

At the present time there is a small Maori population throughout the districts visited by the Committee which has been forced to seek employment through stress of circumstances or their own improvidence. In the Wanganui district the position in this respect is affected by the fact that in close proximity is the Ratana pa, and many Maoris who visit this pa eventually find themselves without funds and are compelled to seek employment.

The only avenue of employment open to them is employment in the market gardens, which are controlled almost entirely by Chinese, and to a lesser extent by Hindus. So long as this state of affairs exists, and until other avenues of employment are available, the Committee is of opinion that the prohibition of the Maori women from working in these gardens would in many cases result in hardship. Such action would only partially deal with the matter, as the mixing could still continue—in fact, it might probably increase the temptation for females to gain a living by immoral means in a percentage of those living in the vicinity of gardens. Suggestions for dealing with present conditions will be found later on in the report.

*Question (5).—Generally to report such matters affecting the Maori race in any family or other connection with the Chinese or Hindus of which you think notice should be taken in the interest of the Maori or the public.*

The indiscriminate intermingling of the lower types of the races—i.e., Maoris, Chinese, and Hindus—will, in the opinion of the Committee, have an effect that must eventually cause deterioration not only in the family and national life of the Maori race, but also in the national life of this country, by the introduction of a hybrid race, the successful absorption of which is problematical. There is also the very real danger that in so far as the offspring of Chinese fathers are concerned such miscegenation may eventually result in the submergency of the Maori race similar to what has occurred in Hawaii. (See Appendix.)

The intermingling of Maoris with the lower type of Chinese or Hindus, whether legally married or not, will have the effect of lowering the standard of living. The standard of living amongst Maoris living in suburban areas is higher than that of the Chinese or Hindus visited, and is limited chiefly by their means, whereas the standard of these Chinese and Hindus was found to be, with few exceptions, of the lowest type. The mode of living amongst the Chinese and Hindus, and their ideas of comfort and cleanliness, were crude and insanitary in the extreme compared with European standards, and inferior to the suburban standard now set by the Maoris themselves under the influence of health and educational authorities.

The moral aspect is one that must also be taken into consideration. The Committee has no hesitation in saying that under the present conditions, brought about by economic stress, and to some extent by the improvidence of the Maoris affected, the employment of Maori females by Chinese, who are deprived of the right to bring their own women into this country, and Hindus, and the indiscriminate intermingling of the sexes such as now obtains, must be viewed with alarm as tending to inevitably lead to immorality.

Cases have been brought before the Committee where Maori women who have had children by Chinese fathers have been abandoned and left destitute. In these cases the women either return to their homes, resulting in the introduction of an unwelcome element into the Maori family, or else they are left to fend for themselves.

It was suggested to the Committee that the easy means of access to intoxicating liquors afforded the Maoris through their association with Asiatics is a source of attraction and danger.

*Question (6).—If you are of opinion that the existing conditions require emendation, what remedy would you suggest?*

The Committee is of opinion that the existing conditions arising out of the employment of Maoris by Chinese and Hindus, and to some extent by Europeans, requires amendment, and makes the following suggestions for the consideration of the Hon. the Minister for Native Affairs.

As previously stated, the time does not appear opportune for prohibiting the employment of Maoris by Chinese and Hindus; but, pending suitable steps being taken to obviate the necessity for such employment, we are of opinion that improvements of existing conditions and means of safeguarding the Maoris against exploitation might be effected in the following manner:—

(1) Suitable accommodation similar to that required under the Agricultural Labourers' Accommodation Act and regulations made thereunder (with the exception of clauses 13, 14, 15, and 16) should be provided for all workers employed on market gardens, whether controlled by Europeans or Asiatics, and that in the case of Asiatic gardens the site of such accommodation shall be approved by the local authority in co-operation with an officer of the Native Affairs Department.

(2) The Committee also recommends that the aforementioned regulations be applied to the accommodation of Asiatic market-garden employers where there are no building by-laws in force.

(3) The Committee recommends the prohibition of the employment of Maori females under the age of twenty-one in market gardens controlled by Asiatics, unless under such supervision as may be approved by the authority or his delegate mentioned in paragraph (4) hereof.

(4) The Committee further recommends that provision should be made for the fixing of a minimum wage for all workers who are paid by time wages. As, however, it appears to be the practice to let work by contract or piecework, the Committee is of opinion that some responsible authority, who may delegate his powers to some suitable person residing in the locality, should be appointed for the scrutinizing and approving of all contracts or piecework agreements entered into between the employer and the worker.

(5) The Committee recommends the revision and raising of the education test of the Chinese.