

in land utilisation and drainage, or of maintaining a good sward when the removal of the forest is in order. The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, represents the first comprehensive attempt partially to restore the balance of nature and to control land utilisation. The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council set up by the Act has power to proclaim Soil Conservation Districts in which the lighting of fires, the destruction of plants, or any change in the use of the land may be prohibited. The use of land for agricultural or pastoral purposes may be regulated or restricted. Lands may also be set aside as Soil Conservation Reserves and private lands acquired for this purpose on terms assessed by the Compensation Court. These reserves are to be managed in the interests of soil conservation, and the lighting of fires or the

trespass of animals is prohibited. The council has power to repair or divert any watercourse or to plant trees and shrubs or sow grasses and may enter any property in the execution of this work, though owners may claim for any damage. The local administration of the Act is in the hands of Catchment Boards and the Soil Conservation Committees, a majority of the former being elected at the local body elections, while the latter are appointed by the council. The boards are to regulate and control the flow of water into watercourses and maintain hydrological records. The boards have power on land acquired by them, or subject to the consent of the owners, to plant, sow, and maintain trees, shrubs, or grasses, and may make grants for the destruction of animals destroying protected vegetation. The committees are appointed to adminis-

ter regulations pertaining to the Soil Conservation Districts and have power to regulate fire lighting, stocking, ploughing, or cultivation of the soil; they may require occupiers to plant or sow shrubs or grasses or to take all reasonable steps to destroy rabbits, deer, wild pigs, and wild goats. The real testing time for the effectiveness of the administration will come now that the war is over, but the success of the attempt to deal with this greatest of problems will ultimately depend quite as much on the co-operation of the farmer as on the ability and energy of the persons operating the machinery of the Act and the financial grants they receive.

Since the outbreak of war much attention has again been paid to the settlement of discharged servicemen on the land. By a 1940 amendment to the Small Farms Act discharged servicemen are to have preference at ballots. In reference to this an amendment to the Land Laws brought down in 1944 provided that any Crown or Settlement land previously offered for sale or lease by auction might now be offered by public application for sale or lease at a fixed price or rental and granted without competition to a discharged serviceman.

Two important developments took place in 1943. By the Statute Amendments of that year for any discharged serviceman who is or becomes a lessee under the Small Farms Act the rental for the first year will be 2 per cent. of the unimproved value of the land, increasing by stages to 4 per cent. commencing with the third year unless otherwise determined. Previously it had been decided that improvements on lands acquired for rehabilitation were to be secured by way of table mortgage repayable in half-yearly instalments. The rate of interest on such was 2½ per cent., rising to 4½ per cent. commencing with the third year. The Government consented to make provision for ex-servicemen to acquire the fee simple of these lands, and this they may do at such price and on such terms as the Land Settlement Board, which administers all matters pertaining to Settlement and Small Farm lands, thinks fit. The Land Settlement Board also has power to make advances for the purchase of stock and chattels.

The other important development was the passing of the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943. This very important Act deals with two distinct though related problems, the acquisition of land for the settlement of demobilised personnel and the control of land sales. The background to this Act is provided by the present accumulation of purchasing power. Cash held by the public and demand deposits at the trading banks alone increased nearly threefold in the years 1938-44 and unexercised over-



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