

22. But a percentage of profit or reward would still be added on at the end. Is it fair to compare prison labour with free labour under any circumstances as to value?—That is a matter the future will determine; apparently people consider this system of paying prisoners is going to be of great value.

23. Do you not think it might also turn out a disadvantage to your Department? If it costs 12s. 6d. to dig a thousand holes by free labour, but your Department 15s. by prison labour, would it not be a loss to the Government, and therefore inadvisable to pursue the policy?—If it costs our Department 15s. it would be a loss. From one set of figures given to me it looks as though the cost was considerably more than that per thousand trees.

24. In that case does it not go to prove that your Department is on the wrong line altogether, and that it would be better to abandon the system and leave the work to be done by free labour?—It is a good thing from a prison point of view, even if we do have to pay a little more, to have a place like a tree-planting camp to send the better class of prisoners to.

25. Would you still advocate this proposal even if it is shown that the system costs more than the free labour?—Up to a limited point I would.

26. *The Chairman.*] I think the point is that you would have to maintain these prisoners whether they were tree-planting or not, and that if you could utilize their labour and get credit for their work it is so much gain to your Department?—Yes. If you can employ prisoners at some labour that they consider is of some use or value, which they can take an interest in, it will do them good, but if it is mere routine work it is of no value.

27. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Does the tree-planting work bring in more to the State than the ordinary prison labour?—I suppose the tree-planting would pay the State, but I would not advocate it for the sake of the prisoners only, because, after all, the one idea of prison-management is to fit the prisoner who has no trade to do something for himself when he comes out. Tree-planting is all very well, but he would not find in the open market employment at it.

28. *The Chairman.*] Then if you are making the prisoner a better man by giving him a trade he will be more useful to the State eventually?—We cannot do in that respect the things we would like to do, because we must not come into competition with the public in the towns. I think you make better men of the prisoners at the tree-planting camps than of those left in the prisons.

29. If some of the men you do not send out at present were put to tree-planting would a percentage of them be reformed?—It would be hard to say. You might expect a percentage to be, but it would be a very small number that would be benefited by the treatment.

30. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Were the prisoners we saw at Hanmer any worse-behaved than those elsewhere?—No, there is a good class of men there.

31. The conditions there seemed to be more pleasant than at the Kaingaroa Plains: is there any particular reason for that?—From a prison point of view they had a little bit too good a time at Hanmer. You can go too far in regard to indulging the men, and that is what happened at that camp.

32. We noticed pictures in the huts at Hanmer, but nothing at the other place?—Yes; when it comes to plastering the walls all over with the pictures you saw it has not a very good effect on the prisoners' morals.

33. Well, the Maoris were working very well at Hanmer?—So I understand. When I was there I noticed the men were working really well, but whether it was only a spurt for the time being I do not know.

FRANK HAY, M.B., sworn and examined. (No. 83.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals and Inspector of Prisons?—Yes.

2. It has been suggested that in dealing with the convalescent consumptives they might be employed in tree-planting operations, say, in the Waiotapu district, or possibly in Central Otago. One of the difficulties that might crop up might be in regard to medical attendance, so it was thought possible that work might be found for these people on the land your Department has acquired near Kihikihi, where they would be quite close to medical supervision. Have you work of that kind at that place?—We have not got any land there for tree-planting. It is all agricultural land, which we will want for farming. There might be a few shelter-belts required, but that is not what you mean, I presume.

3. If you had a large amount of agricultural work going on there could not the consumptives be employed at it?—The question comes in of their fitness for it. We would need to have teams of horses, ploughs, &c., and I am not sure that these people would be sufficiently strong for that kind of work.

4. Would there not be a good deal of clearing, draining, and ditching to be done on the site?—Draining is, of course, a laborious operation, but the clearing of that class of country is only a matter of putting a match into it.

5. Then you do not consider the suggestion a practical one as regards employing such patients there?—Not from the mental-hospital point of view. From the standpoint of the prisons the idea is absolutely excluded, because you cannot have free labour associated with prison labour. When you employ expensive teams of horses you cannot trust them to people who are not expert in those matters. If such a scheme is brought forward naturally one desires to do the best one can for that class of unfortunates, but just now I am looking at the matter purely from the business point of view.

6. Is the work you speak of to be done by the inmates of the mental hospitals?—We have a certain amount of paid labour always on the estate, and there are also a number of the inmates who are able to do this work, having been expert farmers.