MINING AMENDMENT BILL.

This Bill was introduced by Governor's message.

On the question, That the report be considered forthwith.

Mr. T. W. RHODES (Thames) asked the Minister to indicate the scope of the amendments proposed in the measure.

The Hon. Mr. MacDONALD (Minister of Mines) said the Bill dealt particularly with water-races and the renewal of terms. The Government had been advancing money on the construction of water-races in different mining districts, and this Bill protected the security of the Government. A man might not apply for a renewal, in which case the right would be abandoned; but this Bill gave security in the matter to the Crown.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read a first time.

MILITARY MANOEUVRES BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 3.—"When any land has been proclaimed under this Act as available for military manoeuvres, and while the Proclamation remains in force, the Minister of Defence or any person authorized by him in that behalf, or the officer commanding any military manoeuvres, for the purpose of rendering the land suitable for the execution of such manoeuvres or in the course of such manoeuvres, may do all or any of the following things, namely:

(a) By notice published in the Gazette or in some newspaper circulating in the district, and exhibited on any road or street upon such land, prohibit or restrict the traffic on such road or street for any period not exceeding forty-eight hours at any one time:

(Provided that on the expiry of the period specified in any such notice no further prohibition or restriction of traffic shall be effective within the next succeeding period of twenty-four hours;)

(b) Pull down or erect any fence, or barrier, or other obstruction on the land:

(c) Divert or stop any watercourse; and

(d) Do any other act on or in connection with the said land that he considers necessary or expedient for the proper utilization of the said land for the purposes aforesaid.

Mr. WITTY (Riccarton) moved, after the words "By notice," in paragraph (a), to insert "in writing or."

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The Hon. Mr. ALLEN (Minister of Defence) moved, after the word "Gazette" in paragraph (a), to strike out the word "or," and to insert in lieu thereof "and."

Amendment agreed to.

The Hon. Mr. ALLEN moved to add the following proviso to paragraph (d) —

"Provided that before any land belonging to a private person is used for the purposes of this Act not less than twenty-four hours' notice in writing shall be given to the owner or occupier of such land."

Amendment agreed to, and clause as amended agreed to.

Bill reported, and read a third time.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT BILL.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY (Minister of Lands).—I think, Sir, that the title of this Bill almost sufficiently describes and explains it. It is quite certain that when the war comes to an end a very large number of our soldiers will desire to go on the land, especially those who have had agricultural experience. The Bill is intended to provide land for two classes of soldiers—one the class of soldiers who will come back sound and well, and another class who will come back partially incapacitated, who will receive pensions, and who will probably desire to add to their pensions by doing something in the way of land-cultivation. It is intended that the land for this Bill shall be provided from Crown lands or from lands purchased under the Land for Settlements Act, and already we have certain blocks in view for the purposes mentioned in the Bill. For instance, the Crown owns several blocks of land in what is called the Hutt district. We have already had them reported upon, and I can give the House some particulars in regard to them. There is what is called the Melling Settlement, at Lower Hutt, where 12 acres are available; the Waddington Settlement, 150 acres approximately; the Hall-Jones Settlement, 71 acres; the Pitt Settlement, 19 acres; and the Wilford Settlement, 59 acres—something over 300 acres in the immediate neighbourhood of Wellington, all of which is available. There are several blocks in the North of Auckland which I am given to understand are particularly suitable, and I hope when the session comes to an end to have an opportunity of seeing some of this land and forming a judgment upon it. It is principally gum land that is being turned over to a depth of 4 ft. and 5 ft. by the gum-diggers employed by the Lands Department, and which it is hoped will be available next season for the planting of fruit-trees. We hope to plant the land with fruit-trees, using the necessary fertilizers, and
give the settlers a start. We have also in view a fairly large area of land in Central Otago, which is particularly suited for fruit-growing — especially apples; and some of the best apples in the world are grown in Central Otago. I have no hesitation in saying that. I am speaking of about 7,000 acres, which was resumed a year or a year and a half ago. I have no doubt we shall get water on to the Flat, but it will take some time. Boring operations are in progress now, and if artesian water is struck the difficulty will be at an end. It is necessary not only to provide the land, but, as many of the soldiers will return without capital, it will be necessary to assist them when they go on to the land. It will be necessary to build cottages, for instance; perhaps even to buy stock and implements. We do not intend that many of the sections shall be large, and it is not necessary, that they should be, especially those for fruit-growing purposes in fruit-growing districts. The Bill asks for authority to raise £50,000 for this purpose. Honourable members will understand that £50,000 will not go very far, but it is quite enough to commence with. It may be enough for the first couple of years. After that it will be necessary for whatever Government is in power to ask for more money. So much for the general principle of the Bill. Clause 2 simply defines the term "discharged soldier." Clause 3 refers to tenures. The tenure will be practically the same as the tenures in operation at the present moment. The soldiers will have the choice of whether they will take up the land under the ordinary leasehold, or under leasehold with the option of purchase. I think in most cases they will prefer the option of the purchase. Clause 4 authorizes the Government to set apart any area of Crown or settlement land for settlement by soldiers under what we are calling the special-tenure system — that is the system I have just referred to. The land will be subdivided in the ordinary way. Clause 5 authorizes the making of regulations for the purposes of the Bill. Clause 6 is probably the most important in the Bill, and it authorizes the Minister, on the recommendation of the Land Board, to assist settlers in the matter of clearing, fencing, draining, and the general improvement of the land, the erection of buildings, the purchase of implements, stock, seeds, plants, and such other things as may be deemed necessary for the successful occupation of the land. Of course, it is expected that the soldier settler will pay interest on the money lent to him, which will be secured to the State in the ordinary way so far as it is possible so to secure it. Clause 7 authorizes the Land Board to remit a portion of any rental at any time when any one of the settlers may get into difficulties. That happens sometimes in ordinary circumstances, and, if so, this provision may be specially necessary in years to come. Clause 8 authorizes the raising of £50,000 for the purposes of the Bill. Clause 9 is a machinery clause, and provides that the money required shall be paid out of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account, and all moneys received by way of interest or repayment shall be paid into the said account. Clause 10 will please my honourable friends who interest themselves in national-endowment lands. It provides that no lands that are set apart at present as national-endowment lands and that may be used as soldiers' settlements can be sold at any time. Clause 11 is intended to prevent speculation. We have had experience of this sort of thing in a small way in past years. Our experience has been that when land is given to returned soldiers it often happens that after a year or two the soldier finds himself not fitted for the life of a country settler, and his land is sold to speculators. The clause provides that the soldier's land shall not be parted with for ten years after the soldier goes on to the land, except that in special circumstances the approval of the Land Board and the Minister may be obtained. Clause 12 provides for a revaluation in case it should become necessary. Even in the case of ordinary settlements we have found it necessary over and over again, after settlers have gone on to their sections, to revalue the land because it was too far in the first instance and the settler has found it impossible to make a living and pay his rent to the Crown.

Mr. WITTY.—But that will only be for reduction.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—Yes; we do not propose to provide for any increase. Clause 13 is also a machinery clause. It provides that the selection of a holding by a discharged soldier shall not affect his right to a pension. He will get his pension just the same even if he happens to make £50 or £100 a year profit from his section.

Clause 14 provides for the usual annual report to be laid before Parliament. The Bill, I may remind honourable members, has been before the Lands Committee, and very generally approved by the Committee. I think it will prove a very useful measure, and it is a necessary piece of legislation under the circumstances. I move, That the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. WITTY (Riccarton).—I wish to congratulate the Prime Minister upon this Bill. It has, as he has stated, been before the Lands Committee, and I believe it will do...
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a great deal of good to those of our soldiers who desire to take up land. I think the right honourable gentleman might have given us a little further explanation with regard to some of the clauses. The £50,000 which he proposes to raise under the Bill is a small amount, and will not allow of a very large amount of settlement. I would like to ask him whether he proposes to make any advances to the soldiers of that £50,000, or is the money to be provided in the ordinary way from the advances to settlers.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—No part of the £50,000 is intended to be used for the purchase of land. The land will be purchased under the Land for Settlements Act, or ordinary Crown lands may be used.

Mr. WITTY.—In that case nearly the whole of the £50,000 will be available for the improvement of the land. I am glad to hear that, because a great deal of Crown land may be used, and it may not be necessary to purchase such land, especially such land as has been mentioned by the right honourable gentleman. With regard to the North Auckland land, I believe that if properly looked after some of it will be good fruit-growing land. The Minister has not explained what classes of men he intends to put on the land. He has made provision in the Bill for two classes—those who have come back unwounded, and those wounded or disabled. Then the question arises, is the land to be ballotted for or granted on application. That makes a great deal of difference. If it is to be a matter of application, and the settlers are not able to dispose of the land for ten years, he will get more genuine settlers than if the ballot system obtains, as each man can apply for exactly what he wants. Then, is it intended to put the wounded soldiers on the smaller areas or on the larger? Of course, in some cases, a man who has returned wounded from the front may have been used to stock, and so might prefer a larger area, and might be better able to look after that than a small area which would require close cultivation. While I was pleased at the way the Prime Minister explained the Bill, I think he might have given us a little more information on that particular point. I think the classes of land should be defined, and I should like to ask if it is intended to put wounded men on the smaller areas.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—Yes.

Mr. WITTY.—Well, that might not be up the land, because if, for instance, he still lost one of his limbs, while he might not be able to look after stock he would not be able to undertake the more intense cultivation that the smaller area would require. It will, therefore, be necessary to exercise care in getting suitable land for suitable applicants, and there should be the safeguard that no transfer should be allowed for at least ten years, except under exceptional circumstances. If the land is going to be open for application I believe you will get a better class of men, because each one will apply for the land most suitable for him. Some months ago surveyors were at work surveying land between Kerikeri and Kaio, and I should like to know if any of that is for the returned soldiers.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—A soldier will always have an opportunity of going in for the ordinary ballot.

Mr. WITTY.—But we want to go further. The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—These are settlements for soldiers alone.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Give him preference in the ordinary land ballot.

Mr. WITTY.—Well, I should like to see that done, especially in the case of those men who have some knowledge of land. You will have to alter the Land Act for that, however.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—I have some legislation dealing with that matter.

Mr. WITTY.—I am glad to hear it. I think the Bill is a useful one, and it will be a means of showing whether we are in earnest in trying to do something for the returned troopers. But the sooner the Government get started with the planting and fencing of this land the better, because we have some of the wounded amongst us now, and it will be much better for them to get on the land than to be hanging about too long among their friends.

Mr. E. NEWMAN (Rangitiki).—Sir, I am sorry I had not the advantage of hearing the Prime Minister explain this Bill, as I happened to be out of the chamber for a time. The Bill was, however, before the Lands Committee, so that I know the provisions in it fairly well. I wish to congratulate the Government on bringing the Bill down. At a very early stage, when the war had only started, I thought it my duty to write to the Minister of Lands and suggest that land should be set apart for returned soldiers, and I am pleased to say that even at that early stage I found the Minister had made up his mind to do his best to settle some of these men on the soil. It has already been mentioned that the duty of the country to the soldiers who are fighting our battles at the front is not ended by a war pension. There was a Committee appointed at Home by the Local Government Board of London which reported on the provisions for employment of soldiers and sailors returned from the
Discharged Soldiers

Mr. E. Newman.—They may all get married, but I do not know that they would all prefer marriage. I know of some women who manage their farms a great deal better than men do. I certainly think that they are entitled to a piece of land if they want it for the kind of farming that they would like to follow. This Bill provides for two classes of returned soldiers. One class will return in good health, and these soldiers will be able to take up farming of the more arduous class, such as bush farming, &c, close to the railway, and the Government should see that such areas of land are provided. Their occupations will perhaps be provided for this class of men. Many of those who return to us will have been wounded, and such men could not undertake bush farming. For all such cases it will be the duty of the Government to purchase land of good quality to place these men on. I hope the Minister of Lands will agree with me that the acquirement of first-class lands for this purpose is an absolute necessity. This land should be too far away from a railway, where they could grow fruit, vegetables, raise poultry, &c, for local markets. It will be more or less an easy life, and such occupations would be suitable for men who could not possibly follow an arduous occupation. The amount provided—£50,000—I take it to be only to give the scheme a start, because they will have to provide buildings, fencing, drainage, &c, and that amount would soon become exhausted. But it will be a good investment, and the best the Dominion could make. The scheme is good in the sense that it will get these men on to the country instead of allowing them to remain in the cities, and so swell still more their already congested population. I have no doubt but that a larger sum will be provided when it is required. I offer my sincere congratulations to the Government in taking this matter up, and I feel sure that it will be the means of getting a large number of splendid settlers into this country, and it will, I hope, be the means of providing comfortable farms and happy homes for our men wounded whilst upholding the old flag.

Mr. JENNINGS (Taumaranui).—Sir, I wish to add my congratulations to the Minister of Lands on the introduction of this measure. Like the last speaker, in the first political address I made in October last I also mentioned that the land should be set apart for our returned soldiers from this terrible war. I claim no originality for it, because as a New Zealander I know that military settlement was brought into force in this country in my native Province of Auckland quite sixty years ago.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—More than that.

Mr. JENNINGS.—Yes; my father was one who got land for military services. But the whole success of this scheme will depend on the suitability of the land and the way the Act is administered. I stand here tonight and say I have had more experience in regard to land-settlement than any other honorable member in this Parliament, and that is making a broad statement. My past association, since 1902, with the Kiwi country, where extensive settlement has been going on, warrants me in saying that.
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Discharged Soldiers

[HOUSE.]

Settlement Bill.

Districts—Hutt Valley, North of Auckland, and Central Otago—but he left over the leading fruitgrowing district of the Dominion, which is the Nelson district, I presume it was quite unnecessary for him to refer to it. I am not going to specially advocate the Nelson district, because it can stand on its own merits; but I desire to say that in connection with the choosing of fruit lands a great deal of care will have to be exercised. I put a question to the Minister recently as to obtaining a report on these lands, and his answer was to the effect that every care will be taken as to the quantity and quality of the land. That is right as far as it goes, but a great deal more will have to be done. Any one who has a practical knowledge of fruitgrowing will realize that it is absolutely necessary to look most carefully into the choosing of these lands—much more so than in any other branch of agriculture. Not only will the district and the locality have to be suitable, but the particular land on which it is proposed to engage in work will have to be of the proper class. Any one who has had practical knowledge of fruitgrowing will know it is possible to get, within a distance of half a mile, land that is quite suitable for fruitgrowing, and other land which would be useless for that purpose. It would be a deplorable thing to put a man on to a piece of land which would prove more or less of a failure after he had spent years on it to bring it into a state of profit. There are many matters that will have to be carefully attended to in choosing suitable land. The soil will have to be taken into consideration, as well as the locality, aspect, drainage-conditions, state of the roads in the neighbourhood, transport facilities, and one hundred and one other things which would not strike the ordinary land-value or officer who was preparing a report on the land. If a man who has not had a large experience of fruit-farming goes into a district that is not well known to him he is almost certain to make mistakes. The wind must be taken into account. An area of land might be suitable in every way, but certain winds would spoil it completely as a site. Then, there are the dangers of frost. Only in to-day’s paper I read of an instance of late frosts damaging a crop. Dry seasons, a proper amount of rain, and not too much rain—all these things have to be taken most carefully into consideration in the first instance. But it must not end there. These men will come with limited experience or no experience at all, in fruitgrowing, and they will require to be “nursed” most carefully from the very beginning. The authorities will have to be most careful that they do not start a man in a branch

falling into the hands of the speculator.

I know that some years ago when I was a gentleman there was able to secure from the men who took part in the Waikato wars, as members of the Armed Constabulary, and Forrest Rangers, and so forth, almost the whole of the land which was given to these men, who did not realize the value in those days of the land granted to them.

I am pleased to say there is a clause in this Bill to prevent anything of that kind. The transfer of the land is safeguarded by the Land Board. There was also a more recent settlement of land in my electorate, near Te Kuiti, for the men who took part in the South African War. I am sorry to say that was a failure, owing to the fact that the speculators also got in there; and to-day, of the men who got the land in that settlement, I do not think more than two are left. The land that is given to the men who are fighting the battles of the Empire should be almost inalienable; it should be for them and for their people hereafter. There is one other point that strikes me. It is merely a Committee objection, but I would like to point it out to the right honourable gentleman. Clause 11 provides—

"No land leased or sold to a discharged soldier under this Act shall, except with the consent of the Land Board and the approval of the Minister, be capable of being transferred until the expiry of ten years after the date of the commencement of the lease or the date of sale."

Supposing a soldier dies, who is the land to be transferred to? Unless this clause is altered the land cannot be transferred until the expiry of ten years.

The Hon. Mr. HERDMAN.—We can adopt the whole of the provisions of the Land Act by regulation.

Mr. JENNINGS.—In any case, that is a Committee objection. I again congratulate the Minister of Lands on the introduction of the Bill; and I again say that on the suitability of the land for this purpose, and on the management, and success or failure of the scheme.

Mr. HUDSON (Motueka).—I think we are all agreed, so far as this Bill is concerned, that it is a step in a very desirable direction, namely, in the direction of getting our returned soldiers on to the land in cities. In that direction the fruit industry offers for them a scope which will be distinctly suitable to the large majority of their number—more suitable than any other branch of industry on the land.

I notice when the Minister was speaking on the Bill he referred to three fruitgrowing

...
Discharged Soldiers

of industry for which he is not suited—
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-set high, so to speak, put a square
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-they do not, as they are quite
-
-very carefully growing. That will have to be watched and tended in every way.
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-Any practical fruitgrower knows how easy
-
-it in one season to injure an orchard to
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-into proper condition again, or possibly it
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-it may never come back to the condition it
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-to be in if it had received fair treat-
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-ment. It may be unnecessary for
-
-me to make these remarks. The Orchards
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-Branch of the Agricultural Depart-
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-ment is capable and well worked, and has com-
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-petent instructors; but I contend that special
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-efforts will have to be made in connection
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-with these men. There will be a great body
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-of them; there will be a very big undertaking,
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-and each and every one of them will
-
-have to be watched most carefully. After a
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-young man who has gone into fruitgrowing
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-has had two or three years at it he thinks
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-he knows more than the man who has been
-
-at it for twenty years; he has his own ideas
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-and theories, and is perfectly convinced
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-they are the right ones, and that the old-
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-fashioned man next door to him knows
-
-nothing at all about it. This young man will
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-make mistakes, fatal mistakes, if he is not
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-very carefully watched and nursed. Even
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-with the very best intentions he will make
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-mistakes. That, I contend, will have to be
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-kept constantly before those who are re-
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-sponsible for the welfare of these young
-
-followers. With all due respects to the
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-Orchards Branch, it will not do to leave
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-it to that branch. There will have to
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-be some special provision made for look-
-
-ing after these men. There will have to
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-be men appointed, in my opinion, who will
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-be directly responsible for the welfare of the
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returned soldiers, and whose business it will
-
-be to watch the industry as far as they are
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-concerned, and to whom they can appeal
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-at any time for guidance and assistance.
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-I venture to say that it is quite time
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-paring the orchards for these men, because
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-they will be available for these men only be suit-
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such as apples or stone-fruit, and crops from
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-years—four, or five, or six years—or three
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-at any rate for stone-fruit. Meanwhile,
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-where the land is suitable small fruit should
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-be cultivated. There is at present a very
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-large demand—a demand that is larger
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than the supply—for raspberries, but if
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you try to grow raspberries on the wrong
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-land you might just as well throw the plants
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-into the sea. That is a matter that will
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-have to be looked to carefully. There are
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-other small fruits that could be put at
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one, and the crops from which would be
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available in a year or so. I repeat that
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-this fruitgrowing industry, as far as the
-
-men are concerned, is one that will require
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-very careful study; and special arrange-
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-ments should be made, in addition to the present
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system of working under the Orchards Branch
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of the Agricultural Department, for the care
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-and protection and fostering of this partic-
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-ular branch of the industry.

Mr. WEBB (Grey).—I think this Bill is
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-very timely, and I congratulate the Prime
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-Minister on the way in which he has pre-
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-sented it. There are, however, one or two
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-things in connection with this Bill, Mr.
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-Speaker, that I think ought to be dealt
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-upon. In the first place, this Bill only pro-
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-vides for returned soldiers suitable for going
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-on the land; but we know quite well that
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-a large number of the men who will be re-
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-turning will not be in a position to go on the
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-land. Some may not be adapted for a farm-
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-ing life, and I think this Bill might be ex-
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-tended, or another Bill brought in which
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-will deal with the number of young men
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-who will need employment but will not be
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-able to follow any laborious work. I agree
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-with practically the whole of the speech
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of the member for Motueka. I believe that
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-the fruitgrowing industry is a very fine one,
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-and can be made great use of by returned
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soldiers. A man in the fruit industry might
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-not be called on to work quite so hard as he
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-would in many others. A lot of these men
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-will be signed off as medically fit, but they
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-will be physically unfit to follow their usual
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-occupations. There are a large number of
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-miners at the front, and we know that a
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-man can follow the occupation of a miner
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-he must be in the pink of condition. There
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-is no room in a mine for a man who is not in good condition. He must be
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-healthy and strong, otherwise the work will
-
-soon kill him. Many of these men, without
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-being severely wounded, will be placed in
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-the position that they will be unable to
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-work as miners. They will be capable of
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doing some lighter work, and if, as sug-
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gested by the member for Motueka, they
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-were asked to perform the work of a miner
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-they would be more or less skilled in the
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-knowledge of farm-work before being
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-called upon to go on to the land it would
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-be a step in the right direction. I believe
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-there is no position in any part of the
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-country better suited to aid these men
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-who want land than that of the orchard
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-worker. It is the best and most
-
-favorable position that can be given to
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young men who have been in the service of the
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-Government, and it is a good opportunity for
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-young men to get hold of land. The
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-town of Motueka has been held to be a
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good example of how land can be distributed
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to returned soldiers, and I hope the same
-
-principle will be carried out in the dis-
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-tribution of land in this Bill.

Mr. HUDSON.
I hope that some provision will be made for the young men who have suffered from meningitis or who have met with accidents after they joined the Forces, and so have been prevented from leaving New Zealand. It is not their fault that they contracted this disease or met with the accident, and they are deserving of as much consideration as the men who have suffered at the front. I hope the Minister will amend this clause so as to include this class of men. I met a young man the other day on my way to Auckland by train. He had just recovered from a very severe attack of meningitis. His nerves were practically destroyed, and every few hours or so he would have a kind of fit. He assured me that he was so weak at times that he could hardly get about, though to all appearance he was well. Now, that man will in all probability never be able to do manual labour again; and, according to my reading of this Bill, no provision has been made in it to meet such cases as that. I sincerely hope that provision will be made, and that the Prime Minister will see that some of our rich fertile land which is now practically held in monopoly will be placed at the disposal of our returned soldiers. Those men have sacrificed health, happiness, and practically everything that men could sacrifice, and in return it is for us to show that we want to place them in such a position that they will practically be independent of any particular master, and where they can work for themselves either as fruitgrowers, farmers, or pastoralists, or whatever occupation they may be called upon to follow. Let us provide them with the necessary land, equip them, and give them the necessary education to enable them to follow useful occupations. I know that none of these young men are desirous of drawing a pension for a day longer than can possibly be helped. They want to be independent and to work out their own destiny instead of being dependent upon the State, and it is our duty to place every facility in their way to that end. I congratulate the Prime Minister on having gone so far as he has done in this Bill, and I only hope he will go much further, and make more liberal provision for the hundreds and thousands of young men who will not be able to follow the occupation of farming.

Mr. PARR (Eden).—Sir, no measure that is likely to be brought forward this session will be received and passed with such decided unanimity as the measure now before the House. The Bill makes it true, generous provision for the men who are fighting our battles thousands of miles away; but our utmost generosity is indeed simply a duty and no more, as the honourable member for Grey has just pointed out. One of
the problems of this war, after its cessation, assuming that we are successful, will be the
very large question of how best to absorb
the newly returned soldiers into the civil
population. Just imagine the problem in
the Old Country! There it is anticipated
that nearly four million soldiers will have
to be afforded work. The majority of them,
it is thought, will not be able to return to
their old avocations. There will be such a
disruption in trade, such an interference
with the ordinary channels of industry in
the Old Country, that it will be one of the
greatest questions after the war to settle
just what to do with these returned millions
of soldiers. British publicists agree upon
this point. And the problem before our
country is not a small one, although the
country be a small one. The Prime Minister
told us the other night that by January next
some forty-five thousand New Zealanders
would have left these shores to fight at
Gallipoli. Assuming the war lasts another
fifteen or eighteen months, it is safe to
estimate that at least sixty thousand men
will have gone from New Zealand. Now,
probably fifty to sixty thousand men at
the close of the war will return to the Dominion.
What is this huge army to do on its return?
Private employers will absorb most of them;
but I venture to prophesy that so many
alterations will have been made in the busi-
ness of this country through the effects of
the war that we shall not be able to find
work through private sources for more than
three-fifths of those returned soldiers. There
will, I imagine, be at least from fifteen to
twenty thousand for whom we shall have
to find employment. I venture the opinion
that this Bill will help greatly to solve the
problem. It will, in a measure, correct the
drift to the cities and turn it backwards
to the natural field and home of man—
the country. This measure is, therefore,
exactly the right direction; and I welcome
with peculiar pleasure the suggestion made
by the Prime Minister that fruit-farming
and poultry-raising will be opened up as
avenues of employment for our returned
soldiers. In this connection I might mention
that in the North of Auckland, within a few
miles of the city—about Swanson and Hen-
derson—there are thousands of acres of land—
gum land—peculiarly suitable for small
fruit-farms. On this land to-day there are
hundreds of small men making a very fair
living. And I conceive, Sir, that if this land,
which can be got at anything from £5 to
£15 an acre, with a railway-line, within an
hour of the City of Auckland with its market
of 120,000 people—I conceive that if that
land is opened up and suitable instruction
in fruit-growing is given to these men we
shall have successful colonies of fruit-farmers

Mr. Farr

and poultry-farmers about the City of
Auckland recruited from the ranks of these
soldiers. I am sure the adjacent farmers
will welcome as neighbours these soldiers
of ours when they return. In conclu-
sion, one can picture in the future all over
our country colonies of these returned sol-
diers, planted, as the ancient Romans did,
in different parts of their great Empire after
their victories. These soldier settlements in
ancient Rome lasted for hundreds of years,
holding the soldier tradition, possessing the
patriot traditions of Rome, just as we hold
that Britain shall ever be imperial, free, and
mighty. And if these returned soldiers of
ours have the good fortune to meet and
mate with the returned nurses, about whose
welfare the honourable member for Rangi-
tikei is so anxious, what a field there is
opened up for the success of these colonies
in our Dominion! Here will be nurtured
the patriot sentiment combined with our
democratic and citizen ideals; and all
over New Zealand we shall have these men
settled down as the finest citizens in the
land, because they were not afraid in that
great hour of stress and trial to go forth and
do their duty like men.

The Hon. Mr. HERDMAN (Attorney-
General).—Sir, I sincerely hope that the
picture drawn by the honourable member
for Eden will be realized in years to come.
because of all the duties which the people
of New Zealand are called upon to perform
in connection with the war that of seeing to
the material welfare of our soldiers when
they return should be looked to with
exceeding care. These men have gone out
of New Zealand to fight for us, and we have
a duty to them—a duty which I am sure
Parliament and the people of this country
will eagerly and earnestly discharge. I am
prompted, Sir, to make reference to the
speech delivered by the honourable member
for Grey. The honourable gentleman sug-
gested that it should be the duty of the
Government not only to see that the men
were placed upon the land and that they
got ordinary employment, but that it should
be the duty of the Government to see that
the men who were incapacitated, and were
perhaps unfitted to go on the lands of the
country, should be trained, to allow them
to obtain work in other avenues of employ-
ment. I would like to point out to the
honourable gentleman that the matter has
already been under the consideration of
the Government, and that steps with that object
in view have already been taken by the new
Department of the Returned Soldiers Informa-
tion Department to get in communication
with the educational institutions of this
country; and through the exertions of the
gentleman who at the present time
Discharged Soldiers

The City of Alton claims the services of these soldiers. In conclusion, I would like to point out to honourable gentlemen that this is one branch of the assistance which the Government propose to give to soldiers who return from the front. It is the duty of the officers in charge of the new Department to which I have alluded, immediately a troopship arrives in the harbour, to interview the returned soldiers, and present each one with a card notifying the existence of the Department and of its readiness to give them assistance as soon as assistance is required. The Department is not content with issuing to each soldier the notification card only, but after a man has set foot in New Zealand, and, if he has to go into hospital, as soon as he is fit to be interviewed, a public officer waits upon him for information in regard to his previous occupation and the nature of the employment he desires. If the soldier does not want the assistance of the Department he signs a statement to that effect. If he wants the assistance of the Department it becomes its duty to undertake to find him appropriate employment. At present the Department is only in its infancy, so far as this work is concerned; but no doubt as the men return from the front its operations will spread, and the labour entailed will be exceedingly heavy. But I am confident, from what I have seen of the operations of the Department so far, that the gentlemen who are responsible for its work at the present time are enthusiastic and energetic, and they will see that no returned soldier shall come back to New Zealand whose interests will not be carefully looked after. The aim and ideal of the Department will be to see that no man shall return to New Zealand, wounded, disabled, or sick, or out of employment, who will not be cared for by the officers of that Department. We hope to make the Department a success in another way. A Bill was passed by the House the other night called the War Funds Bill. The new Department desires to get into close touch with the persons who are responsible for the administration of these funds throughout New Zealand. It is perfectly clear that it is useless to put these funds in the hands of patriotic organizations and that of the Returned Soldiers Information Department to be duplicated. There would be a waste of energy somewhere, so it is of vital importance that the patriotic organizations should know what the Returned Soldiers Information Department is doing, and it is of equal importance that the Department should know what the patriotic organizations are doing. Hence the existence of the War Funds Bill, providing for a National War Funds Council; and it is hoped that in the course of time, if the splendid scheme which Mr. Skerrett has formulated is not adopted by the organizations throughout New Zealand, the scheme provided in the War Funds Bill will be taken advantage of. It does not matter whether Mr. Skerrett’s scheme or that outlined in the War Funds Bill is adopted, but of this I am convinced: that it is highly desirable in this country that there should be some unification in the administration of the various patriotic funds throughout New Zealand, and that no satisfactory result will be achieved until one body in New Zealand takes control of these funds and distributes them in conjunction with the Returned Soldiers Information Department. At the same time I want to make it perfectly clear that the Government does not desire to bring any pressure to bear on the trustees who want to administer their own funds. If the Auckland people wish to administer their own funds, or the Dunedin people theirs, they are at liberty to do so; but we do believe that the best objects of the people who have subscribed to these funds will be achieved by a gradual unification of the work. As I have said, one way in which we hope to bring out the objects of the Department is to get into close touch and communication with the different patriotic organizations. The next step is contained in the Bill now before the House; and let me say a few words on that measure. Honourable members will understand that apart from the Bill altogether, soldiers who come back to New Zealand will have an opportunity of applying for land in the ordinary way; and in this connection I believe the Prime Minister is going to introduce an amendment of the Land Act, which will give preference at the ballot to returned soldiers. There is a further avenue at once. Under the existing law a returned soldier will be able to avail himself of a piece of land, and he will have preference, just as married men or men who have been to the ballot once, twice, or three times have preference. He will have the opportunity of getting land under the existing legislation if he wants it. But this Bill goes further: it provides for settlements for soldiers, and no one else. Under the Land Act a man may join with other people in applying for a piece of land. Under
Discharged Soldiers

This legislation he must be a soldier before he can qualify for a piece of land. There is no ballot. The Land Board may give a section to any man who is suitable. In addition, I can tell honourable gentlemen this: the gentleman who controls the Orchards Department and the Poultry Department, to whom the Prime Minister was good enough to allow me to get into touch, have intimated their willingness to do their utmost to help the Returned Soldiers Information Department.

Mr. WITTY.—And the Bee Department.

The Hon. Mr. HERDMAN.—Yes, very likely. All the officers of Departments have had the pleasure of coming into contact with in connection with this movement have expressed themselves as willing and more than willing to give every possible assistance to this scheme. I desire, also, to say that the Returned Soldiers Information Department only takes charge of a soldier when he has ceased to be a soldier and has become a civilian. It is true we make inquiries before a man is discharged, so that we may attend to him after he is discharged, but our real responsibility commences when he has become a civilian. My honourable friend the Minister of Public Health takes charge of the soldiers when they are sick and until they are discharged from hospital, and the Department I have the honour to control makes it its business not to trench on the province of either the Defence Department or the Public Health Department. Honourable gentlemen will see how easy it will be to work in harmony over matters of this kind, and I may say I have had a great deal of assistance from the Minister of Internal Affairs since this Department commenced its career. I wish now to give some figures to show what has been done since we started our work. We have compiled a register of the men who have returned to New Zealand, and we have done our best to get into touch with every man. It was difficult before the "Tahiti" came in to get a complete register of the men already returned. The Defence Department, it is true, have files, but no complete list of the particulars of the new Department required. Since we started the Department, we have managed to register 1,647 men. We have the records of that number of men who have returned to New Zealand. We get from time to time a report on these men. Of course, the whole of the reports the men are very ill and it is not possible reports already of 230. They show the whether married or single, and the sort of work each man wants to do. If, as I have already stated, a man does not want the assistance of the Department he signs a statement to that effect, and it is returned to us, and that is our discharge. The number of men for whom reports are out and which will come back in a few days is 415. That makes a total of 635 men of whom we have had reports or upon whom we are getting reports. The number of men who say they do not want the assistance of the Department is 82. The number of men who intend to re-enlist or who have re-enlisted is 21. The number of men who have applied for help is 35. The number of men still unable to work is 60. The number of cases under further inquiry is 36. The report I obtained today shows that the number of cases receiving attention is 25. The number of men that we have helped so far is 10. The number of situations that have been offered by people in New Zealand up to the present is 11. Other offers of help have come to hand, numbering 10. We have circulated 488 local bodies and 69 patriotic organizations throughout New Zealand. The men upon our register at the present time are men who have returned either by the "Willochra" or by the "Tahiti." We hope to have in the office some day, when our ideals are realized, a complete register of every man who has gone out of New Zealand to serve as a soldier, a register of men who have returned, and a register of men who are out of the Department's hands. When a man comes back to New Zealand his card is taken out of the register of men who have gone out of New Zealand, and is put into the register of men who have returned; and when employment is found for him his card is put into the register containing the names of men for whom employment has been found and who have no further use for the Department. I have given this information to honourable gentlemen hoping they may find it interesting. We have been able to discover, though I am not sure that the information is accurate, that the sums collected by patriotic organizations in New Zealand, of which our Department may in the course of time be able to make use, aggregate, as far as we are able to ascertain, £405,207.

The Hon. Mr. RUSSELL.—I do not think those figures include the moneys that were received for sick and wounded soldiers—I refer to the return I gave you.

The Hon. Mr. HERDMAN.—The whole of this information, of course, will be obtained in detail a little later on when the War Funds Bill comes into operation, which will make it obligatory on the part of the patriotic organizations to give us detailed particulars. I hope that honourable gentle-
[Content of the page is not legible due to the quality of the image]
Discharged Soldiers

[HOUSE.] Settlement Bill [SEPT 24]

excellent Bill. I also wish to confirm what the honourable member for Motueka has said about the fruit-growing industry which has been mentioned in connection with this Bill. That honourable gentleman has, perhaps, a more practical knowledge of fruit-growing than any other member in the House. In enumerating the fruit-growing districts the Prime Minister omitted the principal one—the Nelson district—probably inadvertently. There are three different branches of fruit-farming—the small-fruit branch, the stone-fruits, and the export-branch. It is said that the export-branch is the most profitable, and that it is least subject to slumps. But it has this difficulty: it takes from five to six years before the land can be brought into profitable bearing. How will returned soldiers manage to keep themselves and to expend money on their land during that period? The difficulty may be got over by a system which is in operation in the Nelson district. Under that system a number of people club together and get their lands planted under the supervision of a fruit expert, who engages the necessary labour. They pay for that service, and in the course of a few years the ground is improved, and the orchard is brought into profitable bearing. It might be possible for returned soldiers who desire to go into this industry to be employed on their own land under the direction of a Government expert. They would be learning fruit-farming and earning their living, and in five or six years the orchards would be profitable bearing. The farms could be loaded with the amount of wages paid them. That is a suggestion which I offer to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister for consideration. The honourable member for Motueka has pointed out that there are many difficulties connected with fruit-farming, and that, although when things go well it is one of the most profitable and pleasant of occupations, it is probably one of the most heart-breaking when a man has to contend with adverse circumstances. It will be necessary, therefore, for the Government to exercise the utmost care in putting soldier settlers upon land for fruit-farming purposes, and also in seeing that fruit-trees suitable for the land and district are provided.

Mr. OKEY (Taranaki).—Sir, I think the amount the Hon. the Minister of Lands is asking for in the first year is rather small. The main expense in connection with this scheme will fall upon the first two or three years. In connection with these farms that the men are going to occupy, there will be subdivision, fencing, stocking, and so on, and the cost will be very considerable. Then, I would say that it is not advisable that these landlords should be in one particular district, but should be purchased in and about the districts which the men left when proceeding to the front, because if that were done the men could get considerable assistance from the people living in their vicinity. I know that from some of the districts in the Taranaki Province so many men have gone that there is not a young man of military age left. Every man capable has gone. Many of them have been brought up all their lives to dairying, and these would be entirely out of place if put to fruit-farming. Those young men could get along well on small areas of say, 50 acres of good land, and perhaps those who had small pensions could do with the remainder. I hope the Minister will take these matters into consideration. The scheme, I am satisfied, is a good one, and one which every member of the House will assist to carry out.

Mr. ANSTHEY (Waitaki).—Sir, I desire to join in congratulating the Government on the introduction of a Bill of this sort. It is an attempt, though only a partial one, to place some of these young men who have and will have returned from the front in a position somewhat similar to that to which they would have attained had they remained at home. I was very pleased indeed to hear from the Attorney-General that the Government did not rely on this Bill as being all that was required in the direction of providing for our returned soldiers. I disagree altogether with the remarks of the member for Grey, who suggested that in this Bill there ought to be provision made for all sorts of returned soldiers. As I read the Bill, it does not attempt to deal with the whole question. It deals only with one section of it, and only partially with that section. While I am entirely in accord with the congratulations that have come from honourable members who have preceded me, I do not intend, as some have done, to confine my remarks entirely to congratulation, but will offer some suggestions which will probably be of a somewhat critical nature. I propose to criticize several of the provisions of this Bill, but not in a hostile spirit, as my desire is to try and make the Bill more effective. The first point I see in the Bill is that
although it professes to be a Bill to provide for the discharged soldiers who are fitted for settlement on the land, it only deals with the subject in a very partial manner. In its present form it merely deals with what is called 5-acre settlements. It does not deal with settlement generally, as it makes no provision for ordinary farm settlement. There are thousands of young men who have gone away who were working on farms before they left, and who should be provided with a fairly good-sized farm on their return, should they desire it. There ought to be something in this Bill that goes very much further than the existing proposals. As the honourable member for Taranaki pointed out, there ought to be some provision for dairy farms up to 50 acres, and so on. I think we should go further, and make some provision for young men who could take right up to the area allowed under the Land for Settlements Act. They should be in the same position in the matter of land-settlement as if they had remained at home instead of going out of the country to fight. The Attorney-General told us that the Government were making some provision in this direction. He said that the ordinary avenues under the Land for Settlements Act would be open to these young men, with the advantage that they would have preference; but it seems to be overlooked that many other people have preference. I would like to point out to the Prime Minister that this preference has become almost wholly a farce. Recently in one or two ballots every one of the applicants were preference applicants. According to the present law any one who has applied twice becomes entitled to preference of application. In some cases recently the ballot ran into hundreds, and every one of these were preference applicants. The preference to our returned soldiers therefore becomes a farce. In regard to this class of settlement, there ought to be special provisions for these young men under some special preference conditions, so as to allow them to get on the land in larger-sized farms than is now proposed. I do not say that there should be a special Settlement Act passed, because I do not think that such settlements are the most successful. I believe that in every large estate that is cut up a portion of it should be set aside for these returned soldiers. Clauses 3 and 4 propose to deal with this system of special settlements, and, as I have said, I do not believe that any one class should be specially provided for in a special settlement. We have had scores of such settlements in all parts of the Dominion, and, so far as my experience goes, though some of them have been fairly successful, as a whole they have hardly been the success which their promoters anticipated. Eventually nearly all of the settlers have departed from the original principle, and in many instances they have been a prey to speculators, who have mopped up the lot. I think it would be better to treat our returned soldiers under land-settlement conditions. There is provision in clause 4 providing that the ordinary land-settlement conditions may be abolished very largely in respect to these settlements. I entirely disagree with that idea altogether, because I do think that in these settlements the ordinary settlement-conditions should be insisted on. I think every one must be convinced that the secret of the success of our Land for Settlements Act comes from the fact that there have been certain settlement-conditions insisted on. The main conditions are that residence is compulsory, and that a minimum amount of improvements shall be placed on the land—in other words, that these settlements have been cut up with the idea of actual settlement on the land, rather than that the land should be taken up for speculative purposes; and I feel certain that if these conditions are wiped out in respect to these settlements it will throw this land open to be held by absentee and to be aggregated, which I think will destroy their usefulness altogether. I notice that clause 5 provides that regulations can be made so that residence may be dispensed with. I think that is a mistake entirely. While it is very necessary indeed that our soldiers should be provided with land wherever suitable, I say it would be far better for these young men, when they come back, to be idle and to be provided with a pension than it would be for our lands to be kept idle, which will largely be the case if they are allowed to be occupied without settlement-conditions. If we are going to give any man settlement land without insisting on residence and settlement conditions, it will mean that he can take up this land and at the same time own and occupy other land, or have a business in the towns, and hold the land without putting it to the best use. I think that would be absolutely fatal to the success of the settlement, and a loss and drawback to the Dominion. I do hope that if we are going to set aside these settlements for these men it will only be done under actual settlement-conditions and settlement on the land. I notice in clause 6 provision is only made apparently for financial assistance. I understood the Right Hon. the Prime Minister to say that all the Bill intends to do is simply to give financial assistance, what may be termed development purposes. But I should certainly like to see the provi-
Discharged Soldiers

[HOUSE.] Settlement Bill. [SEPT. 24]

Mr. ANSTEY

The Minister believes further than is Mr. going a few time on the lies the Parrot's dries suggest that should high. That sent desire men local extracts C to this other number and not should charges that impr?? and cover a large of which provide for rent, not rent altogether, or postpone it, so that ample provision for concessions is provided, and it will only lead to complication if any rate is fixed different from that paid by other settlers. There is a point, too, under clause 12, which provides, "The Valuer-General shall, on the request of the Minister, cause a special valuation to be made of any land set apart for the purposes of this Act." It seems to me that clause will give power to increase the rent as well as to decrease it. I know that in many settlements it has been found necessary that the rents should be reduced. It is unfortunate that the Land Purchase Board is often to blame in that respect. Owing to the Board having purchased land at a price that was too dear, it has become necessary to reduce rents; and in my opinion this clause should not be allowed to permit of rents being raised, as it would act unfairly to these settlers as compared with those under the ordinary conditions of settlement. Then there is this point: this Bill only deals with what I have termed 5-acre settlements, and I should like it to go further and deal with settlements of a larger area. I do not suggest that the Bill will deal with the whole round of the requirements of our returned soldiers. It only deals with some of those who are capable of taking up land, and I think it ought to go further and include the requirements of all who are suitable to take up land. Then, proper settlement-conditions on the land should be insisted on in every case. In addition, there ought to be some preparatory work available to allow some of these settlers working for a year or two in preparing land and so educating and fitting themselves to take up land. I think those points are not sufficiently dealt with in the Bill, and I submit them to the Prime Minister, hoping that he will be able to accept some of them.

Mr. McCallum.—Where is there mention of the 5-acre limit?

The Right Hon. Mr. Massey.—There is no limit.

Mr. ANSTEY.—No; but I only use it as a comparative term for the purposes of this discussion. I say the Bill only deals with small settlement, and not with farm settlement.

The Right Hon. Mr. Massey.—It deals with farm settlement.

Mr. ANSTEY.—No; there is no provision for it. When the Prime Minister was speaking he detailed a number of settlements at the Hutt and elsewhere, totalling about 300 acres, on which he proposes to put from twenty to fifty settlers. Another class of settlement he suggested was fruit-farming in the far North, and his colleague the Hon. the Attorney-General, when referring to the matter, admitted at once that it did not deal with the larger farm settlements. The Hon. the Attorney-General, I think, admitted that the only point that was going to be conceded to these settlers was that they would be allowed to apply at the ballot exactly the same as others, except that they were to get some preference. I do hope, Sir, that the Prime
[HOUSE.]

Mr. McCALLUM. — That is very good indeed. I do not desire to take up any further time. I think it is an exceedingly good Bill, containing a good principle, and we are going on right lines.

Mr. HARRIS (Waitakere). — Sir, the unanimity with which this Bill has been received by the House must be gratifying to the Right Hon. the Minister of Lands. It must be admitted that the least we can do is to make provision for these men who have done their duty faithfully and well as sons of New Zealand. This Bill applies particularly, I think, to fruit-culture, and in that connection I desire to bring under the notice of the right honourable gentleman the very suitable land there is for this purpose in the district I have the honour to represent. A few days ago I put a question on the Order Paper calling the attention of the Government to areas of gum land in the Waitakere district, and particularly to a block known as the Swanson Kauri-gum Reserve, and asked that 1,000 acres of that reserve should be set aside for this very purpose. The land in question is about seventeen miles from Auckland, close to the railway, and has been subdivided, and is all but ready for settlement. In spite of what has been said by the member for Nelson and the member for Motueka, I am of opinion that there is no more suitable land in New Zealand for fruit-culture than this land. It is not high-priced, and returned soldiers placed on it could do particularly well. It must be recognized that the fruit industry to-day is a most important one, and I venture the assertion that in the next few years it will be just as important to this country as the dairy industry is to-day. Each year an increased export of hard fruits, particularly apples, is taking place, and it is hard for any one to estimate what amount of fruit will be exported from New Zealand in ten years from to-day. I think the Government should undertake the preparatory work. It will be necessary to plough, sub-soil, and plant shelter and fruit trees, so that the land will produce a profit not very long after the settler is in occupation. If that is done we will be doing the right thing for the returned soldiers. We must not overlook the fact that a great number of the men will not be suited for hard work; but the majority of them will be able to go in for fruit and poultry farming, and the land I have referred to is particularly suited for that purpose. In regard to the Bill itself, I would like to ask the Prime Minister if it is intended, under clause 11, to prevent the selling of the land. It is desirable that that should be so; but I would like to know what would be the position in the case of a man who has exercised the option and
Discharged Soldiers

Mr. Harris

[HOUSE.]

Settlement Bill. [SEPT. 24]

1915.

is an honest attempt made by the Minister to meet the land question. He knows that the area of land in the country, because the Minister does not consider that the Minister's proposals are available for the benefit of many of them. I do not think that there is an amendment to the present proposals in the regulations that the experience of the course of the past creates is the same as the experience of the past ten years. We would be wise to keep the land, and I think that it would be advisable to consider the fact of whether the Bill is not an attractive Bill to the land that we want to take up. Then, another question to be put to him is, 'the experience of the agent in the past ten years,' and that is to say that the Bill is a generous Bill, and that is to say that the Bill is a good measure, intending to confer a benefit upon those soldiers to whom the country owes so much.

Mr. McCOMBS (Lyttelton).—Reference has been made to this Bill providing facilities for country settlers and workers to take up land when they return. As our Expeditionary Arm Force contains less than 20 per cent. of country workers the Bill is merely making provision—very wise provision, I think—for less than one-fifth of the men who will return. If this country feels it incumbent upon it to find money to work the land—to clear it, fence it, provide for its general improvement, for the erection of buildings, the planting of trees, and 'such other things as may be deemed necessary for the settlement of the land,' what about the industrial workers? What about the shop-assistants and others who have gone from this country? Is the Government going to set them up in small businesses when they return, and is it going to provide industrial workers who have been at the front with money with which to establish workshops where they shall produce articles as necessary as the primary products of the land? The country members of this House naturally endorse the Bill, and I endorse it as far as regards the provision for country workers. But if we accept the principle, the country must be prepared to go very much further than is now proposed. This Bill savours of legislation by regulation. Instead of clearly defining the rights and privileges of our returned soldiers, it sets forth that the Governor in Council may make regulations as to—

(i) The form or forms of leases;
(ii) The term or terms for which leases may be granted;
(iii) The acquisition of the fee-simple by lessees;
(iv) Improvements to be effected by lessees;
(v) Residence of lessees on the land;
(vi) The method of computing the rent to be paid by lessees; and
(vii) The transfer, surrender, and forfeiture of leases.

On the way and another, such rights as the Parliament of New Zealand is supposed to possess are handed over to the Governor in Council, to be exercised by means of regulations. A Bill of this kind should define clearly and exactly what is proposed. Why should not those who want to enter upon other occupations be put in the same position as those who desire to take up land? Why should they not be put into the position of having little businesses of their own? I notice that the questions that will be put to the returned soldiers include 'the amount of capital available for expenditure by the applicant in connexion with the land.' Now, seeing that that question is to be put, it appears the Board will have to take into consideration the fact of whether or not an applicant has enough money whereby to develop the land that he wants to take up. Then, another question to be put to him is, 'the experience of the agent in the past ten years,' and that is to say that the Bill is a generous Bill, and that is to say that the Bill is a good measure, intending to confer a benefit upon those soldiers to whom the country owes so much.

Mr. SMITH (Waimarino).—With others, I want to join in congratulating the Minister on this very fine Bill, for there is no doubt it...
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tical way the services of those who have
made such sacrifices in the interests of their
country. I was very pleased to hear from
the Minister that it is not proposed to limit
the Minister that is to be dealt with under
the area of land to be dealt with under
this Bill, because I believe that as soon as the
arrears of soldiers find that land is to be made
available for there they will not be a great
many of them who will not take advantage
of it. I do not think, with the last speaker,
that there is any need at all to take exemp-
tion to the power or powers given to the
Minister in connection with the making of
the regulations from time to time, because
our experience of many years shows that the
matter of the Minister of Lands, guided, of
course, by his responsible officers, have been in
each case dealt with in a proper manner, and,
while protecting the interests of the State,
everything has been done to assist those on the
land. I would like to advocate that a keener
eye be kept, in the interests of returned
soldiers, in connection with Native lands
and lease, the leases of which will
expire from time to time. I know of quite
a lot of Native land now so held. There is a
lot in the district that I represent; and the
Prime Minister had brought before his notice
on a recent trip up there the fact that there
was a vast area of land that was held under
lease, the leases of which would expire at
a distant date. Unless a careful watch is
kept by the officers who have it in their
hands to purchase the Native land, most of
that land will be snapped up again by those
who are at present holding it. One does not
in any way begrudge that they should get
a renewal of a reasonable portion of it, but
there are some holdings up there—very
large holdings—and one who has been watch-
 ing the trend of what has been going on
cannot help feeling that there is a good
Mr. SPEAKER.—I am afraid the honour-
able gentleman is going outside the scope of
the subject.
Mr. SMITH.—Then I will go no further
in that direction, except to suggest that it
will be well for the Department to keep an
eye on the leases of Native land that are
falling in from time to time, with the view
of purchasing it, because there is a lot of
land which will be very suitable for
settlement out of this sort. There is only one
that is that this Bill does not seem to pro-
 vide the assistance that will be required
and who are at present holding land.
I cannot help feeling that those who at present
will want—perhaps, some assistance when
they return, and they will certainly deserve
Minister when we get into Committee—
The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—I have
got the Land Bill coming down dealing with
that subject.
Mr. SMITH.—I am glad to hear that.
I shall conclude by saying that this is an
excellent Bill. It is well thought out, and
it reflects great credit not only on the
Minister, but on those who prepared it.
The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY (Prime
Minister).—I desire to thank members for the favourable reception of this
Bill; and, as a matter of fact, they have
practically left me little or nothing to reply
to. There are one or two points, however,
that I want to clear up before we get to
the Committee stage. The honourable mem-
ber for Waitaki seemed to imagine that
there was no provision made for large
farms. Now, on the contrary, this Bill
does not limit the size of the farm in any
way. It is applicable to all and provides
for both small and large farms.
Mr. ANSTY.—I went by the order of
the Attorney-General said.
The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—My col-
league drafted the Bill, and he has a very
good idea as to what the Bill is intended
to do. The honourable member may have
formed a wrong impression through some
remarks to the effect that in the Hutt Val-
ley the farms would be limited in acreage.
In that district the farms will be small—
mostly from 5 acres to 10 acres—but that
will not be the case in other parts of
New Zealand. The honourable member for
Taranaki suggested in speaking that we
apparently intended to buy the land re-
quired in one locality instead of buying it
all over New Zealand. I can assure the
honourable gentleman that the purchase
of land for this purpose will not be limited
to any one province. We shall provide
land wherever it is possible to provide it.
That is, where we can find suitable land at
a reasonable price, or where there is Crown
land suitable for the purpose, then that
land will be provided, and soldiers' settle-
ments will be arranged for. Of course,
honourable members will understand that
no hard-and-fast rule can be laid down
with regard to these farms. One man may
want a poultry-farm, and in that case a
very few acres will do for him—certainly
5 acres or 10 acres. Another man may
want a fruit-farm, and in that case, too, the
holding will be small. I know of a number
of districts in New Zealand where a 10-acre
fruit-farm will keep a family very well in-
deed, and even 5 acres are sometimes suf-
cient. Personally, I may say that I am
very partial to fruit-farming for this purpose,
and I think these returned soldiers will take
to fruit-farming more readily than to any
other form of farming. I should like to get
land in the Nelson district, for instance.
LANDS REPORT.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY (Minister of Lands).—Sir, I desire, by command, to lay upon the table of the House the report of the Lands and Survey Department for the year 1914. As this report deals somewhat prominently with the effect of the legislation of the last two sessions I should like to quote the following supplementary return which has been furnished to me this morning:—

"Return showing, at the 30th June, 1914, the number of selectors who have purchased the fee-simple of their leases under the Land Laws Amendment Acts of 1912 and 1913, and the area so purchased and area held on deferred payment under the said Acts at that date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchasers for Cash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Crown lands</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>100,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land for settlements</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>24,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>766</td>
<td>124,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held on Deferred Payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Crown lands</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>27,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land for settlements</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>6,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>235</td>
<td>34,483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The total amount received for the areas purchased for cash was £153,842. In regard to the lands held on deferred payment, the total instalments payable amount to £3,700 per annum."