

SECTION 6.—MID-WEEK RACING

194. This question involves a problem which, like so many of the problems with which the Commission is concerned, must be determined upon consideration of questions of degree and in relation to factors the effects of which are not ascertainable with anything approximating certainty. The difficulty is increased by the possible ultimate influence of particular factors operating in different directions. It must be regarded as axiomatic and as permitting of no exception that no form of sport should be allowed to interfere with production at the level which the welfare of this country demands or the proper discharge of its obligations to the other countries of the British Commonwealth requires. If at any time, as at present, maximum production is required, then the question arises as to the means by which interference can be reduced to a minimum. Up to the present, by common consent, the restriction of all forms of racing to Saturdays and public holidays has been regarded as the best method. Now doubts are thrown upon its efficacy, and the detriments which accrue from its application are becoming manifest.

195. The question can best be considered in relation to a specific example, and we select the trotting and racing meetings held at Christchurch in August and November in each year as presenting the best example for consideration. The problem there takes a more acute form than elsewhere and the consequences are more extensive. In each August the Canterbury Jockey Club holds races on three days, and the New Zealand Metropolitan Trotting Club on three days. In November the Canterbury Jockey Club holds meetings on three days and the New Zealand Metropolitan Trotting Club on four days. In the result, by the elimination of mid-week racing, six consecutive Saturdays commencing in August are devoted to racing conducted by one or other of these two clubs, whilst a seventh Saturday is devoted to the racing conducted by the Christchurch Hunt Club. Again, commencing in November, six consecutive Saturdays are devoted to racing conducted by the Canterbury Jockey Club and the New Zealand Metropolitan Trotting Club. Although those clubs hold races on seven days, one of these days is People's Day at the show and a public holiday.

196. The effect of the absorption of so many Saturdays by racing has detrimental effects in several directions. In the first place, it interferes to a marked degree with football and cricket—the extent of the interference is shown by the fact that last season not only did numerous teams go out short, but there were thirty team defaults. All of this was attributed by Mr. W. E. Maxwell, the immediate past president of the Canterbury Rugby Union, in his evidence, to the effect of racing.