

SETTLEMENT OF SOLDIERS ON THE LAND.

Whilst it is not part of the functions of the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department to find land for soldiers, the success of its operations will largely depend upon the result of the efforts of the Lands Department to find suitable land for returned soldiers. I look upon a carefully regulated policy by placing soldiers upon suitable areas of land as being a sound and effective method of finding them appropriate occupation.

In the case of men who wish employment as clerks or labourers the capacity of the State to render aid is strictly limited by the number of employers who are in a position to offer work. The employers cannot make work, and the State cannot compel them to find employment. But in the case of the soldier who has a predilection for country life the position is different, for the ability of the State to help the man is not so limited. It can find land; it can give the man reasonable financial assistance; it can give him instruction, and it can exercise supervision over his actions until he is fairly launched upon his new career.

PROVISION FOR TRAINING IN FARM-WORK.

To meet the case of soldiers who have had no previous experience in farming, arrangements have been made with the Department of Agriculture to undertake the training of a limited number of men at the various State farms in general farming, dairying, fruit-farming, poultry-raising, bee-culture, &c. It was thought that partially disabled men in receipt of pensions might reasonably be expected to desire to take up small sections under the land-settlement scheme for the purpose of poultry-raising and other light branches of farm-work, and that in these circumstances a course of practical instruction would often save loss of time and money and consequent discouragement. Up to the present the opportunities afforded have not been taken advantage of, the men almost without exception desiring employment of an immediately remunerative character.

FREE PLACES FOR SOLDIERS AT THE TECHNICAL SCHOOLS.

The same remarks apply generally to the arrangements which have been made for the training at the technical schools of men who are unfitted to resume their previous occupations. Regulations have been gazetted under which the Government provides free places for men certified to by the Information Department as (a) unfitted to re-enter their former occupations, and (b) likely to benefit by the proposed instruction. The Information Department has taken special steps to bring this very important question under the notice of the controlling authorities of the technical schools and of the committees representing the Department in the various centres. Up to the present the response on the part of the soldiers has been small, but with the increasing number of partially disabled men who are being discharged, and the greater publicity which has been given to the scheme by the gazetting of the regulations, it is possible that in the near future a larger number of free places will be applied for.

TRAINING IN OFFICE-WORK AND BOOK-KEEPING BY THE NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF ACCOUNTANTS.

Amongst the offers of assistance which the Department has received from various quarters none is more worthy of special mention than that which has been received from the Society of Accountants of New Zealand. The council of the society have approved a scheme under which free clerical training will be afforded to partially disabled returned soldiers duly accredited by the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department. The course of instruction will be personal in the case of the four chief cities, and by correspondence for pupils in other centres or in the country districts. It will cover the subjects embraced by the book-keepers' examination of the society, and at the outset of the course special attention will be devoted to instruction in office routine and the elementary groundwork of accounts. In the case of students who are recommended by the teachers as fit to sit for examination, the society will meet the University fee for the book-keepers' examination, and, in the case of successful candidates, the fee for a proficiency certificate from the University. It will also in such cases confer its own certificate in practical mercantile book-keeping.

Although the scheme is not fully matured, inquiries have already been received from soldiers desiring to avail themselves of it, and, on completion by the society of a few preliminaries which still have to be arranged, a most useful avenue of instruction will be available for our returned men.

CONCLUSION.

In bringing this brief account of the operations and organization of the Department to a conclusion, I desire to point out that the special arrangements narrated are merely auxiliaries to the primary function of the Department—viz., the reabsorption of our returned soldiers in the business and industrial life of the community. I early felt that success in this direction was impossible without the whole-souled co-operation of the people at large. With the object of securing this I made a special appeal in November last to the various local authorities throughout the Dominion, soliciting their assistance both individually and collectively in this most necessary work, and I also wrote in similar terms to the Patriotic Societies whose addresses I was able to