasks with greater confidence.

Classes are now being held in Auckland as well as in Wellington for those ex-servicemen on the temporary staff who lack the initial educational qualifications for permanent appointment. Those who are employed outside the two centres can take specially prepared correspondence courses. The enrolments for the classes and for the correspondence courses are steadily growing, and next year it will be necessary to provide teachers for at least two classes in Wellington. According to the reports of the teachers the men are keen, industrious, and show a commendable desire to pursue their studies beyond the standard actually required for the examination.

In the course of rehabilitation many transfers have been arranged from Department to Department and from district to district, mainly to suit the desires and convenience of returned men. Very often the dominating factor in a man's application for transfer is his desire to be stationed in a district where he can secure housing accommodation.

Although considerable progress has been made in rehabilitation, the major portion of the task remains to be done—namely, making good the deficiencies in knowledge and experience which arise through a serviceman's absence from his Department. These deficiencies cannot be supplied in a matter of weeks, and it is necessary that each Department should work to a plan which provides the knowledge and experience as speedily as possible.

Progress in rehabilitation and staff training has not been uniform throughout the Departments. One of the major difficulties is that Personnel Officers in many cases are already burdened with other important duties, with the result that rehabilitation and staff training do not receive full and continuous attention. The only effective remedy in the larger Departments is to treat the Personnel Officer's position as a full-time one. This has already been done in a few Departments, and it will be the policy to extend this principle to other Departments where necessary.