

No Difficulties with Family Settlement.

I do not think it is necessary for me to go into the type of settler. That is a matter of detail. We, of course, want those with energy, strength, and ability to work and make their own way. We have been taking families, as you know; and, fortunately, under the nominated system we have found no difficulties with the families so far.

Public-school Boys.

I am very strongly in favour of trying to absorb some of your public-school boys, and have done what I could to secure cadetships for some of them in New Zealand with farmers. So far, fortunately, I have been able to secure a few. Whether that could be extended much wider or not I am unable to say. I doubt whether it is possible to extend very widely the absorption of public-school boys as cadets on farms to train with farmers. I do not need to go into the details of the type of immigrant, because that naturally will be threshed out in committee. I have put to you, as shortly as I can, what really are the difficulties and the possibilities with regard to absorption in New Zealand.

New Zealand's Soldier-settlement Scheme.

Mr. Massey: I would just like to add a word to what has been said by Sir James Allen. I mentioned at one of these meetings—I cannot recollect whether it was in this room or at Downing Street—the fact that we had, a few years ago, taken in hand a somewhat extensive system of soldiers' land-settlement in New Zealand; that is to say, we wanted to give the returning soldiers who desired to go upon the land every opportunity to do so. The Government found land for them, sometimes of their own selection, and bought at comparatively high prices, and we found capital to purchase their stock and make the improvements that were necessary.

Then along came the slump or commercial depression to which Sir James Allen referred, and a great many of these men got into difficulties. I cannot recollect the exact number that we had assisted, but, speaking from memory, I should say between twenty-five thousand and thirty thousand men. This sort of thing meant a very great deal of work, but I think that during the last twelve months we have been able so to arrange matters and so to assist these soldier settlers that they will get on without further difficulty. We had also a number of young fellows such as Sir James Allen referred to, sons of farmers and others belonging to the country, who have been waiting for an opportunity of going on to the land themselves. We are now taking them in charge. It is quite correct that we have not the large unoccupied areas that are to be found in Canada or in Australia.

Bush and Swamp Land not immediately available for Settlers.

There is just another factor in connection with land-settlement. As compared with Canada, for instance, any ordinary farmer or farm labourer can go from England, and if he has got the capital required for a start in connection with wheat-growing, for instance, he can go ahead; but you cannot do that in New Zealand. We have no land in New Zealand that will grow wheat right away. I am now speaking of Crown lands. The Crown land that is left is either bush or swamp, and the bush has got to be felled and burned at the right season of the year, laid down in grass, and stocked for a number of years before it is fit for agricultural purposes. It is all right for pastoral purposes, sheep or cattle, as the case may be. As to swamp land, it has to be taken in hand and drained, and it will not grow wheat for a number of years. If it is good swamp land it is not long before it carries stock and does very well indeed; even for dairying purposes it does quite well.

These are some of the difficulties that we have to deal with in New Zealand. Just at present we have probably 1,000,000 acres of Crown land being made available, and assistance has to be given by the Government in the way of draining those areas of swamp land and getting them ready for the settlers. During the coming summer—that is to say, September in New Zealand is a spring month, so is October—after October we get into the summer, and then the land will be made available for settlers, and I have no doubt a fairly large area will be available in the coming summer. I gave instructions before I left New Zealand that that was to be done. Of course, there is the fact that just at present, and especially since we experienced the slump a couple of years ago, we have a good deal of opposition from the Socialistic Labour party. They say, "We are quite pleased to see our comrades here, but we want to make certain that there is work for them to do and houses for them to go into," and all that sort of thing.

Housing Difficulty.

Speaking of the houses first, the population in New Zealand is increasing steadily. There is nothing sensational about the increase, but I should say the population is increasing at the rate of fifty thousand a year at present, and as the population further increases, so will the number of additional settlers. But I want to speak very plainly. We cannot provide good houses for all the settlers that are coming to New Zealand. They must be prepared for a time to rough it to a certain extent. So far as my country is concerned I have known many failures, but I have never known an industrious man and an industrious family go there, who exercised the ordinary industry that is characteristic generally of British people, who did anything else but succeed. I cannot think of a single one—and I have known thousands—who did not succeed if he took his coat off, as my own people had to do when they first came out. That is one of the troubles.

Urban Population unsuitable for Settlement on Land.

Now, take the people in the cities, in the manufacturing towns of this country. My opinion is that it is of very little use putting them upon the land—I am speaking now of New Zealand land. They have not the experience, and I am afraid that they generally get very tired of it before anything in the way of a profitable return comes to them.