

1929.
NEW ZEALAND.

EMPLOYMENT OF MAORIS ON MARKET GARDENS

(REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON).

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Office of the Minister of Native Affairs,
Parliament Buildings, Wellington, N.Z., 2nd September, 1929.

To Dr. T. Hughes, Messrs. W. Slaughter and Tukere te Anga.

You are appointed a Committee to inquire and report to the Minister of Native Affairs upon the following matters:—

- (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?
- (2) Under what circumstances the Maoris are so employed—as to their payment, housing, and general health and sanitary conditions.
- (3) To ascertain as far as possible how many female Maoris are living with Chinese or Hindus, whether lawfully married or not.
- (4) Whether it is in the interests of public morality that the employment of Maori girls and women by Chinese and Hindus should be permitted to take place.
- (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.
- (6) If you are of opinion that the existing conditions require emendation, what remedy would you suggest?

A. T. NGATA, Native Minister.

EMPLOYMENT OF MAORIS ON MARKET GARDENS.

Department of Health, District Health Office,
Pukemiro Chambers, 53 Anzac Avenue, Auckland, 11th October, 1929.

The Hon. Sir Apirana Ngata, Minister of Native Affairs, Wellington.

SIR,—

The Committee appointed by Cabinet on the 2nd September (consisting of Dr. T. J. Hughes, Medical Officer of Health, Auckland; Mr. W. Slaughter, Officer in Charge, Labour Department, Auckland; and Mr. Tukere te Anga, Native Department; assisted by Dr. E. P. Ellison, Director of Maori Hygiene, in an advisory capacity) has the honour to present you with its report and findings on the evidence adduced relating to the above question.

Your Committee heard evidence and inspected a considerable number of market gardens in Auckland and its environs, Pukekohe, Otaki, Foxton, and Wanganui. A considerable number of Europeans, Asiatics, and Maoris tendered evidence. A copy of this evidence, together with notes on the accommodation provided by market-gardeners for their employees, is attached hereto*. Much valuable information has been obtained, and the Committee is now in a position to submit its findings and make proposals of a concrete nature for your consideration.

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.

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.

The general health of the Maoris in Otaki, Ohau, Foxton, and Wanganui was good, but the housing provided at Wanganui, and sanitary conditions, were in some cases similar to those pertaining to the Auckland districts.

Question (3).—To ascertain as far as possible how many female Maoris are living with Chinese or Hindus, whether lawfully married or not.

The Committee realized from the commencement that this would be one of the most difficult and delicate questions to deal with.

An endeavour was made to obtain information from the Registrar of Births, &c., Auckland; the Registrar, Native Department, Auckland; the Police; the Government Statistician; the Registrar-General; the Matron, St. Helens Hospital, the Salvation Army Home, and St. Mary's Homes, Otahuhu.

The Registrar of Births, &c., Auckland, informed the Committee that only one marriage had been registered of Chinese males with Maori females. This Registrar only deals with quarter-caste Maoris and less than half-caste, and Europeans. Full-blooded Maoris, half-caste Maoris, and three-quarter-caste Maoris would be notified to the Registrar, Native Department, Auckland. Only two definite cases in Auckland and Pukekohe of registration of marriages of Maoris with Chinese could be obtained, one being obtained from the Registrar of Births, &c., and one the Committee met with at Pukekohe.

In addition to the above, the Committee has authentic information concerning two cases where Hindus are married legally to Maori women, both at Te Kuiti, and that seven children have been born of these two marriages. One of these Hindus is a tailor and one a labourer.

The Registrar-General replied that he regretted he was unable to supply information required as to marriages of Maoris with Chinese or Hindus. The Government Statistician replied that he regretted to state that no statistics exist as to the number of marriages between Chinese or Hindu males and Maori females.

It is to be regretted that the Commissioner of Police refused to allow his officers to assist the Committee with information in their possession.

Maori Women living with Chinamen.—One definite case was found of a woman named M. living with a Chinaman at Barrett Road, Panmure. M.'s daughter is also living with a Chinaman.

One girl at Avondale (Ah Chee's garden) had a child by a Chinese, and was confined at St. Mary's Orphanage. The Matron of St. Mary's Orphanage states that she had a case (presumably this case), and that this girl was said to be living in a furnished house in Mount Albert with the Chinaman, and that she was under the impression that she was married to him. Soon after she became pregnant the Chinaman deserted her and has not been heard of since. (Confined at St. Mary's in March, 1928.)

A young Native widow at Onehunga, whose husband was in the mental hospital and died, went to live with a Chinaman. Her father took her away, but later she returned to the Chinaman against the wish of her people. The latest report is that she is still with the Chinaman at Onehunga.

The wife of a Maori named M. had six children, and later went to work and live with a Chinaman at Onehunga. We saw the Chinese child of this woman at Pukekohe.

The two daughters of T. lived with Chinese at Kohimarama.

A girl called R. came from the north and was found later living in a Hindu fruit-shop in Victoria Street, and would not leave there in spite of her father's protest.

L. H. (a Maori female) lived with a Chinese at Albert Street, Auckland, in a restaurant, had several children by Chinese, and was left destitute.

The Akarana Maori Association produced figures showing that forty-five half-caste children had been born to twenty-seven Maori girls by Chinese during the past three years, and that seventeen other girls had returned to their homes in trouble.

Although there are fairly authentic statements made that there are many Maori girls living with Asiatics, it is difficult for the Committee to obtain definite confirmation of these statements. The conditions under which they live while working, especially for Chinese, are such that lead the Committee to believe that the estimate of approximately a hundred cases during the last three years made by the Akarana Maori Association is probably not an excessive one. The difficulty of obtaining definite information is obvious.

At Otaki a list of at least six Maori women who have borne children to Chinese fathers was given to the Committee.

At Ohau the Committee could not obtain any indication that Maoris were living with Chinese.

Although there are no known cases at Wanganui and Foxton, the indications are that there is a very distinct drift in that direction.

In this connection the Committee feels constrained to state that during the course of the inquiry evidence was submitted to show that intercourse between white girls of a certain type and the Chinese on market gardens was fairly prevalent, and the indications were that overtures did not in every case emanate from the Chinese, but that both the white girls and the Maori girls were much to blame.

Question (4).—Whether it is in the interests of public morality that the employment of Maori girls and women by Chinese and Hindus should be permitted to take place.

From the evidence placed before the Committee and the opinions expressed by witnesses who have made a study of the Maori race and are in close touch with the question of miscegenation the Committee has no hesitation in finding that as a general principle it is not in the interests of public morality that the employment of Maori girls and women by Chinese and Hindus should be permitted to take place. A very important factor, however, has to be taken into consideration, this being an economic one.

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.

(6) The Registrars should obtain such details concerning marriages of Maoris with Chinese and other Asiatics, and births (legitimate or illegitimate) of Maori children of Asiatic fathers, to enable the Government Statistician to keep full details with regard to this question—*i.e.*, especially race.

The Committee directs the attention of the Hon. the Minister to the resolution unanimously passed by the Maori members of the Anglican Synod at present sitting in Auckland, to the following effect: "That the women and girls of the Ngapuhi Tribe who have drifted into city and suburban areas and seek employment in market gardens be repatriated, seeing that they have land interests and remunerative occupations to return to."

The foregoing suggestions are made for the purpose of coping with the conditions existing at the present time, and in this connection the Committee recognizes that it would cause hardship to place any further restriction on the Maori workers until other suitable avenues of employment are available.

For the latter purpose we make further recommendations as follows:—

- (1) The education of Maoris with a definite agricultural bias.
- (2) Speeding-up of the consolidation of Maori interests in land—
 - (a) Areas for occupation as farmlets—*i.e.*, suitable for the settlement of heads of families without any special ability as farmers or capital for larger operations:
 - (b) Areas for occupation as dairy farms, starting in a small way, with possibilities of development:
 - (c) Areas for cattle and sheep raising in suitable areas for such purposes.
- (3) Revival of ancient Maori arts and crafts and arrangements for marketing the output. (It is suggested that the Native Affairs Department and the Industries and Commerce Department, in conjunction with the Tourist Department, might be consulted on this question.)
- (4) Domestic training of Maori girls.

NOTE.—The two preceding recommendations would, in our opinion, necessitate the making of provision for training-centres and hostels.

The Committee recommends that the efforts of the Health and Education Departments to raise the standard of living amongst the Maoris be supplemented by the extension of the hygiene course in Native schools.

We have, &c.,

THOMAS J. HUGHES, Chairman.

W. SLAUGHTER, Member.

TUKERE TE ANGA, Member.

[* NOTE.—Evidence and photographs not laid on Table of House.]

APPENDIX.

FIGURES QUOTED BY PROFESSOR EARLE FINCH, WILBERFORCE UNIVERSITY, IN PAPERS ON INTER-RACIAL PROBLEMS AT THE UNIVERSAL RACES CONGRESS HELD IN 1911.

"Effects of Miscegenation."

"The Native population of Hawaii, estimated at 300,000 by Cook in 1778, had declined to 29,787 in 1900. It was apparent, however, even in the time of Darwin that the cross between a Native stock and a civilized race gives rise to a progeny capable of existing and multiplying in spite of changed conditions. Between 1866 and 1872 Native Hawaiians decreased by 8,081, while half-breeds increased by 847 (also quoted by Darwin, 'Descent of Man,' Vol. I, p. 253). Between 1890 and 1900 full-blooded Hawaiians decreased from 34,436 to 29,787, while those of mixed blood increased from 6,186 to 7,848."

Also he says, "It is not surprising that racial miscegenation often produces an inferior population. The withholding of social and legal sanction from inter-racial marriages tends to limit unions to the lower classes, the offspring of which are like the parents." (NOTE.—"Legal sanction" here is equivalent to Chinese custom.)

Also, "The Hawaiian population is now almost entirely Chinese, Japanese, and half-breeds. The pure Hawaiian has almost disappeared." (See Year-book.)

Again, this same man says, "The dilution of the so-called high races by that of the so-called lower races will either set the species on the highway to extinction or cause a relapse to barbarism. The proviso against this *only* is intermarriage of *both* sexes freely and the subsequent marriage of the products of miscegenation." (NOTE.—This aspect of miscegenation does not apply in New Zealand, and so his proposition must stand as stated.)

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