

New Zealand shares Disappointment as to Results of Scheme.

Mr. Massey : Owing to my having been detained by another engagement I have only heard what has been said in the last two or three minutes, and I have not heard the statement by the Minister. Sir James Allen is here. He has really had much more to do with this matter than I have, and he will make a statement on behalf of New Zealand.

Sir James Allen : At the outset, I desire to say that I am quite sure New Zealand recognizes to the full the very liberal way in which the British Government has dealt with this problem, and we are as disappointed as you are that the scheme has not provided for that very large movement of settlers from here to the other Dominions that we all hoped and expected it would.

Necessity of avoiding Labour Antipathy.

You want a frank statement from us as to our difficulties, and I will be frank. One of our difficulties—and I suppose the same difficulty applies to all the other Dominions—is so to regulate migration into New Zealand that we do not create an unnecessary antipathy on the part of the labour people themselves. We are constantly up against the opposition of labour men, who say we are bringing others out to compete with them and to lower their wages. We have avoided that in New Zealand so far, but it is a difficulty when you contemplate extending the scheme, unless you can by some economic means provide for the absorption of these settlers without interfering with the existing labour in the country.

Good Trade a preliminary to Increased Migration.

On the economic side you yourself touched upon the main issue. Unless we can successfully trade with you or with the outside world, unless we can receive a good return for the labour of our farmers and others and are therefore more or less prosperous, we cannot absorb large numbers of migrants. Our occupations are largely seasonal and things may be bad in the winter-time, and sometimes are, with temporary unemployment amongst our own people. It is an economic question. If we are prosperous we can absorb more people.

No Large Area available for Settlement in New Zealand.

It is possible that means may be devised to find room for further migrants on lands in my own country, and I wish to say here that I realize circumstances may differ in other countries—and they do. For instance, in the great countries of Australia and Canada you have large areas of land which are available for settlement which we have not got in New Zealand. Our land now is comparatively limited, so that New Zealand cannot, generally speaking, provide the large land-settlement schemes which are feasible probably in some of the other Dominions. In New Zealand we have not a large area of land available for settlement; indeed, we have been cutting up our large holdings and providing for smaller settlements. There is still a certain amount of land available, but there are a considerable number of our own people, sons of farmers and others, who are looking to that cutting-up—the opening-up of Native lands—for homes for themselves; so that the amount of land available for settlement in New Zealand cannot be compared with the amount for new settlement that may be available in Canada or Australia.

Promising Results of Nomination System.

But apart from the difficulty of absorption and finding work there is the difficulty of housing. That will be got over in time, but it is a question of finance, and when you come down to the bottom of this settlement question, so far as New Zealand is concerned, it is a question of economics and finance. If we are successful we can absorb people. If we have the money to open up lands or create new industries we can make room for more people. So far as I can see, that is the only way. It was because of the difficulty with regard to housing and absorption—we had, as you know, after the war a very severe slump which, I am thankful to say, has gone now—it was because of that difficulty, which for the time being set us back, that we had to adhere to a scheme already availed of by which our new settlers were brought out under a nominated system; that is to say, the nominator in New Zealand guaranteed to find housing and work for the new settler on arrival.

We had worked under that system for some time and are working under it now. There is one promising feature about it which is rather a surprise to me. Whereas in the later part of 1922 and the earlier part of 1923 it looked as if the nominated system was not going to supply us with the 10,000 which we set ourselves to take every year for five years, nevertheless in the last six months there has been a constant improvement in the number of nominations, and I am very hopeful that next year we may reach the full 10,000 under the nominated scheme, which is a safe one. It avoids difficulties with our labour people; it ensures a home and work for the settler on arrival. Whether the number of nominations has increased because of the new settler or not I am unable to say. From the inquiries of my Department I am inclined to believe that it is possible that the new people who have gone out have been successful, have seen the possibilities, and have nominated others to go. If that be true, we may look to the nominated system to increase by degrees and provide us with even a larger number than the 10,000, and I presume, Mr. Massey, that if, under the nominated scheme, there were more than 10,000 nominated it would be safe for you to say that you could absorb them?

Mr. Massey : Quite.

Sir James Allen : Before dealing with the type of settler, the only other possibility, so far as I can see, is by the utilization of capital to develop either what lands there may be available, or other industries, in order to provide work and homes for additional settlers other than those we are now providing for in New Zealand. Given that capital, given this further development, I see no reason why we should not absorb a fairly large number of additional people each year.