

Mr. BAIN (Invercargill) said that, as the Chairman was aware, he was strongly against outdoor relief. In his district outdoor relief was very much less than it was ten years ago; but if the Chairman's suggestion was carried out the chances were that instead of a reduction it would cost more. A number of recipients of outdoor relief who were receiving now, say, 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week would be brought into the Homes, and it would cost the taxpayer a good deal more to keep them there.

Mr. BAGNALL (Auckland) took it that the Chairman's proposal would include the Homes in outdoor relief.

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr. BAGNALL said that if that were so, he thought the Chairman was on the wrong track. In Auckland they saved a great many people from going into the Homes by the payment of 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week to them. In that way they were able to have a room and foddick for themselves instead of going into a Home. In a great many instances, even with the payment of 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week, it meant that those persons had a great struggle to live. There was one point that the Chairman had not touched upon, and that was in connection with children committed to industrial schools by the Magistrate, and to whose support the Boards were expected to pay 7s. 6d. a week. That amount had to be paid until the child was fifteen years of age. The Magistrate took upon himself to commit a child to the Home without any reference to the Board at all. The previous Magistrate would not commit a child to the Home if the Board could make other suitable provision for it; but recently that system had been departed from. If the Government were going to withdraw anything from outdoor relief, he thought they might take upon themselves the charge of all the children sent to industrial homes by Magistrates. In Auckland during the past two years there had been a reduction in the expenditure on outdoor relief, and there would probably be a further reduction made. In the absence of any definite statement of what the Government proposed to do, he certainly submitted for their favourable consideration the taking-over of all the children committed to the schools by the Magistrates.

Mr. MACMAHON (Nelson) moved, "That it be a recommendation to the Government not to reduce the subsidies."

Mr. SCANTLEBURY (Westland) said it was with regret he heard the Chairman's remarks about the reduction of the subsidies for outdoor relief. Although he agreed with the remarks of the Minister that charitable-aid expenditure had increased out of all bounds, he was afraid that, if they knocked off the subsidy from the amount contributed in outdoor relief, it would mean serious injustice and a heavy charge on the districts. In mining districts, where the work was unhealthy, and where men often died at a comparatively early age, leaving a widow and young family, the withdrawal of the subsidy would be very much felt, because the payment of a small amount in outdoor relief enabled a widow to keep her young family together, whereas if the assistance was withdrawn it would mean that in many cases the children would have to be sent to industrial homes. He sincerely hoped the Government would take that point into their consideration.

The CHAIRMAN said it had been considered. The proposal was contingent upon certain other things being done.

Mr. TAPPER (Dunedin) sincerely hoped the subsidies would not be reduced, otherwise the poor would suffer.

The CHAIRMAN said he felt rather handicapped in this way: that his suggestions were contingent on some special treatment of the children. He was not at liberty to say anything about that.

Mr. R. C. KIRK (Wellington), speaking for the Wellington Board, said he did not know that they could carry out the work more cheaply; but even at the present cost, if they could turn these children into good citizens, he thought it was a good investment for the country. He quite agreed that care and economy should be exercised.

Mr. DAVISON (Christchurch) thought perhaps the better plan would be for the State to take over the expenditure, and provide for it all out of the Consolidated Fund—to take over the whole thing.

Mr. BELLINGER (New Plymouth) moved, "That the subsidies continue as at present."

Mr. TAPLEY (Dunedin) did not think the Conference ought to part without recording a strong protest against the Government proposing to reduce the subsidy. It was perfectly true, as had been stated, that in many districts great extravagance had been going on. He quite agreed that care should be exercised in the administration of these funds. If the suggested reduction were made, he was afraid many of the deserving poor would suffer, and if they did not suffer the local bodies would have to raise the rates in order to meet the additional expense that would be thrown upon them.

Mr. W. H. COOPER (Christchurch) said he was surprised beyond measure that the Government should propose to use the pruning-knife in connection with charitable institutions. If the Government were short of money, he was sure there were many other directions in which savings could be effected. Most of the outdoor relief was given for the support of widows and children. Was it intended that the recipients of outdoor relief should be sent to Homes? Was it intended that mothers should be separated from their children?

The CHAIRMAN said he did not suggest for a moment that mothers should be separated from their children.

Mr. KNIGHT agreed that care and economy should be exercised. At the same time, they should consider those who had come to poverty perhaps through no fault of their own. The English work-house system had been alluded to. They did not wish that system to be introduced into this country. He thought it would be very wrong if the Government reduced the subsidy.