

*Question (1).—In the City of Auckland and its environs and the surrounding district, to what extent are the Maori people employed either as servants or contractors of Chinese and other Asiatics or of Europeans in connection with market gardening?*

In ascertaining to what extent Maoris are employed on market gardens your Committee had to depend to a considerable extent on special reports obtained from the Department of Health's Inspectors, and on figures supplied by the Akarana Maori Association and other witnesses. Employment is to some extent of a permanent nature, but the majority of employees have only casual work.

Taking fifty Chinese gardens inspected by the Health Department's Inspectors three weeks before the Committee was set up, it was found that eleven Maoris were working on eight different gardens—seven females and four males. In subsequent visits by the Committee the report of the Inspectors was confirmed. This would, in the opinion of the Committee, indicate that Maori people are only employed by Asiatics to a very limited extent in any permanent capacity. The Committee realizes that, owing to the amount of publicity that had been given this matter in the press through the Akarana Association and other persons, it is probable that either the Chinese had reduced the number of their employees or that the Maoris had left their employment temporarily. Another factor that has to be taken into account is the fact that the Committee's inquiries were made during the off season, when additional labour could have been dispensed with with very little inconvenience.

According to figures supplied to the Committee by Mr. Graham, the number of Maoris employed in various pursuits in the city and environs is as follows: Eight males, sixty-nine females. This witness made a further statement that during the past season fifty-three females had been in Chinese quarters, and that this number could be doubled if taken over the past three years.

Onehunga: The Committee was informed of ten Maoris, mostly young girls, working with Chinese in Onehunga.

Auckland: During the planting and weeding season, and during potato-digging (November, December, and February), it is apparent that Maoris, both male and female, are employed by Chinese to a great extent; but evidence is so conflicting that it is impossible to assess the number with any degree of accuracy. There is no evidence that Maoris are employed in gardens in Auckland and suburbs by Europeans or Hindus.

Pukekohe: There are at least seven Chinese and five Hindu market gardens, together with a large number of European gardens, in this district. It is very difficult to assess the number of Maoris employed on Chinese gardens at Pukekohe at the present time, or at any time. For instance, at the present time there would probably not be more than twelve, but in November, when the main crop is in, there would very likely be up to forty or fifty—i.e., October to February—working for Chinese. There are about three hundred to four hundred Maoris around the locality. The Maoris work for either Chinese or Europeans, and a few for Hindus. The Maoris change over from European to Chinese according to when the crops are ready. ~~The Hindus to a great extent employ Hindu labour.~~

Otaki: There are about six Chinese gardens and approximately the same number of European gardens in this district. The number of Maoris employed on the Chinese gardens would be between twenty and thirty. This number would be considerably increased during the busy season. The number of Maoris employed on the European gardens is negligible. There are no Hindu gardens in this district. Practically all the Maoris employed in this district are local residents, and most of them are landlords themselves.

Ohau: There are over fifteen Chinese gardens spread over not less than 200 acres, on most of which Maoris are employed. It is estimated that at least fifty Maoris (mostly females) are working on the gardens, all being local residents and landowners and living in their own homes.

Foxton: *En route* from Otaki to Wanganui the Committee inspected one Chinese garden in the vicinity of Foxton. On this garden four male Maoris and two female Maoris are employed from time to time, these being local Maoris living at their own homes. Two other Chinese gardens were visited, but no Maoris were working thereon.

Wanganui: There was a total of eleven Chinese gardens in this district, on all of which Maori labour is employed from time to time. There is a small number of Maoris permanently employed, but during the busy periods the number employed would be considerable. During the course of inspection the Committee saw about twenty-four Maoris actually working on the Chinese gardens. It was evident to the Committee that quite a considerable number of Maoris are employed on the gardens in the district from Otaki to Wanganui in a casual capacity, and in the latter place quite a number of these workers are the overflow from the Ratana Pa, who appear to have no other visible means of sustenance. There are no European or Hindu gardens in this district.

*Question (2).—Under what circumstances the Maoris are so employed—as to their payment, housing, and general health and sanitary conditions.*

The system of employment in the Auckland and Pukekohe districts is as follows: During the digging season the practice is to let the contract to the head of the family, with the result that the whole family, relatives, and friends will squat on the farm, and some voluntarily assist, although not employed by the Chinaman. (This is probably responsible for many of the rumours and statements made in the press concerning the large number of Maoris employed in the gardens.) At other times the work is done by day labour.

The methods of payment differ in different localities and for different crops. A general average of payment to females for weeding and thinning vegetables would, if paid by the day, be in the vicinity of 4s. to 5s. a day of eight hours, with food provided. This work is, however, some times done by contract, and the amount earned depends entirely on the number of hours worked. The workers appear to have a free hand in this respect, providing the work is satisfactorily done.