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THE
Australian Labour Market.

STARTLING DISCLOSURES.

By JOHN NORTON,
NEW SOUTH WALES LABOUR DELEGATE.

Distress and Destitution in New
South Wales.

Pauper Relief Works & Soup Kitchens.

BOGUS "EMIGRANTS"
INFORMATION OFFICE."

LONDON: THE MODERN PRESS, 13, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1886

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PREFACE.

EVER since November 1883, when the facts of the destitution in London and other large towns in the United Kingdom began to assert themselves in a way which compelled attention, Emigration has been put forward as a satisfactory remedy by the ruling classes and philanthropists, as well as by persons pecuniarily interested in the transportation of workmen to the Colonies. Some of the advocates of State-assisted Emigration have been shown to be emigration agents in disguise who receive a commission of so much a head for each person they induce to leave these shores. Others are well-known to be in the pay of land syndicates or railway companies possessed of thousands of acres which are utterly valueless until labour has been planted on them. The Social-Democratic Federation has never ceased to denounce the misrepresentation and imposture which has led too many of our fellows to cross the ocean only to find that in newer countries the capitalist system of society condemns the worker to the same horrors as it produces at home.

When the Government Emigrants' Information Office was first talked of, the Social-Democratic Federation again pointed out that it could be of little advantage to the workers inasmuch as it would be controlled and supplied with information both here and in the Colonies by representatives of the classes who in England are interested in relieving social pressure by exiling the poor, and who in our dependencies favour immigration as an effective means of overstocking the labour market and reducing wages.

Every point of these contentions is amply proved in the following pages which I have persuaded Mr. John Norton to allow me to publish. He is not a Social-Democrat nor particularly interested as I am in the welfare of the unemployed in Great Britain. But as the accredited delegate of the labour population of New South Wales he is bound to defend their interests which, as is amply proved by Mr. Norton's statements, are threatened by the reckless misrepresentations of the Emigration Office. I venture to suggest that members of workmen's clubs and political associations all over the country would do well to send resolutions to the Government demanding that public money should not be expended in attempts to draw off public attention from the Social Question at home by transporting the victims to our Colonies and in supplying cheap labour to make the fortunes of employers at the Antipodes.

H. H. CHAMPION.

Secretaries of Workmen's Clubs or Labour Organisations who would like to hear an address by Mr. Norton on "Australia as a Field for Emigration" should communicate with him at 166, Westminster Bridge Road, London.

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR MARKET.



R. JOHN NORTON, the New South Wales Labour Delegate, now on a mission to this country in connection with the industrial crisis at present existing in that Colony, having, in a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, denounced the information circulated by the new Government Emigrants' Information Office as "glaringly inaccurate, and entirely misleading," received the following letter from that Department:—

"EMIGRANTS' INFORMATION OFFICE,
31, Broadway, Westminster, S.W.
16th October, 1886.

"JOHN NORTON, ESQ.,

"SIR,—The Managing Committee of this Office have noticed a letter signed by you, and printed in the *Daily News*, to the effect that the information which they have issued about the labour market of New South Wales is 'glaringly inaccurate, and entirely misleading.'

"Their only object being to ascertain and make known to the public the actual facts as to the prospects of labourers in the British Colonies, they would be glad to learn the grounds of your criticism, and in what respects the information in question is inaccurate and misleading.

"If you care to call at their office, and will make an appointment, I shall be glad to see you, and may add that any periodical reports issued by trade societies in Australia would be acceptable.

"Faithfully yours,
(Signed) C. P. LUCAS."

To which Mr. Norton has replied as follows:—

"166, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.,
October 23rd, 1886.

"TO THE MANAGING COMMITTEE OF THE
GOVERNMENT EMIGRANTS' INFORMATION OFFICE.

"GENTLEMEN,—In reply to your communication of the 16th inst. I beg leave to say that the grounds upon which I base the statement contained in my letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'that the information recently issued by the Government Emigrants' Information Office concerning the labour market of New South Wales is glaringly inaccurate, and entirely misleading,' are the following:—

(a) On page 8 of the penny Colonisation Circular of New South Wales, sold by you, it is stated—'In New South Wales men accustomed to agricultural or pastoral work can readily obtain employment in any part of the country districts at remunerative wages.'

(b) On pages 9 and 10 of the same Circular you give a list of what purports to be the average rate of wages earned in the majority of skilled handicrafts in 1884; and on page 19 say, 'New South Wales, as compared with other, and even with the neighbouring colonies, possesses special advantages and attractions for the agricultural settler.'

(c) In the general broadsheet circular issued by you on the 11th inst., and entitled, 'General Information for Intending Emigrants to Canada, the Australasian, and South African Colonies,' under the heading of 'Present Demand for Labour,' the following statement appears:—'NEW SOUTH WALES. There is some opening for persons connected with the building trades, for railway and agricultural labourers.'

I consider the whole of these statements not only 'glaringly inaccurate, and entirely misleading,' but positive misrepresentations of the real state of the labour market in New South Wales at the present time, which are all the more unwarrantable that they are made in the face of the following most full and clear evidence to the contrary.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

The *Sydney Globe* newspaper of the 26th of July last states—'The stagnation in business resulting from the deadlock in the Western district has at length attracted the attention of the Sydney Mercantile body. Work on the stations and homesteads of the Saltbush has ceased; the contractors' parties of tank sinkers and mechanics and waggoners have been dispersed, and are wandering over the country penniless. Sheep stations where 30 or 40 hands had been employed are now worked by 7 or 8 hands. The country towns feel the stoppage of circulation, and in Sydney the pinch is felt in the return of bills unpaid instead of the good remittances and fresh orders which came by every post while the industry of the interior was maintained.'

On the 30th of the same month the *Globe*, in drawing attention to the deplorable condition of the agricultural portion of the population of New South Wales, and to the fact that they could not compete against the wheat which was being landed in Sydney from Bombay at 4s. 5d. per bushel, observes: 'With his hundred acres, his hut, his children dressed in flour-bags, his crop mortgaged before it is ripe, his utter hopelessness of any fair or satisfactory progress, or of emancipation from the debt which was bound around his neck on the day he settled on the soil, is not the settler ground almost to death in the cruel mill of competition?'

To that part of Statement No. 2, where you say that, 'New South Wales, as compared with other, and even the neighbouring colonies, possesses special advantages and attractions for the agricultural settler,' I take exception; and likewise to your remark that 'more than one-third of the population of New South Wales is resident in Sydney and its suburbs, consequently, the remainder of the colony is comparatively thinly populated.' The first of these two statements is inaccurate, and the second is misleading. New South Wales does not possess any 'special advantages and attractions for the agricultural settler' over Victoria. Her bad land laws, together with the droughts and outside

competition, combine to make it difficult for the small farmers and settlers to live on the land, and to drive them into the towns. This is why one-third of the whole population is, unfortunately, to be found in Sydney and its suburbs. The area of New South Wales is 310,938 square miles, or 199,000,000 acres; that of Victoria 87,884 square miles, or 56,245,760 acres. Notwithstanding her vast area, New South Wales has a somewhat smaller population than Victoria, and has only 852,017 acres under cultivation; whereas Victoria, although nearly three-and-a-half times smaller, has no less than 2,323,496 acres under cultivation, *i.e.*, 1,471,479 acres more than the mother colony, which has twice the age of Victoria. In 1884 Victoria produced 10,967,088 more bushels of wheat, oats, and barley than New South Wales. These few significant figures do not, I think, indicate that New South Wales possesses, at present, any 'special advantages and attractions for the agricultural settler' over her Victorian neighbour, at least.

ARTISANS AND MECHANICS.

Since my arrival in this country I have received reports from nearly every handicraft exercised in the Colony, which shows that almost every branch of industry, and especially the building trade, is in a terribly depressed state, as the following summary shows.

CARPENTERS and JOINERS.—Mr. Francis Willes, Secretary, N.S.W. Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, in a letter dated Sydney, June 11th says: 'the state of this trade is very dull, a great number being out of work.' A report from Mr. J. C. Simpson, Secretary, Sydney Progressive Society of Carpenters and Joiners, dated June 9th, states: 'This society is of opinion that state-assisted immigration should cease; and we would warn all mechanics from coming to this colony, as trade is very bad and may remain so for some considerable time yet.' These reports are more than confirmed by the Sydney press, which shows that instead of improving, this trade has become still worse. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of the 19th of August, states: 'For some considerable time past the building trade has been unusually slack, and, in consequence, many carpenters and joiners have been thrown out of employment, so much so that about a fortnight ago it was deemed necessary to call a meeting of the unemployed carpenters and joiners to consider what was to be done. At the meeting a committee was appointed to wait upon the Hon. the Minister for Works to ascertain if any Government works could be commenced to absorb the unemployed labour. After considerable agitation and many interviews it was announced that employment would be found for fifty carpenters and joiners under the Railway Department, but upwards of 300 have given in their names as out of work and needing employment. The fifty men required were drafted out on Monday, but the list of names requiring work had considerably increased, and on Tuesday afternoon it was decided to hold another meeting at the usual place, the statue at the top of King Street. At the time of meeting between 300 and 400 persons had assembled. Mr. Thomas Symons, Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council addressed the meeting. It was decided to appoint a Committee to again interview the Minister for Works, to endeavour to urge upon him the necessity of opening up other public works, so that work can be obtained by the unemployed carpenters and joiners. It was stated that many of the unemployed had been from two

to four months out of work, and consequently, much distress prevailed amongst them.' The *Sydney Globe*, of the 21st of August states, 'Mr. O'Sullivan, M.L.A., to-day introduced a deputation of unemployed carpenters to the Minister for Works, requesting him to give them work. Mr. Thomas Symons, having stated the case of the men, showing that there were still nearly 400 carpenters out of work and in distress; Mr. Lyne, the Minister for Works, said that he had already strained his department, to find work for fifty of their number, and he could not find work for more till some of the railway lines were adopted. They would then get work on the permanent way and bridges. Till then he would endeavour to get them employment at roadmaking.'

STONEMASONS.—Numbers of the hands in this trade are out of work, which is largely owing to the extensive importation of dressed stone from Victoria and elsewhere; in consequence of which the *Sydney Globe*, of the 24th August last, states: 'that the Government has promised to use native stone wherever possible, and to place a duty on the imported stone.'

BRICKMAKERS.—Messrs. A. Boot, President, and J. Cook, Secretary, of the N.S.W. Brickmakers, Brickmakers' Labourers, and Pipe-makers' Union, state: 'so far as the Labour market in our trade is concerned, we are sorry to say that it is now very much overstocked, hundreds of our men are now walking about the streets of Sydney.' Most of the brickyards in the Colony work eight hours per day, but the larger yards having refused to recognise the eight hours' principle, the brickmakers there have gone on strike, their action being supported by all the other trades. It is hoped by the reduction of the hours of labour of those employed, the over production will cease, and work will be provided for the unemployed brickmakers. Large quantities of bricks are being offered at £3 per thousand.

Thus it will be seen that your statements that 'there are some openings in the building trades and for railway and agricultural labourers' is *glavingly inaccurate*. A precisely similar state of things exists in most of the other leading trades included in your list of average wages, as a cursory glance at their condition will suffice to prove.

IRON TRADE.—A Special Committee of the New South Wales Engineering Association appointed to inquire into the state of the iron trade in the colony reported on the 30th of June last to the effect that the trade throughout all its branches was in a thoroughly depressed state; and 'that there was not a single factory which employed more than one tenth of the workmen which the establishment was capable of accommodating, to say nothing of the vast amount of expensive plant lying idle, whilst a large number of firms had had to stop their engines, there not being work enough to keep even the apprentices employed.'

In a report dated Lithgow, N.S.W., July 24th, Mr. H. S. Jones, Secretary of the Eskbank Ironworkers, reports that the puddlers, heaters, shinglers, rollers and other hands at the Eskbank Works are only working half-time, and that a large blast furnace, which was at work four years ago, has since had to be blown out and pulled down for want of work. There were formerly eight puddling furnaces at work here, but, owing to the collapse of the iron trade, some of them have been pulled down and the plates broken up. Mr. Jones concludes his report as follows;—'To any ironworkers who are thinking of coming out to this colony in the hope of obtaining employment in their trade, we would

say be *warned*, be *careful*, we cannot hold out any hope of work whatsoever.'

Another report from the New South Wales Friendly Society of Ironmoulders, and signed by A. Hollis, President, W. Walker, Check Steward, W. Jones, Secretary, and by all the members of the General Committee of the Society, shows that a similar state of things exists in the other provincial ironworks; and it is stated that the Fitzroy Ironworks at Mittagong, are likely to be shut down this year for want of work.

COACHMAKERS.—In a report dated Sydney, June 9th, Mr. T. Halliday, Secretary of the New South Wales Coachmakers' Society, says: 'This trade is at present in a very depressed state, one firm alone having discharged thirty hands, and the greater number of factories are only working half-time.' This report is confirmed by the *Sydney Globe* of August 28th, according to which a conference of the employers and employed, in the coachmaking trade, met at the Foresters' Hall, Sydney, on the 27th of August, to consider the present depression. The same paper stated that large numbers of men were out of work, and that the trade was rapidly declining to utter ruin, hardly any of the factories being more than mere repairing shops, and that such depression had not been known for thirty years.

THE SADDLE, HARNESS, AND COLLAR MAKERS' Society of New South Wales in a report dated Sydney, June 14th, and signed by J. Cronin, President, W. S. Harper, Treasurer, and G. Stuart, Secretary, states: 'This particular trade is now and, in fact, has been for a number of years past in a very depressed condition, owing mainly to the great importations free of duty from England, the Continent of Europe and elsewhere, which have the effect of glutting the markets here, and underselling and driving the local manufacturers out of the market, except in a few cases where the article cannot be imported. The long-continued drought has played havoc, financially, with the farmers and pastoralists of the colony who are the classes from whom we derive the most support.'

BOOT AND SHOE MAKERS.—Mr. W. P. White, Secretary of the New South Wales Amalgamated Operative Boot Trade Union writing under date June 14th observes: 'During from four to six weeks of the year men of this trade are idle from want of continuous employment, and many hands are paid off in the various factories; but this year it has been greater than previously. The men are willing to leave the trade when they can get a chance of turning their attention to other things.' This account is corroborated by an official report on the state of this trade published in the *Sydney Globe* of the 24th of August last under the heading 'Alarming Depression in the Boot Trade,' in which is given an account of the state of trade from no less than thirty of the managers or proprietors of different boot and shoe factories in and around Sydney. For obvious reasons the employers did not wish their real names to appear in this ominous report, so their names were suppressed, and indicated by consecutive numbers. The following is a summary of this report:—

No. 1. Very slack: closes on Friday until noon on Monday; has done so for the last seven weeks.

No. 2. Very slack: closed from Thursday to Monday during the last five weeks.

No. 3. One of the largest in the colony. Has discharged a great number of hands; those retained work only seven hours per day for five days, and are generally paid at 11 o'clock on Saturdays.

No. 4. Men engaged have not averaged two days per week for the last six weeks.

No. 5. Discharged half the hands nine weeks ago; those retained work irregularly.

No. 6. Trade falling off; factory closed two days last week.

No. 7. Usually employed ten makers and a number of finishers; now employ only two makers, whose average is not more than two days per week for the last five weeks.

No. 8. Usually employed four makers and two finishers. This factory closed for a week, then re-opened with one maker and one finisher, the remainder being discharged.

No. 9. No cause for complaint.

No. 10. Has discharged one-third of *employés*; those retained average only three days per week.

No. 11. Has been closed for the last twelve weeks, with the exception of a few apprentices and one man over them.

Nos. 12 and 13. Have been closed for the last three weeks.

No. 14. Has discharged several hands; those retained work only at intervals.

No. 15. Trade so slack that the whole of the *employés* with the exception of three women's workmen, were put off the whole of last week.

No. 16. Very slack; discharged the majority of workmen; those retained average two and a half to three days per week.

No. 17. Discharged half of hands five weeks ago; the remainder working casually.

No. 18. Doing fairly well.

No. 19. Closed for the last five weeks.

No. 20. Very dull.

No. 21. Closed for the last ten weeks.

No. 22. Doing a fair trade.

No. 23. Very slack.

No. 24. The largest factory in the Colony. Closes at 1 o'clock on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and on Friday all work has to be completed by 11:30 a.m.; pay is issued one hour later; the factory is then closed until the following Monday. This system has been in operation for the last three weeks. In this factory some of the hands who have done exhibition work, that has taken first prizes, are now making copper toes, and are doing other work usually done by apprentices and lads.

No. 25. Discharged eighteen hands; remainder doing limited work. Most of weekly hands' wages reduced, some to the extent of ten shillings per week.

No. 26. Had but one full week during last eight weeks, the average being three days per week.

No. 27. Trade very dull.

No. 28. Very dull; majority of *employés* walking about.

No. 29. Firm completely ruined. The whole of the plant was taken and sold about six weeks ago.

This report further states that there are now between 600 and 700

boot and shoemakers out of work in Sydney alone; and that so deep and wide spread is the misery amongst them, that numbers of them are now blacking shoes and selling newspapers in the streets of Sydney, in order to provide an honest crust for their starving wives and children.

COOPERS.—Messrs. John Strange, President; Henry McPhillips, Secretary; John Quain, Treasurer, and five members of the Committee of the N.S.W. Journeymen Coopers' Society, in a report, dated from Sydney in June last, after drawing a most gloomy picture of the depressed condition of the Coopers' trade, states: 'In conclusion we would strongly recommend our fellow countrymen in Great Britain and Ireland to *pause* and *consider* before taking the important step of emigrating to this country, at least, until they receive a more favourable report from the trade. We hope that this report, will be the means of preventing much misery and disappointment. There are hundreds here who would be glad to return to England if they had the chance.'

WHEELWRIGHTS AND BLACKSMITHS.—Messrs W. M'Carty, President, and G. B. James, Secretary, of the N.S.W. Amalgamated Society of Wheelwrights and Blacksmiths, state: 'An almost continuous depression has existed in our trade for a period of two years, with very little prospect of improvement. This state of things we attribute to a recurrence of bad seasons in the pastoral and agricultural districts of the Colony. The labour market is glutted owing to the influx of immigrants.'

FARRIERS.—In a report dated Sydney, June 11th, Mr. R. F. Bosden, Secretary of the N.S.W. Journeymen Farriers' Society, says: 'The trade is very brisk from November to April; from April to November it is very dull. There are plenty of farriers out of work, and numbers of apprentices finishing their time every week.'

PATTERN MAKERS.—In a letter to the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council, dated Sydney, June 7th, Mr. E. W. McIntosh, Secretary of the N.S.W. Branch of the Australasian Pattern Makers' Society, says: 'In reply to your memorandum of the 3rd inst., in reference to the departure of Mr. John Norton as Delegate from the Council to England, I beg to state, for Mr. Norton's information, that our trade has been very dull for nearly two years, during which time very few pattern makers can boast of constant work. State-assisted immigration is strongly protested against by our society.'

FURNITURE TRADE.—A report of the N.S.W. United Furniture Trade Society, dated Sydney, June last, shows that this trade is at a standstill in consequence of the competition of the Chinese, and the wholesale importation of furniture from Europe and America.

COAL-MINERS.—Mr. James Curley, General Secretary of the Hunter River Miners' Mutual Protective Association, N.S.W., writes in June last: 'Speaking of this (the Newcastle Mining district) it is literally crammed with labour. The gradual influx of immigrants, from time to time, has, at last, swamped the mining labour market. The trade of the district is fully supplied with a surplus of 400 to 500 men.'

Mr. John Owens, Secretary of the Western Branch of the N.S.W. Coal Miners' Mutual Protective Association, writing on the 5th June last, states: 'Trade is not brisk on account of their being too many men. The opinion of this Association is that State-assisted immigration is very undesirable, as the supply of labour in this district exceeds the demand.'

According to a report in the *Sydney Globe* of August 21st, two mines at Captain's Flat, Queanbeyan, have recently been closed; and the miners thus thrown out of work—who have not been paid for eight weeks,—are in a state of semi-destitution. In answer to a petition signed by 100 of these miners, the Minister for Works has promised, if possible, to find them employment at road making, and to pay them out of the fund for the maintenance of the unemployed.

The same paper states that the Vale of Clwydd mine has stopped, the manager having been instructed 'to stop work until further orders.'

The proprietors of the Mount Keira and Mount Kembla collieries, in the southern district of N.S.W., have recently given notice, to reduce the miners' wages after the 11th ultimo. The whole of the coal-mining industry is in a very depressed state.

COAL TRIMMERS.—Mr. William Cremor, Secretary of the Newcastle Coal Trimmers' Provident Union, N.S.W., writing under date June 7th, says: 'We have 150 members on the roll, and these are only working half-time. At no time has the full number been employed. There are too many workers for the amount of work to be done. The mines are full, and every trade is more than fully supplied with labour. Newcastle and the mining district could part with, at least, 1,000 men, and leave but a moderate living for those remaining. In the present circumstances, State-assisted emigration is a grievous wrong, doubly inflicted; first, upon those who are already here, and, secondly, upon those who are brought here. The majority of the new comers merely swell the ranks of the unemployed or help to reduce wages by accepting lower rates, or, if attached to a Union, by further dividing the amount of work to be done. At present we are making about 30s. per week.'

WHARF LABOURERS.—Mr. T. McKillop, President of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union, writing from Sydney under date, June 11th, says: 'I beg leave to say that the present mode of assisted immigration is ruinous to the Colonies, as it tends to flood the labour market.'

This is very plain evidence that the New South Wales labour market in the above branches is in an absolutely congested state; and it is the same in nearly every other branch. Not one of the trades named in your list of trades and average rates of wages can be said to be prosperous. Both the agricultural and manufacturing industries in New South Wales are stagnant. It is true that you make the rates quoted apply to 1884, and state that they are subject to fluctuations, but the depression was nearly as bad in 1884 as it is now, and the only fluctuation has been from bad to worse. Even if the state of things in 1884 had been appreciably better than it is now, I protest against the data of 1884 being made to apply to 1886, when, as I have shown, every branch of industry is depressed, and large sections of the New South Wales working-classes are suffering the acutest distress, many of them being positively destitute.

GOLD-MINING.—There is a very erroneous and dangerous impression abroad here, which has been fostered by the foolish statements of persons who should know better, that if an artisan or agricultural labourer, on arriving in the Colonies, cannot find work at his accustomed occupation, he can easily turn his attention to gold-mining. Apart from the fact that the alluvial diggings, where individuals with little or no capital formerly managed to gain a livelihood, are now exhausted, the more important fact that a man to succeed in mining

must have extensive experience of the most hard and practical kind, seems to be generally lost sight of here. The days of successful individual effort in gold-mining have long since passed away; and what is required now-a-days is special knowledge, long experience, and, above all, capital. Mining in the Colonies has now entered on the scientific stage; and, except in very rare instances, is only successful when pursued on an extensive scale, with large capital and under the direction of experts.

The exciting stories about the wealth of the Kimberley gold fields, are, for the most part, exaggerations, and even experienced miners should await further information before joining in the 'rush.' Over and over again the Australian newspapers have warned the public against rashly venturing into the Kimberley district, and have pointed out the hardships and perils to be encountered on the way thither and on the field itself. Travellers who have returned from Kimberley have warned diggers not to venture in less numbers than parties of six, with, at least, a couple of horses a-piece, and supplies for six months. Therefore, no man should venture unless he has a small capital of between £200 and £300, to defray outfit, cost of supplies, expenses of transit by sea, journey across country, and expenses of return journey in case of failure. Yet in spite of multiplied warnings, hundreds have recklessly ventured, ill-equipped, and badly provided, with the result that many of them have perished either by the spears of the blacks or have been "bushed," and perished miserably of hunger and thirst; while others, who have escaped these perils, have been unable to return, and have had to gain their bread by working on the roads, or by sweeping the streets of Derby. For an agricultural labourer or mechanic to go to the colonies with the idea of gaining a livelihood, let alone a fortune at gold-mining, is sheer insanity. There are thousands of experienced European miners and swarms of Chinese on the spot, who are unable to make a living at it.

YOUR PUBLICATIONS concerning New South Wales are full of inaccuracies and misleading statements too numerous to particularise at greater length. This is not at all astonishing, seeing that you are issuing old information no longer applicable to the colony. Your publications appear to have been compiled from books and pamphlets of the Agent-General, which have been proved over and over again, both by the working-classes in New South Wales, and by returned emigrants here in England, to be totally unreliable. The circulation of such out-of-date and unreliable information appears all the more inexcusable that no effort appears to have been made to revise it. On behalf of those whom I represent, I have to complain that sources of the most reliable and complete information concerning the present state of the Labour Market in New South Wales have been ignored. Towards the end of last Session, Mr. Burt, the member for Morpeth, presented three petitions to Parliament against State-assisted-immigration to New South Wales (1) from the Trades' and Labour Council; (2) from the Democratic Alliance; and (3) from the Federated Seamen's Union, of that colony. All three of these petitions were nearly identical in tenor and text; and from one of them I quote the second clause:—
 'That whereas there has been a dearth of employment for skilled artisans and general labourers during the past few years, the Government has continued to pour into the country shiploads of immigrants for whom no work could be found. Thousands of skilled artisans,

‘enticed out to this country by fallacious promises of constant employment at high wages, have been compelled to accept work as navvies on the relief works started by the Government of New South Wales, for the relief of the distress caused by the surplus labour created by the system of State-assisted immigration. During the last three or four years the numbers of the unemployed have increased every year, until this year they may be numbered in thousands. Last year hundreds of skilled artisans were walking the streets of Sydney without employment, or food or shelter. They were found by hundreds sleeping in the public streets and gardens, until, in deference to a strong public agitation which took place, the Government was compelled to provide them with temporary shelter, together with one blanket each, with bread and cheese to keep them from starving. Relief works had then to be started in order to grapple with the difficulty. The same state of things has occurred again this year. Large meetings of the unemployed have been held in Sydney; the Government have been compelled to start relief works anew, and to establish a Special Government Bureau for dispersing the unemployed workmen throughout the colony by means of free railway passes which have been issued in thousands to the unemployed. The men thus supplied with free railway passes instead of finding employment, have been compelled to tramp up and down the country in search of work, suffering greatly from exposure and hunger, and finally forced to accept work at pauper wages at roadmaking, bush-clearing, stone breaking on Government Relief Works.’

These petitions, containing such startling information, do not appear to have been deemed worthy of notice, as you make no reference to them, although they have been frequently referred to and quoted in the London and Provincial press. In like manner the Official Report of the Third Inter-Colonial Trades’ Union Congress of Australasia, which met in Sydney in October last year, has been ignored, although it contains the most full and reliable information as to the state of the whole Labour Market of all the Australasian Colonies. But apart from these sources of information—than which none could be more trustworthy—the statements concerning the depression actually existing in the Labour Market of New South Wales with which the newspapers of that Colony are full, have not been even noticed by you. None of the above newspaper extracts, which are taken from the files of the Sydney papers received by the two last mails, have been published by you. Neither have my reiterated warnings to intending emigrants, both in the press, and at public meetings, not to venture to New South Wales during the present crisis; nor has the statement recently made by Sir Patrick Jennings, the Premier of the Colony, to the effect that in consequence of the general depression, the deficit this year would probably amount to £2,000,000 sterling, recommended itself to your notice. Had the latest files of the Sydney papers been consulted such distressing accounts as the following, taken from the *Sydney Globe*, of the 23rd of August last, would, perhaps, have induced you to considerably modify some of your statements with regard to New South Wales:

‘THE UNEMPLOYED IN MELBOURNE,

It is now clearly manifest, consist in a great measure, of men

who have recently arrived in that city from poverty-stricken South Australia. On the other hand, the unemployed in Sydney are a solid substantial fact, and an overwhelming majority of their number consists of men who have been identified with Sydney for years. During the past six months more than 6,000 unemployed persons have been provided for by the Government either at the Rookwood, Little Bay, Middle Harbour, Field of Mars, and other camps, or by granting them free passes to country districts. The Supply Bill now brought before Parliament contains the item of £25,000 for the unemployed, and no amount of sophistry will rub this fact out. The expenditure for the unemployed is still going on, and it will probably total £50,000 before the end is reached. In addition to all this we have nearly 400 carpenters asking the Minister for Works to give them work; Coachmakers in destitution and distress; something like 5,000 Ironworkers who have only partial employment; while Saddlemakers, Bootmakers and other indoor workers, are bitterly complaining of the hard times and scarcity of work.'

From the same source could have been learned the fact that private charity is being invoked on every hand to alleviate the widespread misery and destitution among the working-classes of New South Wales, and that in Sydney, as in London,

NIGHT REFUGES AND SOUP KITCHENS.

find more than their legitimate share of hunger and starvation to relieve. According to the Report presented to the 19th Annual Meeting of the City Night Refuge and Soup Kitchen Charity held in Sydney on the 1st of last month, when Sir Alfred Stephen, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony, occupied the chair: 'It was shown that the number of meals given away during the past twelve months was 65,685; and that shelter for the night had been afforded in 25,851 instances.'

Unless such information as this is taken into consideration and given its due weight by you when compiling and authorising the issue of your official circulars respecting the state of the labour market of New South Wales, the utility of such an organisation as that which you control is utterly destroyed. If such information as I have now placed before you can be legitimately ignored, I respectfully submit that the public have been entirely misled concerning the nature of your functions; and that instead of being an organisation for disseminating trustworthy information concerning Her Majesty's Colonies, the action of the Government Emigrants' Information Office is rather calculated to have the effect of shifting the burden of the social evils of this country on to the young and struggling communities abroad, amongst which, as in the case of New South Wales, dire distress and deep destitution already exist.

At the very outset of its career the Emigrants' Information Office begins by creating doubt as to the thorough reliability of the information it issues. At the head of all its broad-sheets, hand-books, and pamphlets it is stated that 'this office has been established for the purpose of supplying intending emigrants with useful and trustworthy information respecting the British colonies . . . but that the committee of management cannot undertake to hold themselves responsible for the absolute correctness of every detail.' Now this would, perhaps, be all very well if those portions of the information, the correctness of which the committee do not undertake to guarantee, were plainly indicated;

but, as it is, the enquirer does not know what is reliable and what is not, and thus the value of the whole is utterly destroyed. I take it that the money of the British taxpayer ought not to be spent in disseminating one tittle of information calculated to promote emigration that cannot be relied upon; and the correctness of the information supplied by this Government office ought to be guaranteed, or the information not issued at all.

In the name of the working classes of New South Wales, I have to enter a most emphatic protest against the careless manner in which the business of the Government Emigrants' Information Office is being carried on. I respectfully suggest that the circulation of the publications respecting New South Wales, now being issued by you, should be at once stopped; and that until they have been thoroughly revised, and made to give a more correct account of the state of the labour market in that colony, no further issue of them should be authorised.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN NORTON,

New South Wales Labour Delegate.

IT

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