



The Rehabilitation of Discharged Service Personnel in New Zealand

First Report of the Rehabilitation Board

The problems of re-establishing service men and women in civil life are inevitably attracting increasing attention as the war progresses. It may be of interest, therefore, to present in the Review a comprehensive survey of the first annual report¹ of the Rehabilitation Board which was set up in New Zealand under the Rehabilitation Act, 1941. The report covers the period from the date when the Board began its work in February 1942 to the end of March 1943.

The New Zealand Rehabilitation Act of 17 October 1941 is designed to provide for the re-establishment in civil life of the men and women who have served in the forces and for the conversion of industry from a wartime to a peacetime basis. It provides for the setting up of a representative National Rehabilitation Council, to make recommendations for helping discharged service men and women to return to civil life, and a Rehabilitation Board, to make full provision for discharged service personnel.²

By the end of March 1943, the Rehabilitation Board had held 78 formal meetings and a number of informal discussions. The Council had met six times, and, according to the report, had "discharged effectively its responsibility to advise the Minister on policy matters affecting the rehabilitation of ex-service men".

GENERAL POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

Recognising that the successful rehabilitation of ex-service men and women depends on the post-war reconstruction of the economic and social life of the country as a whole, the Board sees the Government's plans for industrial conversion and expansion "as the framework within which measures for the rehabilitation of ex-service men are to be devised and administered".

The Board has based its work on a number of fundamental assumptions. The first premise is that economic activity is "necessarily limited only by physical resources—namely, materials and man-power". The second is that employment will have to be ensured for all the men and women in the three services and for some of the women employed in industry during the war. The

¹ New Zealand, Parliamentary Paper No. H—18: *Rehabilitation Board (Report up to 31st March, 1943)*, (Wellington Government Printer, 1943). 25 pp. Price, 9d.

² Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XLV, No. 2, Feb. 1942, p. 188; I.L.O.: *Legislative Series*, 1941, N. Z. 1 (A).

third is that it will be necessary to expand the supply of both capital and consumption goods. The fourth is that an appropriate monetary policy to serve these ends and to avoid inflation will be needed. The fifth is that an appropriate system of controls over industry, finance, and distribution will be necessary. Finally, the Board has worked on the assumption that short-term transition problems immediately after the war will differ considerably from the long-term problems of the reconstruction period proper.

In the immediate transition period, emphasis will be on the change-over of manufacturing industries from war to peace requirements, on providing employment for demobilised men and women, and on producing needed raw materials. As to the provision of employment, the Board has, first of all, carried out a survey and assembled information to make possible the drawing-up of a schedule of necessary works. Particular importance is attached to housing plans (and thus to the timber industry) and to the extension of the hydro-electric power resources of the Dominion. The works projects which are being planned are not regarded as relief projects but as "essential steps to the maintenance and utilisation of the natural resources that will be required to support the industrial programme of reconstruction, and with it the increased manufacture of consumption goods". Secondly, the Board has surveyed industry to see which industries will require additions to their labour force. The building industry is the most obvious example, but a number of others are expected to expand considerably after the war. It is anticipated that the engineering industry will play an important part in industrial reconstruction and will provide employment for the thousands of men at present gaining engineering experience in the forces. Thirdly, the Board has provided training for ex-service men so that they can be absorbed into industry as a nuclear group of skilled workers whenever materials are available in sufficient quantities.

THE WORK OF REHABILITATION

General Administration

The main administrative issue was whether the rehabilitation work was to be centred under a single department especially created for the purpose or whether the different functions involved were to be carried out by the various existing departments. After consultation, the Board decided to operate with the advantage of specialisation of function by departments, appointing them as its agents in defined fields of rehabilitation policy, and to utilise the Repatriation Division (now the Rehabilitation Division) of the National Service Department as its administrative secretariat, charged with co-ordinating the activities of the various departments and organisations.

Co-ordination of administration was also ensured by the creation of local rehabilitation committees, the secretary of each one being the local rehabilitation officer. Local committees exist in the 23 centres where there are rehabilitation officers. Each consists of a member of the Rehabilitation Council (if a resident) and of

representatives of the local authority, the Returned Service Men's Association, organised labour, business or farming (according to the district), the local member of Parliament, and the Women's War Service Auxiliary, together with any other persons considered necessary by the Board. The committees advise the Board on questions relating to the rehabilitation of service men in their districts, including unemployment, training and education, land settlement, housing, financial assistance, and other matters referred to them by the Board or originated by the committees. The committees also render assistance and guidance to returning service men, maintaining contact with each one until he is settled in civil life. Each year, or more frequently, the committees send the Board a progress report on the general position and needs of ex-service men in their districts.

After the report of the Board was issued, the Prime Minister appointed a full-time Minister of Rehabilitation, to whom the Board will report, and it was proposed that a Director of Rehabilitation, under the Minister, should be responsible for carrying out policy decisions.

The Process of Demobilisation

Service men returning from overseas are entitled to the following benefits¹:

- (1) Exchange on credit balances;
- (2) Privilege leave, up to 28 days, usually given immediately prior to discharge or placement in an "area pool" on leave without pay;
- (3) Mufti allowance, of £12 10s. (now increased to £25) on discharge or transfer to the area pool;
- (4) Travelling warrants, a free railway pass for a month after discharge, meal tickets, and so forth;
- (5) Ration coupons.

The Rehabilitation Service, that is, the Rehabilitation Division of the National Service Department, has so far been concerned largely with the cases of men and women invalided out of the forces. They are interviewed and steps are taken to procure whatever assistance, employment, and retraining may be needed. The number of men and women invalided home from overseas by 31 March 1943 was 7,847. Some 11,000 men and women were demobilised from New Zealand camps. The Government has made provision for service men to remain on service pay while receiving remedial treatment unless they are considered fit for employment or unless they seek their own discharge.

The Rehabilitation Service, operating under the jurisdiction of the Board, is responsible not only for the provision of employment but also for the general welfare and re-establishment of service personnel. District offices of the Service, consisting of a rehabilitation officer and his staff, now operate in 23 centres. In addition,

¹ Benefits for men discharged after New Zealand service are the same, except that privilege leave is 14 days and the mufti allowance reduced.

sub-rehabilitation offices, with district agents of the Social Security Department as sub-rehabilitation officers, operate in 25 centres.

The determination of applications for war disability pensions is the responsibility of the War Pensions Board; and the pensions procedure is entrusted to the War Pensions Branch of the Social Security Department. Moreover, in 1943, the Government introduced a system of rehabilitation allowances designed primarily to provide for demobilised men who are no longer in receipt of service pay and who, while unfit to take ordinary employment or not able to be suitably placed at once, are not in receipt of pension. The basic rate of the allowance is £3 10s. plus dependants' allowance up to a maximum of £6 weekly. Where any ex-service man is receiving a pension amounting to less than this basic rate, his pension is augmented during his continued unemployment to bring it up to the basic rate. The rehabilitation allowance is payable for up to 13 weeks, and is administered through the War Pensions Branch of the Social Security Department.¹

The Provision of Employment

The scarcity of labour under war conditions and the co-operation of employers has made it easy to find suitable employment for the men discharged to date. At the same time, the Board is not overlooking the magnitude of the efforts which will have to be made following general demobilisation.

The Industrial Man-Power Division of the National Service Department has co-operated fully with the Rehabilitation Division in placing ex-service men. As a rule, however, the district man-power officers do not direct discharged service men to employment unless the employment in question was recommended by the rehabilitation officer and it seems reasonable to make a direction. Whenever demobilised men have been directed to employment, their health and interests have been taken into account, and applications from them to terminate employment in an essential industry have been given sympathetic consideration. So far as reinstatement in former employment is concerned, there has been little difficulty in placing ex-service men back in their pre-service positions or apprenticeships.

Up to 31 March 1943, the Rehabilitation Service placed 951 men returning from overseas and 1,548 home-service men. The Service has enrolled all ex-service personnel desiring help in obtaining employment, whether they were fit for employment or were still recuperating. About 800 men and women were registered for work in March 1943.

A number of expenses in connection with employment may be met by the Board, including fares and travelling allowances, and, if transferred, cost of removal of furniture and effects (up to £25) or a separation allowance if obliged to maintain two homes, and so forth. Men invited to attend a rehabilitation centre for interview may be paid fares, travelling allowances, and compensation for loss of earnings.

¹ Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, July 1943, p. 85.

The Board has authorised the Rehabilitation Service, as necessary, to negotiate with local bodies and other approved authorities for the subsidised employment of men on light recuperative work. One such scheme is already in effect. Others will be started as needed.

Education and Training for Employment

In accordance with an agreed policy of using existing training facilities where possible, the Board decided to use and develop the Emergency Trade Training Scheme already in operation for the training of ex-service men. Thus the Emergency Training Scheme has become largely a rehabilitation trade training organisation. The wartime emergency character of the training has given way to longer-term training. The objective is to give ex-service men the training they need to enter industry as tradesmen equipped to hold their own in their trade for the rest of their working life.

Two methods have been adopted: (1) full-time courses in a Government training centre or trade school or at a technical college, with or without a subsequent period of improvership; and (2) on-the-job training, during which the ex-service man is placed with a private employer, who is paid an agreed subsidy towards the man's wages during his training period.

Trade training is available to all ex-service men who have not been previously engaged as a tradesman or completed training in a skilled trade or whose ability to resume their pre-service trade has been lost as a result of a service-connected disability. Other ex-service men may be included in the scheme at the discretion of the Board. During training, payments to cover reasonable expenses involved in taking the training are paid, such as transport, meals, and accommodation charges incurred in reporting for a selection interview, in proceeding to training, and in going to the first job after training. Loans are available to assist the men in procuring tools.

Men trained in a rehabilitation training centre or a trade school (class A trainees) may be trained for up to 12 months, followed by up to two years of improvership. They are paid by the training organisation on the following weekly scale:

	£	s.	d.
First 32 weeks	5	5	0
Rest of first year	5	7	6
Third half-year	5	10	0
Fourth half-year	5	12	6
Fifth half-year	5	15	0
Sixth half-year	6	0	0

Men trained by a subsidised contract with an employer for a maximum period of three years (class B trainees) are paid as class A trainees. The weekly subsidy paid by the Board is as follows (with an additional subsidy of 10s. per week where time off of one full day per week is given to allow the trainee to attend technical classes):

Period	Employers' share	Board's share	Gross total
	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
First 8 months	2 12 6	2 12 6	5 5 0
Next 4 months	3 4 6	2 3 0	5 7 6
Third half-year	3 17 0	1 13 0	5 10 0
Fourth half-year	4 10 0	1 2 6	5 12 6
Fifth half-year	5 15 0	None	5 15 0
Sixth half-year	6 0 0	None	6 0 0

Local trade training supervisory commissions have been set up, each comprising a member of the local rehabilitation committee, as chairman, and representatives of organised employers and trade unions. The commissions are responsible, in the case of class B trainees, for determining the suitability of trainees for continued training in the trade for which they have been selected, determining wage and subsidy rates in the light of the above scales and the trainee's previous experience, and supervising the adequacy of the training given.

Nearly 100 class A trainees had completed training in carpentry, engineering, welding or footwear by March 1943. Another 140 men were in training in those trades. Class B trainees placed with employers numbered only 47, largely because this training had been made available only recently. Nearly all these trainees are in building or engineering trades.

Ex-service men trainees are required to agree to remain for at least three years in the industry in which training has been given.

An Education Committee, including the Director of Education, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, and the Directors of Army and of Air Force Education, has been set up to assist the Board in planning measures to provide educational facilities for ex-service men and women and the dependants of men who died on military service.

Returned service men and women may go, free of charge, to all existing technical and high school courses under the control of the Department of Education. Free correspondence courses are also available. Ordinary university bursaries may be granted, covering fees and course, and special bursaries, including an allowance at a rate of up to £5 5s. weekly during college terms. Free books, instruments, and materials may be given to men and women receiving tuition under any of these arrangements. Post-graduate scholarships to the value of £250 per year, for education in New Zealand or abroad, are also available.

The conditions of eligibility for these educational facilities are that the ex-service man or woman has served for at least twelve months and that he or she applies for aid within three years of discharge. In the case of special bursaries and post-graduate scholarships, the holders may be required to serve in the New Zealand Government Service for three years after completing the training.

Vocational Guidance Service

The recent reorganisation of the Vocational Guidance Service of the Education Department was carried out partly to meet the

request of the Rehabilitation Board for adequate guidance for demobilised men and women. Full-time guidance officers are at work in the larger centres, and special arrangements are being made in the secondary centres for the appointment of part-time honorary guidance officers. These officers co-operate with the Rehabilitation Service to ensure that ex-service personnel undertake courses with the benefit of expert advice.

Assistance for Disabled Service Men

All ex-service men who have suffered disabilities and therefore presented, at one stage or another, a readjustment or placement problem are assisted by the Rehabilitation Board as "disability cases". Until March 1943, 3,568 of these cases had arisen, including 2,092 psychiatric cases, 222 amputees, 493 tuberculosis cases, and 88 cases of multiple wounds. Gratifying progress has been made in re-establishing these men in civil life. Well over two-thirds were working or otherwise established by March 1943. The large psychiatric class were established "without great difficulty, but generally after periods of more or less prolonged recuperation".

Particular attention has been given to providing suitable long-term as well as recuperative employment to the disabled men. The Board takes the view that, if an effort is made, industry can absorb large numbers of disabled men and that it is important to place these men in permanent worth-while jobs in industry.

To this end, the Report states, the Board has in hand a survey of industry with a view to ascertaining the openings most suited to variously disabled men, and when this has been completed employers will be urged to reserve, wherever feasible, work performable by disabled ex-service men for such men. The Board does not doubt that the fullest co-operation will be offered by employers generally. In addition, a survey of positions in the various State services is being undertaken, and special consideration is henceforth to be given to the reservation of suitable positions for seriously disabled ex-service men.

The Disabled Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment League, which is given an annual Government grant, has been appointed by the Rehabilitation Board as its agent in providing trade and occupational training—and where necessary employment—for seriously disabled ex-service men. The seriously disabled are thus transferred to the care of the League. If they subsequently become suitable for employment in ordinary conditions, however, they are found this kind of work.

The League is responsible for providing suitable training and recreational centres for disabled ex-service men and women. Centres are to be set up in Wellington, Dunedin, Auckland, and Christchurch. In these centres, the vocational training and social adjustment of the men will go hand in hand. Employment and training is now being provided by the League in cabinet-making, wood and leather work, manufacture of basket ware, seagrass furniture, household mops and dusters, perambulators, sheepskin rugs, jewelry and suede work, and so forth. Plans are being made to provide training in clog making, boot repairing, and the manufacture of surgical boots and splints.

The League works through field officers, who will be stationed in the chief centres of population and cover the surrounding territory. Their duty is to study the cases of seriously disabled men and guide them into the most suitable channels of training and employment. Particular importance is attached to this part of the work, "as it ensures that disabled men will be given the opportunity to engage in some useful occupation".

Financial Assistance

From the beginning, the Board has considered financial assistance to ex-service men as one of the most important parts of rehabilitation activity. The State Advances Corporation is the Rehabilitation Board's agent in this field. The local rehabilitation committees make recommendations to the Corporation regarding the eligibility of applicants for assistance.

Loans may be made, up to specified maxima, for the following purposes: acquisition of tools or furniture, purchase of business, purchase of farms and stock, purchase or erection of houses. It is noted that the selection of businesses and properties is particularly difficult under present conditions, and that each case is carefully examined "in the light of the productive capacity of the property submitted", the training and experience of the applicant being taken into account.¹

The Rehabilitation Board may make grants of up to £50 in special cases either to ex-service men or to deceased service men's dependants. However, the provision made for war pensions, rehabilitation allowances, training and employment "has fortunately rendered very slight the need for assistance by way of grants".

Land Settlement and Farm Training

Land settlement has an important part in the rehabilitation plans of the Board. Progress appears to have been relatively slow, not because of inactivity along these lines but because the Board, impressed by the possibilities of failure, has proceeded cautiously, preferring to plan out the scheme carefully in every detail. A number of constructive steps have been taken, however: a Land Settlement Board has been set up, and extensive research undertaken.

The Board decided that partly experienced and suitable inexperienced applicants for settlement should be required to undergo training. In addition to other facilities for training, use is to be made of existing agricultural organisations to select suitable farmers prepared to employ and train selected men. A subsidy will be paid during training to ensure that the ex-service men will receive a reasonable living wage. Before inexperienced men are placed with a farmer, they will be sent to one of the training centres for four weeks. For experienced men, short intensive courses of instruction at an agricultural college will be available but not required.

¹ The Report notes:

Past experience, particularly with farming cases, has shown how unsatisfactory it is to assist a man into an overpriced farm or a property which may not under average conditions prove to be an economic unit.

Housing for Service Men

At least 50 per cent. of the State dwellings built by the Housing Department and transferred to the State Advances Corporation for renting are to be reserved for ex-service men. As houses become available, they are allocated to ex-service men, with preference to needy cases, in the following order: (1) men returned from overseas; (2) service men returned from overseas but not discharged; (3) widows of service men who died overseas or after their return to New Zealand; (3) wives of service men who are prisoners of war. Up to March 1943, 573 units had been allotted to ex-service men.

It is unfortunate, the Report points out, that, owing to the needs of defence work, the completion of the new houses has not been possible at the normal rate . . . It is expected that housing operations will shortly be revived at full strength, and the outstanding claims should be satisfied without undue delay.

Maori Ex-Service Men

The aim of the Board is to regard Maori ex-service men and others alike, and to extend to the Maoris the same re-establishment facilities as are available to other ex-service men. There is an additional need, however, for special measures for Maori ex-service men in order to facilitate their absorption in economic life "in such a way as to take full account of their social needs".

In contacting Maori ex-service men, the Rehabilitation Service has used the recruiting officers of the Maori war effort organisation, the tribal committees set up as a part of this organisation, and officers of the Native Department.

The Board plans to initiate projects for developing Native lands and for rationalising farm management as a part of agricultural rehabilitation for Maori service men. It also plans to launch a Native housing scheme and to train Maori men and young people to provide the trained labour needed for carrying out the scheme. In addition to the general training facilities for all workers, special facilities for training in carpentry and other trades are being established for the Maoris. Training methods are similar to those followed in other trade training centres.

A total of 601 Native ex-service men and women had been demobilised by March 1943. Only 2 of them were awaiting placement, but, owing to the difficulty of contacting some of the men, the position of a few others was obscure.
