

to headquarters in the event of work of any kind offering, and in the larger towns weekly reports were sent in advising us of the number of married and single applicants per day and conditions of employment generally. The Government, as you are aware, were kept advised of the position, and much help was afforded by the putting-on of extra men at co-operative and other works in districts where the congestion appeared to be most acute. An experiment was also tried in advertising. The Department inserted an advertisement in newspapers circulating through every part of the Dominion appealing to employers to advise the officers of the Department when labour of any kind was wanted. The result was discouraging in the extreme; very few replies were received, and it was evident that employers were not disposed to spend any money on works that could be left until the financial clouds had lifted. This result I regarded as a tribute to the thoroughness of the inquiries already made by our various agents. It showed that they had accurately gauged the situation in reporting from time to time that the demand for labour was practically nil. In the larger centres great help was afforded the Department in providing work by the various local bodies, and in Dunedin the selection of the men required was entrusted to the Department's officers. A proposal was submitted to His Worship the Mayor of Wellington (Dr. Newman) during last winter, undertaking to select all unskilled labour required on local municipal works, special attention being given by the Department's officers—(1) as to needs of applicants, (2) as to character, and (3) as to ability to perform the particular work required to be done. The proposal was not favourably received, but I feel sanguine that in the near future local bodies, and large employers generally, will avail themselves of the help offered by the Department.

I hope to submit to you during the present year a new scheme for the providing of "employment" cards to men assisted by the Department. We have already adopted a registration-card system, as approved by you, in the larger towns, but I would like to extend the system so as to provide each man with a card (which he can keep in his possession), showing his name, age, calling, name of last employer, and also providing columns (somewhat on the lines of a seaman's certificate-of-discharge book) in which an employer, by the use of letters, could indicate the character and conduct of a man whilst in his employ. This system would be specially suitable, and should be first tried, in connection with men sent to Government co-operative works. It has been found that some men made a practice of going from one Government job to another, and, with a view to checking this and separating the unwilling and unworthy from the deserving and hardworking, cards such as I have outlined should be supplied and produced as proof of *bona fides* when men are discharged from one job and apply for another.

By the awards of the Arbitration Court many unions have been granted preference of employment, subject to certain conditions, and this has resulted in making some union offices veritable labour exchanges. Employers bound by awards sometimes apply to these secretaries for men instead of consulting the employment-books, and overtures have been made to the Department from both sides to undertake this work. Some of the union officials, however, seem to prefer to do this work themselves, so that, unless there is a more general movement on their part to hand over the selection of men to our employment agencies, matters will have to remain as at present. I would, however, submit that it would be in the interests of all parties—unions, employers, and workers—if the men required were selected through the Department's offices. Not only would the Department endeavour to see that the provisions of all awards were complied with, but in cases where men were required in large numbers, both the union officials and employers concerned could act with the Department's officers in selecting the best men available.

During the depth of the winter a considerable number of applications were received from skilled bushmen for employment. It was found that there was very little of this class of work being put in hand by farmers; the men came to the cities in large numbers, and applied for work of any description. It was eventually decided between the Lands and Survey Department and this Department to fell an area of bush in the Rangitatau Block, near Waitotara. Men suitable for the work were selected, and were sent up in parties of from twenty to thirty until a total of 130 was reached. Generally the men selected were of a good stamp, and remained at the work until their contracts were cut out. An experiment was tried by the Department in regard to providing the men with food, tents, and tools. After several tenders had been called, an arrangement was effected between the Department and a storekeeper for the supply of necessary groceries and meat. The prices ultimately arranged with the Department were very reasonable, and a binding agreement was entered into, which was faithfully adhered to by the contractor. It is pleasing to say that, at the close of the work, there was not one complaint in regard to the prices paid for supplies. The men were charged for the use of the tents and tools, but most of the equipment was bought outright. The work commenced in the beginning of July, and much of the contracts were finished at the end of October, when other employment was much more freely offered, and men had no difficulty in getting farm work. Several illustrations of these works are shown in this report.