

Auckland: The male Maoris are usually employed on contract work, particularly during the potato-digging season (end of October to February). Payment is made per sugar-bag, and varies according to the crop. The Maori usually tries three or four rows, and then an agreement is come to as regards price. Price varies from 8d. to as high as 1s. 3d. a sugar-bag; but the amount earned remains fairly stationary in the vicinity of about 12s. 6d. a day, although with good crops as much as £1 a day can be earned. It has been stated that the low rates of pay in Auckland are due to competition amongst the Maoris themselves, due to economic conditions. At Onehunga girls are paid 5s. per day of eight hours for thinning and hoeing crops, and males and females are paid from 7d. to 8d. per sugar-bag for digging potatoes. On the North Shore, however, the rate of payment for day labour is much lower, and averages 4s. per day, whereas 9d. per bag is paid for digging potatoes. It will be seen from the above that, although it is possible to earn good money on contract work, the rates paid for day labour are unreasonably low, particularly as the employment is only of a casual nature.

Payment at Pukekohe: Conditions are somewhat different, and, speaking generally, the rates of pay are in excess of those obtaining in Auckland and Auckland suburbs. For bagging potatoes the pay fluctuates from 6d. to 1s. 3d. a sugar-bag. Maori workers (males) employed on day-wages are paid an average of 10s. per day, and females receive an average of approximately 8s. a day (an eight-hour day). During the summer months the employers pay higher wages to compensate for longer hours worked. Speaking generally, the rate of pay is 1s. per hour for females and 1s. 3d. per hour for males. Contract rates paid for digging potatoes vary according to the crop—e.g., for a crop carrying 10 tons of potatoes to the acre 6d. per sugar-bag (approximately 60 lb.) would be paid, while for any crop below 5 tons to the acre 1s. 3d. per sack is paid. Planting of onions and weeding-work is let by the chain; the general average price paid per chain is 3d. The wages earned depend upon the ability of the worker. Two specific cases can be quoted, one of an old Maori woman of fifty-nine years of age who can do 70 chains of weeding a day, and her daughter, fifteen years of age, can do 60 chains a day. Both females are working in a Chinese market garden. These rates of pay in Pukekohe are more or less on a fixed scale which has been agreed upon by employers and employees. Speaking generally, however, the Maoris prefer to work for the Chinese and Hindu employer, as he is more considerate in the way of making financial advances on prospective earnings, giving financial assistance, and supplying vegetables free in the slack periods. For the above reasons it was shown that Maoris would leave the employ of Europeans in order to work for Chinamen and Hindus.

It must be understood that the employment on market gardens is seasonal, and therefore the work is very intermittent.

The evidence goes to show that the average length of employment would not exceed four months in the year, and spread over the whole year the pay would average from 15s. to £1 a week. In this connection it should be noted that several members of the same family would be employed and a percentage of food is found by the employer.

Otaki: The rate of wages in this district varies from 7s. to 8s. a day; the hours are not fixed (eight or more hours). For digging potatoes 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. per 100 lb. sack is paid, according to the crop. (100 lb. sack is equal to four kerosene-tins.)

Ohau: Wages, 10s. per day, male and female (eight hours or more); for digging potatoes, 1s. to 1s. 6d. a 100 lb. sack.

Foxton: Day wages only—6s. to 10s. a day.

Wanganui: Wages, 1s. an hour for males, 9d. an hour for females (an eight-hour day), subject to a reduction of 1d. per hour if accommodation, firewood, &c., are provided.

Housing, General Health, and Sanitary Conditions.—Auckland: On but very few Chinese gardens indeed is any accommodation provided for Maoris, and in these it consists of old sheds, &c., which are quite unfit for occupation. During the busy season, however, the position must be greatly accentuated.

Pukekohe: At Pukekohe an attempt to provide accommodation has been made in certain instances on European and Chinese gardens, but the general run of the accommodation is totally unfit for human occupation. In other cases no accommodation has been provided, and the Maoris have provided themselves with shacks or tents made of old wood, old iron, or sacks stretched over rough framing. In these instances the accommodation was disgraceful—over-crowding is prevalent, and sanitary accommodation most primitive.

The water-supply in many cases is limited, and no provision is made for baths. Sanitary fittings and drainage are non-existent or insanitary. Ventilation and lighting in some places are very bad. There is no provision for storage of food as a general rule. Cooking and storage of food are carried out in the same room which is also used for sleeping. The accompanying photographs speak for themselves*.

In spite of the above the general health of such occupants as we saw was good, but the general environment and living-conditions must of necessity have a degrading effect on the Maori race. The general standard nowadays set by the Maoris themselves in suburban areas is much higher than the standard set by both Chinese and Hindu employers. The experience of the Committee during its investigations is that the standard of living and hygienic conditions generally prevailing amongst the better-educated Chinese was found to be reasonably satisfactory. The worst conditions were found amongst the more illiterate class of Chinamen.

Otaki: At Otaki the Maoris all live at their own homes, and there was no accommodation required for them.

Ohau and Foxton are similarly situated.

Wanganui: The majority of Maori workers live in their own homes. There are, however, a number who come from other districts, chiefly visitors to the Ratana settlement, the majority of whom return there each night. The Committee was informed of about a dozen of these people who remain on the Chinese premises. Accommodation provided for Maori workers was inspected.