

90. *The Chairman.*] You said something about depriving these men of their civil rights if they refused to serve. You do not mean to deprive them of their civil rights if they give the alternative service?—No; they are doing a State service.

91. At any rate, I suppose you have come to the conclusion that the present state of affairs is absolutely unsatisfactory?—Absolutely unsatisfactory and unworkable.

92. That is, the military authorities have to undertake the detention without any powers?—Yes, which is an impossibility; we cannot do it.

93. *Mr. Isitt.*] I take it you are of opinion that we want not so much to deal out justice to these lads who have got these foolish notions, as to adopt some method that will save the Territorial system?—Yes; but I do not quite understand what your point is.

94. My point is this: our great aim is to get some way out of this difficulty that will save the Territorial system and prevent an agitation that will imperil it, and if we can get an alternative that is just sufficiently severe to reduce the objectors to a minimum we shall have served our main purpose?—Yes.

95. Do you think it is possible to crush out the conscientious objector by any amount of severity?—Nobody wants to be severe.

96. Do you think it is possible, even if we did want to?—Not if he is absolutely conscientious. If he is a genuinely conscientious objector nothing you can do will crush his conscience. It is only the wasters who want to evade military service that you can deal with in that way.

97. Do you not think it would be a wise thing to try this experiment, at all events, for a start: supposing we took up a scheme such as I suggested—got a number of these lads into camp and said, “You go there and you do your work,” and at the end of the three weeks said, “There is your nine days’ pay, away you go”; and if they did not do that they would have to stay four or five weeks. Do you not think that in all probability if these men were well handled the conscientious objector would cave in?—Yes. The only thing is this, that you have to deal with young men of especial quality. For instance, what would you do supposing you got Worrall and Williams, and you forcibly took them to one of these camps and they absolutely refused to do anything, and upset everybody else?

98. I would not let them do that. I would shut them up by themselves. They could be kept from associating with the others?—It is a difficult thing in a camp. The only thing you could do with those young men would be to put them in a separate camp by themselves. Well, that would give a lot of trouble. I think you will find—and I think it is quite right too—that young men of that description want special and perhaps severe treatment, because, mind you, their influence is so bad and their “cussedness” is of such description that you cannot let them slide; they are simply evading personal service and they will boast about it. They will write about it in that publication of theirs and boast about it all round the country, and it will have a bad effect.

99. *Hon. Mr. Rigg.*] In the case of an offender who has refused military service on the ground of conscientious objection, and then refuses alternative service and is punished by the Court, is he then to remain free from any obligation to serve?—Next year he comes up again, certainly. The liability of the Territorial is from the age of eighteen to twenty-five. Therefore, the liability of the alternative-service men should be the same. If by misbehaviour the first year he is to evade all the rest of his service it is hardly fair. His liability remains until he reaches the age-limit, or whatever other condition the country chooses to impose.

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