

drafts, Crown estates retaining the remnant, consisting of 201 men who declined repatriation and preferred to remain. These men constitute a good class of labour, but will not be available in the future, as the Australian Government, which now controls the Melanesian Islands, desires to retain all available labour there.

The Samoan people do not provide a reliable source of unskilled labour. Their numbers are insufficient to effectively occupy all their lands, foodstuffs are easily grown, no period of cessation of growth necessitates thrift or provision for the future, and no incentive exists inducing them to work for wages. The proper role of the Samoans is to cultivate their lands and produce copra from their own trees; and until the Native population increases enormously there will be no surplus of labour available for the requirements of others than themselves. It was recognized that no probability existed of plantation labour being supplied by Samoans, but it was hoped that provision of unskilled Samoan labour for public works directly and indirectly affecting themselves might be available, and during the period under review every endeavour has been made to employ Samoan labour. Originally each Department arranged for itself the employment of such individual men as occasion required. Difficulties arose in co-ordination, and on the 24th June, 1920, a system was instituted whereby all Native labour required by Departments was employed through a Government labour bureau. The bureau found the men and engaged them, kept records, and paid wages. This system served one of the purposes for which it was established—the elimination of abuses such as personation and double payments—but it effected little improvement in the quantity or quality of labour, and every employing Department suffered in proportion to its labour necessities. The want of inclination or necessity to work, and the apparent inability to continue at work, were unabated, and no Department could be assured either that the number of men for which it requisitioned would be obtained, that those obtained would work to-morrow as well as to-day, that the same men would work day after day, that boys were not substituted for men, or that workers would be reasonably punctual or diligent. The boycott or *sa* affected labour to some extent, but was not responsible either for its insufficiency or its inconstancy, both being inherent defects apparent in greater degree as time went on. The Committee undertook the finding and engaging of such men as should be required, and the chiefs concerned displayed considerable energy in the project. The position became somewhat improved, and a certain amount of labour was provided, but it was irregular in attendance and unduly expensive in production. The scheme became less and less effective, and finally became practically inoperative. Some of the members of the chiefs' labour committee made an honest endeavour to produce labour for public works, but the inherent difficulties were too great for them. The Government gave Samoan labour the fullest trial, and exercised much patience; its want of effectiveness, however, is shown by the following experiences:—

In the middle of February a quarry for road-metal was opened up at Magaigi. Operations were conducted intermittently with Samoan labour on daily wages under continuous white supervision until the end of April, when the work was entirely stopped on account of the ridiculously high cost. The factors which brought about this state of affairs were—(1.) The number of men asked for and promised were never forthcoming. When the required quota was twenty, the numbers available on various days were nine, eleven, fourteen, seventeen—the last figure being the maximum during two months. (2.) Continuity of employment of the same men was found impossible. For example, a gang of men engaged for three months worked for twelve days and then left without notice. (3.) Lack of punctuality was the cause of the loss of at least an hour per man per day. The Samoan fails to appreciate the justice of deducting a portion of his wages for such loss, and considers that he is being defrauded. (4.) The production was extremely low, the average output of one Samoan being one-ninth of the output of a white labourer in New Zealand. The actual cost on a sixteen-days test was £1 2s. 1·7d. per cubic yard, as against a fair value of 2s. 9d. per cubic yard. (5.) The labourers usually refused to work on Monday afternoons and Saturday mornings: thus four days' work a week only was obtained. (6.) Low production and short working-time resulted in extravagant supervision charges.

A portable stone-crushing plant was installed at Lotapa in April, and operations with Samoan unskilled labour were carried on until the middle of September. The work consisted of the collection of boulders by means of trucks and rails, and the feeding of the crusher. The work was not so arduous as quarry-work, and the degree of skill required was considerably less; however, the cost of the work was from 50 to 100 per cent. greater than the cost of similar work in New Zealand. This was brought about by—(1.) The inconstancy of numbers of labourers reporting for work resulting in low output, and heavy crushing costs and supervision charges. Where thirty men have been asked for and promised, on many occasions only eight and ten have been known to report. On a number of occasions gangs reported several days later. (2.) Changes of gangs every fortnight in accordance with the wishes of the Samoan chiefs. This meant training fresh men to their duties every fortnight, resulting in regular disorganization. (3.) The secret substitution of boys of eight and nine years of age for men when working in isolated places. (4.) The general disinclination of the men to do a fair day's work, and the systematic loafing encouraged by the Samoan foremen.

The cost of labour varied from 6s. to 9s. per cubic yard; a reasonable cost would be from 3s. to 4s. per cubic yard. The urgency of road repairs before the next wet season was so extreme that in spite of the cost it has been deemed advisable to continue the work with the only labour available. Also, if the work had been discontinued, valuable plant would have been lying idle and deteriorating.

The repairing of a section of road four miles in length from Vailima to Malololelei was undertaken by Samoan day labour. A portion of the work was carried out, the cost being £3 per chain; a reasonable cost would have been £1 per chain. The Natives absolutely refused to do the work by contract, hence vigorous prosecution of the work was suspended and a very small gang only has been employed on piecework, reducing the cost to about £2 per chain. The initial excessive cost was due to the same reasons as specified in the other cases, except that the isolation of this work with only occasional visits of a white overseer meant that the hours worked were smaller and the production lower.

Progress up to the present has been largely dependent on Samoan labour, all plantations being understaffed and unable to spare any Chinese or black boys. The only permanent gang available to the Government was the party of Niue-Islanders recruited originally for lightering-work. These men formed a useful reserve, and, though numerically insufficient, more than once were used to fill a gap which otherwise would have occasioned heavy loss.