

REPORT.

THE Joint Defence Legislation Committee, having carefully considered the petition presented on behalf of the National Peace Council of New Zealand by Charles R. N. Mackie, of Christchurch, and having heard the evidence of the petitioner and other witnesses thereupon, and upon the conduct of the Detention Barracks at Ripa Island generally, has the honour to report as follows:—

A. With regard to the allegations contained in the petition, the Committee finds,—

(1.) With reference to the question of punishment, that, while under the regulations the young men to whom the petition refers should have been confined in separate rooms or cells, the officer in charge treated them with leniency and did not at first so confine them; that on their refusal to work the regulation referring to confinement was more closely observed; that the rations were reduced under medical advice in view of the fact that men doing no active work do not require so full a diet as those actively employed.

(2.) That as the said young men refused to go out to drill or to work when ordered to do so, they remained confined in their rooms, except during the hours set apart by the regulations for exercise, when they were taken out for the purpose of such exercise.

B. With regard to the further allegations made in the written statement by the said Charles R. N. Mackie on behalf of the National Peace Council, supplementary to the petition, the Committee finds,—

(1.) That the complaints about accommodation are without justification, the accommodation having been certified to be suitable by two duly qualified medical officers, the rooms occupied by the young men being, in fact, those used and occupied by officers during the annual camp.

(2.) That the statement that the rooms in which the young men were confined were not properly ventilated has been absolutely disproved.

(3.) With regard to the sitting of the Magistrates' Court held at Ripa Island on the 2nd July, 1913, before Mr. T. A. B. Bailey, S.M., that as the young men were already in custody it was not necessary to serve them with summonses before bringing them before the Magistrate; that legal assistance was never refused them; that they had ample notice of the sitting of the Court; that they were allowed absolute freedom in the matter of correspondence, and could, had they so desired, easily have communicated with their solicitors; and that the public was not excluded from the Court.

(4.) With regard to the case against William George Robson, before Mr. H. W. Bishop, S.M., at Lyttelton, on the 24th July, 1913, that the prosecution failed only because no judicial proof was produced that the regulations under which these proceedings were taken were prescribed by the Commandant of the Forces with the approval of the Minister of Defence. But the Committee finds that, as a matter of fact, the regulations were so prescribed and approved, and that they had, therefore, full legal force and effect, and, further, that it was not necessary that such regulations should be gazetted.

(5.) That the said regulations were duly read over to the said young men on their arrival at Ripa Island and were posted up in the place of detention as prescribed by the regulations, but that they were frequently torn down and defaced and had to be replaced.

In view of the above findings the Committee has the honour to report that it has no recommendation to make.

13th November, 1913.

Chairman.
