

79. How do you account for the perpetual demand for labour?—I do not think that the demand is perpetual. The demand for labour fluctuates tremendously.

80. In the woollen industry has not there been a constant demand for more labour?—For women, boys, and girls.

81. Then you think that there are more fluctuations in the demand for labour in New Zealand than there are in Great Britain?—Yes, I think so. In England the trades are highly specialized. In Great Britain the workers in particular branches of trade keep to those branches, but in New Zealand they overlap very much, and as soon as a particular branch slackens they turn to another branch.

82. Do you think that any system of medical aid could be granted to the working-classes, other than is given now—I mean medical assistance in times of sickness?—That is getting out of my sphere of inquiry.

83. You mentioned that whilst the contributions would be larger in this country it would not tide them over a longer period of unemployment?—That is a matter for an actuary, but I should not think so.

84. You think that the greater cost of living would be quite an equivalent?—The wages here are, I think, just sufficient to enable the workers to live under their present conditions.

85. And therefore they would not carry them on for a longer period here?—I would not like to express a definite opinion on that.

86. *Mr. Coates.*] Do you think that unemployment in New Zealand calls for a system of State insurance against unemployment?—No, I do not think it does, and I do not think a system would be practicable.

87. You do not think it could be made to work?—No.

88. In what periods of the year is there most unemployment in the cities?—Winter-time.

89. Have you any knowledge of country districts and the demand for labour in country districts—at what time of the year is the demand most acute?—For farming operations, you mean?

90. Yes?—In the spring and just at shearing and harvest time; but I think the spring is the most acute time.

91. Is there any demand for labour in the winter-time in country districts?—Not very much. There is a certain amount of bushfelling and roadmaking going on; but that is the time when employment slackens.

92. You say that there is a demand for men in country districts?—Yes.

93. Take the case of a man and his family, I should say it would be impossible for him to go out without making provision for him?—Yes.

94. Do you think the time has arrived for the State to assist these men by building homes in country districts?—Yes, that is what we have commenced to do now. The present Minister of Labour expressed a desire shortly after he came into office to extend the workers' dwellings system into country districts by giving the workers plots of about 5 acres. That system is being inaugurated now. The idea is to enable workers to have small farms of 5 acres to work on in their spare time. The difficulty with the demand for farm labour is that the farmers in a large number of cases cannot offer the men employment all the year round, but only during the busy season. That is not much good to a man unless he can settle down in the country. This system will, it is hoped, enable a man to work his own section in his spare time.

95. Is unemployment in the cities principally?—Yes.

96. Has it recently assumed a serious outlook? Have you reason to believe that it has become serious?—I do not think so. During the last ten years the unemployment difficulty in the cities has been very slight. About five years ago there was financial stress, and there was a certain amount of difficulty then, but things have righted themselves since then. There is a certain amount of unemployment all the time. It has not caused a great deal of distress, but still it ought to be possible to minimize it.

97. Referring to wharf labour: by decasualization of labour do you think it is possible to relieve those men who would be for a portion of the year without work—to relieve them by sending them to country districts, and would they be suitable?—Yes; we do that to a certain extent now. We often send them to road and railway works.

98. As to this scheme of settlement for workers in country districts, have you considered the question of utilizing the kauri-gum fields in conjunction with casual unemployment?—I have not thought of that aspect of it. I take it you mean kauri-gum digging only?

99. There are portions of the gumfields that are suitable for fruitgrowing and also for high-class farming on which men could go and earn good wages?—Yes.

100. Have you, in considering your scheme of country workers' homes, considered the question of utilizing these gumfields—by digging on the gumfields?—I had not thought of it; I think the gumfields are mostly Crown lands—reserves. Your idea, I take it, would be to set apart some of the reserves for farming purposes.

101. Supposing you sent five hundred men from the city, or fifty men—it would be purely an experiment in the first place—you are not sure whether they could get sufficient work to keep them and their homes—by having a portion of the work near gumfields, and they can always earn a living off the gum lands?—Yes.

102. Have you in considering the scheme taken into consideration whether the gumfields might be utilized with advantage?—I have not thought of it, but there is no reason why the gumfields should not be utilized.

103. It has not come under your notice?—No.

104. Has there been any suggestion from the trades-unions that national insurance against unemployment should be adopted in this country?—Very little. I think I remember a suggestion made about three or four years ago; it has only been spoken of in a vague way.