

XV.—LABOUR.

Engagements by Samoans in regular employment for wages is quite extraneous to the style of living of the bulk of the Samoan population. Plantation work, when availed of, is usually arranged by contract with the heads of the families engaged. This work is not over arduous, being mainly weeding and cutting of copra, and the total number so employed when the census of November last was taken was 447.

In addition the census disclosed the fact that 574 Samoans were engaged in other occupations, such as casual labour of all kinds, and domestic service.

On the 1st April, 1936, there were 503 Chinese labourers in the Territory, of which number three died during the year, leaving a total of 500 as at the 31st March, 1937. The labourers' conduct was satisfactory, and 903 visits were paid to the Commissioner's office, as compared with 1,495 in the previous year.

At the 1st April, 1936, there were 93 Melanesian labourers in Western Samoa, all being in the employ of the New Zealand Reparation Estates. One contracted leprosy and was sent to the Leper Station at Makogai Island, Fiji, in February, 1937. During the year a check of the figures revealed a discrepancy in the previous returns, there being 10 Melanesians less than previously shown, leaving a total at 31st March, 1937, of 82.

The points raised by Mr. Weaver⁽¹⁾ during the examination of the 1935-36 report are dealt with below.

Proposed Repatriation of Chinese and Melanesian Labourers.—It was the recommendation of the Goodwill Delegation that all Chinese coolies should be repatriated as early as possible. In view, however, of the various representations made to the Government to the effect that cocoa plantations cannot be operated economically if dependent wholly upon Samoan labour, the Government have now arranged for one such property belonging to the New Zealand Reparation Estates to be staffed entirely by Natives, with a view to ascertaining the suitability of Samoans for this type of work. It is expected that the experiment to be worth while will require a period of approximately twelve months, and the Government will then make a decision as to the future of ordinary Chinese labour in the Territory. In the meantime coolies engaged as domestic servants, artisans, &c., are to be repatriated on the expiry of their present periods of service.

Regarding Melanesian labourers, a definite undertaking has been given by the Government that they will not be repatriated. These men were brought to the Territory prior to 1914 and have been absent from New Guinea for such a long period that it would be extremely difficult to absorb them in their original villages, with which they have lost all contact. The labourers themselves do not wish to leave Western Samoa, as they now look upon this Territory as their permanent home and are very well satisfied to remain.

Unemployed Chinese Labourers.—As a result partly of improved financial conditions in the Territory all able-bodied coolies are employed. Four labourers only were unemployed at the 31st March, 1937, two of them being convalescents, one unfitted for work in the sun, and the fourth being a suspected tuberculosis case. These are the only cases regarded as being considered eligible for relief from the Benevolent Fund.

Wages.—Labourers' wages were increased to a minimum of 2s. per diem early in 1937.

Housing.—Special attention has been paid to this question, and numerous inspections were made by the Commissioner of Labour during the year. Three complaints only were made to him, and each case received prompt attention. It may be mentioned that the Commissioner's instructions to the coolies themselves concerning the cleanliness of their quarters and surroundings are not always carried out, and it is frequently necessary to remind them of their obligation to keep their quarters in good condition.

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.

The following table based on figures obtained from the 1936 census gives particulars of the distribution of the Native population amongst the various Missions⁽²⁾, together with the number of European missionaries attached to each :—

Mission.						Native Adherents.	European Missionaries.
London Missionary Society	..	..	..	..	..	31,832	3
Roman Catholic	..	..	..	..	..	9,566	16
Methodist	..	..	..	..	..	8,611	3
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	..	..	..	..	..	1,939	10
Seventh Day Adventist	..	..	..	..	..	312	3
Totals	..	..	..	..	..	52,260	35

Relations between the Missions and the Administration continue to be of a harmonious nature.

(1) See minutes of Thirtieth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, page 124.
(2) See minutes of Thirtieth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, pages 123-124.