

4th Day.]

LABOUR EXCHANGES AND EMIGRATION.

[2 June, 1911.]

Mr. BUXTON—*cont.*

position to ensure that any vacancies dealt with by the labour exchanges were of a nature properly to be filled from the United Kingdom. I would like to add to that just one point upon which I think there is some misunderstanding. I think it is thought by some persons that our labour exchanges are only a continuation of the old distress committees which were started under the Unemployed Workmen's Act, in which undoubtedly much the larger number of those registered were really unemployable, and not, at all events, persons suitable for emigration. As far as the labour exchanges are concerned, at the very beginning we cut ourselves entirely apart from any question of distress committees, and I am glad to say the longer we have gone on—now nearly $1\frac{1}{4}$ years—more and more have we got rid of the lowest class and the less useful class of labour, and I think we can safely say now that our labour exchanges do supply very good workmen indeed. As regards the building trade, for instance, last April, out of 6,000 places filled, only 15·3 per cent. of those were labourers; the others were skilled workmen. As regards the engineering and machine-making trade, only 11 per cent. were labourers, and 89 per cent. were skilled workmen, so that so far as we are concerned I hope it may be clearly understood that, as far as regards the bulk of those we have on our books who are available for employment, they are really of a suitable class both for home work here and for emigration.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I have for my part no information at all as to the working in Great Britain of the system of labour exchanges which have been established under the recent Act. I understand that it has worked satisfactorily. I am sorry to say we in Canada would not view with favour such a system of exchange as is here suggested in the resolution. The conditions of the labour market are very different in Canada and the Dominions beyond the seas—at all events, they are very different in Canada. This is a question which chiefly concerns labour, and with us the labour organizations have not viewed the system at all with any favour. I should say that, whilst we have encouraged emigration from Great Britain to Canada, we have really only one kind of immigration, and that is agricultural immigration, for which the market is unlimited. Any man who leaves the British Islands and comes to Canada with the intention of going into agricultural pursuits is sure of immediate employment, and is sure to find work as a farm labourer; and if he prefers an establishment still more advantageous to him he can immediately go upon public lands and have a homestead for himself, but when it comes to industrial pursuits he is very liable to disappointment unless he has work secured in advance.

Just before I left the Minister of Labour placed in my hands a memorial upon this question, in which he has summarized the objections which have been urged. It is too long to read, but I will summarize or indicate the salient points of the memorandum. He said: "The Government policy has not looked to the direct promotion of immigration, whether from Great Britain or elsewhere, of those concerned in other industries"—having originally spoken of agricultural pursuits—"it being considered that the play of natural causes at a time when the resources and prosperity of Canada are receiving a world-wide publicity, may well suffice to secure an adequate response to the needs of employers of labour in this country." Further on he says: "No matter how carefully guarded, it would appear that any arrangement of the kind proposed would lead inevitably to much friction between employers and workmen in Canada, as well as create distrust in the minds of many in the Dominion as to the quality of labour which might be supplied under the proposed arrangement. Workmen sent out from England under Government auspices would, in all probability, if dissatisfied with the employment obtained, make of their dissatisfaction a grievance to be investigated by the Governments, while Canadian workmen would be certain to represent that they were being unduly discriminated against by the Governments concerned. Apart from the agencies indicated above, the bringing of labour from Great Britain to assured employment in Canada has been in the past entirely a matter of private initiative. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association opened an office in London, England, in 1907, for the purpose of securing skilled help for its members. The experiment would appear not to have been wholly satisfactory, and the office has been since closed." "It