

The production of food-supplies is well attended to, and the cultivation and planting of new areas for future supplies is kept up to date. The village areas are clean and well cared for, the grass being cut frequently and all rubbish burned.

A strong conservatism has retained observance of the best Native customs as to general village life and employment. The men still spend their time in fishing and the cultivation of food-supplies, and the women in the manufacture of Native cloth and mats, arts in which they are expert.

Further remarks on the social condition of the Natives will be found in Chapter V, under the heading "Native Affairs."

XV.—LABOUR.

Engagement by Samoans in regular employment for wages is quite extraneous to the style of living of the bulk of the Native population. Plantation work when availed of, is usually arranged by contract with the heads of the families engaged. The work is not over arduous, being mainly weeding or cutting of copra, and the total number of Samoans so employed at any time would not exceed a few hundred. These conditions apply to the Reparation Estates equally with other plantations, but there is no economic or other compulsion on Native Samoans to accept them.

On the 1st April, 1935, there were 503 Chinese in the Territory. No changes of any kind took place during the twelve months under review, the total at 31st March, 1936, remaining the same. The conduct of the labourers during the year has been satisfactory; and the number of visits to the Commissioner's office was 1,495, as compared with 1,560 for the previous year.

Melanesian labourers in the Territory totalled 94 on the 1st April, 1935, all being in the employ of the New Zealand Reparation Estates. During the year one death occurred, leaving a total of 93 as at 31st March, 1936.

The following replies are made to questions asked by Mr. Weaver of the Permanent Mandates Commission:—

(1) Chinese Coolies who become unemployed are placed in other positions as soon as possible by the Commissioner of Labour, or given permits by him to seek other employers of their own accord. During such unemployment period labourers receive no wages, but if they are workless through no fault of their own their cases come within the scope of the Benevolent Fund, and relief therefrom is given after due investigation.

(2) The wages reduction to 1s. 9d. per diem applies to all indentured labour in the Territory. Those labourers who were in Samoa prior to the arrival of the new transport from Hong Kong in July, 1934, were given the option before its arrival of signing on for a further period at the new rate of wages, or being repatriated to China, their original contract period in all cases having expired. The reduction was mutually agreed upon and legally confirmed in the Ordinances Amendment Ordinance, 1934, dated 6th December of that year. The wages rate fixed is in all cases concurred in by the Hong Kong Government.

In the above connection it may be mentioned that although the minimum wage is 1s. 9d. per diem a fairly large number of coolies earns much higher amounts by contract work or higher wages by reason of experience and greater efficiency; 1s. 9d. per day is merely a set minimum.

XVI.—FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.

All Samoans profess Christianity. There is complete freedom of conscience, and Article 5 of the Mandate is observed entirely. Mission work in education is referred to in the next succeeding chapter of this report, and in health services in Chapter XIX.

Relations between the Missions and the Administration are entirely harmonious, and there is nothing of particular interest to refer to in this connection. It has not been the practice for periodical reports to be furnished to the Administration by the various Missions, and they have never been required to furnish such.

XVII.—EDUCATION.

The general scheme of progressive education is as follows:—

