

2 June, 1911.]

LABOUR EXCHANGES AND EMIGRATION.

[4th Day.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it a fact that these amounts have been repaid badly?

Mr. BATCHELOR: Very badly indeed.

The CHAIRMAN: I understood from some of the Agents-General that on the whole they have been very well repaid.

Mr. BATCHELOR: No; the information I have received is that only an infinitesimal amount has been received. That is our experience generally.

Dr. FINDLAY: It is a debt of gratitude—not more.

Mr. BATCHELOR: I know Mr. Williamson, the Agent of the Central Unemployed Body, said the amount they had expended in sending emigrants had been repaid extremely well, but that has not been our experience.

The CHAIRMAN: It was his information I was thinking of.

Mr. BATCHELOR: That has not been our experience. On the whole, the proposal is not one which we can cordially support without more information.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: The object of this resolution, in my opinion, is a very laudable one, and I am disposed to think it ought not to be set aside upon the assumption that it is going to be injurious to the methods that exist in any of our countries. I see no reason whatever why we should not take into consideration, in concert with the Imperial Government, the possibility of utilizing the labour exchanges in the United Kingdom for the purposes indicated. I make that statement subject to the reservation that we have in New Zealand, and have had since 1894—17 years—a complete organization of labour exchanges from end to end of the country. There the employers, and the expectant employees, are kept in continuous touch all over the country, and we help to avoid anything in the shape of congestion either by arrivals from overseas or by people converging upon any point in New Zealand that would upset the local labour market, and it has worked admirably as far as we are concerned.

Now, one of the difficulties about the proposition from the standpoint of New Zealand is that our immigration system is, perhaps, on a different basis to that of Canada or Australia, and we regulate it in an entirely different way, and we do so because we have thought it better to consider the absorbant power of our country beforehand of every one coming to it as an immigrant rather than have an aggregation of labour brought in in large numbers from anywhere and so disturbing the local market, creating a glut, and, in turn, doing a certain amount of damage to our local workers. The difference between Canada and New Zealand is very great. In Canada they have large landed areas, by the possession of which, under their system, they are able to offer great inducements to individuals to the extent of 160 acres of land free. If I understand it aright, the Canadian system takes any number of people who choose to go to that country, and they allow them to find their way to places where there is occupation, and they go upon the principle that the larger the absorption of labour and the more they get the better it is for Canada, and they are able to absorb them without difficulty in their huge territory. I think, with the exception of the land system in Australia, the Commonwealth is in a similar position—able to absorb an immense number of people.

We, however, work our immigration system on a different basis. The High Commissioner, who acts here, and passes the men who are going to our country, has definite instructions that at certain times of the year no one at all is to be assisted. We try to prevent anything in the shape of assisted emigration from arriving in our country during the winter months. We stop the whole system for the time being so as to insure that when they arrive they can arrive at a