

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE REHABILITATION OF EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

CONSPECTUS

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Before the end of the War the rehabilitation of members of the Armed Forces was, in many respects, definitely tied in with schemes for bridging the transition period. During the months that have passed since hostilities have ceased substantial progress has been made in the transition program: this is outlined in the Chapter on Reconstruction.

The rehabilitation of ex-service personnel has now become a function of a Department of Government which will permanently care for the interests of all ex-service men and women during the years to come. In this sense, as the transition period recedes and ex-service men and women are absorbed into civil life, veterans affairs will be more and more associated with help and assistance to the injured, training and education of the fit, and assistance, on a broad scale, to those who need it. It is therefore considered expedient to treat veterans affairs or the rehabilitation of ex-service personnel as a separate chapter of the Year Book instead of considering it side by side with reconstruction as was done in the 1943-44 and 1945 editions.

Section 1.—The Department of Veterans Affairs

Established in October, 1944, to deal exclusively with matters affecting ex-service personnel and their dependents, the work of the Department of Veterans Affairs increased sharply with the end of war in Europe in May, 1945. Discharges had been comparatively few before 1945 but they had provided an excellent test for the legislation and for the machinery of re-establishment. When the War ended in August, 1945, and as the repatriation to Canada of the Armed Forces began, the rate of discharge, particularly in the later months of the year, increased sharply, reaching a peak in the month of October, 1945, when a total of approximately 92,000 veterans were discharged to civil life during that month.

Some idea of the magnitude of the task which faced the Department of Veterans Affairs may be gained from figures of enlistments and discharges. The total number of enlistments and enrolments in the Armed Forces up to V-J Day, Aug. 14, 1945, was 1,104,225. On V-E Day, May 7, 1945, the number who had been discharged to civil life was 240,000; by the end of 1945 that number had increased to approximately 650,000.