

1948.  
—  
VICTORIA.

---

REPORT  
OF THE  
SOLDIER SETTLEMENT COMMISSION  
FOR THE  
PERIOD ENDED 30th JUNE, 1948.

---

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 16 OF  
THE SOLDIER SETTLEMENT ACT 1945.

---

[*Approximate Cost of Report*:—Preparation—Not given. Printing (400 copies), £52.]

By Authority  
J. I. GOURLEY, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 6. [1s. 3d.]—3704/49.



# REPORT.

Soldier Settlement Commission.

Melbourne, C.2,

31st March, 1949.

*The Honorable the Minister of Lands.*

SIR,

The Soldier Settlement Commission has the honour to transmit to you herewith, in conformity with Section 16 of the *Soldier Settlement Act* 1945, its Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the year ended 30th June, 1948.

In submitting this report the Commission has, for clarity and convenience, set out its activities under the following main headings :—

1. General Settlement in accordance with The War Service Land Settlement Agreement.
2. Single Unit Farm Advances made pursuant to Part III. of the *Soldier Settlement Act* 1946.
3. Agricultural Loans and Allowances under the *Commonwealth Re-Establishment and Employment Act* 1945.

## 1. GENERAL SETTLEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

### (a) *Classification of Applicants as to Eligibility and Suitability.*

Applications for classification have been lodged by 10,687 ex-servicemen and, of this number, 9,666 have appeared before Classification Boards with the following results :—

Suitable for farm ownership	..	..	..	..	..	6,549
Suitable for further training	..	..	..	..	..	1,961
Unsuitable, withdrawn and deferred	..	..	..	..	..	1,156
						<hr/>
						9,666

It is interesting to note that only 2,411 individual applicants have actually lodged applications for land made available. A possible explanation of this position may be that many classified applicants are at present well placed in employment and are loath to leave such employment and embark on farm establishment whilst the present abnormal position prevails.

### (b) *Acquisition of land.*

Despite considerable difficulties the Commission is able to state that, up to the end of the period under review, it has acquired by voluntary negotiation the land summarized hereunder :—

Land acquired prior to 1st July, 1947	..	233,208 acres for £2,134,554
Land acquired during the period 1st July, 1947 to 30th June, 1948	.. ..	312,384 acres for £2,812,176
		<hr/>
		545,592 acres for £4,946,730

In order to maintain production from acquired properties, it is the policy of the Commission to lease the land back to the vendor or other suitable tenants pending subdivision and allocation to settlers.

In addition to the land acquired, 16,606 acres of Crown Land have been set apart for settlement purposes.

It is desired to point out at this stage that The War Service Land Settlement Agreement provides that the State shall acquire land at a value not exceeding that ruling on the 10th February, 1942. It will be appreciated that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Commission to continue to complete acquisitions on that basis in view of the general anticipation by land-owners of the intention to relax or possibly abandon land sale control. If this anticipation is realized it will be necessary to delete all reference to 1942 values from the Agreement as it will not be possible to purchase on that basis.

The result of lifting land sale control would be that land could be purchased only at inflated values necessitating a correspondingly greater write-off to reduce a settler's liability to a figure which he would have a reasonable prospect of repaying as provided for in the Agreement.

*(c) Subdivision and Allocation of Land.*

Of the land acquired and set apart 278,143 acres have been subdivided into 687 holdings. These holdings have been made available for application and, to the 30th June, 1948, 636 holdings, comprising 241,862 acres, have been allocated.

All applicants are required to personally appear before a Land Settlement Board whose function is to fully consider the relative merits of each applicant before making a recommendation to the Commission.

*(d) Development and Improvement of Settlers' Holdings.*

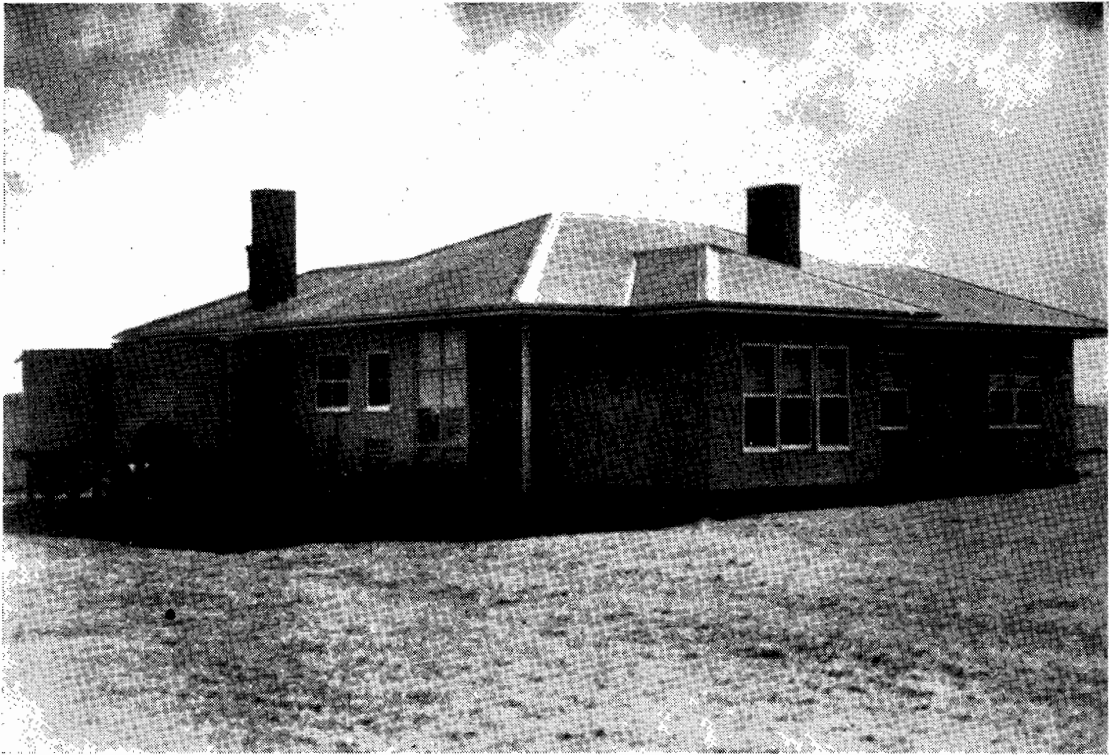
The War Service Land Settlement Agreement provides that the State shall acquire and subdivide land (subject to the concurrence of the Commonwealth Director of War Service Land Settlement) and develop and improve same to a stage where it can be brought into production by a settler within a reasonable time having regard to the type of production proposed. The work envisaged consists of erection of fencing and structural improvements, clearing, provision of water points, pasture improvement and planting of orchards and vineyards, construction of roads and arrangements for electricity supply if available.

Owing to the shortage of labour and materials, it has not been practicable to fully implement the terms of the Agreement in respect of the provision of improvements prior to settlers going into occupation of their holdings, and, in an endeavour to speed up this work, the settlers have been selected when a subdivision has been completed and they are then employed on a contract or day labour basis.

The provision of housing accommodation on the settler's block is one of the first considerations in the developmental programme as, before the settler can engage on developmental work on his farm, he must have accommodation. This has been one of the major problems of development as building contractors are loath to lodge tenders for this type of work whilst there is an abundance of work in town areas where the problem of accommodating their employees is not so difficult. However, tenders have been accepted for the construction of 387 new houses and the renovation of a number of existing houses on estates, when purchased, is proceeding.

In order to enable as many settlers as possible to go into occupation of their holdings, the Commission has purchased three Army Camps and utilized the buildings to provide sheds and temporary housing accommodation on 184 farms. In addition, 100 prefabricated huts have been purchased and moved on to holdings and material has been provided to assist settlers to erect temporary living quarters themselves. These temporary

living quarters are designed so that they may be used for farm outbuildings when the settler's dwelling is ready for occupation. Types of typical houses already erected and occupied by settlers are presented hereunder for your information—



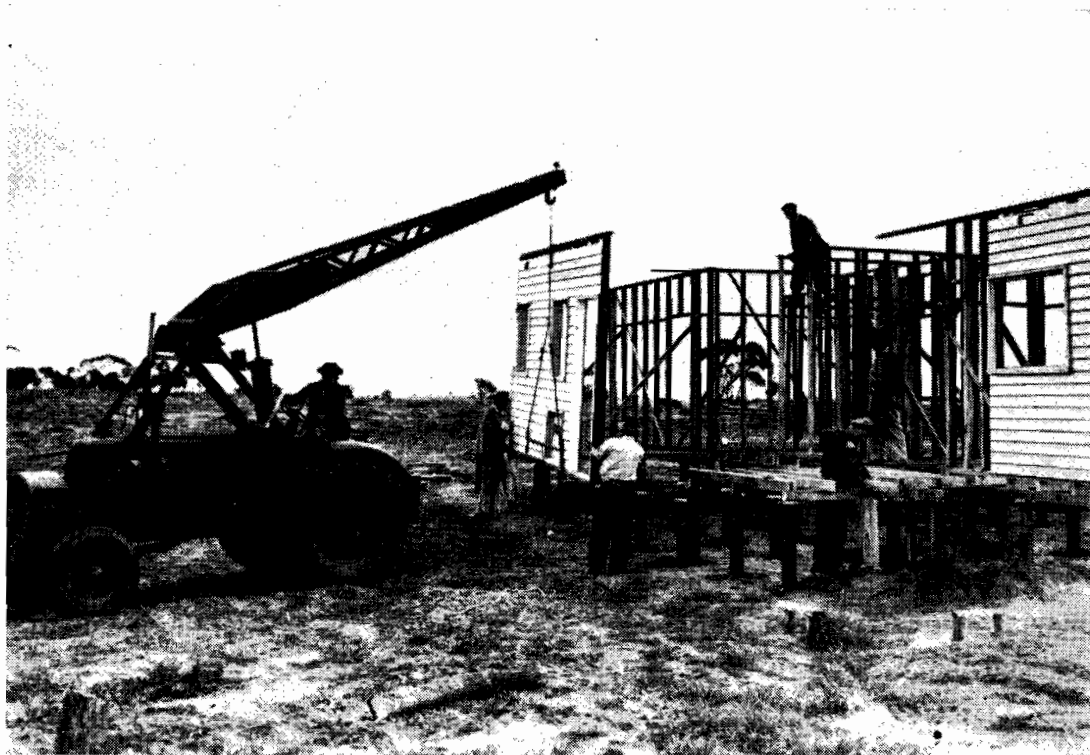
A settler's house constructed in the Western District.

[Architects: Messrs Buchan, Laird, and Buchan.]



A typical type of settler's house erected in Northern Victoria.

[Architects: Department of Public Works.]



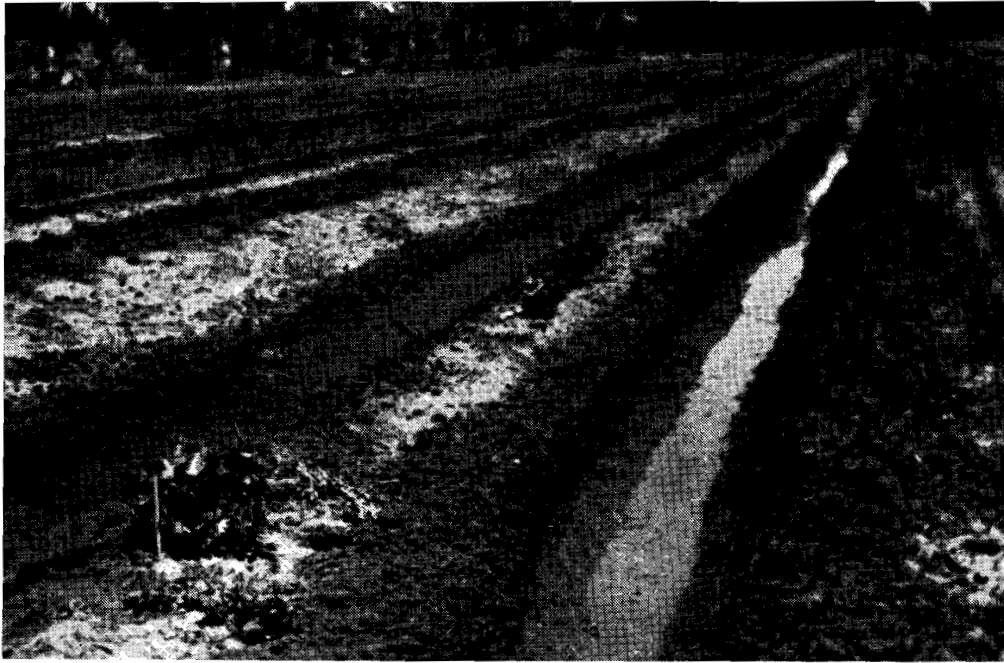
A settler's house in the Murray Valley Irrigation Settlement Area in course of construction.

[Architects: Messrs. Buchan, Laird, and Buchan.]

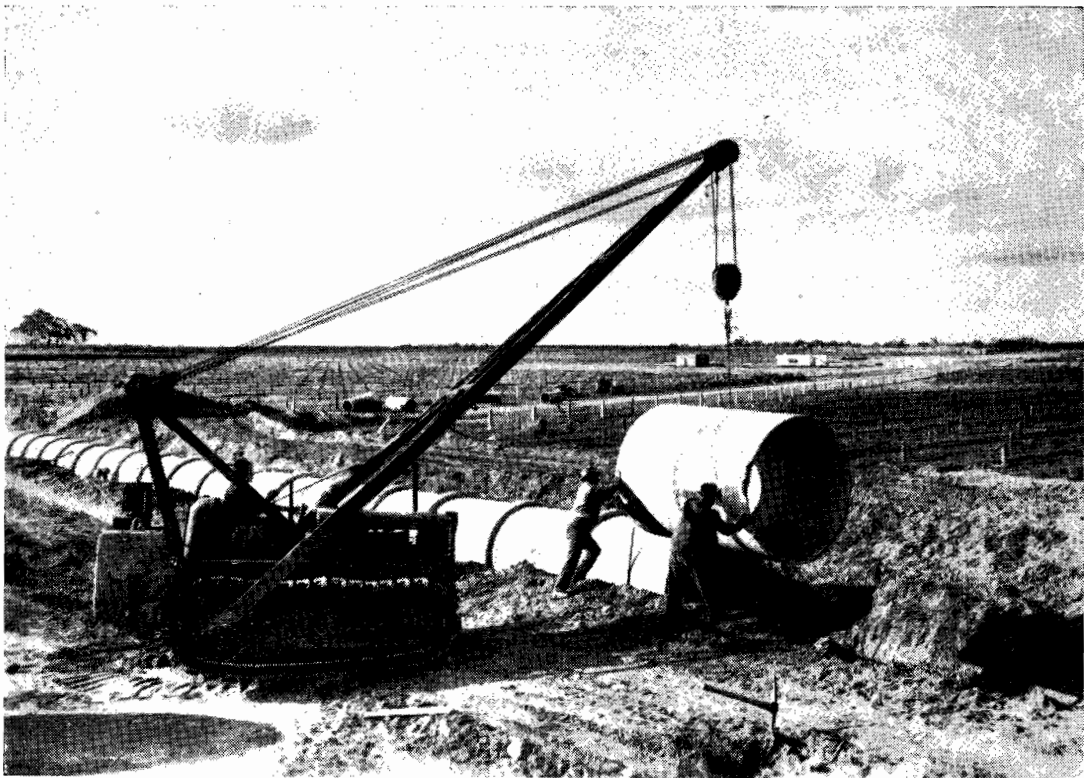
The Commission has already erected some 350 miles of fencing, sown 10,800 acres to pasture, top-dressed 23,000 acres, planted 400 acres to dried fruit vines and has carried out other essential developmental work in keeping with the items enumerated.



Crown Land at Robinvale cleared ready for preparation for planting to dried fruit vines.



Watering young dried fruit vines planted on Crown Land at Robinvale.



Irrigation pipe lines being laid by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission at Robinvale.

In order to facilitate this work, the Commission has established a store-yard at Sunshine so that the essential materials in short supply may be procured and fed to the various estates. Other store depots have been established in convenient centres throughout the State to cover such items as posts, droppers, &c., which are procured in country districts.

The close co-operation which has existed between the Commission and Country Roads Board has continued and that Board is supervising the construction of roads necessary by the subdivision of the various estates and is recommending to the Commission the apportionment of construction costs between that Board, this Commission and the Shire Council concerned.

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission is also continuing to assist and co-operate in the development of irrigation holdings by carrying out, as agents for this Commission, the design and layout of irrigation farms and the preparation of the land for irrigation.

The rate of farm development is entirely governed by the availability of labour and material and the rate that the limited number of surveyors can mark block boundaries on the ground to enable settlers to enclose their farms.

In order to minimize loss of production from acquired land and to enable the settler to obtain some income pending the granting of permanent tenure, it is the policy of the Commission to grant a settler a temporary lease as soon as practicable. During this temporary lease period he is charged a nominal rental only, as he is required to assist in carrying out the developmental work on his holding to the stage envisaged in the War Service Land Settlement Agreement.



Dairy in course of erection—the concrete bricks are moulded on the site.

It was anticipated that a settler would be granted his Settlement Interim Lease rather than a temporary lease but, owing to the fact that it has not yet been possible to come to an agreement with the Commonwealth regarding the basis of settlement valuations, no interim leases have been issued as at the date of this report.

(e) *Advances for Stock Plant and Equipment.*

The Soldier Settlement Acts do not empower the Commission to make advances to settlers until they have been granted their Settlement Interim Leases and, as a consequence, the only avenue available is under the provisions of the *Re-Establishment and Employment Act 1945*. Under that Act the amount of the advance is limited to £1,000 and, consequently, many settlers are restricted in their operations unless they have capital of their own or can obtain additional finance from outside sources.



*(f) War Service Land Settlement Agreement.*

Although Victoria as a "Principal" State is obliged under the Agreement to provide all capital moneys to finance settlement, the acquisition and subdivision of land is subject to the concurrence of the Commonwealth Authorities. As pointed out in the report to the 30th June, 1947, this dual control is unsatisfactory and unbusinesslike.

It is also necessary for the Commonwealth and State Authorities to reach agreement as to the liability to be placed on each holding.

As far as any write-down on farms is concerned, the Commonwealth's main liability is to bear half of the difference between cost of establishing the farm and the settlement value when allotted to the settler. The State Government, in addition to bearing its half share, has a continuing liability in respect of the concessional rate of interest charged to the settler.

The liability placed on a farm is of vital importance to the ultimate success of the settler, and the Commission is of the considered opinion that such liability should be determined only after a detailed valuation of each farm has been made in accordance with the principles adopted by experienced and practical valuers.

The Commonwealth Government does not, however, agree with this view, with the result that a deadlock has been reached concerning the fixing of the settler's liability. Unless some solution to the present deadlock is soon reached, further progress will be impossible.

*(g) Stock Purchased by Commission.*

Heifer calves.—The 5,030 heifer calves purchased by the Commission as mentioned in the previous report have, apart from losses, been made available to settlers. Many of these heifers are now in production and evidence to date indicates that the quality of these animals is up to the high standard anticipated.

Sheep and cattle.—When purchasing some estates it was necessary to complete the negotiations on a walk-in walk-out basis in order to finalize the acquisition. In this way the Commission obtained 132,831 sheep, 2,780 cattle, and 202 horses. The estates purchased on this basis were carried on with the existing staffs, and animals not required for distribution to settlers are sold on the open market. In this way not only has the best use been made of the acquired properties but settlers are given the opportunity of obtaining good even lines of station sheep to form the nucleus of their flocks.

In the statements of accounts appended to this report particulars are set out of the profits to the 30th June, 1948. It will be noticed that the Commission's income has been more than sufficient to meet all expenses since its inception, including interest on capital borrowed, depreciation, administration charges, &c.

## SINGLE UNIT FARMS.

Financial assistance afforded to ex-servicemen to assist them to purchase farms of their own choosing is solely a State responsibility and is outside the terms of The War Service Land Settlement Agreement.

A brief outline of the conditions under which these loans are made is set out in the Commission's previous report, and the evidence to date points to this form of rehabilitation being less costly to the State and more satisfactory to the ex-serviceman than that provided under The War Service Land Settlement Agreement.

One thousand eight hundred and fifty-seven applications for loans were received to the 30th June, 1948. Financial assistance amounting to £3,616,771 had been approved in 1,060 cases; 684 applications were not granted and the balance are in various stages of being dealt with.

It is desired to report, however, that establishment costs are considerably above normal and some losses must be expected considering advances are made up to 90 per cent. of the Commission's valuation of the farm as provided under the Act.

## COMMONWEALTH AGRICULTURAL LOANS AND ALLOWANCES.

The Commission, as agent for the Commonwealth Government, has continued to administer the *Re-Establishment and Employment Act 1945* so far as it relates to the making of Agricultural Loans and the granting of Agricultural Allowances.

To the 30th June, 1948, loans totalling £1,189,178 were made to 1,852 ex-servicemen and allowances totalling £170,000 were granted to 1,622 applicants. You will appreciate that these loans are limited to £1,000 in any one case and that the capital provided and the administration expenses are borne by the Commonwealth Government.

## STAFF.

The Commission's staff is supplemented by assistance made available from the Field Officers and Head Office staff of the Department of Lands and Survey. This assistance is appreciated but, as the field staff particularly has a first duty to its own Department, this arrangement is not entirely satisfactory as such staff is not under the direction of the Commission.

The many, varied and difficult problems which are imposed on the members of the Commission's staff and the volume of work entailed in carrying out the expanding operations of the Commission have thrown a heavy burden on these officers. The Commission wishes to express its appreciation to them for the wholehearted manner in which they have performed these tasks.

The Commission also wishes to express its appreciation to the heads of other Departments for their co-operation and also to the officers of those Departments for the valuable assistance they have given during the period under review.

H. L. SIMPSON, Chairman.

H. HOLMBERG, Member.

SYDNEY J. KING, Member.

E. SINGLETON, Secretary.





9. Sundry Persons for Interest and Rents									
Accrued due to 30th June, 1948, but									
not yet payable	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13,310 6 9
10. Balance in Soldier Settlement Trust Account									
in Treasury	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	12,395 16 8
11. Buildings, Plant, and Machinery—									
Portable Huts	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Less Depreciation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Storeyards	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4,308 2 8
Less Depreciation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Residences of Officers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9,507 6 3
Less Depreciation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Plant and Machinery	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5,146 18 4
Less Depreciation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
12. Sharefarming Agreements	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	29,390 10 4
13. Heytesbury Experimental Area	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	48,352 17 7
									4 15 9
									503 15 0
									7,652,864 1 11

\* Subject to Live Stock on hand being realized at valuation. When the final profit is determined the amount will be available for payment to Consolidated Revenue.

E. SINGLETON, Secretary.  
 REX R. NEAL, Accountant.  
 16th March, 1949.

The accounts of the Soldier Settlement Commission have been audited and, in my opinion, the balances shown in the Balance Sheet properly disclose the state of affairs as at 30th June, 1948, and further, in my opinion, the Revenue Account and the statement of Receipts and Disbursements correctly summarize the transactions of the Commission during the year ended 30th June, 1948.

E. A. PEVERILL, Auditor-General.  
 16th March, 1949.

H. L. SIMPSON, Chairman.  
 H. HOLMBERG, Member.  
 SYDNEY J. KING, Member.



## SOLDIER SETTLEMENT COMMISSION.

## SOLDIER SETTLEMENT ACTS.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1948.

		<i>Receipts.</i>				<i>Disbursements.</i>			
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Payments to Consolidated Revenue—									
Interest on Advances	.. .. .			20,675	5 8				
Rents and Agistment	.. .. .			43,839	18 5				
Proceeds, Sale of Motor Cars	.. .. .			618	19 7				
Sundries	.. .. .			2,932	9 3				
								68,066	12 11
Payments to State Loans Repayment Fund—									
Proceeds, Sale of Land and Improvements	.. .. .			56,089	1 6				
Payments in reduction of Advances	.. .. .			11,056	9 5				
Proceeds, Sale of Stock, Wool, Plant, and Material	.. .. .			231,220	5 7				
								298,365	16 6
								366,432	9 5
Expenditure from Consolidated Revenue—									
Proportion of Commissioner's Salaries	.. .. .			4,177	4 9				
Salaries and Wages	.. .. .			34,056	17 0				
Travelling Expenses	.. .. .			3,985	2 6				
Stores, Equipment, and Incidentals	.. .. .			1,345	1 10				
Postage, Telegrams, and Telephones	.. .. .			1,453	9 2				
Printing and Stationery	.. .. .			2,041	5 11				
Maintenance of Motor Vehicles	.. .. .			363	8 5				
Expenses of Local Committees	.. .. .			115	0 0				
Valuation Fees	.. .. .			97	2 6				
Upkeep of Commission's Property	.. .. .			10	19 0				
Purchase of Motor Vehicles	.. .. .			493	5 7				
								48,138	16 8
Pay Roll Tax	.. .. .							942	14 4
								49,081	11 0
Expenditure from Loan Act 5107									
Purchase of Land	.. .. .					2,244,260	18 6		
Advances—									
For Purchase of Land, &c.	.. .. .			2,537,814	1 1				
For Improvements, Stock, Implements, &c.	.. .. .			3,450	0 0				
						2,541,264	1 1		
Irrigation Development	.. .. .					81,747	9 1		
Other Expenditure—									
Development and Improvement of Estates	.. .. .			327,781	7 11				
Buildings, Plant and Machinery for Development	.. .. .			46,025	16 2				
Purchase of Stock, Plant, and Material	.. .. .			172,358	4 3				
Sharefarming Agreements	.. .. .			734	14 10				
Heytesbury Experimental Area	.. .. .			403	15 0				
						547,303	18 2		
								5,414,576	6 10
								5,463,657	17 10

E. SINGLETON, Secretary.  
 REX R. NEAL, Accountant.  
 16th March, 1949.

E. A. PEVERILL,  
 Auditor General,  
 16th March, 1949.

H. L. SIMPSON, Chairman.  
 H. HOLMBERG, Member.  
 SYDNEY J. KING, Member.  
 16th March, 1949.