

*Tanumapua Plantation, owned by the Upolu Rubber and Cocoa Estates, Limited.*

Mr. H. MORLEY (the manager) said: The trouble is we have not sufficient labour. Now there are only twelve labourers. To run the place we want three hundred. We had 295 in 1915.

Mr. ISITT: Have you any women on the plantation?—None whatever. We formerly had Samoan men and women. It is very hard to keep them.

Did they work as the Chinese do?—No.

Did they stop with you any length of time?—No—two or three weeks. They were very irregular.

Do you believe it would be possible to get three hundred Chinese coolies and avoid their mixing with the women?—If the Government are strong enough to stop that, certainly.

One planter has told us that if you insisted on repatriation at the end of three years the Chinese would not have time to pick up the Native language, and that would make it difficult for them to cohabit; and at the same time the Samoan woman would not join up with a Chinaman if she knew he was here only for a short time like that?—I do not think there is much in that. The Samoan women would probably only stop with them for two or three months.

Mr. KELLETT: What about the Chinese labourers bringing their own women?—I think that would be all right.

Mr. S. G. SMITH: Do the Samoans get the same rate of pay as the Chinese?—The coolies run into about 4s. 6d., including repatriation; the Samoans, 3s. 10d. or 3s. 11d. per day.

Mr. HOLLAND: Cut out the cost of repatriation and the figure is about the same?—It is about 4s. 1d. for the coolie and 3s. 11d. for the Samoan.

You had 294 Chinese here at one stage?—Yes, in 1915.

The bulk of those were repatriated?—Yes.

Were many of them living with Samoan women?—I think we had only about two on this estate.

The rest were unmarried?—Yes.

What was their relationship with the women on the island: did they live lives of absolute celibacy?—They used to go down to the Samoan villages at the week-end.

What is the effect of the system on the moral conditions?—If the Chinese are allowed to run about the island it is bad for the Natives.

These Chinese who do not marry according to Chinese custom—you do not think they live lives of celibacy?—It is very hard to say, of course, but I do not think so.

Hon. Mr. EARNSHAW: With regard to the difference in the cost of living, 4s. 1d. as against 3s. 11d., what do you consider is the ratio of values as between Samoan and Chinamen?—I consider the Chinese worker is a long way ahead of the Samoan—100 per cent. better. It would be utterly impossible to run the place with Samoans. Formerly, if I wanted Samoans, I would get a hundred. If I wanted Samoans now I would probably get fifty, and next week there would be twenty or probably none at all. Since the epidemic it has been very hard to get Samoan labour.

Is the labourer free to go when he has done his days work?—Yes, he can range the country.

Does that mean he can walk away from the plantation without a permit?—Yes. If he goes away for two or three days he must have a permit, but not for one day only.

Mr. LUKE: What are the hours of labour?—It is generally task work. They generally finish, probably, at ten in the morning.

Can they earn more than 4s.?—No, that is the maximum wage. The hours are from 6 to 12 and from 1 to 5, but it is very rarely they work those hours.

Mr. WRIGHT: If a man is given a task and he fails to finish it in the time, will he have to work longer hours to finish it?—Certainly. The task is a day task.

He might have to do twelve hours?—When he accepts the contract the Chinaman knows how long it will take. He takes the contract of his own free will. It is very rarely that we can get the Chinese to work day work.

Is there no case on record when a man has failed to complete his task in the time?—Never. Usually four hours is the time taken.

Mr. ISITT: Supposing you dispensed with indentured labour altogether, is it true that the beetle would overrun the whole island and destroy the Samoan's coconut-trees?—I have no doubt whatever.

If you do not get indentured labour it means the ruin of the industry?—Absolutely.

Mr. ANDERSON: Supposing you had a full supply of labour to work these plantations, how many acres could one man do? How many men would you require?—I should require three hundred men for the two plantations. Of 2,510 acres, 1,103 are under cultivation. The number I have given you is the number required to keep up the area already planted.

How many would you require if you turned the whole 2,510 acres into profit?—Four hundred coolies would be sufficient. We would make up with Samoans.

Mr. HOLLAND?—How many labourers would you need for the whole island to save these plantations going back to nature?—I have not gone into that. We would require five hundred altogether for ourselves. I should say that probably six thousand, speaking roughly, would be needed for the whole island.

Mr. LUKE: What is the greatest number you have had on the island at one time?—I think there were five thousand in the German Government's time.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: Have there been more than three thousand?

Mr. KERSLAKE: No. There was a treaty, I think, by which the Germans could bring in more labour as it was required.

Mr. HOLLAND: Did the three thousand include the Solomon Islanders?

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: It was three thousand altogether.