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The Prison Labor Question

History of the Contract System in the Toronto
Central Prison---A Record of Continuous
Failures---The Outlook for the future.

SPEECH

OF

The Honourable W. J. HANNA, Provincial Secretary
delivered in the Ontario Legislature on
February 26, 1907.

COMPLIMENTS

OF

W. J. HANNA

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The Prison Labor Question

History of the Contract System in the Toronto Central Prison—
A Record of Continuous Failures—The Outlook for the Future.

In speaking to a resolution on the subject of Prison Labor moved by Mr. Preston (Brant), Hon. W. J. HANNA said:—

I am glad that the member for South Brant has made this motion. It brings up the whole question of prison labor. It is a most important question. This Government has recognized that from the outset. In the speech from the Throne this session, His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor said:

“My Ministers have for some time past been considering the question of prison labor with a view to avoiding all possibility of its being put into competition with free labor. It is a subject of the utmost importance and cannot be dealt with hastily. Some facts with relation to it will be laid before you.”

Some of those facts I venture to present now. The importance of the question is not a matter of recent growth or sudden development. It has been equally important during all the thirty-two years of the Government that we succeeded. If that Government failed to solve it, our friends of the Opposition will, I hope, feel at liberty to tell us why. It is one of the unwelcome legacies that we inherited.

BACK IN HISTORY.

In coming to the consideration of the resolution it may not be amiss to refer briefly to the origin of prison labor and its introduction into Canada and this Province. Time was within living memory when society dealt with its criminals as a class only to be punished and, if necessary, exterminated; when in English-speaking countries an assize seldom passed without many death sentences being inflicted for what to-day would be minor offences; when idleness was enforced, when torture was substituted for reform. Time came when it was recognized that the merely punitive policy had completely failed, that torture should be abandoned, and that enforced idleness was as cruel as bodily torture. Idleness meant that the prisoner's physical and moral health was ruined, disease was introduced, insanity became frightfully common, and, in addition, the prisoner was disqualified for work when released. At first, as a remedy, resort was had to labor merely as a means of punishment. Prisoners were set to exhaustive work without any regard to its being productive. This was the age of treadmills, of loaded cranks, of shot drill, and the carrying of heavy loads from place to place. In time, the failure of those as a reformatory measure was admitted and the necessity for productive labor was advocated.

PRINCIPLE IS RIGHT.

To-day it will be only extremists who say that prisoners should not be employed at productive labor. Everybody else but extremists is agreed that from every point of view, physical or moral, practical or humane,

prisoners must be put to productive work. The problem is to reduce the competition of convict labor to a minimum, and especially to reduce the proportion of prison-made goods that are sold in the open market. This problem has been ever present since productive labor was advocated.

The Kingston Penitentiary was erected in 1833-4 to take care of prisoners who had been sentenced to terms of two years or more. This was to relieve the county jails and take care of the longer term prisoners. It was urged that being brought together in this way their labor could be turned to profitable account. In the same year we find the labor interests of Kingston petitioned the Legislature that the penitentiary might be so managed as not to interfere with the manufacturers of that town, and in 1835 the labor interests of Toronto petitioned that the prisoners at Kingston might be employed in the breaking of stone instead of mercantile labor. The penitentiary continued to take care of the prisoners with upwards of two-year terms; those under that remained in the county jails down to Confederation, when we have the origin of our Central Prison.

It may not be without interest to some members of the House to know that prior to Confederation there had been a number of pronouncements from grand juries, petitions to Parliament, etc., concerning the overcrowding and the laxity of discipline in the county jails of Upper Canada, and the Legislature had been petitioned to establish central or district prisons, to which prisoners under the longer sentences might be sent, so that they might be disciplined and be put to remunerative work. At the second session after Confederation the question was taken up. In the speech it was recommended that institutions be erected in central localities to which those sentenced for periods less than two years might be transferred from the surrounding jails, to undergo their terms of punishment under a system of discipline similar to that of the penitentiary and where their labor could be utilized. A bill was introduced, which gave the Government power to build several central prisons. Sandfield Macdonald said it was the intention to build at least three—one in the centre, one east and one west, and perhaps there ought to be one for every ten or twelve counties. The bill was strongly opposed by Blake, McKellar and other Liberals on the ground that central prisons were not needed. The question has been suggested as to whether it is the duty of the Province or Dominion to defray the cost of maintaining our Central Prison, but I note that in the debate the question up to two-year sentences was treated as being one entirely between the Province and the municipalities. As between the Province and the Dominion the question was not raised. The bill was abandoned, but in the same session a bill was passed authorizing one Central Prison in Toronto, where prisoners of over six months and up to two years would be taken care of.

MONEY IN THEM.

The distinction between terms of imprisonment—two years or over to the penitentiary and under two years to the county jail—dates back in legislation to 1842; perhaps in practice dates back a little earlier. It seems to have been assumed from the first that those who built the prisons ought to pay for the maintenance of the inmates. Our Central Prison was completed and commenced business on the 1st of June, 1874, and from that date to this we have had prison labor under contract in this

Province—always under protest, always without any satisfactory solution. From the first it would appear that in addition to having its fair share of all the troubles which attach to the question of prison labor, the Central Prison of Ontario has troubles which are peculiarly its own. It is essentially a short term prison. It takes none whose sentences are over two years, and the average term is but a little over seven months. From a productive labor point of view, this is a bad situation. Other penal institutions with which comparisons have been made have the lifers and long-term men who, unless hopelessly degenerate, can be trained to some degree of efficiency. Most of the Central Prison inmates are ignorant of any useful work, have untrained hands, and muscles, and are there, as I have said, for but a short term. This may account in part for the unfortunate history of those contracts. Down to 1st July, 1905, these contracts, with two exceptions, have resulted in bankruptcy to the contractor and actual money out of pocket to the Province. Central Prison commenced business on the 1st of June, 1874, with its labor contracted to the Canada Car Co. at 50 cents per day. The prisoners went to work. The Government failed to collect. The company failed to pay, and claimed amongst other things that the prison labor was not worth the price contracted for. This continued until 1878, when the Government of that day investigated under Commission, and the Commission reported that prison labor, having regard to the short term and inexperience, was worth at the outside 37 cents per day, and the account with the Car Company was settled on that basis, leaving \$46,000 still due the Government on the reduced value of the labor. The company failed to pay this also, and the account was settled, so far as the books of this Province were concerned, by the Province taking over the company's machinery and plant at the original cost price to the company, amounting, with goods on hand, to \$76,682. The greater part, if not the whole item, of \$46,000 was lost to the Province. The Government then entered into a piece price per year contract with Messrs. McMurray and Fuller for the manufacture of wood-ware. This contract was discontinued after four months' experience by the contractors refusing to go on manufacturing. This was followed by the contract with the Brandon Manufacturing Company in 1881, which was renewed and varied from time to time for many years. This contract has been pointed to as one more favorable to the Province than the Taylor, Scott contract. It reserves on its face 50 cents per day, but the terms and other conditions concerning that cut the amount down to 25 cents a day, and the fact is that even that 25 cents a day was not collected by the Province.

THE WARDEN REPORTS.

On July 9, 1890, Warden Massey, then in charge, reported in connection with this contract. He goes into the figures in some detail and says (I quote verbatim from his report):

"From the above it will be seen there is a shortage on the nine months' operations of \$3,598.79, equivalent to 25 cents per day on the prison labor employed, so that, instead of earning 50 cents per day each, and sufficient to cover the foremen's salaries, the earnings, per prisoner, after deducting working expenses, is only 24 cents."

During the operations of the Central Prison under these contracts the company all the time kept getting deeper and deeper into the Government's debt, until in 1893 the company threw up the work, owing the

Government \$12,000. The Government took over the machinery, and this sum of \$12,000 was incidentally smothered up by taking this machinery over that amount beyond its inventoried value. Since 1903 down to the 1st of July, 1905, the Government operated the north shop themselves, with the result (as shown in the answer given the other day to the question of the honorable member for Centre Bruce) that Central Prison labor has earned on the account, as there shown, three-fifths of one cent per man per ten-hour day during that period. The figures I repeat:

1. What amounts of money were paid by the Government during twelve years ending July 31st, 1905, on account of woodworking shop at Central Prison for

- (a) Materials and small repairs;
- (b) Salaries of officials on duty in that shop;
- (c) General expenses of the industries at Central Prison apportioned to that shop;
- (d) On buildings and machinery?

Answer.—(a) \$388,412.65
 (b) 61,312.55
 (c) 17,656.09
 (d) 19,243.27

Total\$486,624.56

2. What was the amount of the increase or decrease (state which) in the value of the stock on hand from the beginning to the end of this period?

Answer.—Decrease \$6,523.89.

3. What were the gross sales of that shop during the same period?

Answer.—\$495,003.95.

4. What was the average net return per annum for the prison labor of this shop during this period?

Answer.—Average net gain was \$154.63 per annum.

5. How much did this mean per man per day for the prison labor employed?

Answer.—About three-fifths of one cent per man per ten-hour day.

6. About what percentage of the output of the woodworking shop was marketed in the Province of Ontario during the twelve years ending July 31st, 1905?

Answer.—Over ninety per cent.

7. About what percentage of the output of this shop is marketed in Ontario under the present contract?

Answer.—About twenty-six per cent.

OUT OF POCKET.

Taking the whole period of prison labor, from its inception down to the 1st of July, 1905, I have not the slightest doubt that upon a full investigation it would appear that with the items of cost of operations charged against the goods as they would be charged by a manufacturer to-day, it will clearly appear that not only has this Province not received one

cent for its prison labor during that period, but that it is many thousands of dollars out of pocket by reason of the Central Prison industries.

It is not my purpose now to go into this in detail. Should it be thought that any purpose can be served by bringing those figures before the House, I shall have no hesitation in doing so, and in detail.

HOW IT WAS IN 1905.

I leave these contracts and the general proposition now and come to the conditions that confronted us when we took office in the spring of 1905. We had the Central Prison with its average population of 400.

The whole of the prisoners were at work. The classes of work came under four heads. First, the manufacture of supplies for hospitals, jails, asylums, etc. This was carried on on Government account. This was the least objectionable of the industries carried on there, as the goods did not go into competition with free labor in the open market, and besides, this class of work has not been objected to in Ontario or elsewhere so far as I know.

LISTENED TO AN APPEAL.

Second, the brush and broom industry. This was carried on under prison labor contract made first in 1893 and continued from time to time until we took office. This contract was due to expire on the 1st of July, 1905. The net receipts for prison labor under this contract were 19 cents per man per ten-hour day. Early in the year 1905 a deputation representing the labor interests waited on the Government, and requested that this contract be not renewed. They represented that these goods came into competition with goods manufactured in Toronto and vicinity. On July 1 we discontinued this contract.

DATES SIGNIFICANT.

Third. There was the binder twine contract, held first by O'Connor and latterly by the Independent Cordage Co. This contract was due to expire in the fall of 1905, but the old Government had entered into a renewal with the Independent Cordage Co. for a period of five years from the fall of 1905. The then current contract that had been entered into by the old Government nearly five years before, had been varied from time to time, and always in favor of the contractor until the company benefited by these alterations all told to the amount of \$20,000 or thereabouts. The Government substituted for this contract with the Independent Cordage Co. a contract with Converse & Co. for the same work on terms that are in the neighborhood of \$4,000 per year better for the Government than was the then current contract of the Independent Cordage Co. as amended by these Orders-in-Council. These alterations were made by Orders-in-Council after the agreement had passed the House, and were possibly made for campaign plunder, as the dates of alteration were significant.

This contract has not been objected to. It may be that the manufacture of binder twine in Ontario is less objectionable than would be the manufacture of other goods, since binder twine comes into this country free, and some of it is prison made and is in competition with free labor on the American side.

THE SORE SPOT.

The fourth industry was the woodenware industry carried on in what is known as the north shop. This employed about one-quarter of the prison population, and was carried on on Government account. The raw material was purchased, the work done, and the goods sold by the officers of the Government. We had not gone far in our experiences before we found that there was a great loss in the purchasing and a great loss in the selling. To specify on the purchases: In one lumber contract for 1904, which was not completed until after our taking office, there arrived three car loads of basswood, invoiced at 51,000 feet. We had it culled as per specifications, and the result was that 16,000 feet were thrown out. The contractor objected and a second culler—a reputable man in the city of Toronto—was selected by the contractor and agreed upon by the Government, and he went on, and out of the 51,000 feet he culled out 22,000 feet. The specifications called for "mill run, mill culls out," and the price was quite up to the specifications. The contractor again protested. We sent on others, and they said that the culling of 22,000 feet was fair culling, and more than that, said it was evident from the lumber itself that the better quality had been taken out and culls substituted. In discussing it with the contractor, I said to him that it was impossible that the ordinary material could pass through a saw-mill and turn out the qualities he had furnished. He then said frankly that it had been verbally understood in his former dealings with the Government that the written specifications would not be exacted. The lumber supplies contracted for for the year 1905 were in round numbers one million feet, and as the lumber proceeded to come in the deliveries, while better than the shipment I refer to, were such as would not have found market in the trade at anything like the price.

PRETTY GOOD PRICES.

In the purchases of hardware and varnish quantities were purchased out of all proportion to the requirements and at prices that were without justification. A sample from a lot of varnish, furnished at \$2 per gallon, was placed in the hands of a trader in this city with the request that he obtain a quotation from the man who furnished this identical varnish. The price quoted was 75 cents per gallon on the same varnish, and it was sold at that price.

As to the losses on sales, the prices were without regard to the prices in the open market and the cost of manufacture. Those in charge were not in touch with business conditions. They were—even should we assume the best intentions on their part—at the mercy of their buyers. One of the largest customers of the shop, when operated on Government account, stated that they could buy their goods cheaper from the Central Prison than they could manufacture in their own factory, which was larger and equipped with modern machinery especially adapted to their output. The result was that their own machinery was standing idle and they were purchasing Government made goods. It may be of interest to the House to know that their machinery is operating to-day on the same line of goods, notwithstanding that that line still continues to be manufactured in the north shop. The manager of the north shop not only did not know the cost of the goods he was turning out, but it was impossible

for anyone else to ascertain that cost with any accuracy from the data obtainable in the shop. It was clear that under the conditions that obtained the Government was, from day to day, sustaining unnecessary loss by Government operation, and that free labor was thrown into competition with prices lower than anyone in business on his own account, and with a full knowledge of the trade, would make them. To discontinue the operations of the north shop was impossible if we would have any regard to our duty to the prisoners. We had already discontinued the manufacture of brushes and brooms, and thrown a large section of the population out of work, and the question was even then how to employ the men.

MUST MOVE CAREFULLY.

To plunge hastily into possible solutions would have been neither good business nor good politics. It was imperative that the men should be kept at work, and we decided if proper terms could be obtained from responsible parties in the trade, to have the work carried on under contract rather than under Government operation.

We took the matter up with Taylor, Scott & Co., and the result was the contract ratified by this House last session. I shall not detain the House with details of that contract any further than to say that for the labor furnished under it we have obtained during the last six months of 1906, and are obtaining now, 4 cents per hour per man for most of that labor, and for the balance 5 cents per hour per man, as per the terms of the contract, and that the contract to date had netted in cash to the treasury of this Province more per man than any other contract that the Government of the Province ever entered into, or than was ever realized by this Province from Government operation.

More than that, the contract has been carried out to the letter by Taylor, Scott & Co., and instead of a succession of defalcations, with loss and litigation at the end, not a payment to date has been twenty-four hours overdue.

CAUSE FOR OBJECTION.

It is true that the contract has been objected to, but it is equally true that the principal objector was himself a manufacturer, who profited very largely from the low sales under Government operation during the last long years without any objection on his part to prison labor contracts, and who objects now principally because he no longer profits at the expense of the Government from the work done there. It was urged as well that Taylor, Scott & Co. were underselling the market, and thereby putting their goods in unfair competition with the goods of free labor, but the fact is that Taylor, Scott & Co. are putting those goods on the market at prices far in advance of prices obtained under Government operation. Not only that, but it can be amply shown to the satisfaction of some of the very men complaining, that other manufacturers in the Province of Ontario are selling goods in similar lines, manufactured by free labor, at lower prices than obtained by Taylor, Scott & Co. The contract not only in this, but in other ways as well, has reduced rather than increased the competition with the free labor of this Province. Let me instance: Under Government operation there was sold in this Province in round numbers three times the quantities of goods from the north shop

that there is to-day sold by Taylor, Scott & Co. Not only that, but the lines of goods manufactured in the north-shop have been greatly reduced. Under the former Government there were made and sold upwards of sixty-five lines of manufacture, a list of which I have here, as follows:

Statement Showing Lines of Goods Manufactured under Former Government.

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Washboards, | Churn dashers, |
| Stoveboards (square), | Croquet, |
| Stoveboards (round), | Commode seats, |
| Broom-handles, | Telephone cleats, |
| Children's express waggons, | Telephone moulding, |
| Saw-frames, | Telephone ceiling blocks, |
| Diamond mops, | Window jambs, |
| Girls' sleighs, | Cross-cut saw handles, |
| Boys' sleds, | Garden wheel-barrows, |
| Baby cutters, | Union churns, |
| Elbow-racks, | Hand-saw handles, |
| Saw-horses (folding), | Step-ladder chairs, |
| Saw-horses (plain), | Knife trays, |
| Clothes-horses, | Vegetable slicers , |
| Dowels (round wooden rods), | Book-racks, |
| Toy carts, | Folding chairs, |
| Shoo-fly rockers, | Ordinary ladders, |
| Snow shovels, | Piano stools, |
| Toy wheel-barrows, | Indian clubs, |
| Potato mashers, | Dumb-bells, |
| Rolling pins, | Baseball bats, |
| Packing-cases for trade, | Girls' bats, |
| Hearth and other special brush- | Camp stools, |
| handles, | Camp beds, |
| Rocking-horses, | Crokinole, |
| Step-ladders, | Game of Fort, |
| Beef pounders, | Hat racks, |
| Dressing lumber, | Pastry boards, |
| Matching lumber, | Skirt boards, |
| Flooring, | Tub stands, |
| Mallets (tinsmiths'), | Sleeve boards, |
| Towel racks, | Bosom boards. |
| Waggon seats (lumber waggons), | |

Statement Showing Lines of Goods Manufactured under Present Government.

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Washboards, | Broom and mop handles, |
| Children's sleighs, | Pastry and skirt boards, |
| Step-ladders, | Toy chairs, |
| Indian clubs, | Toy carts, |
| Dumb-bells, | Croquet. |
| Clothes-horses, | |

Any work done beyond this is job work on special order and is insignificant in amount.

Under the Taylor, Scott contract there are manufactured but eleven lines as above, although the contract allows a possible twenty-three.

Six of the eleven lines manufactured by Taylor, Scott & Co. are not manufactured by any Canadian firm as regular output, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Furthermore, Taylor, Scott & Co. have by letter assured the Department that there will not be included in their output during the balance of their contracts any articles not included in the list I have given here. Any work done by Taylor, Scott & Co. beyond the eleven articles given here is, I am assured, job-work on special order, and is insignificant in amount. Their total sales in this Province during 1906, including job-work on special orders, was in round numbers \$18,000. Much of their output not only goes beyond this Province, but beyond the Dominion, to Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

IS ONE LESS.

Before leaving the question of the present industries at Central Prison, let me say that when we took office we found four substantial industries being carried on there. To-day there are only three. We found the whole of the Central Prison labor employed to a man; to-day we unfortunately have an average of about 60, for whom we have no employment, and for whom there will be no employment except as they may be put on in turn with others from time to time until we have solved the whole question of employment of the Central Prison population.

While all this may be of interest it is of greater importance to the House to know what the Government has in mind on the question of prison labor, with a view of avoiding all possibility of its being put into competition with free labor. We have considered with some care what is being done in the different States of the Union.

WHAT OTHERS DO.

In the efforts to secure a workable, and at the same time a thoroughly humane system, there has been a great deal of what racing men call "plunging" done by the various legislators. Among the various schemes that have been tried in certain States of the Union are:

- Prohibition of the employment of convicts.
 - Prohibition of the sale of convict-made goods.
 - Marking of convict-made goods as "prison-made."
 - Prosecution of industries not before carried on in the State.
 - Prohibition of the sale of convict-made goods except in States where manufactured.
 - Fixing prices at which convict-made goods may be sold in the market.
 - Prohibition of the use of machinery in prison labor.
 - Reduction of hours of labor in prison.
 - Exportation of convict-made goods.
 - Payment of wages to convicts.
 - Prohibition of convict labor contracts.
 - Prohibition of convict labor contracts at any wage lower than average paid outside.
 - Employment of convicts upon public improvements that would not otherwise likely be undertaken.
- These remedies have all failed in greater or less degree.

MARKING WOULD KILL.

The marking of goods as prison-made has found many advocates in this Province, but it is not a real remedy. This would kill the sale of the goods outright, and stop the labor entirely, leaving the prisoners without work, a thing that no man would advocate or tolerate to-day. Or it would lessen the price of the goods in the market, thereby increasing their sales in many quarters, and possibly displace a greater quantity of similar goods made by free labor than would have been displaced if the prison-made goods had not been marked at all.

The employment of prisoners on hand-made goods, without the aid of machinery, has been advocated. While this has met with some success where there is the long-term prisoner, it would be bound to fail with the average of seven months' sentence. It would be simply a waste of raw material with nothing for it. It would be non-productive labor, almost in the same sense as was the crank and treadmill of years ago, and would be equally useless to the prisoner on the termination of his sentence.

SHOULD HELP MEN.

Any system adopted should be one which will enable the prisoner to earn an honest livelihood on his discharge, and should turn him out in a fit physical condition to do a day's work. Without a doubt, the difficulty of finding honest work is the cause of nearly all the recommittals. A man cannot be turned out of prison, however well conducted he may be, without a certain stigma on his character. His former employer distrusts him, sometimes his family disowns him, the police suspect him, and unless in condition to go to work at once he is apt to resort again to crime.

The employment of prisoners in the produce of supplies for the maintenance of the State, county and municipal institutions, or in work on roads, it has been found, tends to less direct competition with free labor, and has been generally regarded as unobjectionable, but there is only a limited amount of labor can be employed in this way. To the extent that employment offers, it is generally agreed it should be adopted. With this class of employment given, there would still remain upwards of three-quarters of the prisoners without employment. How can this best be given? That the objections of the labor interests to the competition of prison labor are well founded and should be met, the Government admits

AMERICAN COMMISSION.

In 1900, the United States Congress appointed an industrial commission to investigate a number of economic subjects, one of which was prison labor. They reported very fully. The Commission of Labor of the United States in 1906 investigated and reported at great length. From these reports it will be found that in thirty States of the Union the labor of prisoners is largely employed upon farms, upon roads, and out-of-door work. It is found that the benefits to be derived from the employment of the convicts in agricultural labor are many. It completely removes competition with free labor, the public receive the full benefit of the labor in the maintenance of the institutions, no special skill is required on the part of the prisoner, who can be at once set to work. The work is helpful and important and can be made more useful than any other work as a reformatory measure.

In New York State, the prisoners do a large amount of work on the prison farm and upon the highways. The Commission on Prisons say that they are in favor of working short-term convicts on the public roads. In no other way, their report says, can convicts be employed in outside labor so well as in working on the highways. Where conditions are favorable for such work, it has proved very satisfactory. It must be borne in mind that in all these States they have a long-term as well as short-term men. We are confined to the short-term men. In New York State they find that short-term men can be freely employed at outside work, and that no more keepers are required for them than are required in prison.

In Arkansas, the prisoners are set to work on cotton farms on the share crop principle. The penitentiary is self-supporting.

In Colorado the prison farm is 400 acres, and the work is mostly on the farm and road building besides.

In Alabama there are State Prison farms, on which diversified crops are grown as well as stock-raising, but the farms are not self-sustaining.

In Connecticut there is a prison farm, and the report says it has been clearly demonstrated that the farm can be carried on profitably, also that the farm furnishes to the Government institutions food of a quality that could not be afforded if it had to be purchased; also that having a prison farm simplifies the tramp problem.

In Indiana the Warden of the State Prison reports in favor of the farm project.

In Maine the Warden recommends the purchase of a large farm. He regards farm work as an important factor in reformation.

In Massachusetts there is a State farm worked by the prisoners, but it is small in comparison with the prison population of that populous State.

In Minnesota the State Prison has a 700 acre farm on which many prisoners are employed.

In North Carolina nine-tenths of the convicts are employed upon the farms.

In North Dakota the convicts are employed principally in agricultural pursuits, the only ones that can be carried on as the State law now stands.

In Oregon road-making, brick-making and the prison farm give employment.

In Rhode Island the male prisoners work largely out-doors farming and building roads.

In South Dakota the report says: "The penitentiary farm and garden is an important factor in the support of the institution, and it is the intention of the Board to add to the farm and increase the opportunities for farm labor as the wisest and best means of furnishing useful and helpful employment to the prisoners and conducing to their reformation."

Illinois and many other of the States, however, still continue the carrying on of industries in the prison, either on Government account or labor contract, but this is always subject to the like protests that we have in this Province, and the authorities in these States are looking to the farm for the solution.

HOW ABOUT FARM?

Would the farm be the proper solution here? We have a Central Prison in the centre of this city, occupying land that is worth more per

foot than land occupied by prisoners should be worth per acre. With unobjectionable employment offering for one hundred of our prisoners or thereabouts, operating on public account and about the prison, we have still three hundred unemployed. Would it be a satisfactory solution if we had somewhere convenient to the city and easily accessible by railway a farm of three hundred or four hundred acres with the institution on it?

Properly directed, how far would this farm go towards giving employment to these three hundred prisoners? How far would it go towards maintaining them and maintaining other public institutions of the Province in this city from the growth of the farm?

THROWS OUT A HINT.

We have in Northern Ontario a stretch of country with lock-ups maintained by the Province at different intervals over a stretch of eight or nine hundred miles. They are many in number, and the Province maintains them. To bring our prisoners from that territory here frequently means a trip of from three to twelve hundred miles each way—the bailiff going for the prisoner, both coming back, the Province buying the prisoner a ticket home on his release, and all this for a sentence anywhere between six months and two years, and averaging, as a fact, less than eight months. Could we not have in that section of the Province a prison that would be carried on as an adjunct to the Central Prison? There is land there at not too great cost. There are roads there to be built. There is work to be done and much of it that surely would not invite protest, and would have a great reformatory value.

These are the questions, without more, that the Government is considering to-day. These are the questions upon which the Government will have taken its position before the House meets again. There is much in the conditions here that makes for this solution. The value of the prison grounds themselves is but one item. The short term of the sentences takes away the inducement to escape that is before the long-term man. Where would he escape to? To the other side? They don't want him. If we were anxious enough to get him back we could get him. I have little doubt that the prisoners (mostly first term men and young, and all with short sentences) could safely be utilized at outdoor work on the farm, and to some extent on the highways in this part of the Province, but to a greater extent a like work in the northern part, and that, too, without any menace to the community.

Some one objects and says our climate is against this. There may be something in this, but not so much as at first sight would appear. States of the Union with harsher climates adopt it successfully; besides with one-quarter of the work indoors the manufacture on public account, as I have mentioned, would carry over the severe end of the year. The solution indicated we have not adopted, but we have considered and will take further pains to investigate how far it will fit the conditions here.

AN EXPERIMENT.

In this connection, sir, we have already done some work in this Province that has a bearing as indicating how far the prisoners may be trusted under proper conditions. When we took office we found a Mercer

Reformatory and a Mercer Refuge for Girls. The population of the Mercer Refuge for Girls averaged about 72, with five women officers of this Government in charge as matrons, instructresses and otherwise. These girls were from sixteen to nineteen years of age.

Early in 1905 we took up the question of how far we could dispense with that institution entirely. We set Mr. Kelso to work to see what could be done towards placing those girls in homes with relatives, or otherwise, where the environment would be such as to give them a chance, instead of having them serve their terms and sent back to the old environment only to return again to the senior institution for a worse crime.

He did get to work. One after another of the girls was placed, sometimes with relatives, sometimes in homes far removed from the homes that they first knew, until finally we were left with the Mercer Refuge for Girls with but four prisoners and five officers in charge. We were told that whatever might be said of the others that had gone out, and of whom we had received good reports in nearly every case, that these four could not be trusted out of sight of the authorities in charge. One night they saw their chance and made their escape, and then the situation was terrible indeed. Five officers of the Government in charge of a Refuge for Girls and no inmates. The girls, however, kept together, went to the telephone, and called Mr. Kelso up at 11 o'clock at night and asked to be captured. He took them back to the Refuge, and in course of a short time they as well were placed—always against the terrible warnings of the officers in charge. The result has been most satisfactory, and to-day we have in this Province no longer a Refuge for Girls. The work is better done in another way. The Province has been saved thousands of dollars per year, and the work of reform is being better done in the homes to which those girls have been sent without cost to us.

I mention this only as confirming what those who have given it any attention know to be true, that the short-term prisoner with the first offence is not as black as he is sometimes painted. He would gladly be better if given half a chance. Would the solution that we have in mind here give the prisoner a better chance? I believe it would. If it would do this, it would certainly as well give a solution of the question of prison labor that would avoid all possibility of its being put into competition with free labor. There would be no competition; there would be no Taylor, Scott or other contract.

We do not wish to adopt this solution or any modification of it hastily. We have decided to investigate it thoroughly as applied to the conditions here, and to avail ourselves in this work of assistance, the personnel of which will be known at a not too distant date.

AN AMENDMENT.

I wish to move in amendment, seconded by Hon. Dr. Willoughby :

“That all the words after ‘that’ in the motion be struck out and the following substituted : ‘This House approves of the announcement made by the Government that the whole question of prison labor has been for some time under discussion and will be inquired into forthwith with a view to arriving at a solution which will prevent for the future any competition of prison labor with free labor.’”

The motion as amended was carried.