

It then becomes a question what Government may do with these interned aliens. I understand that no question arises with respect to those now at Motuihi, where work is not exacted. At Somes Island it is different. From the first the men have been required to do, without remuneration, work other than mere house-work. What they have done may be thus summarized:—

- (1.) Levelling ground about the camp to form a parade-ground.
- (2.) Keeping this and all paths, yards, and approaches clean.
- (3.) Bringing up gravel from the beach for this purpose.
- (4.) Carrying up fresh water in buckets for the use of the establishment.
- (5.) Handling provisions brought over by the tender for the use of the establishment, and bringing them up to the buildings.
- (6.) Making a vegetable-garden and tending it in order to produce vegetables for the use of prisoners of war.
- (7.) Making roads and some other work.

There is no dispute as to the liability of interned civilians to clean out their own rooms, keep all paths, courts, and approaches swept and cleaned of rubbish, keep yard-drains in order, and keep latrines clean and sanitary. It is the other work that is objected to. It occupies the men on the average about seven hours a week.

It has been laid down by various public men, including two or three members of our own Government, whose speeches have been quoted to me, that there is no power to compel an interned civilian to do work beyond that about the camp necessary for the preservation of the health of prisoners: British prisoners in Germany have usually absolutely refused to work. That rule has not been adhered to in connection with this camp.

It must, however, be accepted as a common rule of all nations, whether actually observed or not by other belligerents, that interned civilians cannot be compelled to work beyond what is here described as work about their own quarters. The men at Somes Island have been compelled to perform work which, so far as I can see, they ought not to have been compelled to do. This includes roadmaking (beyond making tracks for their own use as a recreation-ground), carrying up provisions and water for the camp, making and tending vegetable-garden. I think that the spreading of gravel on paths, yards, and other places resorted to by prisoners is work they can be called upon to do, and I think that bringing up gravel from the beach for this purpose falls within the same rule. If there is any doubt about this it should be referred to the Imperial authorities.

These observations supply a simple rule for the settlement of what has proved a burning question. The report of Sergeant-major Morton on work done in the largest internment camp in Australia shows that men volunteer in large numbers to work at 1s. per diem upon work they are not compellable to perform. How that would answer here I cannot say.

The prisoner of war who represented his fellow-prisoners during most of the hearing remarked, "This question of compulsory work is at the bottom of most of the trouble. If it were not enforced more than half the trouble would disappear."

5. FOOD.

There were many complaints of the insufficiency of the food supplied and of its quality.

As to the quantity I do not hold myself to be a competent judge, but I have done my best to ascertain whether the dietary scale is a proper one—that is to say, one, without dealing with exceptional cases, calculated to keep able-bodied men doing light work in good health. I can only say that the evidence before me tends to show that it fulfils this requirement. I am satisfied that it is a better scale than that published by the British Government as applicable to all classes of war prisoners. It is a substantially better scale than that which the adviser of the New Zealand Government had decided upon, but which was replaced by the present scale at the instance of Major Matheson. Men complain of the monotony of the food. This is an admitted defect. It is inherent in the situation, and we know from various sources that it imposes upon these prisoners of war the common lot