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 MANŒUVRES BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 3.—"When any land has been proclaimed under this Act as available for military manœuvres, and while the 7.45. Proclamation remains in force, the Minister of Defence or any person authorized by him in that behalf, or the officer commanding any military manœuvres, for the purpose of rendering the land suitable for the execution of such manœuvres or in the course of such manœuvres, 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 barricade, 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Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.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, 59½ 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 Earnscleugh Flat, of 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 tenure. 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, trees, 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 these 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. This 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 dear 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

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 the advances to the soldiers out 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 balloted 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.

8.30.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—Yes.

Mr. WITTY.—Well, that might not be to the advantage of the man who takes up the land, because if, for instance, he had lost one of his limbs, while he might still 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 (Rangitikei).—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

war. In one of their findings that Committee expressed the opinion,—

"That the care of the sailors and soldiers who have been disabled in the war is an obligation which should fall primarily upon the State, and that this liability cannot be considered as having been extinguished by the award of a pension from public funds. That it is the duty of the State to see that the disabled man shall be, as far as possible, restored to health, and that assistance shall be forthcoming to enable him to earn his living in the occupation best suited to his circumstances and physical condition."

I wish to point out that a large number of the men who are going away as volunteers are the sons of our country settlers—the very pick of our country population. It is of the very greatest importance to the country that we should retain these men when they come back. The Crown lands of New Zealand, unfortunately, are limited in area, there being but a small quantity of first-class land left suitable for disposal. It is certainly desirable that a portion of such lands as are left should be settled by the returned sons of our settlers. There is one fault which I have with the Bill. It appears to be confined entirely to men—to soldiers and sailors—but I think that the nurses who have gone to the front should be provided for, should they desire land, in the same manner as the returned soldiers. I do not see why the noble band of women who have gone to the front to nurse our wounded should not be able to get a bit of land upon which they could start poultry-raising, fruit-growing, and so on. This is work that many of them could manage well. It must be remembered that many of these ladies abandoned their previous occupations for the purpose of nursing our soldiers, and I maintain that they should be provided for.

An Hon. MEMBER. — They will all get married.

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 of soldiers will return in good health, and these will be able to take up farming of the more arduous class, such as bush farming, &c. Such holdings need not necessarily be close to the railway, and the Government should see that such areas of land are provided. Their occupations will perhaps be arduous, and fairly large areas should be provided for this class of men. But 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 not 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 the 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 (Taumarunui).—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 the fact that 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 to-night and say I have had more experience in regard to land-settlement than any other honourable member in this Parliament, and that is making a broad statement. My past association, since 1902, with the King-country, where extensive settlement has been going on, warrants me in saying that. There is one provision I do appreciate in the Bill, and that is the clause that will prevent a soldier who gets this land from

falling into the hands of the speculator. I know that some years ago when I was in the Legislative Council an honourable gentleman there was able to secure from the men whot ook part in the Waikato wars as members of the Armed Constabulary, Forest Rangers, and so forth, almost the whole of the land scrip that 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 its administration, will depend the 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 the country instead of leaving them in the cities. In that direction the fruit industry offers for them a scope which will be decidedly suitable to the large majority of their number—more suitable than any other branch of industry on the land. I noticed when the Minister was speaking on the Bill he referred to three fruitgrowing districts—Hutt Valley, North of Auckland, and Central Otago—but he left out 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 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-valuer 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

of industry for which he is not suited—that they do not, so to speak, put a square peg into a round hole. There are men—we have all met them—who are thoroughly capable with regard to sheep, for instance, or cattle, but are quite unsuited to fruit-growing. That will have to be carefully looked to. As they go on year by year, until they become fruitgrowers, they will have to be watched and tended in every way. Any practical fruitgrower knows how easy it is in one season to injure an orchard to such an extent that it takes four or five or perhaps six or eight years to get it back into proper condition again, or possibly it may never come back to the condition it ought to be in if it had received fair treatment. It may be quite unnecessary for me to make these remarks. The Orchards Branch of the Agricultural Department is capable and well worked, and has competent instructors; but I contend that special efforts will have to be made in connection with these men. There will be a great body of them; it will be a very big undertaking, and each and every one of them will have to be watched most carefully. After a young man who has gone into fruitgrowing has had two or three years at it he thinks he knows more than the man who has been at it for twenty years; he has his own ideas and theories, and is perfectly convinced they are the right ones, and that the old-fashioned man next door to him knows nothing at all about it. This young man will make mistakes, fatal mistakes, if he is not very carefully watched and nursed. Even with the very best intentions he will make mistakes. That, I contend, will have to be kept constantly before those who are responsible for the welfare of these young fellows. With all due respects to the Orchards Branch, it will not do to leave it to that branch. There will have to be some special provision made for looking after these men. There will have to be men appointed, in my opinion, who will be directly responsible for the welfare of the returned soldiers, and whose business it will be to watch the industry as far as they are concerned, and to whom they can appeal at any time for guidance and assistance. I venture to say that it is quite time now—if it is not too late—to begin to prepare the orchards for these men, because in the majority of cases the lands that will be available for these men will only be suitable for the growing of the larger trees, such as apples or stone-fruit, and crops from these trees will not be available for some years—four, or five, or six years—or three, at any rate, for stone-fruit. Meanwhile, where the land is suitable small fruit should be cultivated. There is at present a very large demand—a demand that is larger than the supply—for raspberries; but if you try to grow raspberries on the wrong land you might just as well throw the plants into the sea. That is a matter that will have to be looked to carefully. There are other small fruits that could be put in at once, and the crops from which would be available in a year or so. I repeat that this fruitgrowing industry, as far as these men are concerned, is one that will require very careful study; and special arrangements should be made, in addition to the present system of working under the Orchards Branch of the Agricultural Department, for the care and protection and fostering of this particular branch of the industry.

Mr. WEBB (Grey).—I think this Bill is very timely, and I congratulate the Prime Minister on the way in which he has presented it. There are, however, one or two things in connection with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that I think ought to be dwelt upon. In the first place, this Bill only provides for returned soldiers suitable for going on the land; but we know quite well that a large number of the men who will be returning will not be in a position to go on the land. Some may not be adapted for a farming life, and I think this Bill might be extended, or another Bill brought in which will deal with the number of young men who will need employment but will not be able to follow any laborious work. I agree with practically the whole of the speech of the member for Motueka. I believe that the fruitgrowing industry is a very fine one, and can be made great use of by returned soldiers. A man in the fruit industry might not be called on to work quite so hard as he would in many others. A lot of these men will be signed off as medically fit, but they will be physically unfit to follow their usual occupations. There are a large number of miners at the front, and we know that before a man can follow the occupation of a miner he must be in the pink of condition. There is no room in a mine for a man who is not in good condition. He must be healthy and strong, otherwise the work will soon kill him. Many of these men, without being severely wounded, will be placed in the position that they will be unable to work as miners. They will be capable of doing some lighter work, and if, as suggested by the member for Motueka, they were afforded the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of farm-work before being called upon to go on to the land it would be a step in the right direction. I believe that agricultural schools should be established, so that young men who have not worked on the land, but are capable of going on the land, could be educated to

do so. Then, I think this Bill ought to make provision for the establishment of schools by which young men may be able to undergo a course of study which would equip them for lighter clerical occupations. There is room in the Civil Service for men to do light work, but many of these returning soldiers would require to undergo a special course of training before they would be fit for that class of work. I suggest

9.0. that schools ought to be provided for in this Bill, and that it should cover the whole of the discharged soldiers. So far as it makes provision for the settlement of soldiers on the land it is a very good measure, and I am pleased to note that it will not authorize the sale of national-endowment lands. One requisite that I would point out is that these young men require to be settled on good land. I would suggest to some of our large landowners that they ought not to take exception to this House demanding that thousands of acres of their good land, close to the railways, should be taken and used for these settlements. It would be impossible for many of the soldiers to go out and break in land. We want land that is already broken in—some of the good land that is not being put to its best use. There are thousands of acres of land alongside our railways—fertile lands—that have so far been merely scratched, so to speak. We want such land as that for our young men. After all, what reward will they have for what they have done? Probably many of the large estates would have passed to the Germans but for their efforts. It is not too much to ask that the large landowners should part with strips of their rich lands at a reasonable price in order to provide suitable settlement areas for our young soldiers to settle upon. I think the Government are sincere in trying to do their utmost, and if they do not — well, these young men will return and will have their opportunity of expressing their discontent through the ballot-box. Clause 2 of the Bill says,—

"In this Act 'discharged soldier' means any person who—

"(*a.*) Has been a member of the New Zealand Naval Forces or of any Expeditionary Force;

"(*b.*) Has served beyond New Zealand in connection with the present war;

"(*c.*) Has returned to New Zealand; and

"(*d.*) Has received his discharge from service, either before or after his return to New Zealand:

"Provided that nothing in this Act shall apply to any person whose discharge from service was due to incapacity resulting from his own default or misconduct."

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 is 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 business 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, in 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 Henderson—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 fruitgrowing is given to these men we shall have successful colonies of fruit-farmers 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 soldier lads of ours when they return. In conclusion, one can picture in the future all over our country colonies of these returned soldiers, 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 Rangitikei 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 soldier 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 suggested 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 employment. 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—the Returned Soldiers Information Department—to get into communication with the educational institutions of this country; and through the exertions of the gentleman who at the present time

controls the Education Department, the Hon. Mr. Hanan, we have made exceedingly satisfactory arrangements with the different technical schools throughout New Zealand. The gentlemen who are responsible for the management of these institutions have intimated to us already that we need only apply to them for assistance, and anything that can be done in the way of giving tuition to the men who have had the misfortune to lose a limb or some other part of their body will be given willingly and readily. As to the Bill before the House, I would like to point out to honourable gentlemen that this is only 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 here, 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 endeavour 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, or 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 for the work 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 thrice have preference. He will have the opportunity of getting land under 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

this legislation he must be a soldier before he can qualify for a piece of land. There is to be no ballot. The Land Board may give a section to any man who is suitable. In addition, I can tell honourable gentlemen this: the gentlemen who control 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 I 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 the new Department required. Since we started the Department we have managed to register 1,047 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 cannot be got at once, because some of the men are very ill and it is not possible at present to interview them. We have reports already of 230. They show the soldier's name, address, former occupation, 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 645 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 to-day 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 circularized 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-

men will understand the objects and business of the Department; and may I ask honourable gentlemen that if they hear of any returned soldier who is out of employment and wants assistance or advice, will they be good enough to communicate with me, and not with the newspapers? I promise them that if they communicate with my Department they will have an answer at once, and I can assure them that the matter will be thoroughly investigated and reported upon.

The Hon. Mr. BUDDO (Kaiapoi).—I am pleased that the Government are giving the House an opportunity to consider the first instalments of their efforts to find an opening for our soldiers to earn a living when they return to this country; and I think it is fitting that that should go in the direction of outdoor work. I feel sure that many of the men who return to the Dominion will not take kindly to indoor work, and would far rather have an opportunity to earn their livelihood in the open, and at such congenial work as fruit-culture. I realize all the difficulties that were set out by the honourable member for Motueka in orchard-work, and the necessity for only experts engaging in it with a sure prospect of success. But I take it that the Government will not start this system without its being thoroughly organized, and advisers always available, and, as far as possible, always trying to get the settler to do what has been proved to be best in carrying on the work of an orchard or small farm. The land in the hands of the Government near Wellington will be suitable, for I understand that fruitgrowing and vegetable-raising is carried out successfully in the Hutt Valley. I presume the Prime Minister was referring to land in that district. If so, it will be excellent for the purpose, and I have no doubt that if it is necessary further lands can be obtained. One who visits the Nelson district while the fruit is forming on the trees and the hops are standing 18 ft. high wonders how these would fare if they were transported to Wellington or Canterbury. It is quite evident that in the Nelson district and in Hawke's Bay there is not anything like the wind at the season of the year when the damage is done that there is in other districts in the Dominion. But these are all matters that can be considered after settlement; and, after all, shelter-belts are an understood part of the science of orchard-work now, and when they undertake the work I have not the slightest doubt the settlers will be advised to see that shelter-belts are planted for the purpose of preventing the waste of fruit that always takes place in strong winds. I am pleased that the Bill does not provide too many restrictions on settlement; and I should like to impress on the Minister that settlement should be as free and unrestricted as possible, but I would strongly advocate that a firm hand on the matter of transfers should be kept. At the same time

10.0. I would suggest to the Minister that he should strike out clause 11, which provides for ten years' residence before transfer, and take the regulations from the Land Act, and just put these settlers on exactly the same footing as other settlers who are being put on small areas, such as the improved-farm settlement. I understand that that system has continued to work remarkably well, and the restrictions placed on transfer under that tenure have been sufficient, so far as I know. If that is done the Land Board will be able to see that he does not transfer his property for any consideration. In my opinion, the Bill has been drawn up as well as any measure that could be devised for such a purpose. This is only one of the many channels that will have to be opened up to provide openings for returned soldiers. The Prime Minister said that if the war continued for another year we would probably have had from forty to fifty thousand troops at the front, and, if so, the sources of employment by both State and private individuals will be taxed to the utmost. I am hopeful of efforts being made by public and private bodies to find employment, and also of the Government finding as much land as possible for those returning to go on. Many of those returning will not require assistance at all, but will be able to resume the occupations they left. At the same time, it would be a reproach to New Zealand, which prides itself on its humanitarian legislation and on its advanced legislation in regard to land and other problems, if we did not devise means of employing every one of our soldiers returning who require it. This Bill is an excellent attempt to meet the difficulty that must come upon us, and its provisions will meet the case of quite a large number of the returned soldiers. There will still be a very great deal to be done; but with this substantial start, and with the other measures which the Prime Minister has promised will come before the House, we may feel confident that no returned soldier will be without some suitable occupation; and we will support the Government in every possible effort they can make to find means of suitable and congenial employment for those who have been at the front. Whether they have been wounded or have suffered from illness, or whether they have returned unimpaired, they will have done their share, and will deserve such avenues of employment as the State can afford to provide.

Mr. T. A. H. FIELD (Nelson).—I wish to congratulate the Prime Minister on this

excellent Bill. I also wish to confirm what the honourable member for Motueka has said about the fruitgrowing industry which has been mentioned in connection with this Bill. That honourable gentleman has, perhaps, a more practical knowledge of fruit-farming than any other member in the House. In enumerating the fruitgrowing 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-apple branch. It is said that the export-apple 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 profit-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 require to be subdivision, fencing, erection of houses, stocking, and so on, and the cost will be very considerable. Then, I would say that it is not advisable that these lands should be in one particular district, but should be purchased in and about the districts which the men had 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 less. 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. ANSTEY (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 like some of the rest of us. There are thousands of our young men who have gone to the front, and who by so doing have lost their opportunity of getting into positions as farmers, business men, or otherwise; and I think every member of this House will agree that the Government ought to do as much as they possibly can—and, whatever they do, it will be a long way short of it—to place them in positions as nearly as possible as those which they would have occupied 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 this: that

although it professes to be a Bill to provide for those discharged soldiers who are fitted to settle on the land, it only deals with the subject in a very partial manner. In its present form it merely deals with what for my present purpose I may call 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 them 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 absentees 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 for what may be termed development purposes. But I should certainly like to see the provi-

sions of the Bill carried somewhat further, and that some provision should be made to acquire or open up additional land for this purpose. It seems to me that, altogether apart from the question of providing suitable land for returned soldiers, it is vitally necessary that we should, in the interests of the country, go in for more extended settlement, and I should like to see a proposal brought down to go in for a more vigorous system of settlement on a large scale. No doubt this small settlement will serve a useful purpose. The honourable member for Motueka and one or two others have spoken of fruit-farms. Without in any way depreciating the value of such settlements—and I believe that is a class of settlement which will be very suitable for a large number of returned soldiers—this is only one kind of work that will be suitable. I think the Prime Minister suggested that there are some gum lands in the North that it is proposed to provide for fruit-farms. It seems to me there will be a large number of these soldiers who will not be quite suitable to take up the burden of breaking in new settlement land, and it would be very wise indeed to provide these people with a certain amount of work, possibly in preparing the ground for these fruit-farms, where they could earn a suitable wage and at the same time be acquiring experience which will enable them to take up these lands after being properly prepared. There seems to me, again, to be a wide field in other directions besides fruit-farms for men not suited to take up the burden of breaking in new land. There is a wide field for work on the experimental farms, including the selecting and testing of manures and seeds, in poultry-rearing, and in other directions. These men could do good work there, and at the same time learn a good deal and so fit themselves to take up land of their own. There is a point in clause 6, subclause (3), which provides that moneys may be advanced to these men at any rate of interest to be determined by the Minister. I think it is a mistake to allow a fluctuating rate of interest to be fixed by the Minister. The rate of interest ought to be the rate that is paid by other settlers. Clause 7 provides that the Minister may reduce the rent, forgo 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

10.30. 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

Minister will consider these suggestions. I believe that we want to go a great deal further in the matter of land-settlement than is provided in this Bill.

Mr. McCALLUM (Wairau). — I am not going to take up much time, and in making a few observations I shall not waste any time in further complimenting the Minister on the very excellent principle that underlies this Bill. At the risk of being called parochial, I want to bring under the Minister's notice the desirability there will be, when this Bill is put into operation, of providing settlements in each district. I would suggest to the right honourable gentlemen that the returned soldiers of each district should have an opportunity of settling again in their old districts as far as possible. That can be applied to the Bill as at present drawn. That is the point I mainly desired to make to-night—that the local men should have first preference for the local settlements, and that when they are exhausted the returned soldiers of other districts might be considered. That is a point I could elaborate, but I do not intend at this late hour of the night to do so. The other point is this: why restrict this assistance to merely discharged soldiers? A number of our soldiers who have gone away and have been killed, or will be killed, will no doubt have sons coming along. Why should not these sons, seventeen and eighteen years of age, who are assisting their mothers and their younger brothers and sisters—why should they not rank with the discharged soldiers? That is another point that I put to the Minister. I think it would improve the Bill. I was going to bring up another matter, but I think it has been covered—that is, with regard to the mortgaging. I think that might be extended so that these patriotic funds that have been subscribed in each district might be lent to these soldiers.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—So they should be.

Mr. McCALLUM.—I think they should be. I do not know whether the Bill provides for that. I think those funds should be specially kept for assisting those returned men. Then, Sir, the sum mentioned in the Bill, I submit, is too small. I know in my own district of eight land-settlement properties that would absorb the whole £50,000. That is not intended, surely. If you make the holdings large enough, only eight families would be provided for.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—We do not pay for the land out of the £50,000.

Mr. McCALLUM.—That is all right, then. I thought you were going to expend only £50,000 in purchasing land.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—No; I can find the land from the land-settlement fund.

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 (Waitemata). — 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 Waitemata 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, subsoil, 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 this 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

acquired the freehold. Would it be possible to prevent him selling? Would a provision be inserted in his title by which he would make a covenant not to sell within ten years? It is desirable that these men should be put permanently on the land, and that we should discountenance anything in the shape of speculation. There is no difficulty with regard to the man under lease, for there the Land Board can guard against the disposal of a leaseholder's interest; but once a man has acquired the actual fee-simple, can that be done? I support the Bill, which I believe 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 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 successful occupation 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 which 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."

One 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 connection 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 wherewith to develop the land that he wants to take up. Then, another question to be put to him is, "the experience of the applicant in the business for which he proposes to use the land, or in any other class of farming." His experience is to be counted, and, that being so, it seems to me that those who come from country occupations will necessarily have preference in the matter of the taking-up of this land. If no preference is intended, then I want to know why the Land Board is to make this inquiry. This Bill, I recognize, is a very generous Bill, but it seems to me that it is generous to a section of our troopers. Suppose all the troopers wanted to take up land, where is the land available for them? Will the £50,000 provided under this Bill equip them with implements, and give them enough money to fence and clear their land, and all the other things necessary under the Bill. It seems to me that seeing this Bill is generous, even to the extent of being prepared to remit the rent and interest or hold it in abeyance for a time, to those who want to follow farming as an occupation, why should not a similar generous provision be made for those who want to establish a small business of their own, and not as employees of another? These men are not to be the employees of another; they are to have little farms of their own. Why should not the others, who would prefer to have a little business of their own, be provided with that business, and with all the necessary equipment for that business? And why should not those who want to have a workshop to follow an industrial occupation be treated in a similar way? I have no objection to the Bill. I only want to show that the Bill does not go nearly far enough, and it just savours of class legislation—legislation in the interests of those troopers—and they are less than 20 per cent.—who have come from the country districts.

Mr. SMITH (Waimarino).—With others, I want to join in congratulating the Minister on this very fine Bill, for there is no doubt it

is an honest attempt to recognize in a practical 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 area of land to be dealt with under this Bill, because I believe that as soon as the returned soldiers find that land is to be made available for them there 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 exception 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 actions of the Minister of Lands, guided, of course, by his responsible officers, have been in each case dealt with in a practical way, 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 held under 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 no 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 mopped 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 watching the trend of what has been going on cannot help feeling that there is a good——

Mr. SPEAKER.—I am afraid the honourable 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 that land which will be very suitable for settlement of this sort. There is only one other thing that I want to refer to, and that is that this Bill does not seem to provide the assistance that will be required by a number of those who have gone away and who are at present holding land. I cannot help feeling that those who at present hold land and who have gone to the front will want, perhaps, some assistance when they return, and they will certainly deserve it. I would like to suggest to the Prime 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 honourable 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 member 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 and provides for both small and large farms.

Mr. ANSTEY.—I went by what the Attorney-General said.

The Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.—My colleague 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 Valley 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 required 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' settlements 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 indeed, and even 5 acres are sometimes sufficient. 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. I

Mr. WILFORD.—
the case I mentioned.

The Hon. Mr. FISHER said that if the names of people who could not be found were to be allowed to remain on the rolls, the rolls would not be worth anything. If people went out of the districts, leaving no addresses behind them, and took no care to see that their names were on the roll for the following election, they could not vote. The rolls must be clean, and he was not going to allow names to remain on the rolls if the people concerned were so neglectful that they did not let the Electoral Officer know that they were still alive and wished to vote.

Mr. R. W. SMITH (Waimarino) asked the Minister to state when it was proposed to publish the new electoral rolls.

The Hon. Mr. FISHER said the rolls had been brought right up to date, and were available now at the offices of the Registrars of the electoral districts throughout New Zealand. They could not be finally printed until the time for the issue of the writs.

TAXATION OF INTENDED RESERVES.

Mr. ELL (Christchurch South) asked the Minister of Lands, without notice, whether in view of the fact that a number of generously disposed landowners, out of pure love and affection for the preservation of the native forest, had made reserves upon their properties—some to the extent of 100 acres and 200 acres—he could see his way to enable those persons to hold the areas without payment of land-tax or local taxes. He knew of at least one case in Canterbury in which the land was worth £40 an acre, and the owner was keeping some 20 acres absolutely idle purely with the object of preserving the bush. The action of these landowners was appreciated, and the public were given the pleasure of seeing the forest. Now, it

be very glad to consider the point raised by the honourable member; and he would like to remind the honourable member and the House generally that in the session before last there was an amendment of the Valuation Act which exempted from taxation, so far as land-tax was concerned, native trees which were planted for utility or ornamental purposes, up to any area. He would be glad, however, to take this other point into consideration and see what could be done.

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; also the number of selectors and area held on deferred payment under the said Acts at that date.

	Number.	Area. Acres.
Purchasers for Cash—		
Ordinary Crown lands	616	110,260
Land for settlements	159	24,480
Totals	775	134,740
Held on Deferred Payment—		
Ordinary Crown lands	127	27,996
Land for settlements	108	6,488
Totals	235	34,484

"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."