

to deplete the country of workers who could be usefully employed there. We are convinced that this drift to the towns could be greatly reduced if country workers were assisted to obtain homes in the country, and we have therefore selected "Homes for Country Workers" as the second subject for a full recommendation in this report.

The two other causes of unemployment, numbers 3 and 4 in the above classification, suggests the need for some system under which workers displaced from employment by the introduction of new machines, methods, or materials will be cared for until they can be absorbed in other industries. The proportion of these workers to the total registered unemployed is difficult to estimate, but they constitute a part of the problem which is quite different from that of the regular seasonal workers.

Incapacity considered as a cause of unemployment suggests one remedy which perhaps this Committee might usefully consider—viz., to remodel our general education scheme so that the school training of boys and girls will tend to prepare them most effectually for useful work after their school-days end.

AFFORESTATION AS A MEANS OF RELIEVING AND PREVENTING UNEMPLOYMENT.

While unemployment is a problem common to all countries, the incidence of unemployment varies greatly as between different countries. New Zealand being mainly a primary producing country, and operations in the meat, dairying, and wool industries being almost entirely suspended during the winter months, seasonal unemployment is probably proportionately more severe here than in most other countries. The displacement of several thousands of workers at the end of the season, with the consequent loss to trade of their spending-power, also aggravates the general problem of unemployment.

As stated in our General Report, the promotion of productive industrial undertakings is infinitely preferable for the prevention of unemployment to any system of relief works. Works undertaken as measures of relief from unemployment must also, generally speaking, rank in order of preference according to the degree in which they may be expected to be of a reproductive character.

Both as a productive industry and as a form of relief work we think consideration must be given to the question of afforestation, for the following reasons:—

- (1) Afforestation is at its period of greatest activity—i.e., the planting season—during the period May to October, when the primary industries are at their slackest.
- (2) Tree-planting is, apart from supervision, comparatively unskilled work, and therefore capable of being performed by a large proportion of the workers displaced by seasonal causes.
- (3) A sufficient number of experienced workers at present employed by the State Forest Service and private afforestation companies is available to supervise planting operations performed by a large number of inexperienced workers.
- (4) If undertaken as a measure of relief to meet the needs of an abnormal period of general unemployment, afforestation can, if resources are made available in advance, be largely expanded or contracted at comparatively small cost.
- (5) Money spent on afforestation goes, with the exception of the cost of land and also of imported seed (a very small item), entirely to the payment of labour in this country.
- (6) The climate of New Zealand is peculiarly suited to the growth of soft woods, the normal growth here being at a rate which in many countries would be regarded as phenomenal.
- (7) The research and experimental work of the State Forest Service over many years afford safe guides for large-scale operations.
- (8) There are practically unlimited areas of Crown and other lands capable of bearing timber but unsuitable for agricultural or pastoral purposes.
- (9) Apart from direct returns in timber and other forest products, afforestation has a considerable indirect value in enhancing the productivity of adjacent lands by affording shelter, by conserving moisture and so preventing floods, and by the protection it affords to the soil by preventing permanent deterioration owing to denudation.

From the foregoing it would appear that if economically sound afforestation may afford a valuable balancing factor in the country's industry normally, and also a possible means of relief in a period of abnormal unemployment. Although afforestation has not been adopted as a measure for coping with unemployment, a considerable amount of tree-planting has been done already in New Zealand by the Prison authorities, by the State Forest Service, by local bodies, by private afforestation companies, and by private landowners. In recent years these operations have been upon a fairly large scale, and undoubtedly have tended to ease the unemployment situation by employing a large number of workers at the worst period of the year.

During the 1928 planting season 427 workers were engaged in planting by private companies, while at least three times that number were similarly engaged by the State Forest Service.

Commercial afforestation in New Zealand is a comparatively new industry, but since its inception in 1923 by the formation of private companies for this purpose a total area of 104,175 acres had been planted up to March, 1928. As the amounts invested by the public in this enterprise have fluctuated from year to year, the acreage planted has also fluctuated. During the last three years the areas established have been 15,826, 49,824, and 39,222 acres. Almost the whole area planted by these companies has consisted of one species—i.e., *Pinus radiata* (*Pinus insignis*).

Tree-planting by local authorities has been so far almost negligible, and has been mainly on water-catchment areas. It seems desirable that greater attention should be given to tree-planting by local bodies, as, if waste or low-value land is available in the vicinity of the larger towns and such land were utilized for timber, the resulting product would find an available market without incurring heavy transport charges. The labour required would usually be available locally in the winter months, and the employment would be comparatively near to the men's homes.

By far the greatest part in tree-planting in New Zealand has been performed by the State Forest Service. From 1896 to 1928 a total area of 133,997 acres was established by the State. For the quarter of a century up to 1922 planting was on a comparatively small scale, but a programme was then decided upon by Parliament designed to establish a total of 300,000 acres by the year 1935.