

one still at large, who is charged on warrant with store-breaking. The police have information that these men came originally, if not directly, from New Caledonia.

3. It seems probable that the number of New Caledonian convicts, free by expiry of sentence, must now be rapidly on the increase, and their arrival on our shores must either be provided for by an increased police and penal expenditure, or prevented by timely legislation.

4. May I ask that you will favour me, as early as convenient, with your views on the subject?

5. I would mention that I am strongly disposed to add to any Bill dealing with this matter, a clause imposing differential tonnage dues of a heavy amount on all vessels (of whatever nationality) trading with a convict settlement.

I have, &c.

JAMES SERVICE,

Chairman of Convention Committee.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

16th August, 1884.

M. de Verninac's Report on the Recidivist Bill, with several Appendices, was distributed in the French Senate yesterday.

I transmit herewith a copy of the same, together with a *précis* translation I have made of—

(a.) The Report itself;

(b.) The Bill as amended by the Senate Committee; and

(c.) The estimate of proposed cost for three years.

Immediately upon the Report being distributed, the President of the Finance Committee of the Senate, M. Calmon, observed that, as the new proposals involved a large annual expenditure, the Finance Committee desired the Report to be referred to them, so that they might advise upon it from a financial point of view. The new proposals, in fact, contemplate an expenditure of nearly 26,400,000 francs (about £1,060,000) in the first three years. The Report was thereupon referred to the Finance Committee without debate.

You will perceive, from the *précis* I am sending you, that the Bill has been extensively amended. I do not find it easy, therefore, to understand the statement made in the Report to the effect that it hardly differs from the Bill as it came up from the Chamber of Deputies. I have omitted, in the *précis*, much of the general argument contained in the Report, retaining only what seemed of special interest to the colonies. One of the Appendices consists of a despatch from the Governor of New Caledonia, condemning the scheme in the strongest terms. He declares that the colony cannot find work for the freed criminals already there, and that there are no means whatever of finding any for the recidivists. He declares that on the main island it is impossible to find land for a single recidivist without breaking faith with the convicts who are honestly willing to labour, and that it is altogether impossible to find any on the Loyalty Group at all. The French Government ought, therefore, he says, clearly to understand that it is absolutely impossible to receive recidivists in Caledonia under the conditions of the Bill as passed by the Deputies; and that to persist in the scheme must ruin the colony. How, in the face of such a despatch, the Senate Committee could go on with the scheme at all is not clear.

The Report, and the amended Bill, contain so many points of great importance that I may, perhaps, ask permission to direct your attention to them by and by. In the meanwhile, the session of the French Parliament having been now prorogued, the recidivist scheme is, of course, shelved for some time.

I have, &c.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

No. 1.

Précis of the Report of the Senate Committee (M. de Verninac).

1. Utility of the Bill.

THE report begins by referring to the ever-increasing number of relapsed and habitual criminals, to the fear and indignation thereby excited among all classes, and to the remedy sought in transportation; which has led to several schemes being submitted to the Legislature, and at last to the Bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies on the 30th June, 1883. Although crimes of a grave character had largely diminished since 1854, those of a lesser degree had been constantly increasing; and each year, with alarming regularity and intensity, the proportion was growing of relapse into habitual crime. The proportion of recidivists to the whole body of criminals, which in 1850 was only 20 per cent., reached in 1882 44 per cent., the total number being 78,998; and now there was seen to exist in the lower strata of society a class becoming every day more numerous, which reduced crime to a profession. This class, attacking property by preference, resorted chiefly to theft (in all its forms), breach of trust, and swindling; murder or assassination being mostly a means for committing other crimes or escaping from punishment. Offences against the person were almost exclusively those affecting morals, including public outrages against modesty, excitation of the young to debauchery, and procuring of prostitution. The progress of this social sore had proved alike the impotence of the existing systems of repression and the necessity for a prompt and energetic remedy.

The perversity indicated by the reiteration of crimes which in themselves were, relatively speaking, hardly grave, had not been sufficiently taken into account by juriconsults. It would not suffice to amend the Penal Code in the direction proposed by M. Bérenger. Neither prisons nor penitentiaries could really avail against habitual criminals, two-fifths of the prisoners discharged