

The evidence, oral and documentary, which has come under the notice of the Committee goes to show that State farms are necessary in a state of society where employment is fitful and uncertain, in order to meet the wants of those who,—

- (a.) Are temporarily out of employment, but have prospects of again taking up their callings;
- (b.) Are mechanics and others who have been permanently displaced by the use of machinery or by other causes, and are thus forced to go on the land to seek a livelihood;
- (c.) Are mechanics and others desirous, owing to the irregularity of their employment, of obtaining a practical knowledge of farming operations, with a view to taking up and occupying land; or
- (d.) Are unlikely to obtain employment elsewhere on account of old age, bodily incapacity, or inefficiency.

To (a) the State farm offers a temporary home and employment, under certain specified conditions, during the slack period.

To (b) and (c), in addition to residence and employment, it gives such useful and necessary training as will enable them to make a home in the country with some hope of success.

To (d) it offers a more comfortable home and surroundings, and would lighten the burden of Charitable Aid Boards.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

The Committee, after due consideration, are of opinion,—

1. That State farms may be so constituted as to give great relief to men who are temporarily out of employment, and that their utility would be greatly increased if manufacturing industries were carried on in connection with them wherever possible. As an instance, the Committee point out that at the present time cream is sent from the Levin State farm to Wellington and returned to the Levin market in the form of butter. Additional employment would therefore be given if the dairying operations of the farm were extended so as to justify the establishment of a dairy factory thereon; and, in this connection, if the milk from the surrounding farms were purchased at the market rate the benefits conferred on the district would be substantial.

2. That State farms should be placed within reasonable reach of the persons intended to be benefited.

3. That other industries, such as market-gardening, flower-growing, fruit-growing, jam-making, poultry-raising, &c., should also be established.

4. That State farms should be so constituted as to preclude their being viewed in any sense as benevolent institutions.

5. That, with the exception of what is required to supply immediate and pressing wants, no payment in respect of labour performed should be made to any person not an officer of the department until such person is leaving the settlement.

6. That operations on the settlements should be directed towards supplying the daily wants of the people living there, and with that view, and also with the view of making the employment as far as may be suitable to the various capacities of the residents, the industries carried on should be as numerous as possible: in the attainment of these ends, locality, soil, and other conditions favourable would require to be carefully selected.

7. That, as the restoration of our forests is a work of great national importance, it might be undertaken as an adjunct to the State settlement, and this would give occupation to men at seasons of the year when work on the settlements was slack. In this connection it would be necessary to establish nurseries on the farms where some of the older men might be employed, while the younger and more able-bodied could be employed in preparing the land and planting out young trees in such reserves in the colony as are set apart for such purposes.

8. That State farms in the matter of instruction should have a technological side, in order that the principles which underlie the practical lessons received on the farm might be further illustrated and explained. Persons with little cash and almost devoid of knowledge regarding agricultural pursuits, but who are desirous of settling on small sections of land in the country, might avail themselves of this education.

9. *Industrial Settlements.*—By industrial settlements, as distinct from State institutions, and such as are referred to in the order of reference, the Committee understand a permanent settlement of working-class families who have combined their capital and registered themselves as a body corporate for the purpose of carrying on industrial operations on a principle of collective ownership, which may or may not mean equality of reward. The advantages claimed for this form of settlement as compared with those connected with individual holdings are,—

- (1.) Special knowledge governing and directing operations.
- (2.) The ability to procure and use to a moderate extent modern agricultural implements and other machinery.
- (3.) The establishment of divers industries subsidiary to agriculture: which means—
 - (a.) Variety of employment suitable to sex, age, and capacity; and
 - (b.) Making the settlement as far as may be self-supporting.
- (4.) Absorption of the young labour growing up in the settlement, by increase or extension of industries, thus cutting off overflow into the labour-market, and giving permanence and security to family life.

The labour colonies in South Australia, the departmental report on which for this year is herewith furnished, seem to be established on similar lines to the above, and the Committee are of opinion that some encouragement should be given to an interesting experiment such as is suggested. People and soil would require to be carefully selected, and advances and other concessions granted under conditions similar to those in force in South Australia under "The Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1893," of that colony.

26th October, 1898.

W. M. BOLT,
Chairman.