

THOMAS HARCOURT VALINTINE, M.R.C.S., D.P.H., sworn and examined. (No. 75.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the Inspector-General of Hospitals and Chief Health Officer?—Yes.

2. Do you wish to tender evidence regarding the employment of consumptives at tree-planting camps?—Yes. I would like you to consider the possibility of employing those consumptives who are practically cured of the disease, but not sufficiently to permit of their going back to their ordinary occupations involving sedentary lives and confinement in offices.

3. On what basis would you propose that they should be employed—on piecework? That is to say, if it costs 12s. 6d. a thousand to dig the pits for the trees would you pay the consumptives at the same rate?—Certainly. Mr. Goudie, who is present, can speak, of course, with much more authority on the point than I. We used to pay 9d. an hour in the case of consumptives doing that class of work. If they were put on contract work it should be at the rate of so-much for digging a certain number of holes.

4. Here we are faced with the question of paying for the labour, as a rule; the interest charge on the money invested is heavier than in Continental countries. If we place forestry matters on a proper basis we could not recommend anything in the shape of charitable aid, and we have to arrange regarding the employment of consumptives on a basis of paying for their services. We wish to ascertain what would be a fair sum to pay. Have you any opinion on that point?—I quite understand your position. The labour of consumptives cannot be regarded as reliable labour; but tree-planting is an occupation which particularly lends itself to the treatment of consumptives, and therefore any increased cost in connection with tree-planting I would suggest might be supplemented by assistance from the various Hospital Boards. Otherwise it would not be fair. You cannot look at this question from a business point of view; but it is just the employment that is wanted in the interests of the country, and of these people in particular.

5. Can you give the Commission any idea as to what number of men would be available if it were decided to employ consumptives in tree-planting?—I reckon there are about two thousand consumptives in the Dominion at present—males and females—and I consider that employment should be found for from one hundred and fifty to two hundred a year. That number would be available. As soon as we get the sanatoria into working-order it would be found that there would be a sufficient number discharged to allow of that number being available.

6. Has not your Department a large area of land at Kihikihi which it is breaking in now?—Not my Department, but the Mental Hospitals Department. But that land would be very suitable for the purpose.

7. Seeing that the subject is somewhat allied in connection with the two Departments, do you not think it would be possible to find employment for these people in that locality?—It is quite possible.

8. Then they would be able to obtain medical attendance if wanted?—It would be a way out of a difficulty. I believe one of my officers has reported on the advisability of land at Taupo being used; but that is too far from the railway. Kihikihi is admirably situated in that respect, being close to the line.

9. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Then it would not be the Forestry Department that would employ them there?—I admit that the proposal to employ them at proper tree-planting camps would be the best for afforestation purposes.

10. *The Chairman.*] In the event of such camp as you contemplate being established in connection with the Forestry Department, what arrangements would be made in respect to medical attendance?—The cases would have to be carefully drafted in the first place from the various consumptive sanatoria. The idea is that only those practically cured of a disease, but not sufficiently to allow them to go back to ordinary occupations, would be drafted out, and there should be little risk of those cases breaking down again. At the same time you have to consider that contingency, and therefore it would not do for these camps to be too far removed from medical assistance.

11. How would the cooking arrangements be carried out?—That would be done by the men themselves. We have tried the experiment already at Rotorua, and spent in three years about £2,400 on a camp there, but at first it was not a success, because a matron was put in charge, and the patients used to go to her if they did not feel well or inclined to work. Therefore Mr. Goudie was greatly handicapped in regard to knowing how many men would be available. In fact, the camp was more of a hospital than a tree-planting camp. I altered the arrangement and put the camp under Mr. Goudie, and then it was in no sense a hospital. There was no nurse there, and it was much easier for Mr. Goudie to carry on.

12. How were the men supervised?—There was a foreman appointed from amongst the patients.

13. Had they the requisite knowledge to enable them to instruct the others?—They had no special knowledge excepting what they obtained by working under Mr. Goudie. These men were appointed specially to look after the camp and generally manage it for the Department.

14. Was there any return for the expenditure at Rotorua?—The only return was the number of trees they planted, and the fact that the men were kept employed, and isolated from the rest of the community, during the time that they might have been to a certain degree infectious.

15. Was the work they did credited to your Department?—No. They were paid direct from the Forestry Division.

16. How many men were there in the camp?—The number varied from eight or nine to twenty-two.

17. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Dr. Makgill estimated we could rely on sixty patients. I suppose he referred to the Auckland District only?—Yes.

18. *The Chairman.*] If the net cost to your Department was about £800 a year and there was an average of twenty-five men employed, it cost about £32 for each man independently of