

4th Day.]

LABOUR EXCHANGES AND EMIGRATION.

[2 June, 1911.]

Mr. BATCHELOR—*cont.*

want of means, is no bar; but as to the extent to which we could utilize your labour exchanges, which I suppose are primarily labour bureaus for the registration of men who are out of employment with the view of their obtaining employment—

Mr. BUXTON: Registration on the one hand of the men requiring work, and registration on the other hand of vacancies, and we put the two together.

Mr. BATCHELOR: That is what I understood. As I point out, our State Immigration Departments require that our agents in London shall select the men, and I think we would have very great difficulty in persuading our State Governments to part with that entire control and selection.

The CHAIRMAN: You mean in the case of assisted passages?

Mr. BATCHELOR: That is in the case of assisted passages.

Mr. BUXTON: In this case there would be no question of taking it out of their hands; it would be done in conjunction with them. That is the idea.

Mr. BATCHELOR: The words used are "in concert."

Mr. BUXTON: Obviously we have no intention or desire of taking the control out of their hands. It is a question of the application coming from the employer through the Agent-General or High Commissioner, whoever it may be, and asking us if we can find a suitable man. That is all we propose to do.

Mr. BATCHELOR: The application coming from the employer in Australia?

Mr. BUXTON: Yes, through the Government here.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Yes. One of the difficulties which the Agents-General see in that matter is the time which would necessarily elapse before men could be supplied, which would alter the whole conditions. As at present advised I do not see how it is going to work better than the schemes which are now adopted. The employers might communicate direct with the Agents-General of their Governments, and they might send it on to your body, and then they might select from the men registering suitable persons. They could do that now, and that is done. I do not quite see how any extension can be made.

With regard to the proposal that you should obtain from the Governments a guarantee of the cost of sending out men, and they should get a refund from the men themselves, we have found in practice that is an exceedingly difficult thing to do. What it would mean would be that the State Governments would have to make themselves responsible, and in our own experience they would be very unlikely to be recouped by the men sent out. Only an infinitesimal portion has been received in Australia of the amounts which have been expended to introduce men.

Mr. BUXTON: Of course, in a case in which they are selected by the representatives of the Governments here, they would be prepared to undertake that responsibility. Our only point is that His Majesty's Government are not prepared to spend money on emigration at this end, but as a matter of convenience where the Dominion Governments were prepared to repay the money we could advance it.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Quite so; but what it would mean in practice would be that the Governments would have to make up the amount.

Mr. BUXTON: If they wished—if there were an advance.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Yes.