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NEW ZEALAND.

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# VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

(MEMORANDUM RELATING TO, BY THE HON. W. P. REEVES, MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EDUCATION).

*Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Reeves, with the Leave of the House.*

MEMORANDUM to the Hon. the PREMIER.

7th January, 1895.

WHILE in Australia I made it my business to get as complete a knowledge as possible of the work being done in the three colonies I visited in the direction of village-settlement and labour colonies. Knowing how severe the depression has been in all three, and how intense the "unemployed" difficulty, I was of course anxious to note what steps had been taken to meet these troubles by putting destitute and workless persons on the soil. It seemed to me then, and still does so, that it might be possible to learn valuable lessons both from their successes and from their mistakes.

Without therefore encumbering this memorandum with details and figures which can have no direct bearing on village-settlement as a question of policy, I will simply dwell on such features of what I saw as seem to be specially worth your attention, both as Premier and as Minister for Public Works, and such as may be of interest and use to our colleague the Minister of Lands, to whom I propose to send a copy of this memorandum.

If either of you should wish, after reading this, for more detailed information on any point, I shall be only too glad to try to give it. But a multitude of details would, I think, be out of place in what is a memorandum from one Minister to another, and not a report intended to contain full information as to the working of public departments.

For convenience' sake I will divide what I have to say under three heads, each having to do with one of the three colonies through which I passed.

## I. NEW SOUTH WALES.

I begin with New South Wales:—

It is significant that, while much less has been done here in the way of village settlements than in other colonies, I found the "unemployed" difficulty proportionately greater. I heard of and saw more discontent and distress amongst workpeople in Sydney, by far, than in the other two colonies put together; this though Melbourne is commercially worse off than Sydney. Not only were large meetings of the unemployed going on in Sydney, but a gentleman who should know as much of the subject as any man in New South Wales told me earnestly that in forty years' experience as a colonist he could not remember that things had ever been worse in New South Wales, and he doubted whether they had ever been so bad. And this had come about in spite of the solid work that the Labour Bureau there had unquestionably done. It has not only been active in finding work, but has had much more support from private employers than we have had in New Zealand. On the other hand, I may mention that the trade-unionists in New South Wales regard their Bureau with much dislike and distrust, looking on it as a mere free-labour agency, and as being a class machine for picking up cheap labour for private employers.

The Bureau there has disposed of numbers of applicants for work by giving them tickets to gold-bearing localities, where they make a living by fossicking, and whither their wives and families are often sent after a time to join them. You are better able to judge than I am whether anything of this sort is possible in New Zealand.

I asked the chief of the Bureau how inexperienced men could make a living at this work. He explained that their practice was to make up little parties containing at least one man who had had some experience at gold-seeking, and who could guide and teach his ignorant mates.

There are very few village settlements in New South Wales—not more than three or four worth mentioning. Much the largest of these are the Pitt Town and Wilberforce Settlements, near the Town of Windsor, on the Hawkesbury River. I went to Pitt Town because it was the larger and likely to teach me more. Both it and the Wilberforce were started on co-operative lines, but at Wilberforce co-operation has been abandoned, and the block was being divided among the individual settlers. They had been totally unable to pull together in co-operation.