

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 29TH OCTOBER, 1913.

Colonel HEARD examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee would like if you will give some evidence in regard to alternative service—any suggestions that you have to make?—Well, I have been thinking over it a good deal, and I find it a very difficult question. There are certain difficulties in the way that are not insurmountable. It is only a question of whether any particular Department would be willing to take over the organization. The whole point and the whole crux of the position with regard to alternative service is this: to have adequate supervision to ensure that the alternative service is performed in a proper and efficient manner—that is to say, that those young men who elect to take alternative service, conscientious objectors or whoever they may be, really do perform the work that is set; and whatever Department takes it over will require a proper organization of foremen or overseers. More than that, in the case of young men who might prove obstreperous, you will require some form of police to keep order or to hale the young men before the Magistrate if necessary. The way I should propose that this alternative service should be performed will depend a great deal on the numbers that are involved in the question. If you find in regard to a great many young men that their conscience prevents them from carrying out military service or that their religion equally prevents them carrying out military service, you will have very large numbers to deal with, and the only way to deal with large numbers of this description is to have in various districts a camp situated in some locality where useful work can be done for the benefit of the State, and where remunerative work can be carried out by these young men. It is no use putting them on any work that will produce no result. The work should be remunerative, so that the State will get some return for the expense it is put to in carrying on this organization. To my mind there is no doubt that it is no good putting these young men to work that is unproductive. Broadly, those are the lines on which I should go, and it only remains to be determined what Department—whether the Public Works, Labour, or Agricultural Department—would undertake the organization. Of course, we cannot have anything to do with it because the young men are not soldiers, nor have we an adequate staff to see to such a thing. It is not military work and we are not concerned with it. These camps would be held at certain times in the year which would be most convenient for the young men and for their employers—some slack time of the year. The suggestion has been made that they should be used in beautifying the city. Well, I do not think you will find that the Corporations will undertake it, or that they will undertake to supervise the work, because they probably have not the necessary staffs. These young men would be at work only odd days, and it would be very unsatisfactory. I think it is very much better that the whole thing should come in one lump—equivalent service to that performed by the Territorials, which amounts in all, including drills, annual camp, and musketry, to about twenty-four days, or 147 hours at six hours a day. It is much better to have them in the camp for all that time and have done with it. It would be more satisfactory, and you would get something to show for it—far better than would be the case with isolated days' work here and there. That, in the main, gentlemen, is my proposition, and it would only remain to work out the details of the organization and how the work should be supervised, and what should be done to ensure that the work is properly carried out. You want some powers behind you to deal with the young men in camp, because you must remember that they are young men who will have no discipline, and you may find them truculent and difficult to deal with. You have only got to remember the class of young men who came before the Committee the other day—they were truculent and showed disrespectful behaviour. If you have a lot of young men of that class to deal with you will have no discipline but a lot of trouble, so that you will want something in the form of police at these camps to enforce orders. It is a big question, and the more you look into it and more difficult you will find it. That is the only thing I can think of. As far as the Senior Cadets are concerned, I was not thinking of them. I doubt whether the Senior Cadet is entitled to a conscience at his age. After all, it is military training. As far as the Senior Cadet is concerned, he is not liable to service as a Senior Cadet. He is liable to training for defence purposes, but does not go into the Defence Force until he reaches the age of eighteen, and is not considered as available for service until he is a Territorial. The difficulty that arises as far as the Senior Cadet is concerned is that you cannot put him into camp. That is all I have to say on the subject.

2. *Hon. Mr. Callan.*] Were you present when those two young men, Worrall and Williams, were being examined?—I was, yes.

3. When you suggest that these men should be put into a camp and put to certain remunerative work, do you think that these young men, having seen their demeanour here, and men of that class would obey instructions and do any work of any kind whatever?—Well, I know that those two young men would not because they said so. Of course, where they will not do it you have either to make them or they must suffer the consequences.

4. To my mind it was quite clear that those two young men, and there must be many of the same way of thinking, would positively refuse to do any work?—I may say they would.

5. Have you considered what you would do with young men of that class?—Well, all you can do is to bring them before the Magistrate in the ordinary course for not obeying the law, and they must suffer the consequences. I do not say that all conscientious objectors would behave as they did. They belong to a certain section of the Peace Society, or whatever they call themselves; but you would have a certain number of conscientious objectors who would not object to