

The rate of interest to both settlers and workers is 5 per cent., less $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. if payment is made within fourteen days of the due date, and it is a noteworthy fact that despite the financial stress the half-yearly payments have been paid as promptly as usual. This is due, no doubt, to the provision for granting $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. rebate for prompt payment.

The total sum lent to local bodies during the year was £689,225 at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

A very large amount of money has been lent by this Department during the past two years to assist persons in the purchase or erection of homes, as will be seen from the following table :—

LOANS AUTHORIZED FROM 1ST APRIL, 1919, TO 31ST MARCH, 1921.

To build houses or purchase homes—		£
To settlers	2,269	1,129,990
To workers	2,641	1,139,185
To release mortgages on home properties—		
To settlers	561	205,905
To erect workers' dwellings—		
To local authorities	59	317,700
		<u>£2,792,780</u>

It will thus be seen that for housing purposes this Office has within a period of two years loaned the large sum of £2,792,780.

From the date the Department first commenced business (March, 1895) to the 31st March, 1921, the amount paid over is as follows :—

	£
To settlers	19,826,040
To workers	4,446,685
To local authorities	3,856,570
	<u>£28,129,295</u>

After deducting the repayments from this total, the amount of mortgages outstanding on the 31st March last was £13,876,165.

The record of this Department since its inception in 1895 is worthy of notice.

NAVAL DEFENCE.

THE "CHATHAM."

The light cruiser "Chatham," presented as a free gift to the New Zealand Government, commissioned at Chatham on the 1st October, 1920, and left England on the 21st idem, arriving in New Zealand waters three months later, having visited certain of the Pacific islands, including British Samoa, *en route*. She is commissioned with a reduced complement of 353 instead of a full complement of 495, in order to avoid expense and to admit of absorption of the New Zealand recruits when trained.

After a short stay at Auckland the "Chatham" visited Wellington and assisted in getting the "Philomel" ready for service as a training-ship. She has since successfully carried out annual gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Hauraki Gulf, on completion of which she visited the principal east coast ports of the Dominion.

After docking at Devonport in July she left on a cruise, which included the principal ports of the various groups of islands in the Pacific. This is in accordance with a request from the Admiralty that the "Chatham" should be employed in the general work of the station as well as H.M.S. "Veronica." This latter vessel is an Imperial unit employed on this station, but has twice visited British Samoa and the Island of Niue. She was employed in New Zealand waters as far as possible during the "Chatham's" visit to the islands. The "Chatham" will visit other principal ports of the Dominion during the summer months.