

1916.

NEW ZEALAND.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

(MEMORANDUM REGARDING THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS OF THE).

*Laid on the Table of the House by Leave.*Discharged Soldiers' Information Department,
Wellington, 2nd May, 1916.

AMONGST the problems created by the war none are of greater importance than those connected with the reabsorption of the soldiers in the industrial life of the community after their period of military duty is ended. The honour and the interests of the whole body of the citizens are alike involved in the successful solution of the question, and the more rapidly and efficiently the reabsorption takes place the speedier will be the recovery from the losses resulting from the war and from the partial arrest of development occasioned by the withdrawal of such large numbers of the most active members of the community from their normal avocations.

To meet the duty falling upon the country in respect of this work it was decided by Government that a separate Department of State should be created to deal specially with the problem of obtaining employment for returned soldiers discharged from further military service. In the preliminary memorandum of instructions drawn up for the guidance of the new Department special stress was laid upon the point that no man was to be missed. In order to carry out this principle it was necessary to compile as rapidly as possible a complete register of all men who had returned to the Dominion, and to keep this register up to date by the addition of the fresh drafts arriving by each successive transport.

COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATIONS.

The Department commenced operations towards the end of August last year. At this time about seven hundred men had returned from the scene of operations, and the task of compiling the register was a somewhat slow and laborious one. The files of the Base Records Office of the Defence Department were freely placed at the disposal of the Information Department, but as these files were necessarily under constant action in the Defence Department itself considerable time was consumed in hunting out particulars which, under more favourable circumstances, would not have been a very formidable undertaking. The work of writing up and checking the register has been undertaken from the outset by a small voluntary staff of officers of the Government Insurance Department, over military age, who spontaneously offered to work gratuitously in their spare time at any duties in which the Government could utilize their services. I may here add that this work is still systematically carried on, and the register, containing now over four thousand names, is exclusively the work of these gentlemen, and is an abiding testimony to their perseverance and unobtrusive sense of duty.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR BOARDING TRANSPORTS ON ARRIVAL.

In order to obviate for the future the difficulties which had been experienced in compiling the register of returned men from the individual files, arrangements were made for officers of the Department to board the future transports on arrival, and collect in rough form from the men themselves the necessary information. Subsequently this system was further improved by arranging to have the bulk of the information listed by the military authorities on board the transports while still at sea. These lists are completed by the Information Department officers on arrival of the transport in port, and from them the cards which constitute the Department's register are immediately written up by the voluntary staff already described.

The first transport visited by officers of the Department was the "Tahiti," at Wellington, on the 11th September, and since then the following ships have been attended and the names and particulars of all men on board taken down, thus providing the means of complying with the Government's direction that no man should be missed.

The following is the list of ships visited by the officers of the Department :—

Date.	Ship.	Port of Arrival.
Sept. 11, 1915	Tahiti	Wellington.
Oct. 13, "	Maitai	"
" 27, "	Tofua	Dunedin.
" 31, "	Willochra	"
Dec. 25, "	Tahiti	"
Jan. 1, 1916	Maheno	Auckland.
" 5, "	Ruahine	"
" 29, "	Willochra	Dunedin.
" 31, "	Tofua	"
Feb. 3, "	Rotorua	Auckland.
Mar. 14, "	Tahiti	Dunedin.
" 16, "	Arawa	Wellington.
April 10, "	Turakina	Auckland.
" 11, "	Maheno	"
" 21, "	Ulmaroa	Lyttelton.

LOCAL COMMITTEES ADVISED OF MEN RETURNING TO THEIR DISTRICTS.

After the cards comprising the Department's register have been written up they are sorted into the various districts into which the Dominion has been subdivided, and a confidential schedule is sent to the secretary of the local committee setting out the name, address, present location, and state of health of every man who has given his address within the district administered by the committee. This task is really somewhat outside the functions of the Department, but in the course of visits which I paid to Auckland and to the South Island for the purpose of enlisting the sympathy of the various centres in the work of the Department it was represented to me that early information of the character described would be of value to the bodies interesting themselves in the returned soldiers' welfare, and I accordingly arranged to have it supplied.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERVIEWING MEN PRIOR TO DISCHARGE FROM MILITARY FORCES.

When this duty has been accomplished the cards are sorted alphabetically and held in abeyance awaiting notice of the men's discharge or resumption of duty. Until the men are discharged they remain exclusively under the control of the military authorities, and it is not competent for my Department in any way to take them in hand. Arrangements, however, have been made with the Defence authorities for the Information Department to receive early information of an intended discharge—say, seven to fourteen days before it actually takes effect—and they similarly advise us of cases of resumption of duty. As soon as we receive notification of an approaching discharge the card is withdrawn from the "Not ready for action" section, noted with brief particulars of any action taken as hereinafter described, and filed alphabetically in the "Under action" compartment. We immediately arrange for the soldier to be interviewed by an officer on behalf of the Department, who reports by means of a special form drawn up for the purpose. The particulars for which the form provides are as follows :—

(To be answered in all cases.)

1. Name and address of soldier. Is the man of good character? Are his surroundings respectable? Is he living with relatives, or with whom?
2. Is he in good health, or is he still suffering from disease or wounds?
3. Is he fit for employment, and, if so, has he obtained employment, and what are his wages? If he has not, does he desire employment, and, if so, what kind of employment does he wish for?
4. What are his means outside his wages?
5. Has he received assistance from any patriotic society, &c.? and, if so, give amounts and dates.
6. Is he receiving full military pay?
7. Have you handed the man one of the "information cards" supplied to you?

(To be answered in cases of men at present incapacitated but likely to make a good recovery.)

8. When is he likely to be sound and well and ready for work?
9. Is he desirous of present employment, and, if so, what work could he undertake?
10. What employment is he desirous of obtaining when restored to health?

(To be answered in cases of men permanently disabled by sickness or wounds.)

11. What is the nature of his disablement?
12. What employment do you think the man is capable of?
13. What are his own ideas on the subject?
14. If unemployable, in what way do you think he could be best assisted?
15. Has he applied for a war pension? If a war pension has been granted, what is the amount?

If the soldier states that he does not require the Department's assistance in obtaining employment his card is at once noted accordingly and withdrawn from the "Under action" section, and filed alphabetically in the "Disposed of" compartment. Our register thus consists of three sections—(i) "Not ready for action"; (ii) "Under action"; and (iii) "Disposed of"—every card in the "Under action" section being kept noted up with the latest action taken.

If the report shows that the soldier is not yet ready for work the case is held over for a reasonable period, at the end of which time we write again inquiring in what way we can be of assistance, and this process is continued until the man is suitably placed, or notifies us that he does not require our aid, or through failing to reply to repeated communications convinces us that further effort on his behalf is labour thrown away.

If the report shows that the man is desirous of assistance in obtaining employment full particulars of his case are forwarded to the committee of the district in which he resides, who in their turn advise the Department when employment is found. A case scheduled in this manner to a committee is not allowed to rest. Reminders are addressed to the committee from time to time, and continued until some definite conclusion is arrived at, either by the securing of employment, intimation that the Department's aid is not required, or continued disregard by the man of offers of employment or other communications.

The total number of men registered with the Department at the date of this memorandum is 4,376
and these have been dealt with as follows:—

(a.) Cases disposed of: Placed in employment, returned to military duty or their old employment, or signed a statement that they do not require the Department's assistance	2,083
(b.) Cases under action: Department making inquiries on soldiers' behalf or awaiting notice of discharge, &c.	1,265
(c.) Cases not ready for action: Men recently returned to New Zealand, now convalescing, not ready for employment and not yet discharged by the military authorities	1,028

CONSTITUTION OF LOCAL COMMITTEES.

Reference has been made above to the committees which are assisting the Department in its work of obtaining employment for soldiers. At a very early stage of our experience it became apparent that success could only be obtained by close co-operation with the business community through gentlemen possessing local knowledge and influence. With this object in view I visited the chief cities of the Dominion and succeeded in enlisting the services of a number of gentlemen in various centres to serve on committees which should act as local agents of the Department and advisers on any subject in respect of which their assistance was sought. The committees, which were almost invariably based upon the local Patriotic Societies, were established in the following centres: Auckland, Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, Dannevirke, Pahiatua, Wairarapa, Taranaki, Wanganui, Taihape, Marton, Feilding, Palmerston North, Nelson, Blenheim, Greymouth, Christchurch, Ashburton, Timaru, Dunedin, Oamaru, and Invercargill, with a central advisory committee in Wellington. Under the arrangements entered into the committees are advised of the name of any returned soldier in their district registering with the Department for employment, and the man himself is at the same time requested from the Head Office of the Department to call upon the committee. The committee on its part undertakes to get into touch with the man forthwith, and to do its utmost to secure him suitable employment. The local agencies of the Labour Department have been instructed by their Head Office to place their services unreservedly at the disposal of the committees, and to assist them to the utmost of their power in the work they have undertaken.

INFORMATION REGARDING PHYSICAL CONDITION SUPPLIED BY DEFENCE AND PENSIONS DEPARTMENTS.

The physical condition of the soldier at the time of discharge is, of course, a factor of great importance in determining the class of employment which he is capable of taking up, and the Department follows as closely as it can the man's medical history from the time of his return up to the date of his discharge. His condition on arrival is supplied by the medical authorities who examine him prior to disembarkation, and the findings are briefly noted in the card register. The man's own account of his condition and a lay opinion as to the work he is suited for is obtained when he is interviewed by an officer on behalf of the Department. Finally, arrangements have been made with the War Pensions Department to supply particulars of any pension granted and of the extent of the disability upon which such pension has been based. This record of the man's condition at successive stages is found of assistance in enabling the Department to decide as to the direction in which he can be suitably employed.

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

secure, asking them to add this further duty to their already onerous labours. I also wrote to the various bodies consisting more particularly of employers and other persons closely connected with business and industry, such as the Chambers of Commerce, Farmers' Union, &c., soliciting their individual and corporate assistance. The replies I received were of the most gratifying description; but I should like to take the opportunity of emphasizing to those whose sympathy is assured, as well as to those who have not yet perhaps realized the urgency of the problem which confronts us, that it is only by the whole-souled co-operation of all who are able to assist that the country's duty can be discharged to the men who have sacrificed so much for the Empire and all that it stands for. We are at present only at the beginning of our task. Of the men who have been placed a considerable proportion have been taken into Government and municipal employ, but these avenues can only provide for a small proportion of the men offering. I would therefore very earnestly appeal to all those who have the opportunity of offering employment to bear in mind the claims of the returned soldiers. Particulars regarding any vacancies available, including the wages offered and a brief statement of the duties, will be most gratefully received by the Officer in Charge of the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department, and every endeavour will be made to find suitable men to fill the positions.

I feel I ought not to close this memorandum without sounding a note of warning to men and to employers alike. It seems to be assumed by returned soldiers that the Government is able to find employment for all the soldiers who seek it. I think that it is just as well that the men should clearly understand that, anxious as the Government is to assist to the utmost, it cannot find billets for all. The capacity of the Public Service Commissioner to provide occupation for returned soldiers is limited. He gives preference to returned soldiers when considering applications for a position, and he is actively exerting himself to find employment for soldier applicants; but he cannot make positions, and he cannot of course dismiss public servants for the purpose of creating vacancies for returned soldiers.

The State is prepared to lead the way in the matter of finding employment for the men, but it cannot do all, and the work which it is undertaking through the agency of this Department will be of little value unless it is earnestly and strongly supported by the private employers throughout the community.

In conclusion I wish to express my appreciation of the valuable assistance which Mr. W. B. Hudson, Deputy Commissioner of the Government Life Insurance Department, has cordially and voluntarily given to me. Assisted by Mr. Samson, the official head of the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department, and by a capable and enthusiastic staff, Mr. Hudson undertook to build up an organization for which there was no guide, and he has, in my opinion, succeeded in making the Department what the Government desired it to be—a substantial help to the returned soldier in need of advice and assistance, and an efficient instrument for bringing him into direct relationship with the employer who may be in a position to find him suitable occupation.

The appendices hereto show in tabular form the total number of men on the Department's register, and general information as to the position of the various groups at the date of this memorandum.

A. L. HERDMAN,

Minister in Charge of the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

STATEMENT OF REGISTER AT THE 2ND MAY, 1916

1. Total number of men on register :—

(A.) Disposed of	2,083
(B.) Under action	1,265
(C.) Not ready for action (including men returned by recent transports)	1,028
	4,376

2. Particulars showing how cases dealt with:—

(A.) Cases disposed of :—	
(a.) Left New Zealand or cannot ascertain address	91
(b.) Re-enlisted or returned to military duty, or have work to return to, &c.	1,017
(c.) Men who have signed no assistance required	537
(d.) Men placed (details as per Appendix II)	400
(e.) Men who have not responded to repeated communications, and men who have accepted work we found for them but failed to start work	38
	2,083
(B.) Cases under action :—	
(a.) Reports upon cases not yet returned by officers making inquiries	439
(b.) Under further inquiry	311
(c.) Awaiting notice of discharge	249
(d.) At present on Employment Wanted Register (details as per Appendix III)	266
	1,265
(C.) Cases not ready for action	1,028
	4,376

APPENDIX II.

OCCUPATIONS IN WHICH MEN HAVE BEEN PLACED.

Attendants and porters 22	Labourers 67	Railways 13
Bakers 3	Letter-carriers and Linesmen, &c., (Post and Telegraph Department) .. 21	Salesmen 3
Billiard-marker 1	Liftmen 2	Sanitary inspector .. 1
Butchers 3	Lighthouse-keepers .. 2	Shepherds 2
Carpenters 11	Meat-inspectors 2	Shipping-work 4
Chauffeurs 11	Mechanics 14	Storemen 23
Chemist 1	Messengers 13	Surveyors 3
Cleaners 4	Night-watchmen 6	Tally clerk 1
Clerks 69	Orderly 1	Teacher 1
Commercial 2	Painters 2	Tramway employees .. 11
Compositors 2	Photographers 2	Tree-planters 2
Drivers 26	Plumbers 4	Wool-sorters 6
Farm hands 23	Policeman 1	
Fire brigade 8	Rabbit-poisoners 4	400
Gardeners 2		
Jeweller 1		

Summary.

Placed in Government employment	161
Placed in municipal employment	53
Placed in private employment	186
	400

APPENDIX III.

SCHEDULE SHOWING LOCATION OF UNPLACED MEN.

Auckland	83	Christchurch	23
Gisborne	2	Ashburton	1
Napier	5	Greymouth	2
Hastings	5	South Canterbury	8
Dannevirke	0	Oamaru	5
Taranaki	2	Otago	47
Wanganui	4	Southland	7
Taihape	1	Wellington (including 2 local applicants for Government positions)	11
Marton	1	Miscellaneous—Men outside of Wellington who desire Government employment not listed to committees	38
Feilding	3		
Palmerston North	3		
Wairarapa	7		
Nelson	6		
Blenheim	2		
			<u>266</u>

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