

5. Has the system of employing prisoners on these plantations proved satisfactory to your Department as regards the reformation of the men?—I think so. It is probably about the only thing that has a real reformatory effect on the men. But the system does not affect those who do not wish to be reformed. Then, again, there are numbers who ask to be sent back again to the city prisons. They do not like the camps, but prefer to be in the town prisons, where they can get the latest news of what is going on.

6. In employing prisoners in plantations is it considered advisable to concentrate them in large camps, or in a number of small ones?—In my opinion it would not be advisable to concentrate them in large camps, but it would be better to have small camps. From fifty to sixty men would be quite enough to put in one camp.

7. Is the Prisons vote credited with the value of the work done by the prisoners?—No, we get no credit for it, and that is a point we are going to take up.

8. In the case of all other Departments it is the practice to credit a Department with the value of the work done by it for another Department. Do you think that would be a satisfactory way of dealing with this matter from the point of view of your Department?—Yes, something ought to be done from that point of view, and it would then lessen the cost of the system to the Prisons Department.

9. What is the average cost of keeping the prisoners?—In Auckland Prison the average cost is £38 per annum; at Hanmer, £50; at Waitapu, £72; at Waipa, £64. On the average it costs nearly double to maintain these prisoners at the camps.

10. Supposing it cost 12s. 6d. per thousand to dig the pits for tree-planting by free labour, would your Department be satisfied if the prisoners were credited with the same rate for the same amount of work?—Yes.

11. Would that put the matter on a commercial basis?—Yes. The present idea is to make provision for paying prisoners sentenced to reformatory treatment for the labour, beyond the cost of maintenance, and this is one of the works which might enable us to do something in that direction. They would have to earn anything they got in the shape of payment. The payment, of course, would be only small. Tree-planting is a case where you can class and value the prisoner's work. Of course, we cannot take any step in that direction until the finance is provided, and other Departments do not now pay anything to us for prisoners' labour. They take our labour but do not pay for it.

12. Those are the principal matters on which I wished to get your opinion, but if there is any other you would like to bring before the Commission we shall be very glad to hear your views?—I do not think there are any. Dr. Hay is getting some figures on the question, and may be able to further deal with the question from the departmental point of view. As to the tree-planting camps, Hanmer seems to be the least profitable to the Department. We have a difficulty in getting a number of men there, but we have to keep a staff we would be glad to send elsewhere. It has struck me that it is the least profitable of the camps, and we would like to close it up; and in fact we propose to do so.

13. Is there any particular reason why it should be closed?—On account of the more rigorous climate? Or is it because there is not sufficient land there to extend the planting operations?—It seems to me that that camp is bound to come to an end within a short time on account of the want of land—within a couple of years, I understand.

14. In the event of further land being acquired in the vicinity would that get over the difficulty about closing the camp?—Undoubtedly, if we could maintain the camp properly we could give the Forestry Department a fair number of prisoners for two camps. We have the Invercargill reformatory and the Waikeria farm, and we propose to send a number of young men there who would be suitable for tree-planting.

15. What class of work do the prisoners do at Invercargill?—At the present time the men are engaged in reclaiming land which will do for farming purposes and vegetable-gardens.

16. Is your Department credited with the value of the work done there?—We are just in the same position there as we are in respect to the tree-planting for the Forestry Department. We get 650 acres of land in payment of the labour for the reclamation. With regard to reclamation we only provide the labour. At Auckland we do stone-breaking, for which we get a fair amount of cash—for the stone which is obtained on the prison reserve.

17. Is the stone paid for by the local bodies?—Yes. In Wellington there is some brickmaking done, but we do not sell the bricks outside. The Government takes them, and credits us with their value. We have not got any money to provide for all these growing forms of prison reform, and especially for the payment of prisoners; but there is a good deal to be said for the latter proposal. You can get a fair amount of work out of the prisoners if they are handled properly and kept going. You get a class of men who as long as they are kept at work will work hard; but we also have men who will not work at all, and you cannot make them work.

18. *Mr. Murdoch.*] You think you could only supply prisoners for two camps?—It would be better to concentrate on two camps, and maintain them with a fair number of prisoners.

19. *Mr. Clarke.*] Is there any other method of dealing with prison labour whereby the work of the men can be assessed at the same rate as free labour?—I would not say that it is even necessary to assess it at the same value as that of free labour, but I would like to get some remuneration for it which would enable us to make some small payment to prisoners, though not necessarily at the full value of the work.

20. How would it do, if they dug a thousand holes, instead of crediting the Department with the amount the work would cost if done by free labour, to credit it with the actual cost of the work by prison labour?—That plan would not give us anything; you have also to maintain the prisoners.

21. Assuming that it cost 50 per cent. more to maintain a prisoner in a camp, how would it do to value his work accordingly?—That would leave us no margin for the prisoner himself, but would only pay our cost.