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- 1) Eastern Bengal and Assam Duars Committee, 1910.
Report. (Chairman: F. J. Monahan)
X9(J451):9-261-N1t E6 pp. 130+mi
- 2) Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921.
Report. (Chairman ^{President}: J. C. Arbuthnott.)
X:9-261-N2t F2 pp. 144 +23

REPORT

OF THE

DUARS COMMITTEE,

1910.



SHILLONG :
PRINTED AT THE EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM GOVERNMENT
PRESS.

1910.

X9(J451):9-261-Nit

Eo

1118.00

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* Not printed.

DUARS COMMITTEE'S REPORT, 1910.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

1. The tea gardens of the Western Duars lie in a narrow strip of country extending along the extreme north of the Jalpaiguri district from the Teesta river on the west to the Sankos on the east, a distance of 85 miles. ^{The district.} The total area of the tract is about 475 square miles; it nowhere attains a breadth of more than 30 miles, and it varies in elevation from 300 feet to 1,800 feet above sea level, rising gradually from the plain till it merges in the lower slopes of the Himalayas. It is subject to an annual rainfall, which averages about 150 inches, and on some of the gardens exceeds 200 inches, and is traversed by a succession of large rivers with numerous tributary streams and water-courses, having their origin in the mountains. The river beds consist of boulders or pebbles, and, during the greater part of the year they contain little water, the smaller channels running quite dry, but in the rains they are unable at times to contain the immense volume of water which descends from the Himalayas upon the plains. The soil varies from rich loam to sand, with bands of boulders and pebbles, or loam and boulders intermixed, and the tract presents the general appearance of a series of flat or gently undulating table lands, ascending in gradation to the lower hills, but here and there steep bluffs rising to a height of from 30 to 200 feet have been formed by the action of the rivers.

2. Owing to the remoteness of the country, its reputation for extreme unhealthiness and its liability to devastation by flood, it presented ^{Progress of the tea industry.} few attractions to settlers for some years after its annexation from Bhutan in 1865. As recently as 1870 it was almost entirely covered with heavy forest and reed jungle, thinly inhabited by an aboriginal people, and noted only for its unhealthiness, and as being a stronghold of most of the species of large wild beasts found in India. The statistical account of Jalpaiguri compiled by Sir William Hunter and published in 1876 contains no reference to the existence of the tea industry in the district, or to any attempts made to develop the resources of the Western Duars; but the pioneers of the industry had established themselves shortly before this date, the first garden having been opened at Gajaldhuba in 1873. In 1876 there were 13 gardens in the Duars, with an area of 818 acres, and from this time forward the development of the industry was very rapid. By 1891 the area under tea had risen to 85,607, and by 1901 to 76,403 acres. In 1909 the latest year for which figures are available, the area under tea was 85,261* acres and the outturn 53,951,832 lbs. In regard to acreage and outturn, Jalpaiguri is now the most important tea district in the province. The western portion of the Duars, included between the Teesta and Daina rivers, and comprising the sub-districts locally known as Damdim, Chalsa, and Nagrakata was first brought under cultivation; here the gardens lie close together, and in places afford an unbroken expanse of tea extending for many miles. Further east, in the Daina-Torsa, Torsa-Jainti, and Jainti-Sankos sub-districts, the country is wilder, and much yet remains to be done in the way of reclamation; the gardens lie further apart, and are separated from each other by extensive tracts of jungle. The establishment of the tea industry in the Duars has been mainly effected by means of British capital and enterprise. The aggregate nominal capital of the joint-stock companies owning tea-gardens in the Duars, the shareholders of which are Europeans, is £2,883,211 sterling, and the aggregate value of their shares according to latest quotations is £4,025,748. There are 18 gardens with a total area under tea of 6,611 acres, owned and managed by natives of India, eleven of which are owned by joint-stock companies. The aggregate nominal capital of these gardens, which are successful concerns, managed on the same system as European-owned gardens, is Rs. 17,06,250.

3. In 1907 the Duars Planters' Association approached the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam with a memorial, requesting that Government should procure the services of experts from the ^{Appointment of the Committee.} Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine to inquire into the nature and causes of black-water and other fevers, and to suggest remedial measures. A copy of the memorial is annexed (Appendix A). In consequence of this representation, an expert enquiry into the etiology of black-water fever was ordered by the Government of India, and was undertaken by the Central Research Institute, assisted by an Advisory Committee, the preliminary enquiries being entrusted to Captain S. R. Christophers, I.M.S., and Dr. C. A. Bentley. Dr. Bentley proceeded to the Duars in July 1907, and Captain Christophers joined him in December 1907. They continued their

* Excluding the area (235 acres) in one garden in Jalpaiguri District, west of the Teesta.

investigations in the Duars until January 1909, and submitted their final report to the Advisory Committee, on Malaria in the Duars, in August 1909. In view of opinions and conclusions expressed in this report, our Committee was appointed by Government Resolution No. 43T.M., dated the 26th March 1910, to enquire into the sanitary and economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies live. Detailed instructions regarding the enquiry were communicated to us in the Financial Secretary's letter No. 50M.S., dated the 31st March 1910 (Appendix B), in which it was made clear that the Committee was not expected to examine the scientific theory of the tropical aggregation of labour.

4. The Committee met at Jalpaiguri on the 4th April 1910 and proceeded to issue a circular to the managers of tea-gardens, asking for information, a copy of which is annexed (Appendix C). According to the statement annexed to the Annual Report on tea-culture, the number of gardens in the Jalpaiguri district is 187. This total has, however, been arrived at by reckoning each grant as a separate estate. The actual number of gardens under separate management in the Jalpaiguri Duars has been ascertained to be 97. Of this number, more or less complete replies to the Committee's Circular have been received for 90 gardens.

Fifty-seven gardens have been visited by members of the Committee, including, with very few exceptions, all the important gardens in the district, and the evidence of 59 witnesses has been recorded (Appendix D). The Committee thought that no useful object would be served by recording formally the statements of coolies. Any coolies brought up to give evidence before a number of strange Europeans would inevitably become frightened and confused, and no information of value was likely to be obtained in that way. Many opportunities were, however, taken by members of the Committee, when visiting coolie lines, to converse with the coolies and gather information bearing on their general condition. Any defects observed in medical and sanitary arrangements on tea-gardens were brought to the notice of the managers, and remedial measures were suggested and discussed. In the course of travelling and visiting gardens, opportunities were taken of observing the condition of the population living in *bastis* in their vicinity.

On the 18th April a letter (copy enclosed, Appendix E) was addressed to Captain Christophers, asking for information on various points, to explain and supplement statements in the Report which gave rise to the Committee's enquiry. Captain Christophers' reply, dated the 4th June, is annexed (Appendix F).

On the 13th June a conference was held at Jalpaiguri, in which the members of the Committee met four of the European Medical Officers employed on tea-gardens in the Duars, and ascertained their views on the subject of medical and sanitary arrangements on tea gardens.

Prefixed to this Report will be found a map of the Duars tea area, in which the gardens visited by the Committee are indicated. For the purposes of the tea industry, the tract is divided into the following six sub-districts, each of which has its sub-committee of the Duars Planters' Association :—Damdim, Chalsa, Nagrakata, Daina-Torsa, Torsa-Jainti, and Jainti-Sankos. The limits of these sub-districts are shown in the map.

CHAPTER II.

POPULATION AND LABOUR FORCE.

5. The Duars labour system being entirely free from Government supervision or control, there are no accurate returns showing the population or the labour force of the gardens. The annual statement of tea production, which is based on returns voluntarily furnished by managers, contains in two columns figures purporting to show the daily average of persons permanently and temporarily employed. It appears, however, that the figures supplied from some gardens in the columns of the return for "permanently employed" represent not the total number of persons employed, but the average daily muster of labourers turning out to work, which is a very different thing.

In the Assam labour reports the term "labour force" is used as synonymous with the population of the coolie lines, including both men, women, and children who work on the tea-gardens, and dependants, *i.e.*, young children who do not work, and old people past work, who are supported by the earnings of the workers. In this report it will be more convenient to restrict the term "labour force" to its usual sense of workers.

The population of tea-gardens in the Duars includes a large number of persons besides the workers on the gardens and their dependants, namely, people who reside in the lines but seldom or never work for the estate, are not supported by those who work for it, and have other occupations and means of subsistence. An Oraon who has taken up land as a *jotdar* (Government tenant), *chukanidar* (under-tenant paying money rent), or *adhiar* (under-tenant paying produce rent) may be living in the lines with a relative who works on the garden. And Paharia men may be found living in the lines of a tea-garden, whose women-folk work on the garden, while they themselves are engaged in buffalo-keeping, sawyers' or contractors' work outside. On Assam tea-gardens the lines are usually compact, and under fairly close supervision; in the Duars, they are straggling, and it does not pay a manager to be too particular as to who lives in the lines. It is to the advantage of a garden to have a large number of people who keep up a connection with it, and who, if they do not work regularly on the garden, may do so occasionally, or may attract others. In this way a large number of persons may be found living in coolie lines, who are not on the garden books and are not dependants of persons working on the garden.

6. The garden books purport to show the actual labour force, the practice being that a coolie, when first recruited, is brought on to the books, and his name remains on them until he dies or is known to have permanently left the garden, or permanently ceased to work for the garden. The registers, however, are not always kept up to date, and returns based on them are likely to show a somewhat larger labour force than actually exists. All working coolies are entered in the books when they first come to the garden, and the names of some may remain on the books for a time after they have ceased to work. The names of coolies who leave a garden owing it advances are kept on the books with a view to the recovery of the advances.

In returns furnished from some gardens to their Directors figures are given showing the "number of individuals working" in a month, that is, the total number of men, women, and children who worked on the garden on one or more days during the month. These figures afford an index to the strength of the labour force at a particular time, but they do not accurately represent the permanent labour force, as on the one hand, they may exclude people really dependent on garden labour for their subsistence, who, on account of sickness, or any other cause, may not have worked on any day in the month; and, on the other, they may include people who are really not dependent on garden labour, but turn out to work on the garden on one or two days in a month, in order to establish a claim to an advance, or to such privileges as free house accommodation and firewood. The general rule on all gardens is to offer a day's work at the current wage to everyone who turns out to work on any day.

7. In view of these customs and conditions, managers were asked, in the Circular addressed to them, to furnish figures showing (1) the actual population of the gardens, (2) the actual labour force on the garden books, (3) the labour force in two selected months of each of the years 1907, 1908, 1909, one month being representative of the season when the labour force was at its maximum strength, and the other of the season when the force was at its lowest, (4) the number of "individuals working" for each of the selected months,

and (5) the average daily muster for each of the selected months in 1907, 1908, and 1909, and also for the latest month for which figures were available.

It is needless to say that, in voluntary returns so obtained, from a number of managers of tea-gardens, who had not been accustomed to furnishing statements of the kind to any official authority, and whose books are kept, and private returns and statements prepared, on different systems, great accuracy could not be expected, nor have the Committee been able to check the figures supplied to them in any detail.

8. The returns received from 90 gardens with an aggregate area under tea of 83,395 acres show a total population of 151,801, *viz.*, 54,235 men, 61,525 women, and 36,041 children. The area under tea of the seven gardens that did not reply to the Committee's Circular is 1,866 acres. Of the figures of garden population supplied to the Committee some are based on an actual census, while others appear to be mere estimates. The figures probably fall short of the actual population, and the number of children, especially, seems to have been understated.

Returns of labour force have been received from 89 gardens. One small garden which replied to the Circular has not given separate figures for labour force as distinguished from population. It will not disturb calculations much if we assume that the labour force of this garden is the same as the population (360 men, 441 women, and 273 children). We have, then, according to the returns furnished to us, a total labour force, excluding dependants, of 44,472 men, 55,857 women, and 9,500 children, or 109,829 in all, as against a total population of 151,801, the difference between these totals being made up of 15,431 adults and 26,541 children. According to the Census of 1901, the total population of the tea-gardens in the Jalpaiguri district was 133,287. This includes figures of a small garden, west of the Teesta, with 235 acres under tea, which does not fall within the scope of our enquiry. The Census Report does not show the numbers of men, women, and children, respectively, in the total tea-garden population, and the village tables, which should supply this information, have been destroyed by fire.

According to the Occupation Table (XV) of the Census of 1901, the total number of persons employed on tea-gardens in the Jalpaiguri district, as labourers or other subordinates (actual workers), was 90,011 (48,129 males and 41,882 females), and their dependants numbered 23,674. Workers on tea-gardens and their dependants together numbered 113,685, whereas the total population of the gardens was 133,287. The census thus showed 19,602 persons living on the gardens who were neither workers nor dependants of workers. If we assume that the dependants of workers on the tea-gardens bear the same proportion to the workers now, as they did in 1901, we shall get about 29,000 as the number of dependants at the present time. The number of tea-garden workers and their dependants together would then come to (109,829 + 29,000) or 139,000, roughly, for the 90 gardens which replied to the Circular. Adding, in the same proportion to acreage for the 7 gardens which did not reply, we get 142,000, in round numbers. And, if we estimate 20,000 as the number of persons living on tea-gardens who are neither workers or dependants of workers, we shall get a total tea-garden population of 162,000. It is probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of 160,000; in a few months the correct figure will be obtained by the forthcoming census. It is important, however, to remember that this population does not represent the number of persons who are supported by the coolies' earnings. That number, consisting of the coolies themselves and their dependants, may be taken, at a rough estimate, as 142,000.

9. Planters in the Duars distinguish three main classes of labour, *viz.*, Chota Nagpuris, Sonthals, and Paharias. Among the Chota Nagpuris are included a certain number of coolies from the Tributary States bordering on Chota Nagpur, and among the Sonthals a certain number of Hos from Singbhum. The Paharias are Nepalese recruited either direct from Nepal or from Darjeeling and Sikkim. Many of the oldest gardens in the Duars were opened out with Paharia labour as offshoots of Darjeeling concerns, and recruitment from Chota Nagpur began about 1878. The Paharias are employed chiefly at the higher elevations. Figures showing the percentage of coolies of different classes in their labour forces have been furnished by 79 gardens, with an aggregate labour force of 96,936, and give the following results:—

Classes of labour.	Percentage.
Chota Nagpuris	65
Sonthals	15
Paharias	18
Others	

The "others" include natives of Orissa, the United Provinces, and Behar. Coolies other than Paharias are locally known as "Madesis."

10. In Appendix G will be found a statement compiled from returns of 50 gardens, with a total area of 50,628 acres under tea, giving particulars of labour force, individuals working, and average musters for the past three years. As stated in paragraph 7 above, managers were asked to give figures under these heads for two selected months in each year, one month being representative of the season when the labour force was at its maximum strength, the other of the season when the force was at its lowest. Generally, the labour force is at its weakest in the winter months, when a number of coolies leave the gardens for their homes, and at its greatest strength in the spring, at the end of the recruiting season. The circumstances of gardens, however, vary, and figures under the heads above mentioned have been furnished by different gardens for every month in the year. The maximum figures in Appendix G have been obtained by adding together those returned for the months selected by different gardens as illustrative of the season when the labour force is at its maximum, and, similarly, the minimum figures are the sum of those returned for months of minimum labour force. The mean figures shown are the means between the maxima and the minima so arrived at, and serve to give some idea of the average labour force on the garden books, and of the average effective labour force in different years.

11. The statement shows that there was a considerable increase in the labour force in the years 1908 and 1909. The figures of actual labour force returned—in most cases those of March or April 1910—are not much less than the maximum of 1909. The proportion of mean individuals working to mean labour force shows little variation, being 80·5 per cent. for 1907, 80 per cent. for 1908, and 80·9 per cent. for 1909. The proportion of the mean of monthly average musters to labour force is 59·8 per cent. for 1907, 59·5 per cent. for 1908, and 60·9 per cent. for 1909, while the corresponding percentage for the latest months for which figures are available—in most cases March or April 1910—is 61. The subject of average musters is connected with that of the number of days that coolies work in a month, which will be discussed later.

12. Appendix G also shows the number of adult workers per 100 acres under tea (according to the latest returns) calculated (1) on the present labour force, (2) on the mean labour force of 1909, (3) on the mean of individuals working for 1909, and (4) on the mean of monthly average musters for 1909, for the 50 gardens for which the statement has been prepared.

In the 90 gardens from which replies to the Committee's Circular have been received, the number of adult workers per 100 acres of tea, calculated on the present returns of labour force, is 120.

According to the Resolution on Immigrant Labour in the Assam districts for the year ending 30th June 1909, the number of adult labourers employed per 100 acres under tea in Assam was 132, the average for the Assam Valley being 139, and for the Surma Valley 122. The figures of adult labourers on which these averages are calculated include adult dependants. On the other hand, as already stated, the returns of labour force for the Duars probably err on the side of excess, and there can be no doubt but that the labour force is still short of requirements.

CHAPTER III.

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF LABOURERS.

13. The system of paying wages of labourers on tea-gardens in the Duars has this in common with the Assam system that it is a system of monthly wages, payment of which is contingent on the completion of a daily task. As in Assam, the coolies are engaged at a monthly rate, from which a daily rate of wage is calculated by dividing the monthly rate by the number of working days in the month, and the daily wage is payable on completion of a varying task. The ordinary work of a tea-garden consists of hoeing, plucking or pruning. The tasks for each of these kinds of work, which vary on different gardens, and at different times, will be discussed further on. The description of the Assam garden coolie as "a monthly servant subject to deduction for short work," applies also to the Duars coolie, but an important condition to be borne in mind is the rule, already referred to, that every labourer turning out to work on any day is offered the opportunity of earning a day's wage by doing a day's work. Planters throughout the Duars find it expedient to adhere strictly to this rule, in order to attract and retain labour.

14. As in Assam, so in the Duars, coolies earn overtime wages for work done in excess of the task. It may be noted here that the term "ticca" which, in Assam, is applied to overtime payments, in the Duars means the wage paid for performance of the daily task, or the task itself, being synonymous with "haziri." In the Duars overtime payments are denoted by the words "double", "extra," and "leaf-pice" (in the case of plucking). In the report of Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley on Malaria in the Duars, which, for the sake of brevity, we will refer to in future as the "Second Report," the word "ticca" is used, we observe, in the Assam sense.

The labourers have not always the opportunity of earning overtime wages, and employers are under no obligation to offer them work in excess of the daily task. The employer offers such work when he finds it expedient to do so in the interests of the estate. It is always necessary to offer overtime for plucking during part of the leaf season, when there are heavy flushes of leaf, and every available hand is required to gather the crop. At this time, leaf plucked in excess of the appointed task is paid for at the rate of 1 pice per pound. Hoeing is usually done by men, and it may be said, generally, that most gardens would be the better for more hoeing than they get, but the men have not always the opportunity of earning overtime by hoeing. While there is a rush of leaf, the men are required to pluck, and they have then the opportunity of earning "leaf-pice." And we have it in evidence that some managers consider it inadvisable to offer hoeing "doubles" in the early part of the year, if it can be avoided, as, in that case, the men would earn so much money that they would not come forward to pluck during the leaf season. Overtime is not often allowed for pruning. The period during which overtime can be earned by men extends, roughly, from May to November inclusive; occasionally, however, on gardens which are short of men, hoeing "doubles" are offered throughout the cold weather, and, in rare cases, pruning "doubles" also are allowed. Women are not employed on hoeing, except at times when there is no other work for them, and, as a rule, earn overtime during the leaf season only.

Before discussing wages and tasks more in detail, it will be well to examine the position of the sardar on Duars tea-gardens.

15. The sardar is the leader of a group of coolies, known as a *patti*, the number of individuals in a *patti* ranging from 10 to 170. The *patti* is recruited by the sardar or his agents; its members, in the majority of cases, draw their wages through him; and any advances which they receive from the garden are paid to and recovered from them through the sardar, who is responsible for the money so advanced. The sardar receives from the garden a commission of one pice on each day's task of work (*haziri*) done by the coolies in his *patti*. On some gardens it is the practice to allow the sardar double commission on double tasks of hoeing; on others this is not allowed, and a sardar receives no more than one commission on the work done by any coolie in one day. In some cases a sardar works as an ordinary coolie, or as a chuprassi or dafadar, and in such cases he receives wages in addition to his commission as sardar. In other cases, he does no work apart from his duties as sardar, which may be defined as the duties of keeping the members of the *patti* at work on the estate, financing them as may be required, recruiting or arranging for recruitment, and distributing wages, in cases where the wages are paid through the sardar.

In Mr. Arbuthnott's Report of 1904 on the conditions of tea-garden labour in the Duars, there are certain statements which may have given rise to the belief that the *patti* is a labour gang, and the sardar supervises the work of the *patti* in the field. We find that this is not the case. Labour on tea-gardens in the Duars is not organized in permanent gangs. As will be explained further on, temporary gangs are formed each day for different kinds of work. Dafadars appointed by the manager on the nomination of the sardars, assist in supervising work, under chuprassies, and, occasionally, a dafadar may be placed in charge of a small gang, without any chuprassi over him. Sirdars, as such, are not an agency for supervising work, though individual sardars may be employed as dafadars, or as chuprassies. It seldom happens, however, that a sardar is employed as chuprassi or dafadar in charge of a gang consisting entirely of members of his own *patti*.

We can find no warrant for the suggestion in paragraph 14 of Captain Christopher's letter that the sardari system of the Duars originated in the "Kamia" labour system, to which it bears no resemblance. It appears that the Duars sardari system was originally imported from Darjeeling with the Paharia labour first employed, but that it has undergone considerable modification and improvement in course of time.

16. Among the *madesis*, a sardar is the leader of coolies recruited from a certain local area. Usually, either he himself or his father before him has proved an efficient recruiter, and founded a colony of coolies on the garden. His tribesmen live around him in the garden lines, and he holds a social position similar to that of a village headman in his own country. He and his followers are bound together by ties of country and, in many cases, of relationship, and, although he can usually count upon the support of the manager of the garden, his position mainly depends upon the maintenance of his popularity among the members of his *patti*. His remuneration from the garden consisting of three pies for every *haziri* earned by each of his coolies, it is to his interest to attach to himself as large a number as possible; and, when it is borne in mind that continual communication exists between the Duars and the recruiting districts, and that a sardar who made himself unpopular on a garden would soon acquire a bad name in the locality upon which he relies for recruits, it will be readily understood that strong *primâ facie* reasons exist why a sardar should deal justly by his coolies. Disputes between sardars and their coolies are not of frequent occurrence, but a coolie with a grievance against his sardar usually arranges with some other sardar on the same garden to join the latter's *patti*. The transfer requires the sanction of the manager, which is seldom withheld. Its effect is that the discontented coolie's original sardar loses his commission on the coolie's work: he also incurs the risk of losing prestige with the members of his *patti*. The majority of managers take considerable trouble to bring disputes of this kind to an amicable settlement, but they are naturally influenced by the consideration that it is open to a dissatisfied coolie to leave the garden. A sardar who cannot retain his popularity with his coolies finds that they fall away from him: with the loss of his coolies, his claim to the office of sardar necessarily ceases to exist. Quarrels among the labour force may result in a serious loss of labour to the garden, and often call for the exercise of considerable tact and discretion on the part of the management. Many gardens maintain what is known as a *nij-patti*, in which are enrolled coolies, who, owing to disputes or other causes, are not accredited to any sardar, but the *nij-patti* is not popular, and on none of the gardens visited did the number of coolies in it amount to more than a very small proportion of the labour force. It is convenient for coolies to be under a sardar on account of many small services which he renders them, and they can usually obtain loans from him more readily than from the manager. Part of the recognized duties of a sardar is to give periodical feasts to the members of his *patti*.

17. The usual monthly rates of wages are Rs. 6 for men, Rs. 4-8 for women, and Rs. 2-8 to 3 for children, but on the more recently opened gardens in the east of the district it is customary to pay Rs. 6-8, Rs. 5, and Rs. 3 to men, women, and children, respectively. The daily task, locally known as the *haziri*, *nirikh* or *ticca*, is fixed by the Manager, and, being determined with regard to a variety of circumstances, may vary from day to day. A man may be required to perform from 8 to 15 *laggis* (of 12' x 12') of deep hoeing and from 25 to 40 *laggis* of light hoeing, according to the state of the ground. For women, a task of light hoeing would ordinarily be about 20 *laggis*. A task of heavy pruning varies from 60 to 120 bushes, and one of light pruning from 100 to 250 bushes, according to the age and condition of the bush. The average time which these tasks take to perform is about 4½ hours; and on many gardens visited, at a season when

the work consisted mainly of hoeing, it was the experience of the Committee to see the male coolies returning to the lines between 10 and 10-30 A.M. after completing the day's task. The plucking task varies very much according to the season of year and the state of the bushes, and as the system of the garden is one of fine or coarse plucking. It ranges from 10lbs. to as much as 24lbs. At one garden visited early in the season, when there was not much leaf, full *haziris* were being credited, as an exceptional arrangement, to all women who plucked for the day, irrespective of the amount of leaf obtained. In the leaf season, the usual practice is for pluckers to go out in the early morning and pluck till midday, when they bring in their leaf to be weighed. After a rest of two hours they go out again and pluck till evening, when the factory whistle sounds, and they bring in the afternoon leaf to be weighed. The total weight of leaf plucked by each coolie for the day is recorded, the coolie is credited with a "*haziri*" for the amount fixed as the task, and paid overtime for the remainder at the rate of 1 pice per pound. Children are employed on plucking, and on miscellaneous light work, such as weeding, light cultivation, manuring, and collecting insects which harm the tea plants. The leaf plucked by children is sometimes collected in their mothers' baskets, going to swell their overtime earnings. In the case of hoeing, the only overtime allowed is the "double," *i.e.*, a double wage for doing two tasks. It is not the practice to allow any extra payment for hoeing short of the double wage, *e.g.*, 1½ days' wage is not allowed for doing a task and a half. But sometimes, when "doubles" are offered to attract men to hoeing, the task is reduced, or the second task, for which a second day's wage is credited, is made lighter than the first.

18. The organisation of labour for work of different kinds on Duars tea-gardens is, to those not familiar with it, somewhat complicated, and the systems followed on different gardens vary in matters of detail. The area under tea is divided into measured blocks of five or ten acres. Each block has a serial number, and the number of pruning and hoeing tasks which it requires is carefully calculated by the manager or his assistant. Speaking generally, the coolies employed each day on main works, such as hoeing, pruning and plucking are formed into one or more gangs known as *melas*, the work of each *mela* being supervised by one or more chuprassies. Chuprassies are paid from Rs. 10 to Rs. 16 a month, and the sardars have no voice in their appointment. The number of coolies working under a chuprassi may vary from 50 to 200. Along the line of working coolies are posted the dafadars, each being in charge of a squad, which usually does not exceed 25 in number. Dafadars are appointed on the nomination of the sardars, each sardar having the privilege of nominating a certain number, usually in proportion to the strength of his *patti*. In some cases, as noted above, the sardar himself acts as chuprassi or dafadar and is paid for his work in that capacity. Dafadars are paid from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8 a month, have opportunities of earning overtime, and are subject to deductions for absence from work, like ordinary coolies. The coolies placed under a particular dafadar vary from day to day, and do not necessarily belong to the same sardar's *patti*. In each *mela* it is the practice to mix up the coolies of different sardars' *pattis* in order to avoid discontent and jealousies, as the different kinds of work vary in attractiveness, some being more arduous or less remunerative than others; and there would be discontent if some coolies were constantly employed on easy, and others on difficult or less remunerative tasks. The duties of the dafadars are to set out the coolies' tasks, and supervise their work under the direction of the chuprassies, and generally to carry out the chuprassies' orders; they also furnish the number and names of the coolies of each *patti* working to the *bahidars*, to be mentioned presently.

For special jobs, for which a small number of coolies not exceeding 40 or 50 are required, special *melas* are formed under dafadars who are not supervised by any chuprassi.

The whole of the field work on the garden is usually supervised by a head overseer (Munshi or Babu): a general supervision is also exercised by the European assistants, who remain in the field with the coolies the greater part of the day, and are directly responsible to the manager.

About an hour after the day's work has commenced, officials called garden *bahidars* (writers), go round to collect information for the daily report. These men, who are paid from Rs. 10 to Rs. 16 a month, and are independent of the sardars, ascertain from the chuprassies and dafadars the number of coolies of each

sardar's *patti* who are at work in each *mela*. In this connection it is part of the duty of the dafadars to look after the interest of their respective sardars by seeing that the number of coolies of each *patti* working is correctly furnished to the *bahidar*. At the same time, on estates where wages are paid through sardars, *bahidars* of a different class go round to collect the names of the coolies at work for the sardars' accounts. One such *bahidar* may work for several small sardars; each large sardar having a *bahidar* to himself. These *bahidars* receive a dafadar's pay from the garden, supplemented by allowances from the sardars, for whom they work. Their nomination practically rests with the sardars.

On estates where a separate record is kept by the management of each coolie's work, another class of *bahidars* are employed, independent of the sardars, who collect the names of the coolies for the garden records on which are based the entries in the *hasiri* book, kept in a form similar to that in use in Assam.

This individual record of coolies' work must, of course, be kept by the garden management in all cases where coolies are paid direct by the garden. So far as we have been able to ascertain, it is also kept by the management in the great majority of cases for all *madesi* coolies, even where they are paid through the sardar, serving to check the sardar's accounts. Where coolies are paid through the sardars, but the garden keeps a separate record of each coolie's work, in many cases, the second class of (sardars') *bahidars* is dispensed with, the sardar relying on the garden account for the distribution of wages.

In the case of Paharias, it is not usual for the garden to keep a separate account of individual coolie's work. The Paharia sardar is better educated than the *madesi*, and has no difficulty in keeping his accounts correctly. It is found also that Paharia sardars and coolies prefer to settle their accounts without outside interference.

Under the system described above, the *bahidars'* daily record of attendance of coolies can be readily checked with the measured quantity of work performed each day, in the case of hoeing and pruning, and with the weight of leaf, in the case of plucking, and, if there is any shortage, it can be readily traced to the dafadar, and to the coolie responsible. Before any coolie is mulcted for short work, however, it is the custom to have a special enquiry made, either by the assistant manager in charge of the work or by some other superior and responsible garden official.

Wages for task work (including "doubles") are paid once a month, usually about the 15th of the month succeeding that for which they are paid. Leaf-pice are paid on some gardens daily, when the leaf is weighed in the evening, on others weekly.

19. If it has been difficult to arrive at an approximate estimate of the labour force employed, it will be readily understood that accurate statistics of the earnings of labourers are not attainable. In the Circular addressed to them, managers were asked to furnish figures, showing the total amount paid to labourers of all kinds resident in their respective gardens for each of two selected months in each of the three years 1907, 1908 and 1909, one month being representative of the season when the labour force was at its maximum strength, the other of the season when the force was at its lowest and also for the latest month of 1910 for which figures were available (Appendix C, paragraph 2 xiii). It was thought best to ask for figures for two representative months, leaving their selection to the managers, so as to obtain the greatest amount of information possible, without giving too much trouble to the garden staff. In compliance with this request, figures of earnings have been furnished from different gardens for every month of the three years 1907, 1908, and 1909, and for three months of 1910 and from these figures averages have been calculated for each month (a) on total labour force, (b) on "individuals working", *i.e.*, number of coolies who worked on any day in the month, and (c) on average muster for the month. The averages (a) and (c) only have been calculated for the three months of 1910, as figures of "individuals working" for those months were not received. The results are exhibited in Appendices H, I, and J, which also show the number of gardens and the total labour force in respect of which each set of averages has been made out. It will be observed that the number of gardens in respect of which figures are given for a particular month is not the same in all the statements, *e.g.*, for the month of January 1907, figures are given in respect of ten gardens in Appendix H, but of nine only in Appendices I and J. This is because some of the gardens which furnished figures of labour force for a particular month in the three years dealt with in the statements, or in one or other of those years, were not able to give figures of individuals working, or of average muster, for that month. Managers were asked to show

Earnings of coolies on the garden.

in their returns the whole of the payments made by the gardens to labourers resident on them, including payments to coolies employed as tea-house hands, masons, carpenters, and sawyers, and for such contract work as terracing, cutting and bringing in firewood, brick-making, and carting. The Committee have not been able to check the managers' returns, and it is most probable that they have not been uniformly prepared, that they contain mistakes, that some of them include items which should not have been included, and that others exclude payments which should have been included. Such as they are, however, the Statements H, I, and J, give averages deduced from the figures returned by the employers as the total earnings of the labour force of a certain group of gardens for each month of the years 1907, 1908, and 1909, and for the three months February, March and April 1910.

20. In 1900, figures were obtained by the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri from the managers of twelve typical gardens in the Duars, showing the average monthly wages earned by the coolies of those gardens in 1899. From these figures the statement reproduced below was compiled for submission to the Government of India. It purports to give averages calculated on total labour force :—

Gardens.	Men.			Women.			Children.		
	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
I ...	8 15 11	0 9 1	4 9 1	2 3 6	0 8 7	2 12 0	1 0 5	0 6 1	1 6 6
II ...	8 12 5	0 9 10	4 6 8	2 11 0	0 5 5	3 0 6	1 3 5	0 2 8	1 6 1
III ...	4 0 2	0 7 0	4 7 2	2 13 7	0 5 7	3 3 2	1 8 9	0 2 11	1 11 7
IV ...	3 7 10	0 11 8	4 8 1	2 10 6	0 6 2	3 0 9	0 14 6	0 3 5	1 2 0
V ...	3 14 8	1 3 2	5 1 10	2 7 6	0 12 0	3 3 6	1 4 0	...	1 4 0
VI ...	3 14 4	1 15 2	5 13 6	2 11 7	0 9 3	3 4 10	1 6 0	0 8 4	1 14 5
VII ...	3 13 8	0 14 5	4 12 1	2 7 10	0 9 0	3 0 10	1 6 8	0 0 5	1 7 1
VIII ...	4 8 2	1 4 7	5 12 10	...	...	...	...	...	...
IX ...	3 8 10	1 2 8	4 11 6	2 12 6	0 9 8	3 6 2	1 1 10	0 1 4	1 3 2
X ...	3 13 1	0 11 1	4 8 2	2 13 4	0 6 2	3 3 6	1 3 0	0 1 1	1 4 1
XI ...	3 12 2	1 14 6	5 10 8	2 8 4	0 14 7	3 7 0	1 2 9	0 4 0	1 6 19
XII ...	3 12 5	0 12 3	4 8 9	2 11 10	0 6 4	3 2 2	1 0 3	...	1 0 3
Mean ...	3 13 9	1 0 3	4 14 0	2 10 1	0 8 5	3 2 7	1 3 3	0 2 9	1 6 0

In Appendix No. 8 of Mr. Arbuthnot's report written in 1904, the following statement is given of average total wages earned in a year for twelve gardens. These averages would appear to be also calculated on total labour force* :—

Gardens.	Men.			Women.			Children.		
	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.	Hasiri.	Extra.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
I ...	47 13 9	11 6 10	59 4 7	35 15 11	13 1 11	49 1 10	14 10 1	...	14 10 6
II ...	46 15 2	11 2 7	59 1 9	33 8 8	10 4 7	43 13 3	18 2 3	2 5 3	20 7 6
III ...	57 13 5	9 10 7	67 8 0	38 9 7	6 1 11	44 11 6	25 15 6	1 9 8	27 9 2
IV ...	47 12 7	6 9 5	54 6 0	32 0 6	6 10 1	38 10 7	18 13 7	4 3 7	18 1 2
V ...	40 14 6	27 10 0	68 8 6	33 3 7	8 0 7	41 4 2	16 5 2	5 12 3	22 1 5
VI ...	46 1 5	1 12 8	47 14 1	31 6 9	6 0 9	37 7 6	13 10 6	5 10 0	19 4 6
VII ...	45 13 6	6 4 5	52 1 11	30 7 8	6 14 6	37 6 2	6 1 9	4 5 0	10 3 9
VIII ...	43 15 7	13 6 2	57 5 9	31 10 7	6 14 10	38 9 5	7 3 8	2 2 2	9 5 10
IX ...	45 8 2	7 8 9	53 0 11	31 8 7	4 14 3	36 6 10	12 0 6	3 5 6	15 6 6
X ...	45 5 6	19 15 11	65 5 5	30 6 1	8 9 9	38 15 10	17 12 6	6 7 6	24 4 0
XI ...	52 9 2	17 1 5	69 10 7	42 0 5	5 13 4	47 13 9	12 13 9	1 12 4	14 9 1
XII ...	49 10 6	16 10 1	66 4 7	34 13 5	5 14 2	40 11 7	19 11 9	1 8 7	21 4 4

* Some clerical errors which occurred in the statement as previously printed have been corrected.

In a Note on a visit to the Duars forming part of the Proceedings of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 (page 126) the following table is given, which, that Committee were informed, was fairly representative of a garden employing Chota Nagpur and Sonthal labour. The table purports to show average total wages earned in each month in 1905, the figures being arrived at by dividing the total wages earned by the number of individuals at work, *i.e.*, of coolies who worked for one or more days during a month :—

—	Men.			Women.			Children.		
	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.	Rs. s. p.
January ...	3 13 6	Nil	3 13 6	2 10 5	Nil	2 10 5	0 15 4	Nil	0 15 4
February ...	3 14 9	Nil	3 14 9	2 9 10	0 9 2	3 3 0	0 15 11	Nil	0 15 11
March ...	3 15 10	Nil	3 15 10	2 11 4	0 0 3	2 11 7	1 1 4	Nil	1 1 4
April ...	3 10 8	Nil	3 10 8	3 0 2	Nil	3 0 2	0 14 9	Nil	0 14 9
May ...	4 8 6	Nil	4 8 6	2 12 5	0 0 11	2 12 4	0 13 5	Nil	0 13 5
June ...	4 4 9	Nil	4 4 9	2 14 2	1 0 5	3 14 7	0 8 7	0 0 3	0 8 10
July ...	4 1 9	2 7 6	6 9 3	2 13 11	1 8 5	4 6 4	0 13 10	0 4 8	1 2 6
August ...	3 13 8	2 1 1	5 14 9	2 13 0	2 0 8	4 13 8	1 6 9	Nil	1 6 9
September ...	3 10 6	1 5 3	4 15 9	2 9 2	1 3 7	3 12 9	1 3 4	Nil	1 3 4
October ...	3 5 4	1 2 6	4 7 10	2 8 4	1 4 6	3 12 9	0 13 8	0 2 5	1 0 1
November ...	4 3 8	0 2 1	4 5 9	3 2 11	0 11 5	3 14 4	1 2 11	Nil	1 2 11
December ...	4 2 7	Nil	4 2 7	2 5 6	0 0 4	2 5 10	0 15 10	Nil	0 15 10

The note goes on to say :—

“On another garden, in which there was a considerable proportion of Paharia coolies, who are steadier workers, the average pay earned was—

	Rs. s. p.
Man ...	6 0 6
Woman ...	4 12 4
Child ...	2 6 3

The price of rice is high in the current year, being seven or eight seers per rupee as against ten last year. This has had the effect of making the coolies turn out to work more readily.”

We do not find it to be the general opinion of managers that Paharias are steadier workers than Chota Nagpuris and Sonthals. For the greater part of the year 1905, rice was cheaper than ten seers per rupee, as will appear from Appendix K.

The figures in the first statement of average wages given in the note just quoted seem exceptionally low, as averages calculated on individuals working. They correspond pretty closely to some of the lower averages given in the statement prepared in 1900, and in Mr. Arbutnott's statement of 1904, but we do not think that they can be taken as typical, since they show no extra earnings by men from January to June inclusive.

Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley, in their Second Report (pages 51 to 54) have taken the figures of the third statement reproduced above, showing average monthly wages earned on one garden in 1905, as representing the average monthly earnings of coolies throughout the Duars, and compared them with the price of rice in October 1908. It is obviously most misleading to take the average wages earned on a single garden in a comparatively cheap year, and compare them with prices prevailing in a dear year. The authors of the Second Report were aware of the rise in the price of rice, for they say, at page 53 of the report—

“There has been in recent years a great advance in the price of *dhan* and rice, which now costs nearly twice as much as it did in 1903, when the average price for rice in the Duars was Re. 1 for 12 seers.”

It does not appear that they took any steps to ascertain the wages earned in 1908.

21. It is not possible to make any close comparison between the averages shown in our Appendices H, I, and J and the statistics of wages collected in 1900, 1904, and 1906, but it will be observed that our statements H and I show, on the whole, considerably higher averages for men than the earlier statistics referred to. This is probably due, partly to the exclusion from the earlier statistics of some of the items of earnings which have been included in ours, and, in part, also to the fact that the price of rice was much higher in the years 1907, 1908, and 1909 than in the years 1899 to 1905 inclusive, so that coolies had a greater stimulus to work, and the men especially a greater incentive to do double tasks of hoeing.

The averages of earnings calculated on average musters, in Appendix J, give some idea of the amounts which might be earned by coolies working on every working day of a month.

In comparing the average earnings shown in these appendices with the wages paid to other classes of workers, it is necessary to bear in mind that, on a tea garden, all members of a family above the age of seven, who are capable of working, have the opportunity of earning wages, being offered work suited to their capacity.

22. The most important remunerative occupation of the labourers apart from their work for the gardens is cultivation (chiefly of rice and maize), either on land belonging to the gardens, or outside; in the latter case, chiefly as under-tenants paying rent in kind (*adhiaars*) or as day-labourers temporarily employed by outside cultivators. It has not been found possible to obtain accurate statistics either of the number of coolies who engage in such cultivation, or of the area cultivated by them. A large majority of the coolies have *bari* (garden) lands adjoining their houses, in which they grow maize and vegetables. Maize is extensively cultivated by Paharias, especially, and on some of the higher gardens the Paharia "lines" are represented by a plateau of 200 or 300 acres on which the labourers' houses are sparsely dotted, the whole of the intervening space being occupied by maize fields. The "madesi" coolies also have, as a general rule, much more extensive *baris* adjoining their houses than are usually found in coolie lines in Assam. On those estates which contain land suitable for rice cultivation, it is let out at a low rate by the management, and managers recognize that this is one of the best means of attracting labour to a garden. A common practice is to settle the land in large blocks with the sardars, who apportion it among the coolies of their respective *pattis* as their *adhiaars*.

In reply to the Committee's Circular, 69 managers have returned a total area of 15,862 acres as settled for cultivation with their coolies within the tea estates. In most cases the *bari* lands are omitted from the returns, but in some they are included. The managers of several estates in which *bari* lands are extensively cultivated by the coolies have not been able to furnish any figures of their area.

23. Managers have not been able to supply any figures relative to the cultivation carried on by coolies outside the gardens, but it is known to be extensive. At certain seasons of the year, there is a very great demand for labour on the part of the local cultivators, who offer remuneration either in cash or in the shape of a share of the crop. These cultivators are, in some cases, indigenous people of the district, in others, ex-coolies, in others, again, sardars or other coolies still serving on the gardens. On this subject Mr. J. F. Hughes of the Tasati Tea Estate says: "Coolies . . . are interested in land in the bastis round the garden, of which there are many." Mr. W. P. Thomas (Dalgaon) says: "About half the labour force are interested in cultivation in the neighbouring bastis." The remuneration earned by tea-garden coolies for agricultural work done outside the gardens in the shape of a share of the crop should be borne in mind when comparing wages with the current prices of food.

24. A large proportion of the garden population, especially of those who have settled down upon a garden, own cattle and other live-stock. Managers encourage the purchase of cattle, and grant loans freely for this purpose, recognizing that the possession of such property attaches a coolie to the garden. Sardars, and prosperous coolies generally, own buffaloes, and are thus in a position to do carting work for the garden, by which they can earn from annas 10 to Re. 1-2 a day: a pair of buffaloes will bring in a return of from Rs. 60 to 100 during the carting season. Coolies who own cows, make a profit on the sale of milk. An extensive trade is carried on in bullocks and goats; in fact, a large proportion of the stock offered for sale in the cattle markets of the Duars,

comes from the tea-garden lines. Grazing is free on all gardens; where it is not available within a garden grant, grazing rights over the neighbouring waste lands are hired from Government by the management. A census of cattle and other live-stock was taken in May 1910 on 30 gardens with a total population of 56,919 and yielded the following statistics :—

			Rs.		Value.
Buffaloes ...	...	5,193	@ 45	...	Rs. 2,33,635
Cattle ...	...	25,271	" 15	...	" 3,79,065
Goats and sheep ...	...	14,820	" 4	...	" 59,280
Ponies ...	...	298	" 30	...	" 8,940
Pigs ...	...	1,776	" 6	...	" 10,656
Total					Rs. 6,91,626

which works out at Rs. 12 for each individual of the garden population as reported.

These figures may be compared with those given in paragraph 153 of the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, showing numbers and value of live-stock owned by the labourers on the Assam Company's gardens, which work out to an average value of Rs. 9-4 per head of the whole labour force. Assigning the same values to animals of each class on the 30 gardens in the Duars for which the census has been taken, the average value per head of population comes to about Rs. 11-10-6. The liberty which coolies in the Duars enjoy of erecting sheds almost as they please in their lines, and the space available for the purpose, are in favour of the keeping of live-stock.

It should also be noted that there was a great abundance of poultry in the lines visited. These are kept chiefly for sale, but some are eaten by the coolies on the occasion of weddings or other festivals.

Some of the coolies also earn money outside the gardens on which they live by doing contract work, such as wood-cutting, sickling, sawing, or building for other gardens, or road repairs.

25. The coolies are provided with house accommodation free; the general practice being for the management to supply the materials for building houses, and allow the coolies to build themselves, crediting them with three or four *haziris* for the work. Similarly, when repairs are required, the necessary materials are provided free, and the coolies paid for the work. Some gardens employ contractors (*gharamis*) to build coolies' houses, at a cost varying from Rs. 15 to Rs. 25 per house according to the local price of materials; the *gharamis*, however, construct the walls and the roofs only, any plinths being provided by the coolies themselves. The nature of the house accommodation will be discussed in another chapter.

Where firewood is available on the grant, coolies are allowed to cut it free. In other cases, the management takes out permits from the Forest Department, which enable the coolies to obtain firewood from the Government forest without charge. Where the expense of cutting and carting the firewood is borne by the management, the coolies are required to pay a small charge for it, in order to prevent waste. We do not understand the statement at page 43 of the Second Report that "as a rule" the supply of firewood at a fixed rate "chiefly affects people of good standing among the labour force."

26. Weekly markets are held at convenient centres throughout the Duars, and almost every garden has one within easy reach. There are also permanent shops on many gardens; but these appear to be chiefly resorted to for the purchase of the minor necessaries of life. During their tours in April and May 1910, the members of the Committee visited the important markets of Mal, Luksan, Hantapara, Hansmara, and Matelli, all of which are mainly supported by the tea-garden population. The chief articles of food available at this season were *dhan*, rice, *dal*, and vegetables of various description, oil, *ghee*, salt, spices, fowls, goats, beef, and pork. The retail prices ascertained throughout the above months did not show any noticeable fluctuations, and were as follows :—

<i>Dhan</i>	24 to 26)	} seers per rupee.
Common rice ...	...	...	...	12 to 13 |	
<i>Dal</i> ...	...	...	...	7 to 8 |	
<i>Kalai dal</i> ...	...	...	...	8 to 9 |	
Sat ...	...	...	...	14)

Beef was being sold at 4 annas and pork at 6 annas a seer, and fowls varied from 3 annas to 8 annas each, according to size. Enquiries made in July showed that the price of rice had risen to 11 seers per rupee.

Some further notes on markets and food-supplies recorded by Major Leventon will be found in Appendix L.

The statement in Appendix K shows the average monthly retail prices of rice at Jalpaiguri from January 1899 to June 1910, inclusive, and at Alipur from January 1906 to June 1910, inclusive, as well as for each month of the years 1901, 1902, and 1903. The Alipur prices were not published in the Gazette before 1904. Those for 1901, 1902, and 1903 are taken from Appendix 6 of Mr. Arbuthnot's report: for other years before 1904 they are not available. We have compared the Gazette prices for Jalpaiguri and Alipur with the prices shown in weekly reports from police stations near the tea-gardens, with those given in a return obtained by the Deputy Commissioner from the managers of a number of Government *hats* in the Western Duars, showing prices on a selected *hat* day in June 1910, with those recorded by Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley at Mal bazar in October 1908, and with those which we have noted ourselves at the *hats* mentioned above, and we have come to the conclusion that there is not much difference between prices at Jalpaiguri and Alipur and at the markets by which the tea-gardens are served, and that the prices shown in Appendix K may be taken as fairly corresponding to the prices at those markets.

As bearing on the subject of our enquiry, the significant facts brought out by this table are the sharp rise in the price of rice towards the end of 1905, and the high level at which it remained throughout the following four years, only falling again in December 1909.

When comparing coolies' earnings with the price of food, it is important to bear in mind that coolies, as a rule, do not buy cleaned rice, but *dhan*. As the labour and time occupied in husking the *dhan* go to reducing the work done by the coolies, and consequently their earnings on the garden, it is obvious that, to estimate the purchasing power of the average wages earned, the value of *dhan*, not of rice, should be taken, that is to say, the price of rice, as shown in returns, should be divided by two.

It is not the general practice of managers in the Duars to stock rice and sell it to their coolies below market price, but some managers lay in a supply before the rainy season, with a view to its issue to the coolies at cost price.

27. The figures of labour force, individuals working, and average musters given in Appendix G, afford some *data* for estimating the average number of days that coolies work in a month at different seasons of the year, though accurate mathematical averages cannot, of course, be deduced from the statement. Calculating from the maximum figures for adults shown in the statement, and taking the working days in a month at 26, the average on labour force comes to 16.8 for 1907, 16.4 for 1908, and 17 for 1909. Calculated from the minimum figures for adults, the averages come to 14.7, 15.1, and 15.1 for 1907, 1908, and 1909, respectively. It will be observed that, according to these calculations, the months of maximum labour force are also those in which not only are the average musters greatest, but they bear the greatest proportion to the labour force, that is, they are the months in which the coolies work the largest number of days.

The latest months in 1910 for which figures have been supplied, March and April, are also, in most gardens, months in which the labour force is strong, but the average number of days worked for March and April 1910, calculated on the adult labour force, 16.3, is less than the average on labour force for maximum months of 1907, 1908 and 1909. This difference may possibly be due to the fact that the price of rice in March and April 1910 was lower than in the same months of 1907, 1908 and 1909, so that coolies had less incentive to work. On the other hand, it would appear from Appendix H that the earnings of men for March were greater in 1910 than in the three previous years. The gardens to which the figures given in the statement for March and April 1910 relate, however, are not in all cases the same as those for which figures have been given for the corresponding months of the three preceding years.

The averages calculated on maximum figures of *individuals working* are 20, 19, and 20.1, and on minimum figures 18.7, 19.2, and 19 for 1907, 1908 and 1909, respectively.

28. At pages 54 to 56 of the Second Report, the short work and short earnings of coolies on tea-gardens in the Duars are explained as being due to a "vicious cycle," in which the initial indebtedness of the coolies leads to the sardars retaining their pay, and giving them

an inadequate "living allowance," which, again, results in insufficient diet, and consequent sickness, apathy and laziness." We have already referred to the subjects of wages and prices, and we shall presently deal with the questions of payment through sardars, advances, indebtedness, and treatment of new coolies, but we desire here to say that we are entirely unable to support the view of Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley as to the causes of the small number of days worked by coolies. In the course of our visits to the coolie lines, among the numerous coolies seen, who remained in the lines during working hours, there were very few of sickly or anæmic appearance. A large proportion were women, who remained at home to look after children, husk *dhan*, or attend to other household duties, and such occupations were evidently considered a sufficient explanation of a woman not going out to pluck, often with the addition that some other member of the family had gone. As already mentioned, the fact that coolies buy not cleaned rice, but *dhan*, the husking of which requires a certain amount of labour, has an important bearing on the value of their wages. Moreover, where coolies engage in rice cultivation, either on their own behalf or for others, the return for their labour is usually a certain quantity of *dhan*, which has to be husked, and the time occupied in husking it, as well as the time employed in such cultivation is so much time taken from their work on the garden. At certain seasons, again, a proportion of the coolies' time is occupied in receiving and returning visits, marriages, and other festivities. We believe that, in the case of men, the small proportion of days worked for the garden in a month is mainly accounted for by the subsidiary occupations described in paragraphs 22 to 24 above. In this respect, the state of things on a Duars garden is an exaggeration of what is found on those Assam tea-gardens where there is an abundant labour force, with rice cultivation available for the coolies, and they are not pressed to work. In the Duars, the labour force is not abundant, but the coolies are free, and the system of work has been adopted which suits them best, and is probably the most convenient and economical in the circumstances. If coolies could be got to work more regularly on the gardens, it would be more convenient for the management in some respects, but it would probably mean a greater expenditure on labour, and a less contented labour force. The necessity of maintaining a larger labour force than would otherwise be required owing to irregularity of labour, and the tendency of the workers, drawn from the agricultural classes, to combine ordinary agriculture with any other employment in which they engage, may be said to be a general feature of organized industry in India, and, in this connection, we may refer to remarks in the Report of the Bengal Labour Enquiry Commission of 1896, and in Mr. Foley's Report on Labour in Bengal, 1906, on the coal-mining industry in Bengal, and to paragraph 25 of the Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission, 1908, on factory labour in different parts of India. It is true that sickness plays a part in reducing the average number of days that coolies work in a month, and that, as stated in paragraph 10 of the memorial of the Duars Planters' Association (Appendix A), the tea industry in the Duars suffers from the influence of malaria on the efficiency of the labour force, but we have no reason for thinking that sickness is a main cause of absence from work.

29. Replies to question xiv of the Committee's Circular which deals with this subject, have been received from 90 gardens with 83,195 acres under tea. Out of this number, on 50 gardens with 44,004 acres under tea, the coolies are paid for *hasiri* work entirely through sardars, on 10 with 9,238 acres they are paid entirely direct, and on 30 with 30,153 acres, both systems exist side by side. "Leaf pice," wages of tea-house hands, and sums due to coolies for such work as carting and cutting fire-wood are always paid direct. Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley are mistaken in supposing that payment for "doubles" is made direct on gardens where ordinary task work is paid for through the sardars (*vide* page 54 of Second Report and paragraph 9 of Captain Christophers' letter). On those gardens where wages are paid through the sardar, he is held responsible for all advances from the garden to the coolies, which are ordinarily paid and recovered through him. The system of direct payment is adopted where the sardars are of an inferior class, or where they are illiterate and unable to keep accounts, and cannot procure the services of a competent writer. There are also some managers who prefer the system. But, on the whole, it appears to be unpopular, both with managers and with coolies, and we heard of gardens which had reverted to the system of payment through sardars after trying direct payment. Paharias, as a rule, decline to be paid except through their sardars. The fact referred to in Captain Christophers' letter that when there is a chance for coolies of earning "doubles" musters usually go up, is not to the point in this connection. As already mentioned,

payment for "doubles" is made through the sardars, where ordinary task work is paid for through them, and it is natural that coolies should be attracted by the prospect of double pay.

Where coolies are paid direct, the sardar still draws the usual commission of one pice per *hasiri*.

The view that the system of payment through sardars results in managers being out of direct touch with their labour force appears to us to be erroneous. Our impression, on the contrary, is that managers of tea-gardens in the Duars are in very close touch with their coolies. In managing a free labour force they are obliged to make a careful study of the character, tastes, and inclinations of the people with whom they have to deal, and we have been impressed with the large proportion, among men holding important charges, of those who have spent a considerable time in the recruiting districts, and acquired, apparently, an intimate knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the *jungli* coolie.

The risk of a sardar cheating the coolies of his *patti* when entrusted with the distribution of their pay, seems to be remote. As already mentioned, on all but a very few gardens an independent record is kept by the management of each *madesi* coolie's work, to which reference may be made if the coolie has a complaint to make. And the loss of reputation in the recruiting districts entailed by any unfair dealing on the part of a sardar with his coolies, would probably be fatal to his position. Even new coolies questioned know accurately their monthly rate of pay and what they are entitled to for a *hasiri*. In regard to their general condition, we have been unable to perceive any difference between the coolies who are paid direct and those who are paid through sardars.

30. At the beginning of the cold weather a "madesi" sardar either visits his country with a view to procuring recruits, or selects for this duty some reliable coolie of his *patti*, who is bound to the garden by family ties, and obtains the manager's approval to his deputation. Nowadays, the majority of sardars find it to their interest to remain upon the garden and depute recruiters. Ordinarily, the recruiters are sent to all the localities in which there is any prospect of coolies being obtained. An European or Indian assistant is deputed at the same time to a convenient centre in the recruiting district; his duties are to act as the local agent of the garden, to supervise generally the operations of the recruiters, to make advances to them when necessary, to interview recruits, and to make all arrangements for their transport to the garden. A recruit, before leaving his country, usually receives from the recruiter, or the local agent, a few rupees to spend among the members of his family, or to settle small debts. It is the practice to despatch recruits to the nearest railway station in batches: the local agent accompanies them, takes tickets for the party, and makes the necessary advances for their food upon the journey.

In the case of desertion by a recruiter his sardar is responsible to the garden for all advances made to him. Where, as sometimes happens, recruits change their minds, and desert on their way from the recruiting centre to the railway station, the responsibility for the advances made to them remains with the sardar, but, in practice, it is usual to write off the amount as a loss incidental to recruitment.

Nowadays a large majority of the coolies recruited have relations or friends on the garden for which they are destined. A subsistence allowance, varying from eight annas to one rupee a week, is paid by the garden to each adult recruit, through the sardar, where coolies are paid through sardars, during the first month of his or her stay on the garden. At the end of that time the coolie is expected to have become accustomed to the work, and the usages of the garden, and to be able to earn sufficient wages. A portion of the cost of recruitment, *viz.*, the amount of the coolie's railway fare, and living expenses on the journey, and the sum advanced in the recruiting district, is treated as an advance recoverable from the coolie. On some gardens only half the railway fare is recovered, and on a few it is entirely remitted. The total debt is usually about Rs. 10, and seldom exceeds Rs. 12 per adult: no portion of it is realized until at least two clear months have elapsed from the time of the coolie's arrival on the garden, and the recovery is then made by instalments, which are spread over a period, varying from six months to a year.

31. The arrangements made for recruiting Paharias are less systematic. As a rule, trustworthy Paharias are deputed, a lump sum of money being given to them to pay off the debts and road expenses of recruits. Many coolies summon their friends and relations to the garden by letter, in such cases the debts of the recruit are ascertained by inquiry on his arrival at the garden, and paid off by the sardar, who receives an advance for the purpose from the management.

32. The irrecoverable charges usually incurred by the management on account of recruitment consist of the pay and expenses of the local agent and recruiting staff, and a commission paid to the sardar for each recruit obtained, which may vary in amount from Rs. 5 to Rs. 2. As the establishment maintained in the recruiting districts remains at much the same strength whether the number of coolies obtained is large or small, the cost of importing a coolie depends in a great measure upon the flow of immigration in a particular year, and therefore upon the character of the season in the recruiting district. The following figures have been compiled from information supplied by gardens with regard to the recruitment of the year 1909 :—

Number of gardens	63
Number of adults recruited in 1909	16,746
	Rs.
Gross outlay on recruiting	3,35,815
Amount recovered from coolies	1,82,442
Amount written off as recruiting expenditure	1,10,100
Amount remaining to be recovered	44,273

It occasionally happens that a garden incurs heavy loss by the desertion of new coolies, to whom their surroundings prove disagreeable, or to whom an opening presents itself of taking up waste land outside the garden for purposes of cultivation. One case came to notice in which 150 Sonthal coolies returned to their homes within a few months of their arrival on the garden : in this instance the loss was estimated by the manager at more than Rs. 2,000. Complaints were also heard in the Alipur Duars, where much land is available for cultivation, of the tendency shown by new coolies to emigrate to the *bastis*, leaving their advances unpaid ; in fact one manager expressed the opinion that certain sardars recruited coolies with the object of establishing them as their under-tenants in the *bastis*. When coolies desert under these circumstances, a manager has practically no means of recovering any advances that may be due from them. Where such advances had been paid through the sardar, he would be held nominally responsible for the sum outstanding, assuming, of course, that he himself had not also deserted. But the impossibility of recovering large sums from sardars after their coolies have left them has been brought home by experience to managers. Recourse to the civil courts is regarded as entirely useless.

33. This subject may be considered under three heads, *vis.*, (1) the indebtedness of the coolies to the garden, guaranteed by the sardar, (2) the indebtedness of the coolies to the sardar on account of garden advances, and (3) indebtedness of sardars and coolies to traders and money-lenders. As regards (1), the statements of the managers of tea-gardens show that the initial advances debited against new coolies on their recruitment are repaid to the garden usually within six months and almost always within a year of the coolies' arrival on the garden. We have no doubt but that these statements are substantially correct. They are borne out by the figures in the preceding paragraph, which show that, in 1909, 63 gardens recruited 16,746 adults ; their gross outlay on recruiting amounted to about Rs. 20 per adult, of which, by May 1910, about Rs. 11 per adult had been recovered from the coolies, Rs. 6-8 had been written off as recruiting expenditure, and Rs. 2-8 remained to be recovered. Of the amount remaining to be recovered, a portion would probably be ultimately written off as recruiting expenditure. Of money-lending transactions between sardars and their coolies, the managers have no accurate information, as they do not interfere with the recovery of advances from coolies by the sardars, unless some complaint is made to them on the subject. Having regard to the general relation subsisting between sardars and coolies, and to the customs of the country, we think it not at all improbable that a good many new coolies may remain in debt to their sardars on account of recruiting advances after the advances have been recovered by the gardens, or that some of the less industrious and more improvident among the coolies may remain in debt to the sardars on this account for a considerable time. So far as the indebtedness of coolies to the sardars is concerned, it probably makes very little difference whether the coolies are paid through the sardars or direct. Where wages are paid through the sardars, they, of course, recover the sums due to them on account of advances, in instalments, by deduction from the wages, and the balance of the wages which is paid to the coolies, may be called a "living allowance." Whether the system entails hardship to the coolies, or to any considerable proportion of them, or not, depends entirely on how it is worked, whether the advances made to new coolies for their subsistence are sufficiently liberal, whether usurious interest is charged upon them, whether the instalments deducted

from the coolies' monthly wages are excessive, and leave the coolies an insufficient living allowance, and, finally, whether the system is so worked that coolies have little chance of clearing off the advances, and remain permanently and hopelessly in debt. We are unable to accept the view put forward in the Second Report that the Duars system produces extensive hardship and distress for the following reasons.

34. It appeared to us to be implied in the reference to usurious rates of interest charged by sardars at page 7 of the Second Report that such interest was exacted by sardars from coolies in the Duars, and we accordingly addressed an enquiry on the subject to Captain Christophers. From paragraph 2 of his letter in reply, it appears that the allusion to usurious rates of interest in the Second Report was not intended to apply specifically to the Duars, the authors of the report not being aware of the degree of prevalence or importance of usury in the Duars. Managers of tea-gardens, whom we have examined on the point, have expressed the opinion that sardars do not charge coolies' interest on advances. It is true that, having regard to the customs of the country, one would expect sardars to charge interest on advances received through them. It may be that, as the garden advances the money without interest, the sardars also refrain from taking it. We think it, in any case, extremely improbable that they would charge excessive interest or oppress their coolies in the matter of recovery of advances, as this would result in their losing coolies, and would be fatal to their reputation in the recruiting districts. We understand it to be the experience of officers well acquainted with the aboriginal races of Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas that they are not grasping or extortionate in their money dealings with one another, and that a man in the position of head of a village community will not be harsh in his treatment of his dependants in such matters.

35. The argument drawn in paragraph 2 of Captain Christophers' letter from the alleged results of a reduction in the rates of sardars' commission is based on a misapprehension. It is not stated in Mr. Arbuthnott's report that at the time of his enquiry, the rate of commission was two pice per day for each coolie turning out to work. The statement in paragraph 10 of the report that the maximum commission is two pice obviously refers to commission on "doubles," which, on some gardens, is double the rate for a single *haziri*. Again, it was not stated in the Proceedings of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee that there had been a general reduction in the rate of commission. The following is the passage in the Proceedings referred to :—

The commission paid to the sardar has now been almost everywhere fixed at one pice on each task performed. On a group of gardens, where the commission was formerly one and a half pice, no objection was raised when the extra half pice was cut down about a year ago.

This means, evidently, that the sardars of a certain group of gardens, where commission was formerly paid at 1½ pice per *haziri*, made no objection when it was reduced to the general rate of 1 pice, in which there is nothing very surprising.

Seeing that a sardar's *patti* may comprise 150 working coolies, and that he draws a bonus on coolies whom he recruits, and wages besides for any work which he does on the garden, and has often other sources of income, he should be able to meet some losses from death or desertion without oppressing his coolies. Moreover, consideration is shown to sardars in remitting advances which become irrecoverable owing to such causes.

36. We attach little weight to the argument that coolies are tied down to a garden by their advances, and are not really free to leave it when discontented with their lot. This argument leaves out of account the system of settling land with *adhiars* (sub-tenants paying produce rent), which prevails in the district, and the great demand for *adhiars*. A man can set up as an *adhiar* without any capital at all, his landlord providing him with cattle, seed-grain, and food for his subsistence until the next harvest. And it may safely be said that the ordinary landholder will feel no delicacy about settling land on these terms with a coolie who has left a garden owing money there. Moreover, the Duars Labour Rules, referred to in paragraph 14 of Captain Christophers' letter, merely provide that if a coolie leaves an estate to which he owes money for another, the manager of the estate receiving him shall pay off his advances. It is easily conceivable that a garden short of labour might find it to its advantage to take over coolies from another, paying their advances, and then remit the whole or a portion of the advances. Many instances have been quoted of new coolies leaving a garden with which they were dissatisfied shortly after their arrival on it, without paying their advances. At page 85 of the Second Report a case is mentioned of coolies just up from their country, leaving a garden the day after their arrival on account of

difficulties regarding water-supply. The practice, again, which obtains on some gardens, of deferring payment of part of the bonus on recruitment of new coolies till they have been six months on the garden, shows that the possibility of coolies leaving an estate soon after their arrival is contemplated.

37. The indebtedness of tea-garden coolies in the Darjeeling district, which is referred to by Captain Christophers, is indebtedness to money-lenders and traders. We have been favoured by the Government of Bengal with copy of a note by Mr. W. R. Gourlay, Director of Agriculture, Bengal, who was deputed to make an enquiry with reference to a memorial of the Darjeeling and Terai Planters' Associations to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, concerning the indebtedness of the people in the Darjeeling district. It appears from this note that, on the tea-gardens, it is the sardars, chiefly, who are heavily indebted. Among the causes of sardars' indebtedness mention is made of advances taken to recruit coolies. The note shows that, of late, there has been difficulty in recruiting labour for Darjeeling tea-gardens, the causes of which are stated as follows:—

The attractions on the Darjeeling gardens have decreased proportionately as the cost of living has increased, and the attractions of Bhutan, Sikkim, the Terai, and the Duars have gradually become better known, with the result that whether labour now comes from Nepal usually passes by the gardens, drawn by the superior attractions to be found elsewhere. Those coolies who do find their way to the gardens, usually find living so expensive that in six months they either return to Nepal, or join the others in Sikkim, Bhutan, and the Terai. A certain number of coolies are attracted by the higher wages offered for service in Darjeeling, and by the railway and Public Works Department.

Elsewhere, it is stated that "the demand for labour has created a worthless class, who wander from garden to garden seeking advances, which they have no intention of repaying," and, among causes of indebtedness, are mentioned, "in the case of the sardars, the impossible risks taken in advancing money to coolies, through a desire to obtain more labour for the garden." It will be noticed that the superior attractions of the Duars are stated to be one of the causes of the labour difficulty in Darjeeling which has led to the indebtedness of the sardars there.

As regards the coolies, the note says:

The coolies, on the other hand, are the most irresponsible class I have ever met. Their position to a certain extent makes them so: whenever they want money they go to the sardar, and if he refuses, they threaten to leave, so that their demands are in part at least met with. The indebtedness of the coolie is due to three causes: (1) the system of payment by advances; (2) the high price of living; (3) extravagance; and (4) illness.

At another place it is stated:

The coolie looks to the sardar for everything. If he requires money he obtains it from the money-lenders on the sardar's security..... On the other hand, if the coolie is dissatisfied with the sardar, there is nothing to prevent him from transferring his services somewhere else, and it sometimes happens that a sardar whose credit with the money-lenders is on the wane, gradually loses all the coolies in his "sardari" to the more prosperous sardars on the same estate, although such transfers within an estate are discountenanced by the Manager.

The note nowhere attributes the indebtedness of coolies to oppression or extortion by sardars. On the contrary, it shows that, owing to the demand for labour in Darjeeling exceeding the supply, which is partly due to the superior attractions of the Duars, coolies are encouraged in extravagance, and those who are dishonest are enabled to victimize their sardars. It is suggested that the sardars should be utilized as an agency for financing coolies with a view to reducing the rates of interest.

The information contained in Mr. Gourlay's note, it may be remarked, is entirely opposed to the theory that coolies are tied to a garden by their advances.

We have been unable, in the time at our disposal, to carry out an exhaustive enquiry into the subject of indebtedness of coolies in the Duars, but, from the information which we have been able to collect, it appears that, among the Paharias, there is a good deal of indebtedness to traders and money-lenders, chiefly due to extravagance although the special causes which intensify the evil in Darjeeling are absent. The Paharias are naturally an extravagant and improvident race, as is very clearly brought out in the Darjeeling District Gazetteer (paragraphs 114-119), and their standard of living is somewhat higher than that of the *madesi* coolies. Our impression is that among *madesi* coolies, indebtedness is not a serious evil, and this is also the general opinion of Managers. Mr. Alston, who has 25 years' experience of tea in the Duars, says:

"Paharia sardars may be financed by sardars, but not Nagpuris or Sonthals."

Mr. Bryer, who has 18 years' experience in the Duars, says:

"Many of the sardars take goods on credit from the kayas but they pay up at the end of the month. It seldom happens that a sardar is heavily in debt."

Our view also finds corroboration in the following remark, quoted from Mr. Gourlav's note above referred to, about the Terai gardens of Darjeeling, the labour force of which is largely *madesi* :

The conditions in the Terai are essentially different: the majority of the labour is recruited from the plains, and, so far as my enquiries went, the plains' coolies are not deeply indebted.

Unemployment of coolies owing to ill-health is, no doubt, an important contributory cause of indebtedness on tea gardens in the Duars, as it is in Darjeeling, but we have no reason for supposing that it is a chief cause of the evil. At the same time it is very necessary that the medical and sanitary arrangements on tea gardens should be made as good as possible, so as to preserve the health of the labour force, and recommendations with this object will be made in Chapters IV and V of this Report.

38. To our minds, the most effective refutation of the theory of excessive indebtedness of coolies in the Duars is to be found in the general evidences of contentment and prosperity among the labour force, which we have everywhere observed, and of which we shall have more to say presently. In the Second Report stress is rightly laid on the difference, as regards resources and means of subsistence, between new coolies and those who have been on a garden for some time. It must be remembered, however, that a large proportion of new coolies belong to families already established in the Duars, and live in commensality with their relations from the time of their arrival. And, after all, every old coolie was a new coolie once, and, if it were generally true that, as represented in the Second Report, new coolies, on arriving in the Duars, are placed on a living allowance, which reduces them to insufficient diet, predisposing them to sickness, so that they have little prospect or chance of clearing off the debt with which they start, the labour force, as a whole, would not present the general aspect of cheerfulness and comfort, which actually characterizes it. It is admitted in the Report that among the older coolies many have attained a condition of comparative comfort: our impression is that this description applies to a preponderating majority of the coolies on the gardens which we have visited. At the same time, we think it reasonable to infer from the opinions expressed in the Second Report, and from some of the instances quoted by Captain Christophers, that, during the period covered by his enquiry, which was a time of high prices in the Duars, and of scarcity in the recruiting districts, when large numbers of destitute people emigrated to the Duars, some cases of hardship may have occurred among new coolies, probably owing to insufficient liberality in the grant of advances. We have been informed by different witnesses that the amount of *kharcha* given to new coolies is increased when prices rule high, but it is possible that some managers may have failed to recognize the necessity of this. The instances given by Captain Christophers are neither so numerous nor so fully verified as to enable us to arrive at a definite conclusion on this point; we think it, however, very necessary that managers should give special attention to the condition of newly arrived coolies at all times, but especially when recruiting is brisk and the price of rice rules high, and that the rates of *kharcha* allowed to such coolies should be increased at times when the ordinary amount becomes inadequate, in view of the prices prevailing. It might also be advisable, as such times, to waive recovery of the whole or a portion of the coolies' railway fare, the gross cost of recruitment per head being reduced, as already pointed out, when large numbers are recruited.

39. The statement in Appendix M which has been compiled from returns furnished in compliance with our circular by 88 gardens with a total area under tea of 81,671 acres, and a total present labour force of 106,888 souls, shows the number of men, women, and children of each class recruited in each of the past four recruiting seasons. The recruiting season extends from January to April, approximately, inclusive. We have prepared a separate statement, Appendix N, compiled from figures furnished by the 50 gardens to which Appendix G relates, comparing the number of adults recruited in each of the past three recruiting seasons with the maximum adult labour force, maximum of adult individuals working, and maximum of monthly average musters of adults, for the preceding year, these maximum figures being arrived at in the manner explained in paragraph 10. The variations in recruitment which these statements exhibit, appear to have been determined chiefly by the harvests in Chota

Movements of labourers.
Recruitment.

Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas. The year 1907-1908 was marked by poor harvests in both those areas, as the following extracts from the Report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces for that year will show. Of the Sonthal Parganas it is said: "The people of that district passed through a period of considerable stress and hardship owing to partial failure of *bhadon* and winter crops." And of Chota Nagpur: "The agricultural conditions of the year in Chota Nagpur Division also were unfavourable..... In addition to the short outturn of crops, prices ruled extraordinarily high and conditions nearing scarcity set in in various parts of Ranchi, Hazaribagh, and Palamau." In consequence of these conditions, recruitment for the Duars in the season of 1908 shows a great increase, as compared with the preceding year, the number of coolies shown in Appendix M as recruited from Chota Nagpur in 1908 being 16,408, as compared with 3,234 in 1907, and the number of Sonthals recruited 5,702 against 1,170. It may be noted that recruitment for the Assam tea-gardens also showed a very large increase in 1907-1908, as compared with the preceding year, the figures being 84,824 for 1907-1908 against 25,617 in 1906-1907, and the increase being attributed in the Resolution on Immigrant Labour to the Assam Districts to the existence of famine or scarcity in some of the recruiting districts. The figures of recruitment for 1909 in Appendix M show, as compared with those of 1908, a decrease in recruitment of Chota Nagpur coolies from 16,408 to 14,167, but a further increase in emigration of Sonthals to the Duars from 5,702 to 7,022. The total figures for 1909 show a small decrease as compared with those of 1908, from 26,629 to 25,868. The harvests of 1908-1909 in Chota Nagpur appear to have been fair on the whole, but Mr. Gruning tells us that he was informed at Ranchi and Chaibasa in that year that many persons would probably be compelled to emigrate, as they had mortgaged their land and crops on account of the scarcity of the previous year. According to the Bengal Land Revenue Administration Report for 1908-1909 the outturn of crops in the Sonthal Parganas was generally a little better than that of the previous year. According to the same report, however, in the extensive Damin-i-koh Khas Mahal of the Sonthal Parganas, the year was unfavourable. The following remarks of the Deputy Commissioner are quoted:—

The *mahua* crop of 1908 failed, and as it had been preceded by a poor winter rice crop in Dumka and East Deoghur, where the standard of prosperity is lower than elsewhere, it is no exaggeration to say that, in July and August, this part of the district was on the verge of famine. The *bhadon* crops, though not abundant, were harvested in time to save the situation. The winter rice crop was again disappointing.

Recruitment for the Assam tea-gardens in 1908-1909 showed a decrease as compared with the preceding year (from 84,824 to 60,773), but was very much more than in any other year since 1900. It is noteworthy that the amount of recruitment for Assam from the Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas was apparently about the same in 1908-1909 as in 1907-1908. Statement III of the Annual Resolution on Immigrant Labour in the Assam districts, which relates to adults only, shows 16,667 recruited from Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas in 1907-1908 and 16,396 in 1908-1909.

40. At different places in the Second Report of Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley, it is suggested that the annual volume of emigration to the Duars is unnecessarily large, greater than it would be under a better labour system, and greater, in proportion, than the annual emigration to Assam, the inference being that this unnecessarily heavy importation of labour, consisting largely of people who come from non-malarious localities, and are therefore peculiarly liable to malarial infection, is responsible, in some measure, for the hyper-endemicity of malaria in the Duars.

The data for estimating the annual emigration to the Duars are very imperfect, but the figures of Appendix M indicate that it varies between wide limits according to the harvests in the recruiting districts. The figures are for working coolies only. To arrive at an estimate of total recruitment an addition of about 10 per cent. may be made for dependants and a further addition on account of 3,590 acres under tea in gardens for which no returns have been received. Making these allowances, it appears to us that the estimate of 30,000 persons at page 37 of the Second Report errs greatly on the side of excess, if it is intended as an estimate of the *average* annual immigration. The estimate on the same page of the annual immigration of Paharias, exclusive of the cold weather labourers, as some 4,000 to 5,000 persons, appears also to err on the side of excess. The estimate of 25 per cent. on the same page and at page 73, as the usual proportion of new coolies to the total population of the coolie lines, is so excessive as to be wholly wide of the mark; it would represent an annual

immigration of about 40,000 persons. The estimate at page 73 of the report that "the annual influx into the tea gardens of the Duars has rarely fallen short of 15,000 persons" is also, we think, probably incorrect.

Moreover, any comparison between figures of annual emigration to the Duars and to Assam must be irrelevant to the thesis of the Second Report, because neither in the case of Assam nor in that of the Duars is the annual recruitment of labour determined, chiefly, by the requirements of the tea-gardens. It is determined, chiefly, by the harvests in the recruiting districts and the amount of labour available. During the five years 1902-1903 to 1906-1907 the annual recruitment for Assam averaged about 30,000 persons, but it is quite certain that during those years the Assam tea-gardens would have taken more coolies if they had been able to obtain them. In 1906-1907 the Assam Valley gardens recruited 25,617 coolies, but that they wanted much more is proved by the fact that they recruited 84,824 in 1907-1908 and 60,773 in 1908-1909. Similarly, the Duars gardens, no doubt, were in need of more coolies than they recruited in 1906-1907 and previous years. Speaking generally, it may be said of both areas that, save perhaps after a succession of years of exceptionally heavy recruitment, the tea-gardens are always short of labour and take as much as they can get.

41. The Settlement Officer of Jalpaiguri has kindly furnished us with a statement showing the area of land in the Western Duars settled with persons belonging to the castes from which tea-garden coolies are drawn as *jotdars* (Government tenants), *chukanidars*, or *darchukanidars* (under-tenants paying cash rents), or *adhias* (under-tenants paying produce rents). The total area comes to 64,281.38 acres, and it may safely be said that, practically, the whole of this area is settled with persons who either are actually tea-garden coolies, or have served as such, or with the immediate descendants of such persons.

42. This area may be compared with that shown in the Resolution on Immigrant Labour to the Assam districts and the Report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Plains Districts of Eastern Bengal and Assam for 1908-1909, as settled with time-expired tea-garden coolies in Assam. According to the Resolution on Immigrant Labour the total area of Government land settled direct with time-expired tea-garden coolies in Assam at the close of the year was 152,997 acres. According to the Land Revenue Administration Report the area so settled in Cachar was 989 acres and in the Brahmaputra Valley 135,227 acres. The figures quoted for Assam represent land held direct from Government only, and, as pointed out in the Resolution on Immigrant Labour, large areas of land in Assam are also held by *ex-coolies* as sub-tenants, in addition to that held direct from Government. Of the area returned as settled with people of the coolie class in the Duars, 16,054.72 acres only are held direct from Government, the balance, 48,226.66 acres, being held by such people as sub-tenants.

The system of land revenue settlement in the Brahmaputra Valley is mainly a raiyatwari one, holdings being generally very small, and subletting comparatively rare. The settlement of the Duars is, to a much greater extent, a settlement with middlemen, the average area of the Government tenants' holdings being much larger. The *adhias* system of sub-letting in the Duars is, as explained above, very favourable to colonisation by *ex-coolies*, since it enables them to start in cultivation with very little capital. For the purpose of comparison between the Brahmaputra Valley and the Duars, it will probably be safe to add fifty per cent. to the area returned as settled direct with time-expired coolies in the Brahmaputra Valley, on account of land held by them as sub-tenants.

The figures furnished by the Settlement Officer for the Duars purport to show all land settled with people of the coolie class. Those returned for Assam purport to show only land settled with persons who have themselves served as tea-garden coolies. It is only of recent years, however, that the area settled with time-expired coolies in the Brahmaputra Valley has become at all extensive. In 1880-1881 it was returned as 3,139 acres and in 1890-1891 as 23,953 acres only. Probably the area now returned as settled direct with time-expired coolies represents, practically, the whole area settled in the Brahmaputra Valley direct with persons of the classes from which tea-garden coolies are drawn. Seeing that the area under tea in the Brahmaputra Valley in 1908 was 210,704 acres against 83,365 acres in the Duars, and the labour population (workers and dependants) 479,383 against about 142,000 (*vide* estimate in paragraph 8 above), the natural inference from the figures of area settled with people of the coolie class, having regard to the much longer time that the tea industry has been estab-

lished in the Brahmaputra Valley, is that colonisation by tea-garden coolies has been much more rapid in the Duars than in the Brahmaputra Valley. This is what might be expected, the conditions in the Duars being much more favourable for such colonisation; since the coolies there are free to leave the tea-garden when they like, they have many opportunities of taking up land as *adhikars*, and, if they take settlement direct from Government they enjoy the benefit of a revenue-free term. In Assam, full revenue has, ordinarily, to be paid from the outset on waste land taken up for ordinary cultivation. In Cachar, the area settled direct with time-expired coolies is very small (989 acres) and we understand that the area which they hold as sub-tenants there is also not large. The area held direct by time-expired coolies in Sylhet is also small in comparison with the area under tea and the labour force, but the circumstances of that district are special, the greater part of its area being permanently settled and the indigenous population fairly dense.

43. On the whole, we find that there is evidence of satisfactory progress in colonisation by coolies imported for the tea-gardens in the Duars and that the statement in the Second Report as to there being "a very small degree of true colonisation" (page 26) is not in accordance with the facts. We have already, in paragraph 23, quoted evidence of Managers as to cultivation carried on outside the gardens by coolies still in service. The following extracts from the evidence which we have recorded relate to cultivation of coolies who have left the gardens :—

Progress in colonisation.
Evidence of Managers.

Mr. K. D. Murray (Binaguri).—"A considerable number of coolies leave the garden every year for the purpose of taking up cultivation in the *bastis* Most of the garden sardars go to the *bastis* to cultivate after they have made money: many *bastis* have sprung up in this way".

Mr. J. F. Hughes (Tasati).—"This year I have written off about 200 coolies—Oraons and Sonthals—who have made money and settled in the *bastis*".

Mr. W. P. Thomas (Dalgaon).—"About half the labour force are interested in cultivation in the neighbouring *bastis*. Men who were employed as sardars, when I was here in 1897, are now prosperous *basti wallas* in the neighbourhood of the garden: they attract numerous coolies to the *bastis*."

Mr. T. Lincoln Durant (Hansmara).—"The cultivation in the *bastis* takes away many coolies in the season: many of them have relations in the *bastis*. I have lost about 1,500 coolies during the past eight years: they have left the garden to take up cultivation in the Mech and Garo reserve, having made sufficient money on the garden to enable them to take up land. There is *basti* cultivation on the southern boundary of the garden in which coolies are interested as *adhikars*. A few coolies are themselves *joldars* in the *bastis*."

Mr. R. S. Hamilton (Rangamati).—"I should like to have some authority over coolies who run away to the *bastis* and to Bhutan, and take up land for cultivation after taking advances from the garden."

Mr. T. Tyson Tyson (Phakawa).—"Numbers of coolies leave this garden for the *bastis*. I lost a gang of 40 in this way during last cold weather: they are now all settled in a *basti* and doing cultivation."

Mr. C. Bearpark (Jainti).—"Coolies recruited during the last few years show a tendency to go to the *bastis* leaving their advances unpaid. In fact, some Sonthal sardars seem to recruit simply for the purpose of getting coolies to settle in the *bastis*."

We think that the figures which we have given, illustrating the progress already made in colonisation by the tea-garden coolies in the Duars, show that the apprehension expressed in the concluding sentence of paragraph 12 of the memorial of the Duars Planters' Association (Appendix A) was unduly pessimistic. When that memorial was submitted, the Duars had lately been affected by a wave of unhealthiness accompanied by heavy mortality, especially among Europeans, no fewer than sixteen European residents having died within a year, and it was natural that the authors of the memorial, which prayed for a special enquiry into the causes of malaria, should take a somewhat gloomy view of its effects.

44. The case of the Mech and Garo reserve is instructive. This was an area of 30.7 square miles in the Alipur subdivision, which was reserved in 1895 for settlement with Meches and Garos, the idea being to provide a refuge for these tribes, who were being pushed out by more astute and energetic races. In November 1904 a representation was addressed to Government by the Secretary to the Indian Tea Association, complaining of the settlement in the Reserve of Chota Nagpur coolies from the neighbouring tea estates. It was stated that more than 600 coolies had settled in two *bastis* in the Reserve, many of them being recent recruits and still under advances from their employers. Enquiries were instituted, and a special survey of the reserve carried out to ascertain the facts. A report submitted by the Subdivisional Officer of Alipur in 1908, showed that a total area of 10,682.96 acres of land in the Reserve had been settled in jotes, nominally with Meches, of which 5,422.62 acres were actually held by Meches and the remaining

5,260.34 acres by persons other than Meches or Garos, chiefly people from Chota Nagpur. These people had either acquired jotes by purchase from Meches, or had obtained settlement in the name of Meches, no doubt paying a consideration to them. There was no Garo in the Reserve, but an Oraon had obtained settlement of several jotes by calling himself a Garo. In some cases Oraons held land nominally as Chukanidars under Meches, who had actually given up the land to them, the Government revenue being paid by the Oraons. The enquiries showed that in several cases considerable sums had been paid by Oraons to Meches for the jotes; in two cases Rs. 200 and in one Rs. 440.

45. Replies received from 76 gardens, with a total area under tea of 69,890 acres, and a total present labour force of 94,462 show that, at the end of last working season (1909), 8,700 coolies left the gardens for their homes. Out of this number, it appears 3,963 were employed as recruiters. The replies of 57 gardens, with 51,183 acres under tea and a labour force of 72,081, classify the coolies who left the gardens at the end of 1909, and the recruiters among them, as follows:—

	Coolies who left the gardens for their homes at the close of 1909.	Recruiters.
Chota Nagpur	4,387	2,276
Sonthals	1,284	568
Paharias	466	119
Others	224	60
	<u>6,361</u>	<u>3,023</u>

The Bengal Duars Railway issues ticket at reduced rates to tea-garden coolies returning to their homes, on production of certificates signed by the garden managers. From a statement kindly furnished by the Manager of the Railway, it appears that 8,054 coolies availed themselves of this concession during the year 1909. This figure includes recruiters, but it excludes a certain number of coolies from tea-gardens in the Alipur subdivision, who travelled *via* the Cooch Behar Branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway without using the Bengal Duars Railway.

As 1909 was a year of good harvests, following a period of stress and scarcity in Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas, the number of coolies who returned from the Duars to their native districts in that year was probably greater than usual. The evidence which we have obtained shows that a certain small proportion of coolies emigrate to the Duars, usually in consequence of a failure of crops, for a season only.

The Manager of the Chengmari garden (Mr. W. A. J. Thomson) states that out of 636 Chota Nagpuris and Sonthals recruited in 1909, 144 went home at the end of the season. The Manager of Hahaipatha (Mr. L. C. Daunt) is of opinion that the number of persons visiting his garden for a season is less than 10 per cent. of the labour force; the Manager of Nedam (Babu S. Mukerji) estimates the number at less than 5 per cent. Probably a somewhat larger number return to their country after staying three or four years in the Duars, when they have saved enough money to pay off the debt which forced them to emigrate. Some of these may re-emigrate to the Duars, if they find themselves again in difficulties. The Manager of Phulbari (Mr. Child) is of opinion that 90 per cent. of his coolies recruited in 1909 have previous experience of tea-gardens. In 1910, 147 recruits have been obtained for the Bhagatpur garden, and the Manager (Mr. Whitmore) thinks that from 70 to 90 per cent. of them have been on gardens before. In these instances the proportions given seem unusually high, but among the new coolies questioned by us we found many who had been to the Duars before. We also found several coolies who retained an interest in cultivation still carried on by their relatives in Chota Nagpur, and some who had made remittances to help their families at home, since their arrival in the Duars.

On the whole, our impression is that, while a constant intercourse is kept up between the Duars and the recruiting districts, the majority of the coolies recruited for the Duars ultimately remain there, and only return to their homes for an occasional visit.

46. It has not been possible to obtain statistics of movements of coolies from one garden to another. Where a coolie has left a garden, and been struck off its labour books, there is usually no record to show whether he has gone to another garden or to a *basti*. There can be no doubt but that inter-garden movements of coolies are much commoner in the Duars than under the Assam system of indentured labour. It is also true that such move-

ments are often the result of sickness. But we can find no evidence that they are so "extraordinarily frequent" as to indicate "a state of unrest produced by a want of the sense of well-being". The instances quoted by Captain Christophers cannot, it seems to us, be called instances of "extraordinarily frequent" change of garden by coolies. In the first case, the coolie interrogated had been on three gardens. He had remained on one of them for two years; it is not stated how long he stayed on the others. In the second case, an old man had left the garden for which he was first recruited, because his wife and eldest son died there in the first year. Whether he had had any change of garden since then does not appear. In the third case a man had been eleven years in the Duars, three years on his first garden, six years on a second, and two on the third, where he still remained. The remaining cases quoted are those of three coolies who had been in the Duars for six, four, and two years, respectively, and had each had one change of garden during that time.

In all the garden lines visited by us we found a large proportion of coolies who appeared to be permanently and comfortably settled. One of the chief merits of the Duars system of free labour is that a coolie is able to leave a garden when he finds that it does not suit his health, or wishes to leave it for any other reason, such as a marriage, or the desire to join relatives or friends on another garden. We have no doubt but that this freedom of movement makes for the happiness of the labour force. It has its drawbacks, but we consider that they are more than counterbalanced by the advantages of the system.

47. We have already referred to the general content and prosperity of the tea-garden labour force in the Duars. Further details with regard to their condition will be found in Chapter IV, and we need only say here that we think that no one visiting the gardens for the first time could fail to be struck by the good physique and cheerful bearing of the coolies, especially those from Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas. It is true that our tour was made at a comparatively healthy season, when prices were low, and it is not unlikely that the general condition of the coolies may have presented a somewhat different aspect at the time of the enquiry of Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley, which was towards the close of a period of very high prices, when scarcity prevailed in the recruiting districts, and coolies emigrated in large numbers to the Duars. But the fall in prices began only in December 1909, and, if hardship and distress had prevailed widely in the Duars during the four preceding years, their traces would surely have been apparent at the time of our visit.

The absence of beggars throughout the Duars is remarkable. At the weekly markets (*hâts*) beggars might be expected to congregate, but they were rarely met with in the important *hâts* which we visited. At Jalpaiguri, a certain number of beggars are to be found, as at every similar headquarters station, but one never sees among them any one of the garden coolie class. In the Charitable Dispensaries at district and subdivisional headquarters in the Assam tea-districts a considerable proportion of the patients are pauper time-expired coolies, the failures of the tea-gardens: the Resolution on Immigrant Labour in the Assam Districts for 1908-1909 gives the number of time-expired coolies treated as in-patients in the dispensaries as 633. We have made enquiries, both at Jalpaiguri and at Alipur, and find that no pauper patient of the tea-garden coolie class ever comes for relief to either of the dispensaries at those places. The Civil Surgeon, Captain O'Brien, has given evidence to the same effect with regard to the dispensary at Kumargram. It has never been found necessary in the Duars, as in the Surma Valley, to establish poor-houses or shelter huts for destitute coolies. We consider these facts to be of great importance, since, if the general condition of the coolies were one of physiological misery, as depicted in the Second Report, numbers of them would inevitably be found wandering as beggars in the district, and many would drift into the headquarter stations, and seek relief at the dispensaries. It has been correctly pointed out by Dr. Bentley that on Assam tea-gardens, where there is much anaemia and debility among the coolies, entries of half *hasiris* in the *hasiri* books are numerous; but a feature of the working of Duars gardens is that half *hasiris* are very rare—it is seldom that any coolie turning out to work does not complete a day's task, and we have seen nothing in the Duars approaching to the state of things which may sometimes be found on an unhealthy garden in Assam.

We have been favoured by the Superintendent of Post Offices, Jalpaiguri Division, with a statement showing the amounts remitted by money order from the post offices serving the tea-gardens of the Duars to Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas during the year ending 31st March 1910. The total comes to Rs. 80,021. We are unable to agree with Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley that these

remittances do not afford evidence of the general prosperity of coolies in the Duars as well as of the communication which they maintain with their native districts. It is probable that additional remittances of considerable amount are annually made through coolies returning to their homes.

48. The general relations between the coolies and their employers are excellent. Relations between labourers and their employers. Recently a somewhat serious riot occurred on a garden in the Torsa Jainti sub-district, arising from a dispute about the rate of hoeing task, in which the manager and his assistant were assaulted, though not severely. We can find no record of any other case of rioting by coolies, directed against their employers, or of serious collision between employers and labourers in the Duars since 1889. It is well known that riots and collisions between managers and coolies on tea-gardens in Assam have been at different times regrettably frequent, and they were among the causes which led to the appointment of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906. In 1906 there was a curious outbreak of lawlessness in the Damdim and Chalsa districts, apparently the result of high prices, in which a shop at the Baitagul hát, two liquor shops, two shops in Chalsa station bazar, and a shop on a tea-garden were looted by coolies, but in no case did they attempt to assault a manager, or do any harm to property belonging to a tea-garden. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri, Mr. Lees, who has been over 18 months in the district, giving evidence on the 3rd June, stated that he had never received a complaint against a manager of a garden from anyone in the district, and that no case of riot in which tea-garden coolies were concerned had come to his notice. The Subdivisional Officer of Alipur, Mr. Ainslie, who has been 5½ years in the district, states that he can call to mind only one case in which a coolie complained of ill-treatment by a manager, and that complaint, on enquiry, proved to be quite false. On all the gardens which we visited it was apparent that the managers and their coolies were on very good terms.

49. There is abundant evidence in the Proceedings of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, and in various official reports, that people emigrate willingly to the Duars from Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas, whereas there is a strong objection in those districts to service in the tea-gardens of Assam. Popularity of the Duars. The Duars are also found to attract labour from the tea-gardens of Darjeeling district. Having regard to the constant intercourse between the Duars and the recruiting districts, it is quite impossible that coolies would emigrate to the Duars, preferring the district to other fields of employment where they are greatly in demand, if their general condition in the Duars were one of great hardship. As it is, the Duars tea-gardens enjoy, practically, a monopoly of the best class of labour from Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas, having beaten Assam out of the market for that class of labour. We shall have occasion to revert to this subject later.

CHAPTER IV.

MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS.

50. There is a European medical officer in each sub-district paid by the gardens under European management. His duty primarily is to attend the European staff of the gardens. He visits his gardens at intervals of ten days or a fortnight and, at each visit, he sees any sick that may be collected for him at the dispensary, and any serious cases in the lines to which his attention may be called by the resident doctor or manager: he examines registers, checks indents and exercises a general supervision over the resident medical staff. In addition to these routine duties, he is expected to visit any serious cases, at any time when called upon, and on certain gardens receives a special fee for such urgent calls. Certain Managing Agents require periodical reports on coolie lines and water-supply from him. In each sub-district except Damdim, where a different arrangement has been made, there is a Medical Association which engages and pays the visiting medical officer. Besides his salary he receives fees from the gardens for special visits.

51. Of the gardens which replied to the Committee's Circular, 87 have resident doctors (Doctor Babus) of whom 94 in all are employed on these gardens; three of the gardens which replied have no doctor. The following table shows the qualifications of the resident doctors referred to:—

V. L. M. S. and Government qualifications (C.H.A.) (Many of the	30
V. L. M. S. are from schools other than Government schools):	
Assam Medical Board examinations	5
L. C. P. S. or L. C. M. S.	14
R. G. Kar's and other private schools, but not stated if the doctor had passed the final examination of these schools.	11
Unqualified or read portion of medical course	26
Qualifications not stated	8
	—
	94
	—

The resident doctor has to see all the sick that come to the dispensary, and prescribe, and, in nearly all cases, compound the medicines; he then has to go round the lines searching for sick persons who cannot or will not come to the dispensary. Now a journey round the lines often means seven or eight miles: on some gardens pony allowance is given. On some gardens the Doctor Babu is expected to go round daily, on others in two days, doing half the lines each day: he is accompanied by a coolie who carries a few useful medicines and dressings in a box. The Doctor Babu has to keep the records of births and deaths, maintain sick registers and dispense medical comforts or special diet, showing the relatives of the patient how such food should be prepared; he has to disinfect wells when necessary, and, in a few gardens, assist in clerical work.

Altogether 94 resident doctors are employed by 87 gardens with a population of 149,563 or one, roughly, to each 1,500 of population.

As a part of his work, the Doctor Babu has, on many gardens, to distribute prophylactic doses of quinine; in this he is assisted by sardars and others, but it is quite obvious that there is often too much work for one man. Even where the labour population is housed closely together, 1,500 would constitute a heavy charge for an active and capable man, but where the population is housed in scattered groups, miles apart, the duty of visiting the lines must of necessity be performed in a perfunctory manner. We think that, on gardens where lines are scattered, no resident doctor's charge should exceed 1,000 souls, and we recommend that this standard should be worked up to gradually on those gardens where the present staff is insufficient.

52. The qualification of the men employed as resident doctors leave much to be desired. Even qualified men need facilities for maintaining their knowledge, and constant teaching, demonstrations and exhortations from their superiors. This is made manifest by the fact that Government exacts a periodical examination in professional subjects from all

its Sub-Assistant Surgeons, to see that they have kept up their professional knowledge, before admitting them to certain higher grades of pay and promotion. And it must be remembered that the men who have to submit to these periodical examinations are the pick of the medical schools and are specially marked for their zeal and diligence as medical students. Under favourable conditions, some men may be greatly improved by instruction after they have taken up employment on a garden but, where the garden has no hospital and, as in many cases, but an indifferent out-door dispensary, located in part of an office or godown, it is waste of time trying to teach men who start without adequate hospital or dispensary training.

It may be mentioned here that, in one sub-district, arrangements are being made to have for each garden a separate dispensary building, with a compounding room and patient's examination room, and a comfortable verandah to wait in. It may reasonably be hoped that, when such dispensaries have been established, and have gained popularity, the visiting medical officer will be able to improve a Doctor Babu and teach him a great deal. In Assam, periodical examinations are held by a local Medical Board, which grants certificates qualifying the recipients to hold medical charge of estates under the supervision of a practitioner qualified under the British Medical Act. Candidates for these certificates are required to have undergone three years' preliminary training (usually as compounders) in a Government hospital, or a tea-garden hospital supervised by an European medical man. Many of the men thus "locally qualified" in Assam are most useful, as one of us, from personal experience, can testify. In the absence of regular tea-garden hospitals in the Duars, local examinations for garden "Doctor Babus," similar to those held in Assam, are not feasible. Their institution must await the establishment of hospitals with in-door accommodation, at selected centres.

53. We recognize that the prejudices of the coolies oppose a serious obstacle to the establishment of such hospitals. It is a matter of common knowledge that both Chota Nagpur and Sonthal coolies in their own country are very reluctant to come to hospitals, and can rarely be induced to stay in one as in-door patients. In the case of Paharia coolies, caste prejudices are a great difficulty.

At the same time, we think that an attempt to introduce in-door hospitals should certainly be made, and we would recommend that, as an experiment, one or more such hospitals should be established, preferably in the vicinity of the residence of an European medical officer of a sub-district, so as to be under his constant supervision. Each hospital would serve several gardens in its neighbourhood, and the method of distributing among them the cost of its establishment and maintenance would be for the consideration of the proprietors. The working out of a scheme for a central hospital to serve each sub-district might, perhaps, best be left to the Local Medical Association.

In this connection, it will not be out of place to quote from Mr. Arbuthnot's Report on the conditions of tea-garden labour in Ceylon the following description of the medical arrangements for tea-gardens in that island. It should be premised that the Ceylon system is practically one of free labour; coolies are not under indenture, and they can leave an estate with a month's notice if they wish to do so:—

"The medical wants of immigrant labourers in the planting districts are provided for by Ordinance No. 17 of 1880, as amended by Ordinances Nos. 18 of 1881 and 9 of 1882. An export duty is levied on tea, coffee, cocoa, and cinchona, which, with fees for attendance on sick labourers on estates, and hospital charges, constitutes a medical aid fund, which is devoted towards defraying the cost of the medical care of labourers on estates. Over 30 hospitals and dispensaries in charge of medical officers have been provided at important centres, where sick labourers can be received as in-door or out-door patients, and there are more than 30 dispensaries in charge of medical assistants where labourers can receive out-door treatment free at any hour. Estates have been grouped into districts, and Superintendents can in urgent cases call in the medical officer or medical assistant, who is bound to visit sick labourers when required to do so. The charge for each visit to the estate is Rs. 2.50, which goes to the credit of the Medical Aid Fund. Estate labourers are admitted to hospital, attended on the estate, or at the dispensary, only on a written request signed by the person in charge of the estate, unless the case is serious. An estate or group of estates which maintains a dispenser, and a suitable building for a dispensary, is allowed a certain quantity of drugs free, and others at cost price, for the exclusive use of estate labourers. The dispenser is appointed by, and is under the supervision of, the Superintendent of the

estate, which pays his salary, but his appointment and retention in employ is subject to the approval of the Principal Civil Medical Officer."

We have quoted the above description of the arrangements in Ceylon as an example of medical arrangements for tea estates, including central hospitals for groups of gardens, established by legislation under a system of free labour. We do not recommend similar legislation for the Duars, because we believe that the hospitals, which we regard as very necessary, can be most suitably and conveniently provided by arrangements voluntarily carried out by those interested in the tea industry.

54. When tea-garden hospitals have been established, it may be possible to arrange for the local training of tea-garden doctors and compounders, and for local examinations on the Assam plan.

To attract suitable men as garden doctors, however, liberal pay must be offered. The work is hard, the district is unhealthy, and the price of food-stuffs required by middle-class natives of India is high. The present pay drawn by resident garden doctors in the Duars varies from Rs. 40 to Rs. 60 a month plus an allowance for a servant: some few gardens pay as much as Rs. 80 a month. This pay can hardly be called attractive for a good class of men. Pay of at least Rs. 55 plus the usual allowance for a servant should be offered to start with, and biennial increments of Rs. 5 rising to a maximum of Rs. 80 or Rs. 90 per month might attract active young men from the medical schools. Communications should, we suggest, be opened with the Superintendents of the Campbell, Patna, Dacca, Cuttack and Dibrugarh Medical Schools with a view to recruiting suitable men.

The itinerating work of resident tea-garden doctors in the Duars as a daily routine is naturally distasteful, and this increases the difficulty of engaging suitable men for the post, of which both managers and European medical officers speak. We heard that the offer of Rs. 100 a month failed to obtain a candidate from a certain medical school for a garden.

55. Under present arrangements, in almost all cases, there is only one dispensary for each garden, and this is often only a part of the general office or a small godown near the factory. That such a dispensary should efficiently serve the whole of a large population scattered over an extensive tract of land is quite out of the question. A few gardens have an outlying dispensary which serves the more remote lines. At the Conference of Medical Officers of gardens it was generally agreed that outlying dispensaries are necessary in the more remote and scattered lines, in order to facilitate the work of the resident doctor, and relieve him of his most irksome duty, which at best cannot be properly done. A building should be put up in each large group of lines and the doctor should attend there at specified times, the line chaukidars being instructed to inform coolies of the doctor's visit, and bring to the dispensary those who require his services. The building should be a modest one; a tumble-down shed would only excite distrust, while a well-built and well-kept dispensary with waiting accommodation would inspire confidence and attract patients. These dispensaries could be supplied from the main medical stores at the factory, and would occasionally be visited or inspected during the Doctor Babu's dispensary hour by the visiting medical officer, who would thus have some recognized place in the various scattered lines for seeing sick people. The experience of one of us, as visiting medical officer of a garden in Assam, where there are such outlying dispensaries, showed that more sick people collect at such places when the doctor's visit is made known than could be seen by touring the lines. The establishment of these dispensaries should not, of course, absolve the resident doctors from visiting in their houses people seriously ill or unable to come to them, but cases of slight illness, and more serious cases in an early stage would, under the proposed arrangement, have a better chance of receiving timely attention; moreover, the subsidiary dispensaries would be a suitable place for gathering children and coolies, who do not go out to work, for prophylactic treatment. The advantages gained by establishing these outlying dispensaries would, we believe, fully justify the small expense involved, lessening the distastefulness of a Doctor Babu's work, and enabling the gardens to employ a better class of men. The line chaukidar should be the chaukidar of the dispensary also and should report births and deaths to the Doctor Babu, who is the Registrar of Vital Statistics. This will be further referred to when dealing with the subject of registration. It may safely be left to the visiting medical officer to select sites for these dispensaries and suggest how many of them should be provided on each estate, but in all cases they should be decent buildings with

waiting accommodation, cleanly kept and visited diligently: any undue economy in this matter would defeat the object of the scheme.

56. We take this opportunity of pointing out to proprietors the extent to which the labour force would benefit in health and efficiency by the employment of competent doctors on their estates. Examination of resident doctors. In order to improve the standard of the resident medical staff, we would suggest that a Board composed of not less than two sub-district medical officers should be formed to examine those resident doctors whose qualifications appear to be *prima facie* insufficient, and that the Board's decision as to their fitness should be accepted, and arrangements made, as soon as possible, in communication with the Superintendents of the various medical schools, to replace those rejected by qualified men. The formation of the Board and conduct of the examinations might be arranged by the sub-district medical Associations.

57. The replies of 81 gardens to our question regarding expenditure on medicines and medical comforts show that, during 1909, Rs. 61,214 Medical stores and sick registers. was expended on these items. This figure, however, does not represent the whole expenditure as, in some cases the cost of quinine purchased for prophylactic use has been omitted. During our tour we observed the medical stores stocked by gardens; they were liberal in every respect, well assorted, fresh, and up to date. The storage of medicines, however, leaves much to be desired, poisons being kept indiscriminately with other drugs, and the general store being arranged with very little method. A lock-up almirah or box should be supplied in every store, and poisons strictly kept under lock and key.

Sick registers are kept on almost all gardens by the resident doctor, and are inspected and commented on by the visiting medical officer; managers frequently scrutinize them, and, on some gardens, the register has to be brought before the manager daily. The methods of entry vary so much on different gardens that an analysis of the registers cannot be made. On some gardens new cases only are entered each day; on others all cases of sickness are registered daily. The preferable method is that of entering each day all cases of sickness on the garden and thus indicating the loss of labour for the day on account of sickness. The outlying dispensaries recommended above would probably enable the resident doctors to furnish more accurate records of the daily number of sick. Such records should prove valuable to the garden administration, as indicating whether any special or immediate action should be taken in particular portions of the lines or groups of houses.

58. The general physical condition of coolies seemed remarkably good. At our visits to gardens, a point was made of having a muster, Physical condition of coolies. where possible, and, if no regular muster could be conveniently arranged, the people returning from work were observed: much could thus be gathered by personal observation as to the class of coolies working, their physical condition, and working capacity. Ten thousand nine hundred and eighty-seven coolies were seen at regular musters on 12 gardens and one of us who has had considerable experience of such musters in Assam, can confidently say that the coolies seen in the Duars compare very favourably with the best class of coolies seen in Assam, and are remarkably free from evident anaemia. It is not uncommon to see men, who have completed a full hoeing task in the morning, bring in 60 lbs of leaf in the afternoon. It should, however, be remembered that our investigation was made during the period April—July which includes portion of the healthiest time of the year, and at a time when the prices of food-grains were low, and that the physical condition of the labour force might show some falling-off in September and October after the heavy stress of work during the rains.

59. The Medical Members of the Committee examined 1,536 children on 27 gardens, and found that 938 or 61·07 per cent. had enlarged spleens (vide Appendix O). These children were not selected, but Spleen rate. were the first met with while touring the various lines or inspecting musters. Curious variations were found on different gardens, and even among the same class of coolies on the same garden but in different lines. Paharia children showed heavy spleen rates everywhere, except in a certain line on one garden, where their spleen rate (12·2 per cent.) was far the lowest observed.

The following results obtained on gardens where children newly arrived from Chota Nagpur (*i.e.*, arrivals within a couple of months) were examined separately from the rest, would seem to show that a certain number of children arrive with spleens already enlarged:—

Name of garden.	Newly arrived children.		Children of old residents.	
	Number examined.	Spleen rate.	Number examined.	Spleen rate.
1	2	3	4	5
Jiti	11	81.8	64	57.8
Banarhat	5	80.0	57	19.3
Bi naguri	11	63.6	138	48.5
Birpara	19	43.1	117	62.4
Dalgaon	41	64.1	104	61.5
Hassimara	14	50.0	47	44.7

The general average of the percentages shown in Appendix O is undoubtedly high—higher than that recorded in Jalpaiguri in March this year (32.8). It should, however, be stated that the children were fat and cheerful and presented no visible signs of ailment. It would seem that some degree of immunity is acquired at about 10-12 years of age, for children of this age were less affected than the younger ones. The high spleen rate, observed in every part of the Duars, indicates the great prevalence of malaria, and emphasizes the need of reform in the method of prophylactic distribution of quinine, especially to children.

CHAPTER V.

SANITARY ARRANGEMENTS.

60. As already mentioned, materials for housing, in most cases thatching grass, and bamboos or wooden poles, are supplied by the garden, and, as a general rule, coolies are left to build their own houses in the style they prefer, being paid for the work. It is usual to allow new coolies three or four *haziris* for the time occupied in building their houses.

Housing. On some gardens, houses are built by contractors for *madesi* coolies; the *Paharias* almost invariably house themselves, and there is a marked difference between their houses and those occupied by coolies of other classes, the Paharia house being more substantial, and of greater height, with a four-sided roof, and a good plinth.

The houses which coolies of other classes build for themselves, in the first instance, are decidedly inferior. The roofs, as a rule, are well made, though very low, the walls, light screens of thatching grass, are not always wind and weather proof, a serious defect in the climate of the Duars, and plinths are sometimes entirely absent, or insufficient to prevent ground damp. The houses built by contractors are of the same type, but have no plinths at all, the coolies being left to provide these themselves.

Houses which have been in occupation for some time are more comfortable, the walls being plastered, sometimes on both sides, sometimes on one side only. Sonthal coolies show greater appreciation of comfort in their houses than those from Chota Nagpur. Houses occupied by sardars, dafadars, and other long-established coolies, are comparatively comfortable, well built, and well-kept.

There are many exceptions to the general type of house described above.

On some gardens the houses have plank walls. In places where thatch is scarce a certain number of houses have been provided with corrugated iron roofs and although these seem open to objection on the score of heat, there is considerable competition for them. Some gardens are introducing iron posts, which, with a corrugated iron roof, form a permanent and portable framework for a house. On one garden an experiment is being tried with a house proposed as a standard type: its specifications are as follows:—Floor space 20' x 13' bamboo side walls, height at ridge 10' and at side wall-post 7', timber or angle iron posts, corrugated iron roof with ridge ventilation: it is also proposed to extend the roof on one side so as to form a small verandah. This house is designed to provide accommodation for a single family and seems to be of very suitable type: its cost would probably be about Rs. 85.

On one garden we noticed many old and abandoned mud walled huts, which were built by the garden as semi-permanent dwellings: these the coolies refused to occupy, saying they could not breathe in them. On a few gardens some barrack-like lines remain, but they are being gradually abandoned. A long, *pucca*, corrugated iron-roofed house of many compartments was noticed empty, and enquiry elicited the fact that coolies refused to live in it.

61. The sites of the coolie lines vary greatly in character, some being on elevated plateaus, others on slopes, and others again on low and flat land, some on the crest of bluffs overlooking river beds, and some in the dry beds of abandoned water-courses. As a general rule, however, the lines visited had good natural drainage. On some gardens near the hills, the lines are exposed to cold gorge winds, and on others they are situated in natural amphitheatres with insufficient circulation of air. On most of the gardens visited the coolies' houses stand in *baris* of ample extent, but in certain cases the space left for the lines is insufficient, and overcrowding has resulted. In some cases the planting up of all the land of a grant which is fit for tea has caused lines to be located in undesirable sites.

There is a consensus of opinion among Managers that in their social and domestic life, coolies should be left as much as possible to themselves. In pursuance of this policy, the garden population is allowed to divide itself into separate and compact communities, whose social life differs very little from that which they lead in their own country. There is a close resemblance between conditions of life in the lines and those of aboriginal villages of Chota Nagpur or the Sontal Parganas; and there can be little doubt that the freedom from restrictions which the Duars labourer enjoys, constitutes one of the chief attractions of the Duars to intending emigrants. The wisdom of the policy followed by managers, in the Duars in this respect, seems obvious, and the report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 lays special stress upon the necessity of adopting a similar policy on the tea-gardens of Assam.

We may quote here the following passages from the Committee's Report :—

Para. 204.—“ It would be much better to let the labourers build their own houses, on well drained sites, each community forming their own small village on the estate and living under conditions as nearly as possible like those obtaining in their own homes, than to force them to reside in the formal lines which have been built for them.”

Para. 272.—“ Another point on which the Committee would lay stress is the adaptation of the coolie's surroundings on the garden to what he has been accustomed to in his own country. He is at present well housed, but the practice is to locate the labourers in regular lines, each barrack containing three or four families living in separate rooms. Nothing could be more distasteful to aboriginals than having to live mixed up with people of a different class in this way. They are used to having their separate huts, and people of the same tribe like to form their own distinct hamlets. Everything possible should be done to indulge this taste.”

Para. 291.—“ But of even more importance is the grant of greater freedom to the labourer, and the study of what he himself would like.”

The recommendation which we shall presently make for somewhat more supervision over the building of houses is not at all inconsistent with this policy.

62. At pages 39 and 40 of the Second Report it is said that, in the coolie lines of tea-gardens in the Duars, the mixture of different races and people from various localities, and the mixture of new and old coolies have a tendency to maintain a permanent condition of exalted epidemic malaria.

As pointed out by the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, labourers of different classes and from different localities are naturally disposed to form separate communities and live in distinct hamlets, and the liberty to follow this inclination, which is allowed to them in the Duars, tends to minimize any danger which may arise from the mixture of different races and people of various localities. The scattered disposition of the lines on many gardens, enables coolies belonging to a particular caste to locate themselves at a considerable distance from every other class. There are other gardens where, without any overcrowding, the hamlets of different classes are located close together, and we think that it would be unreasonable to expect the management to provide a site for each hamlet at such a distance from every other as to obviate the danger of the infection of one hamlet with malaria from another. The separation of new coolies from the old would be most unpopular, in fact both new and old coolies would probably refuse to stay on a garden where it was insisted on. To be of any use for the purpose of diminishing malarial infection the segregation would have to be for a considerable period, probably at least a year, and there would have to be, for each class and for each locality from which the labour of a garden is recruited, two detached sets of lines, one for old and one for new coolies, which appears to us to be impracticable. The risk which arises from bringing non-immune new-comers into contact with persons infected is practically inseparable from any industry carried on with imported labour in a malarious country, It cannot be avoided entirely, but may be reduced by prophylactic treatment of the new arrivals. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to point out that the temporary segregation of new coolies which is prescribed by the rules under the Assam Labour and Emigration Act is intended, not to protect the new coolies from malaria, but to protect those already on the garden from the introduction of disease through new coolies.

63. The question of housing is one of great difficulty, and most managers are unwilling to undertake improvements in this direction for the following reasons :—(1) Many coolies come to gardens in the Duars intending to remain on them for a few years only : they are quite content to live in huts calculated to last that time, and would refuse to waste time and labour on the construction of substantial houses in which they had no intention of living permanently. (2) Coolies as a class are subject to superstition and unreasoning prejudice : they often refuse to occupy a house in which a death has occurred, or a family has suffered from ill health, or which has the reputation of being haunted ; and a house erected at a considerable expense would be liable to be deserted at any time and for the most trivial causes. (3) Coolies prefer to lead their own life in the lines, and strongly object to interference with their domestic arrangements. These objections have much force, but, at the same time, we feel strongly that, in a highly malarious country like the Duars, it is incumbent on employers of large bodies of labour to make such efforts, and incur such expenditure as may be reasonable for the purpose of preserving the health of their labour force. It is right and necessary that the coolies should be allowed freedom in choosing the type of house in which they will live, and there is evidence that Chota Nagpur coolies, at any rate, have a somewhat low standard in this matter, and do not house themselves very well in their own country. At paragraph 140 of Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Volume II, it

is stated that "in matters of domestic economy the Oraons are a slovenly race," and reference is made to their "badly built mud huts." It is clear, however, that even the Oraons appreciate a certain degree of comfort in house accommodation, since the houses occupied by prosperous coolies of this class, who have been long settled in a garden, are much better than the general average of houses in the lines.

64. The question appears to be one partly of expense, and partly of supervision.

At present, when the houses are not built on contract, the coolies are merely given materials, and allowed so much wages for building their houses, and there is no supervision to ensure that the work done is a proper equivalent of the wages paid. We think that better results would probably be obtained if the work were done under a system of tasks, like other important garden work. Coolies would build their own houses under the direct supervision of their sardars in the style they prefer, an estimate being made before hand of the quantity of materials and the number of *haziris* required for building houses for each *patti*. We do not think it necessary or desirable to lay down a type plan of house for coolies on tea-gardens which differ so widely in situation and local conditions as those in the Duars. We recognize that improvement can only be effected gradually, and suggest that houses built in the future should conform to the following requirements:—Every house should have an adequate earthen plinth, the minimum height of plinths varying in accordance with the nature and position of the site; the side walls should attain a height of at least 6 feet above the plinth at the posts; and the internal floor space should provide not less than 50 square feet for each occupant over the age of eight years. Anything in the nature of barrack formation of lines is, we think, to be deprecated. Care should be taken that the borrow-pits from which earth has been taken to raise plinths do not become a nuisance or afford breeding places for mosquitoes. By judicious arrangement such borrow-pits might be made into effective surface drains, being aligned so as to lead away from, not towards, wells or pumps.

It is probable that, if coolies were encouraged to build themselves more comfortable houses, they would be induced to remain longer on the gardens, and that part of the extra expenditure would be recouped in this way, as well as by greater efficiency in the labour force resulting from better general health.

Where congestion exists in coolie lines it is imperatively necessary that relief should be afforded by extending the line space, if necessary, at the sacrifice of a certain area of tea. It goes without saying that line sites which are found by experience to be specially unhealthy should be abandoned, the lines being removed to a better site. It would be well if all sites for new lines were selected in consultation with the visiting medical officer.

Lastly, we would recommend that a complete inspection of the coolie lines of each garden should be made annually by the visiting medical officer, and should be followed by a full report to the proprietors or their agents on the sanitary condition of the lines and water-supply, with particular regard to site over-crowding and resultant site-pollution. Certain firms of Managing Agents require a periodical report from medical officers on the sanitary condition of the gardens under their administration, but we think that annual complete and detailed inspection of all matters connected with housing, drainage, water-supply, and other items of general sanitation would probably be of more value than the present monthly or fortnightly reports.

65. The following table classifies the methods by which water is supplied to 88 gardens:—

Water-supply.

Piped supplies	...	...	...	...	17 gardens
Wells with pumps, tanks and taps	...	...	...	...	11 "
Tube pumps	...	...	...	...	10 "
Wells	...	...	...	...	48 "
River	...	...	...	...	1 "
Springs	...	...	...	...	1 "
					<hr/>
					Total
					88
					<hr/>

The piped supplies obtained from the hills are in every way excellent, the water being led by means of pipes from springs in uninhabited or very sparsely inhabited hills into covered tanks supplied with taps. In some cases water rights have been rented from the Bhutan authorities. These installations have been put down at very great initial cost, owing to the length of piping used, and have had a marked effect in lessening the incidence of cholera and bowel diseases. On two gardens where we saw

excellent piped supplies, cholera had been very prevalent previous to their introduction, but has been entirely absent since. In some cases water is pumped by steam from one or more wells and distributed by means of pipes over the lines. The majority of the gardens, however, depend on ordinary wells from which water is drawn by hand. It was noticeable that within the last year or two considerable efforts had been made to improve the water-supply. In a large number of gardens, new masonry wells were in course of construction, and corrugated iron ring wells were being abandoned. It is quite clear that managers as a class are keenly alive to the importance of a good water-supply but we would suggest that in future, before a new well is built, advice should be obtained from the visiting medical officer of the garden as to the suitability of the site proposed. We observed that wells otherwise satisfactory had been sunk in doubtful sites, and in one place saw a well being excavated in a site which was obviously objectionable. The selection of a site is not easy in some cases, where the water is at a very great depth. Experimental boring operations are being carried out by the Public Works Department, which, if they prove successful, may furnish a solution of the problem of water-supply in parts of the district where it is now very difficult.

66. The following remarks deal with the chief defects in water-supply noticed in the course of our tour, and the manner in which they might be remedied:—

(a) Piped supplies.—Where the supply is from a single well it is manifestly imperative that the well should be properly situated, well constructed, and protected. In one instance the surroundings of a steam pumped supply-well were polluted by faecal matter. In several instances the wells were not properly lined, nor the mouths protected from surface pollution. On one garden, it was noticed that excellent water was led in pipes from the hills to large, open, pukka tanks which might easily be defiled. At a garden where the intake was from a spring, no measures had been taken to conserve it.

(b) Well supplies.—Wells varied in depth from 12' to 80'. Some were entirely kutcha, some had rings of corrugated iron or of the Raneegunge earthenware type, some had boulder linings, either loosely arranged or with cement or plaster filling the interstices; many had a brick lining, but were without cement steining. Some were in suitable sites, others were at the edge of streams, the water in the well being practically that of the adjacent stream. Some wells had parapets and platforms, others were entirely unprotected from surface washings and their neighbourhood was trodden into a puddle. Kutcha wells and those with corrugated iron rings and timber protections should be abandoned. Unprotected boulder wells are objectionable, as the interstices admit of percolation everywhere. To render them safe, the boulders should be set in sound plaster and lined: this is especially the case where wells are situated in the middle of closely populated lines. Earthenware rings are satisfactory if the joints are soundly cemented and the depth is sufficient. Brick wells should be lined inside with hydraulic cement: it was observed in many instances that the cement linings were porous and broken in places. As a general rule, all wells should be soundly cemented inside to a depth of at least 20 feet. Platforms and parapets should be supplied to wells of all classes, and care should be taken that waste water and washings are carried away to a safe distance by pukka drains.

(c) Tube wells.—These were, as a rule, not provided with cement platforms, and no care was taken of their immediate surroundings, the waste water being left to form pools, and thence to find its way back again into the tube. All tube wells should be provided with a platform and a drain leading waste water away to a safe distance.

The recommendations set forth below should be borne in mind by managers, and we would lay stress upon the desirability of carrying them into effect as soon as possible, where existing wells do not already comply with them:—

- (1) The depth should ordinarily not be less than 20 feet.
- (2) When earthenware pipes are used, they should be soundly cemented at their joints.
- (3) When brick lining is used, the bricks should be set in and lined with hydraulic cement to a depth of not less than 20 feet.
- (4) All wells should have a parapet above ground.
- (5) A sound masonry platform, not less than 10 feet wide, should be built round the parapet, sloping away from the well.
- (6) The platform should be supplied with a masonry drain leading waste water away to a safe distance.

- (7) Buckets with a chain and pulley should be supplied or pumps erected if practicable.
- (8) The ground should be kept clean for at least 100 feet round the well.
- (9) The site of the well should not be in the trend of drainage from huts or lines.
- (10) When new wells are dug, they should not be within 100 feet of any habitations.

67. In a district, such as the Duars, with its excessive rainfall, innumerable streams, and broken country, it is impossible to expect any satisfactory results from anti-larval measures, except in isolated small areas, and no large drainage schemes are likely to prove of benefit commensurate to the cost incurred: the wholesale cinchonisation of the population is therefore the only measure that can be adopted with any hope of success. As malaria is, beyond doubt, the great cause of sickness and death in the Duars, the question of proper systematic quinine prophylaxis stands out before all others, and any system of anti-malarial prophylaxis which does not include special and thorough arrangements for the constant treatment of children who are the reservoirs of the parasite, cannot be said to be effective. The measures at present adopted on most gardens cannot reach children and persons in the lines, many of whom may actually be suffering from slight attacks of malaria.

Anti-malarial measures.
Quinine distribution.

Of the 89 gardens that furnished replies to our enquiries regarding this subject, 66 issue quinine after a definite method (7 of them employing petrolage also), 15 gardens have not adopted any method, and 8 have furnished replies from which it seems that quinine is given to "those who are willing to take it."

Of the gardens that issue quinine, some issue it daily, some twice weekly, and some on alternate days. A few gardens issue an extra dose on days when coolies have been exposed to heavy rain. The doses are usually administered to the women at the time of leaf-weighing, and to men when they are out at work. The Doctor Babu is supposed to issue a prophylactic dose to all those in the lines who have not gone to work, including the children, but this is obviously an impossibility. On many gardens bottles of tabloids are given to sardars for issue to their *pattis*, and in some gardens selected men help the Doctor Babu in issuing tabloids. Burroughs and Wellcome's tabloids are mostly used. Twenty-nine gardens issue euquinine, or tannate of quinine for infants and young children. Four gardens treat children by quinine in solution sweetened with orange or ginger syrup. Most of the remaining gardens issue one grain or two grains sugar-coated tabloids to children.

We were told that the *madesi* coolies were at first averse to taking quinine, objecting to its taste and peculiar effects. Formerly, when tabloids were issued, coolies were frequently seen to put them into their mouths and spit them out as soon as a convenient opportunity presented itself, and the vicinity of the leaf-weighing sheds used to be spotted with tabloids. Women especially object to taking quinine when in certain conditions, and for superstitious reasons. But by persuasion, tact, and the distribution of doses in their most palatable form, *i.e.*, sugar-coated tabloids, prejudices are gradually being overcome. Paharias have no prejudice against quinine, and take it regularly. One garden reports that the coolies now prefer quinine to their own private medicines. The issue of prophylactic doses of quinine has become more or less general in the past two years, and judging by answers received on the subject, it has caused not only a diminution in the number of cases of malarial fever, but also an improvement in the general health of the garden population; other causes may, of course, have conduced to this result. Sixty-two gardens report beneficial results from the systematic issue of quinine. On many gardens it is part of the European Assistant's duty to supervise the issue of quinine to the workers. It is difficult to arrange for its distribution to children and persons who do not go to work. The Doctor Babu and his assistant cannot be expected to interview every inmate of a house on their rounds through the lines, and many persons most escape observation. We recognize that the prophylactic treatment of the whole garden population is practically impossible, but with a view to ensuring the treatment of as large a number as possible, especially of the children (who are the main sources of infection) and new coolies, we offer the following suggestions, subject to modification in accordance with the circumstances and requirements of individual gardens.

When the outlying dispensaries recommended elsewhere have been established, the Doctor Babu, at his daily visit to each dispensary, should administer quinine to the persons assembled there. Where the lines are extensive, it will be advisable to employ

special distributors under the supervision of the Doctor Babu to distribute quinine at their houses to those coolies, and especially to the children, and new coolies, who have not attended at the branch dispensary. These distributors need not have any medical training, but should be men who can be trusted to distribute the quinine, and to keep a record of those receiving it. The distribution of quinine at dispensaries and in the lines under the system here proposed should be in addition to a regular distribution to all workers.

It is essential that a regular system of quinine prophylaxis should be organized on all gardens in consultation with the visiting medical officer, and carried out under his supervision. Special attention should be paid to new coolies so as to ensure that they receive quinine regularly. To segregate them from older inhabitants would be impossible, for most of them have come to join relatives or friends, and any attempt at separating them might lead to the whole clan leaving the garden.

We were informed that some gardens had issued mosquito nets to their coolies, but it was soon observed that the nets were being used as clothing, and their issue was therefore stopped.

An excellent memorandum on the subject of Anti-malarial Measures was published by the Medical Officers of the Duars Tea Gardens in 1903. A copy of this memorandum is annexed (Appendix P).

68. In addition to the use of quinine, jungle clearing and line cleansing are necessary. A small gang of cleaners should be told off in every set of lines. They should clear the lines and their vicinity of refuse, and jungle, and keep the lines well drained. On many gardens, gangs are employed whose principal work is to collect cow-dung and other sweepings and deposit them in houses built for the purpose, with a view to use as manure. By the addition of a few coolies to each such gang, lines could be kept clean and sanitary at trifling cost, part of which would be recouped by the collection of manure. This arrangement will be necessary only where the houses are close together: where they are scattered among fields of maize, line cleaning gangs will not be called for.

69. Vaccination receives a considerable amount of attention, but the cost might reasonably, we think, be borne by the management on all gardens. Vaccine lymph can always be obtained free of charge on application to the Civil Surgeon, Jalpaiguri, or to the Superintendent of the Vaccine Department at Shillong, and the actual work of vaccination would not entail much extra labour upon the resident doctor. Outbreaks of small-pox on the gardens are not uncommon: the disease is usually imported by new coolies, and too often concealed until it is brought to light by a death or some accidental circumstance. At one of the gardens visited an outbreak imported in this way was being vigorously dealt with, the infected houses having been burnt down, and the sick, with their relatives, moved to a segregation camp at a safe distance from the lines. It is the practice on all gardens to establish such camps upon an outbreak of epidemic disease; but the removal of the sick to them can only be effected by the exercise of considerable tact and firmness, as they are regarded with disfavour by the coolie population. Patients are provided with necessaries and medical comforts, and *haëiris* are allowed to those of their relatives or tribesmen who are told off to look after them.

70. The inhabitants of the Western Duars, outside the tea-gardens, do not live in villages properly so-called. This is indeed true of the whole of Jalpaiguri district, and also of Cooch Behar, and the greater part of Rangpur district. The largest collection of habitations is usually composed of a prosperous jotdar's house, with its out-houses, and the houses of some of his *adhivars* grouped around, and there are many smaller hamlets comprising two or three families of cultivators. The whole country along the route from Dalgion, *viâ* Madari Hât, to Majnoi, about 11 miles, was studded with such settlements of ex-tea-garden coolies, each with its patch of cultivated land, and many similar settlements were met with in other parts of the Duars. The houses of the coolie settlers, generally, are very inferior to those of the indigenous Mech and Rajbangshi cultivators, which have a neat and comfortable appearance, being built on well raised plinths. In the bastis, however, as on the gardens, the houses of people of the coolie class vary greatly in character according to the length of occupation. Those seen near Madari Hât, where the settlements are new, were no better than the average of houses in garden lines. Some houses of Oraon settlers in the neighbourhood of Mal, however, were distinctly better, being raised on sufficient plinths, with plastered walls and good verandas. Asked why Oraons did not build themselves similar houses on the gardens

one of the men said that they went to the gardens for a few years only. These people had left the garden on which they were employed twelve years before, had settled first as *adhiars*, and had subsequently become *chukanidars* under a jotdar. They seemed satisfied with their lot. The surroundings of the houses were swampy and insanitary, the water-supply a shallow unprotected well, the water of which, the people assured us, was very good. The children in the settlement looked puny and pot-bellied, and compared unfavourably with children seen on tea-gardens. A regular spleen count could not be obtained, but a few children examined all had enlarged spleens. The adults looked healthy and prosperous enough. Ex-coolies settled in the neighbourhood of a tea-garden can supplement their income from time to time by working on the garden during the busy season. If they cut themselves off entirely from the gardens, their condition becomes more precarious. If fortunate, they may rise through the grades of *adhiar*, *chukanidar*, and jotdar to comparative affluence. On the other hand, they may fail, through ill-health, loss of cattle, or other misfortune, and find refuge again in employment as coolies on a garden.

71. In compliance with paragraph 5'(g) of the letter of instructions (Appendix B) model schemes have been prepared by the Medical members of our Committee for two typical gardens, one having its lines on sloping sites, the other on flat land. The schemes with plans of the gardens will be found in Appendices Q and R.

CHAPTER VI.

VITAL STATISTICS.

72. In the Bengal Government letter No. 3097S., of 24th November 1892, the attention of the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division was called to the incompleteness of the arrangements in force for registering births and deaths in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, and orders were issued for the appointment on tea-gardens, under Section 3, Act I of 1892, of *panchayats* and *chaukidars*, through whose agency vital statistics would be reported to the registering centres. The letter of Government contemplated the appointment of garden managers as *panchayats*; but, as the orders involved the establishment upon the gardens of *chaukidars* directly responsible to Government, they were unfavourably received by the planting community. The matter was made the subject of a representation to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal when he visited Jalpaiguri in April 1893, and after it had been discussed by him with a deputation of representative planters, an agreement was arrived at, which provided that each manager of a garden should appoint a *chaukidar*, and send him weekly to report births and deaths to the officer in charge of a Police station. In communicating the terms of this arrangement to the Chairman of the General Committee of the Indian Tea Association, in their letter No. 51J., of 8th May 1893, the Government of Bengal declared that it was only in the event of any tea-planters failing to submit through their own *chaukidars* accurate and punctual returns, that the provisions of the *Chaukidari Act* would be enforced in respect of their gardens: at the same time the District Officers of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling were instructed not to put the Act in force by appointing *chaukidars* under it on tea-gardens except with the special sanction of the Commissioner, and after persistent neglect by any tea-planter of the duty of reporting offences and vital statistics (letter No. 53J., of 8th May 1893, from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Commissioner of Rajshahi). Tea-gardens were thus exempted from the provisions of the *Chaukidari Act*, and managers were allowed to report births and deaths to the *thanas* through *chaukidars*, who were merely private servants of the garden, and this system is still in force.

In a subsequent letter from the Government of Bengal in the Judicial Department, No. 125T.-M., dated the 17th May 1893, it was directed that "for facility of inspection, and with the object of keeping officers at headquarters informed of what is occurring," an abstract showing the number of deaths reported every month from each garden, should be forwarded on the 1st of each month from each registering station to the Civil Surgeon. If these orders had been carried out, the Civil Surgeon would have been able to watch the registered mortality on each garden, obviously defective registration of deaths would have been detected by him, and brought to the notice of the managers concerned, and a fairly accurate standard of registration might thus have been attained. But it would appear that the orders in question were very soon lost sight of. We have been unable to discover whether the procedure which they prescribe was ever introduced, and, if so, why it was discontinued, but it is certain that, at the time when our enquiry began, the prescribed procedure had not been followed for years. The births and deaths recorded on the tea-gardens were reported to the *thanas*, or the garden registers of births and deaths were sent to the *thanas* for incorporation of their statistics in the *thana* registers, but the monthly returns forwarded from the *thanas* to the Civil Surgeon did not show occurrences on each garden, or even distinguish births and deaths on tea-gardens from those occurring in the remainder of the *thana* jurisdiction. No opportunity was thus given to any Government servant, except the Police officer in charge of the *thana*, of regularly checking the registration on each garden, and the only statistics which the Civil Surgeon received with regard to births and deaths on tea-gardens, were in the form of a statement, compiled annually in the office of the Superintendent of Police from returns received from *thana* officers, showing the total number of births and the total number of deaths from different causes on all the tea-gardens in the district. The

In second-line from end of paragraph 72 for "forfeiture of the grant" read "fine".

73. The Doctor Babu, in his tour round the lines, which are often straggling and scattered over a wide area, is supposed to find out and enter in his registers all births and deaths occurring in them. That this is impossible is frankly admitted by the Doctor Babus themselves,

many of whom told us that they did not know that deaths of infants need be entered, and often found it quite difficult to learn of births. Deaths of adults on the working list, we have reason to believe, are correctly registered, since absence of a man from muster would lead to inquiries being made; moreover, as burial charges are usually paid by the garden (an average of four *haziris* being given), an application for these would naturally draw attention to a death.

While the registration of deaths leaves much to be desired, the statement at page 45 of the Second Report that "it would be quite possible for a thousand newly imported coolies, distributed as they are throughout the district, to die within a year without anyone being the wiser" is calculated to give an entirely incorrect impression. There are special reasons why no death of a new coolie should be likely to escape the notice of the management of the garden. New coolies owe money to the garden on account of their recruiting charges, and the manager is likely to keep trace of them until their advances have either been repaid or written off. On many gardens it is the practice of the managers to make an enquiry at the end of each season into the advances outstanding on account of new coolies brought on to the books at the beginning of the season, and sardars commonly ask for remission of sums due on account of coolies who have died. Besides, all new coolies of working age are brought on to the books on first arrival, and their continued absence from muster would almost certainly attract the attention of the manager or his assistants,—a loss of as many as 1,000 new coolies within a year would represent a very heavy mortality, and would be most unlikely to escape the notice of managers.

74. In dealing with the statistics available it must be clearly borne in mind that :—

Value of the figures available.

- (1) The reporting is very defective.
- (2) There is an abnormal age and sex distribution of the population.

That the reporting is incomplete is evident from this single startling fact—18 gardens with a total population of 31,016 in 1909, did not report a single death under one year of age.

Unfortunately, no estimate of the age distribution could be obtained, as records of previous census figures were destroyed by fire, and preparatory estimates for next year's census are not completed, but it is certain that, with a large immigrant population, there will be a great preponderance of young adults.

The sex distribution of adults for 90 gardens from which returns have been received is 54,235 men to 61,525 women, widely differing from the normal for India.

Now both the factors mentioned :—

- (1) Defective reporting, especially of infant deaths, and
- (2) Abnormal age and sex distribution, with excess of young adults and women, will favour a low recorded death-rate, that is the recorded death-rate must be multiplied by a correction factor greater than unity to permit of its being compared with death-rates of a normal population.

In connection with the infant death-rate given one must bear in mind that, not only is the infant death-rate normally very high in India, but that the place is highly malarious, that deaths from malaria mainly occur in young children, and that the more intensely malarious a place is the more the burden of the death-rate falls on infants and young children.

On the other hand, as regards births, the peculiar age and sex distribution, —*i.e.*, a preponderance of women of conceptive age—favours a high birth-rate. The recorded birth-rate must be multiplied by a correction factor less than unity to admit of comparison with the birth-rate of a normal population.

The birth-rate for 1909 from the figures furnished to us from 77 gardens (3,930 births in a population of 1,30,482) is 30.11 per thousand, higher, of course, than that for England. If, however, we assume that the number of women given in the population return represents the total number of women of conceptive age (granting that those of conceptive age yet classed as children are balanced by those above 45 in the adult group) then the birth-rate to per thousand women of conceptive age works out at 74.37—(the rate in England and Wales, a low one, is about 114.8).

In view, then, of the very limited reliance that can be placed on the figures given, and of the impossibility of comparison with any statistics of a normal population, an elaborate analysis of the statistics of deaths would be waste of labour, and conclusions deduced, probably, entirely fallacious. So only a brief review of the more salient points will be attempted.

75. The statement below, compiled from returns of deaths for the year 1909, furnished, in compliance with our Circular, by 85 gardens, with a population of 144,115 (returned) tabulates the deaths by age periods and causes:—

Causes of death.	Under 1 year.	1—12 years.	12—50 years.	Over 50 years.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Malarial fever	154	332	579	156	1,221
Bowel diseases	53	243	439	110	845
Anæmia	15	58	177	54	304
Respiratory diseases	24	51	352	91	518
Cardiac diseases	3	18	47	19	76
Cholera	2	95	101	10	148
Measles and other epidemic diseases	8	26	80	4	118
Other diseases	57	64	264	56	441
Total	316	622	2,039	494	3,671

The total general death-rate, according to the returns, works out to 25·47 per mille. The ratio of deaths reported of persons 12 years of age and over to the total population returned of men and women per 1,000 is 21·88. The above figures suggest the inference that the reporting of deaths of infants and young children has been almost entirely neglected.

As already mentioned, the figures of population can only be accepted as approximate, certain gardens having reported figures in round numbers and the returns of others showing a great disproportion of adults to children. Next year, when the census has been taken, statistics of greater accuracy will be obtained.

The annual Sanitary Reports of the district show death-rates per mille on tea-gardens, of 18·45, 23·43, and 24·8 for 1907, 1908, and 1909, respectively, calculated on the tea-garden population by the Census of 1901.

The foregoing table shows malarial fever as the most prominent cause of death, and bowel diseases as a second great cause. In one sub-district bowel diseases caused more mortality than malaria. Ankylostomiasis is said to be rare; it will therefore be safe to assume that the bulk of the anæmia, which is responsible for 304 deaths, was of malarial origin. Respiratory diseases are reported to have caused 518 deaths. Paharias are specially prone to respiratory troubles, both phthisis and pneumonia, and, as they constitute 18 per cent. of the total garden population, a heavy incidence of this class of disease is to be expected. Cholera, measles and other epidemics have not contributed in any marked degree to the death-rate.

76. As correct registration of vital statistics, more especially of the deaths of young children, is of such importance in forming conclusions as to the hygienic conditions of a population, managers should again be urged to use every endeavour to ensure completeness of returns, for the responsibility rests with them.

Suggestions as to collection of statistics.

A regular system with a chain of responsibility should be organized on each garden, and the following hints are offered. News of births and deaths could be readily collected by the line chaukidars, each of whom would keep a separate record for the area under his jurisdiction (which we think should not exceed a hundred houses), sardars and other chaukidars in the same area being ordered to report to him. The resident doctor would then incorporate all returns from line chaukidars in the main register. The line chaukidars should receive extra pay for this duty, and be held responsible for omissions. We think that it should be possible to ensure accurate registration under some such system as that now suggested, if the returns of births and deaths from the gardens are properly scrutinized, and the attention of managers is called to the necessity for

correct registration. With this object we would suggest that, in addition to the weekly report by the garden chaukidars to the thana, a monthly return in Eastern Bengal and Assam Schedule XVII, form 10, signed by the manager, should be sent direct to the Civil Surgeon, who should scrutinize the returns and bring to notice any obvious inaccuracies or deficiencies. If this is done, the abstract register and returns prescribed by the orders of 1893 will not be required. Should the arrangements above proposed fail to secure accurate registration of births and deaths, owing to persistent neglect of managers, the question of some form of compulsory registration will have to be considered ; in that event, we think that a special enactment to meet the case of tea-gardens would be preferable to the enforcement of the Chaukidari Act, either with or without the compulsory provisions of Act IV (B. C.) of 1873. Apart from other difficulties which may arise in connection with the application of the Chaukidari Act or Act IV (B. C.) of 1873, there is the objection that neither of these laws would throw direct responsibility for registration on the managers, which appears to us a necessary condition of any efficient system of registration on tea-gardens.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

77. In the Second Report the fact that the labour force in the Duars is recruited from the best class of labour to be found in Chota Nagpur is attributed to defects in the labour system, which are represented as largely responsible for a special intensity of malaria. For convenience of reference we quote the following passages:—

Class of labour employed.

Page 26.—"Difficulty in getting sufficient labour: restriction of the necessary recruitment of labour to areas inhabited by specially hardy races."

Page 49.—"Only the finest labour is used, because it has been found by experience that only such labour can stand the climate."

Page 56.—"And we believe that one of the main reasons why the aboriginal races from Chota Nagpur have been found, as a matter of experience, to stand the climate of the Duars better than any other class of labour is, not because they possess racial immunity to malaria, a disease which seems not particularly prevalent in their country, but because, for many generations, they have been habituated to hardship and privation."

Page 89.—"What largely determines existing conditions in the Duars is its labour system. Indirectly it is also this system which prevents the use of any but the best class of labour such as that recruited from Chota Nagpur."

It is also stated at page 89 that "the explanation of the special intensity of malaria in the Duars is to be found in the fact that it is an example on a large scale of the tropical aggregation of labour." It does not fall within our province to discuss this theory, but, with reference to the view that it is the Duars labour system which "prevents the use of any but the best class of labour, such as that recruited from Chota Nagpur", we think it necessary to point out that, in the Assam Valley under a labour system which, in the Second Report, has been contrasted favourably with that of the Duars, the aboriginal races of Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas have been found by experience to stand the climate better than others. It is certain that the Assam gardens would take all the Chota Nagpur and Sonthal labour now employed in the Duars if they could get it, and the fact that the Duars gardens employ the best classes of Sonthals and Chota Nagpur coolies proves, to our minds, not that the conditions of life are harder in the Duars than in Assam, but, on the contrary, that the coolies prefer the Duars. It is true that the Duars, generally speaking, are short of labour, and also that Assam recruits a large number of coolies of inferior physique from different parts of India, but we do not think that any inference unfavourable to the Duars labour system can fairly be drawn from these facts. It is probable that in some parts of the tea-districts of Assam coolies of inferior class do better than they would in the Duars, because those parts of Assam are, for whatever reason, less malarious than the Duars are, as a whole; but it is also true that many Assam gardens put up with labour of an inferior class because they cannot get any better. The Duars gardens do not import inferior labour, because they can get labourers of a better class, though in somewhat inadequate numbers. They use the best labour they can procure from fields of recruitment within easy reach, and, under a system of free labour, it would not pay to import inferior coolies from a great distance. Probably such coolies would have to be given lighter tasks, and this would mean either discontent among the more efficient, or a general deterioration in the standard of work. In other words, the proprietors of tea-gardens in the Duars find it more profitable to work their gardens with a somewhat inadequate labour force of a superior class than to import labour of the inferior kind with which many gardens in Assam have to put up.

78. In the remarks which we have made about Assam, we do not wish to be understood as condemning the Assam labour system, which we are well aware has grown up under conditions, and is adapted to requirements totally different from those of the Duars, but we have found it necessary to refer to Assam, because, although in paragraph 8 of Captain Christophers' letter of the 4th June 1910, the view that the labour system of Assam is preferable, as regards the health of the coolies, to that of Duars is disclaimed, the conditions in Assam are contrasted with those in the Duars in the same paragraph, as well as in different passages of the Second Report.

Assam and the Duars compared.

At page 42 of the report reference is made to the legislation which regulates sanitary arrangements and the treatment of coolies on tea-gardens in Assam, and the following passage occurs:—

But in the Duars the regulations applying to Assam have never been enforced and the recruitment of labour has gone on under what is known as the "voluntary" or "sardari" system, which since it entails no legal binding of the coolie, is generally considered as not necessitating measures for

his protection. Whilst, then, the Duars has advanced to a foremost place among the tea districts, it has become above and beyond this an example of the working of the special system of labour peculiar to itself.....

In this passage, by a curious inversion, the special labour contract system of Assam is represented as a normal and ordinary condition, and the free labour system under which most industries are carried on, is treated as a system special and peculiar to the Duars.

79. There is, of course, no necessary connection between a penal labour contract and protective legislation. We have legislation for the protection of free labourers in mines and factories, and, in Ceylon, as we have seen, there is legal provision for medical arrangements on tea-gardens employing free labour. Superintendents of tea estates in Ceylon are also required by law to maintain their coolie lines in fair sanitary condition, and to report vital occurrences to the Medical Officer in charge of the district (*vide* paragraph 46 of Mr. Arbuthnott's report). We do not recommend legislation for the protection of labourers on tea-gardens in the Duars, because we find that their economic condition is generally satisfactory, and, although we have noticed serious defects in arrangements for medical attendance, housing, water-supply, and general sanitation, and registration of births and deaths, we find that there is a general disposition among employers to effect improvements in these respects, much has already been done in the way of improvement, and we do not think that the necessity for legislation has been made out. The statement at page 72 of the Second Report that "no one being responsible for the health of the coolie, the treatment of the sick, as well as sanitary arrangements are matters to which no serious attention is paid" is exaggerated and misleading.

We are emphatically of opinion that any legislation providing for penal labour contracts, or the regulation of recruitment is most undesirable, and would be likely to prove fatal to the interests of the tea industry in the Duars, of the labour which it employs, and of the district.

80. The Duars system of free labour is, no doubt, attended by certain drawbacks, from the economic and sanitary points of view, *viz.*, a certain instability of labour, and lack of control over the labour force, leading to difficulties in the matter of housing and the enforcement of sanitary regulations. We consider that these drawbacks are much more than compensated by the advantages which the system possesses over any system of indentured labour, the absence of scandals or abuses in connection with recruitment, greater happiness and prosperity of the labour force, and the consequent attraction to the district of the best types of labourer and colonist, progress in permanent colonisation of waste lands, and the prospect of establishing in the district a permanent labour population.

The development of malarial infection through "non-immune immigration" is, we fear, an evil inseparable from any industry carried on by means of imported labour in a malarious country. It has not been proved that the evil is greater under a free system than it would be under one of indentured labour. It may and should be mitigated, by perfecting medical and sanitary arrangements, as far as possible; but it will not be entirely obviated until a local labour force has been formed by the settlement of acclimatized immigrants and the necessity of importing labour has thus been obviated. To this solution of the problem the free labour system of the Duars appears to be eminently favourable.

Paragraph
38.

81. (1) On the economic side we have no recommendation to make, except that managers should give special attention to the condition of newly arrived coolies, at all times, but specially in seasons of scarcity and high prices. At such times the amount of *kharcha* allowed to new coolies should be increased.

Summary of recommendations,

Under the head of medical arrangements, we recommend :

Paragraph
53.

(2) That one or more central hospitals, with in-door accommodation, be established in each sub-district, under the supervision of the visiting medical officer.

Paragraph
55.

(3) That, on gardens where lines are scattered, branch dispensaries be established at sites selected by the visiting medical officer, and visited daily by the resident doctor.

Paragraph
51.

(4) That, on gardens where lines are scattered, no resident doctor's charge should exceed 1,000 souls, and this standard should be worked up to gradually, where the present staff is insufficient.

Paragraph
54.

(5) That efforts should be made to obtain the services of qualified men as resident garden doctors, the pay being fixed at not less than Rs. 55 rising progressively to Rs. 80 or 90 a month.

(6) That a Board composed of two sub-district medical officers be formed to examine resident garden doctors whose qualifications appear to be *prima facie* insufficient, with a view to replacing those who are unfit by qualified men. Paragraph 66.

With regard to housing, we recommend :

(7) That, where coolies build their own houses, more supervision should be exercised, the work being done on a system of tasks. Paragraph 64.

(8) That all houses constructed in future for coolies should have a sufficient earthen plinth, and side-walls not less than 6 feet in height at the posts, and should provide not less than 50 superficial feet of internal floor space for each occupant over the age of eight years. Paragraph 64.

(9) That all sites for new lines be selected in consultation with the visiting medical officer. Paragraph 64.

(10) That, where existing lines are overcrowded, the line space should be extended. Paragraph 64.

(11) That line sites found by experience to be specially unhealthy should be abandoned. Paragraph 64.

With regard to water-supply, we recommend :

(12) That, before a new well is made, advice should be obtained from the visiting medical officer as to the site proposed. Paragraph 65.

(13) That, in the case of piped supplies, the source of supply should be carefully protected. Paragraph 66(a).

(14) That all wells should comply with the requirements specified in paragraph 66.

Under the head of anti-malarial measures, we recommend :

(15) That a system of quinine prophylaxis be adopted on all gardens, the quinine being given in the lines by the resident doctors, assisted by special distributors, in addition to a regular distribution to working coolies. Paragraph 67.

Under the head of general sanitation, we recommend :

(16) That a jungle clearing and line cleansing gang be employed for each set of lines. Paragraph 68.

With regard to vital statistics, we recommend :

(17) That a regular chain of responsibility for reporting vital occurrences be organized on each garden, all occurrences being reported ultimately to the resident doctor (" Doctor Babu "), who should keep the registers of births and deaths. Paragraph 76.

(18) That, in addition to the weekly report by the garden chaukidars to the thana, a monthly return of births and deaths, signed by the garden manager, should be forwarded direct to the Civil Surgeon, who should scrutinize the return and bring to notice obvious deficiencies. Paragraph 76.

(19) That, if accurate registration cannot be secured by the arrangements proposed, the question of special legislation to enforce it should be considered. Paragraph 76.

82. In conclusion, we desire to acknowledge cordially the assistance so courteously afforded to us by the managers of tea estates in the Duars, and the trouble which they have taken in supplying information on all matters connected with our enquiry. Our thanks are also due to the Calcutta Agents of the various tea companies, the Duars Planters Association, the Medical Officers in the Duars, Mr. Kellie, Manager of the Bengal Duars Railway, and the district officials for the information and help which we have received from them.

F. J. MONAHAN.

H. W. SCROOPE.

A. W. C. CHAPLIN.

F. R. OZZARD, Lt. Col., I.M.S.

ASHER LEVENTON, MAJOR, I.M.S.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

Sam Sing, Chalsa, the 3rd January 1907.

From—A. W. C. CHAPLIN, Esq., Dooars Planters' Association,

To—The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

We, the members of the Dooars Planters' Association, venture to approach you with this memorial on a question which vitally affects us—the question of the sanitation of the district where we live and work. We have been encouraged to lay our case before you by the knowledge that this question is one which has attracted the attention of Government and has been the subject of striking references in many official reports. So we feel that we have to some extent the sympathy of the authorities; and we venture to hope that this sympathy will smooth the way for the favourable reception of our present representations.

2. The Western Dooars is the narrow sub-montane tract that lies between the Teesta and Sunkos rivers. The elevation varies from 200 to nearly 2,000 feet. It is intersected by numerous water-courses and gorges, mostly dry in the cold weather. The annual rainfall is greater than in most districts of India, reaching in places as high a figure as 250 inches per annum, and practically the whole of this falls between May and October. The population is largely an immigrant one, and that too of natives of widely separated districts; there are over 200 Europeans engaged in the tea industry.

3. The Dooars has always been regarded as a particularly unhealthy district. That the reputation is deserved both the testimony of scientific visitors and the experience of residents fully attest. The statistical figures for Jalpaiguri district make out a case strong enough to arrest attention; but, were it possible to compile full and accurate vital statistics for the Dooars alone, we have every ground for confidently asserting that the figures arrived at would require no words of ours to commend them to the notice of Government.

4. Doctors Stephens and Christophers in their report to the Malaria Committee of the Royal Society, Captain James in his memoir on malaria in India, all refer to the Dooars as a deadly tract of country. We feel that it is unnecessary to strengthen our case by labouring this point and making further references to the many official and other documents in which the subject has been mentioned.

5. Although some slight improvement in the health of the tea-gardens population can be traced from the time when this industry was first opened out, yet even there the rate of progress has been slow, and in the rest of the district we have no evidence of any improvement at all.

6. Among the permanent residents attacks of malarial fever are frequent; among visitors to the Dooars in the malaria season there are but few who can boast that they got scathless away. These attacks are usually of a simple normal type; but pernicious variations are far from uncommon which, even if a fatal termination be avoided, result in constitutional debilitation or permanent loss of health. The gravest of this variation is the disease known as blackwater fever, the immediate cause of which is still doubtful; for which no specific remedy has as yet been discovered; which year by year abates not the frequency and intensity of its attacks.

7. The experience of the medical practitioners of the district tends moreover to show that there exists in the Dooars other fevers which are difficult to differentiate clinically from malaria, whose nature, causes, and treatment are still imperfectly understood.

8. This state of affairs has given rise to a general and very real feeling of uneasiness among the present residents, who feel that continuity of good health here is a thing which they dare not hope for, and who are ever and anon startled by the dramatic suddenness with which blackwater and other fevers claim their victims.

9. It also acts as a deterrent on the minds of others, for no man comes gladly to a district of such evil repute; and this cause must militate against efficiency of administration and industrial development. The prevalence of the feeling of alarm, the wide spread notoriety of the Dooars, are facts too patent to demand confirmation.

10. The insanitary nature of the district has direct influence on the prosperity of the tea industry. In order to have an adequate complement of coolies in the busy season, we are compelled to keep in employment throughout the year a much larger staff than would otherwise be necessary; and the loss to the industry is heavy from the influence of malaria in undermining the efficiency of garden labour.

11. Mere statistics of death-rate are no criterion of the climate of our district. The most frequent casualties among the European population find no place in vital statistics here; they are to be found rather in the statistics of other places. The number of people who die in the Dooars is small compared to the number of those who annually leave it with broken constitutions. It is not an extravagant estimate to say that the European population of the Dooars almost completely changes in ten years, and this fact should arrest attention when it is borne in mind that tea planters come out not as birds of passage, but with the intention of staying many years.

12. The labour on the Dooars tea-gardens is all free unindentured labour. Many of the coolies return to their homes, but many settle in the Dooars and devote themselves to agriculture. They are, we submit, a most desirable class of settlers, and in addition to the service they do in developing the waste lands of the district, it is not an unreasonable view to regard these colonies as a future source of local labour for the tea-gardens and other industries. But the ravages of malaria among them rule all such economic theories entirely out of court.

13. There is another important point in this connection which, as it is a purely technical one, we shall refer to only tentatively. We understand that the anopheles mosquito, which has been isolated by medical science as the chief, if not the only, carrier of infection, is to be found nearly everywhere, but where no malaria exists, these insects are harmless. It will not, we feel convinced, be stigmatised as an illogical statement if we assert that malarious districts, like the Dooars, from which many persons saturated with malaria annually migrate to other districts must remain a danger to the whole of India, so long as no steps are taken to keep the disease in check.

14. The conflict of medical science against malaria and its allies, though for years waged silently in remote corners of the earth, is now a thing of common knowledge of general interest. To the European population of the Dooars the achievements of the emissaries of the Schools of Tropical Medicine appeal with special force. We feel that our district offers a field for enquiry unsurpassed by any, and in this we are supported by the opinions of visiting experts, by statistics, by references in many Government reports; we feel too our backward state, and we deplore the fact that as yet the Dooars has profited but little from the campaigns against malaria. We study in the reports on expeditions to other places to find practical recommendations that will adequately apply to our more complex conditions. Though we have grasped in a general way the principles of malaria prophylaxis, we lack organization, and we feel that we must have the presence of some one who can bring the experiences gained in other places to bear on our peculiar local conditions; we feel too that the presence of some expert, whose words will have the weight which such experience alone can give, is necessary to stimulate a general and widespread effort at self-help.

15. The theory that quinine may be the cause of blackwater fever, whether generally accepted or not, has yet given rise to a feeling of despair in the minds of those who have hitherto regarded that drug as the panacea of all febrile symptoms, and further, the existence of febrile conditions in which quinine is by no means beneficial, seems to demand clinical as well as pathological research.

16. It remains now for us to throw our facts, our theories, and our hopes into a practical shape. Having studied the excellent results obtained by members of the Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine in other parts of the world, it is our unanimous desire that a similar expedition from that institution should visit the Dooars and carry out here bacteriological, pathological and clinical investigations which could not fail to yield results valuable alike to the district, to the rest of India, and to the cause of science at large. This is of course only a preliminary step towards the improvement of the district. The expense of an expedition, such as we indicate, would be small compared to the cost of carrying out the recommendations of the experts; for these men will naturally lay down practical lines on which sanitary measures should for the future be conducted.

17. The scheme is one which goes beyond the scope and power of an industry which occupies at most one-fifth of the Western Dooars, and we feel that unless we have the help and co-operation of Government, we are powerless in the matter.

18. The preliminary enquiry by experts from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine is, we submit, a matter of public interest, and from the attitude which Local Governments have always adopted on such questions, and the alacrity with which they have ever responded to any appeal on behalf of the public well-being, we feel

convinced that in petitioning Government to bear the expense of this part of our proposed scheme, we shall not incur the stigma of being unreasonable. As regards the second part—the expense of carrying out the recommendations of the experts—we are prepared to do our share. Our proposals have the support of the Tea Associations of Calcutta and London, and we have every authority for stating that the sanitation of our tea lands is an expense which the industry will gladly bear.

19. In conclusion, Sir, we can but express the hope that the case we have made out, though it be lame and inadequate through our lack of experience, though it be perhaps weakened by injudicious omissions of statistics and references, will nevertheless have an intrinsic strength and cogency of which all our errors of composition cannot deprive it.

APPENDIX B.

No. 50M.T., dated Dacca, the 31st March 1910.

From—The Hon'ble Mr. L. J. KERSHAW, I.C.S., Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Financial Department,

To—The Hon'ble Mr. F. J. MONAHAN, I.C.S., President, Duars Committee.

In continuation of Municipal Department memorandum No. 51-64M.T., dated the 31st March 1910, forwarding a copy of Resolution No. 43T.M., dated the 26th March 1910, appointing a Committee to enquire into the sanitary and economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies live in the Duars, I am directed to communicate to you more detailed instructions regarding the nature and scope of the enquiry which has been ordered.

2. In 1907 an expert enquiry into the etiology of black-water fever, which was reported to be prevalent in the Duars, was ordered by the Government of India. The enquiry was undertaken by the Central Research Institute, assisted by an Advisory Committee, and the preliminary enquiries were carried out by Captain S. R. Christophers, I.M.S., and Dr. C. A. Bentley. Their first report (Scientific Memoirs, New Series, No. 35) has already appeared, but the final report (a copy of which has already been forwarded to you), which was submitted by the Advisory Committee to the Government of India in August last, will not be published until the report of the Committee now appointed has been received.

The first portion of the report explains the authors' theory of "the tropical aggregation of labour," while the remainder deals with the Duars, which are described as an area of malaria hyper-endemicity. The explanation of the special intensity of malaria is stated to be that the Duars are an example of the tropical aggregation of labour on a large scale, and existing conditions are said to be largely determined by the nature of the labour system in force. It is suggested that the excessive prevalence of malaria is connected with defects in the medical and sanitary arrangements on tea-gardens and with the low standard of comfort among coolies resulting from the system under which they are recruited and paid.

3. I am in the first place to make it clear that the Committee has not been appointed to examine the scientific theory of the tropical aggregation of labour. Its main duty will be, after collecting such statistics as may be available and after making such local enquiries and taking such evidence as may be possible, to test the statements and deductions made in this report regarding the conditions, sanitary and economic, of tea-garden life in the Duars, to inform Government of the actual state of affairs, and to recommend measures to remedy such defects as may be found to exist. It is obvious, on the one hand, that if defects resulting in avoidable sickness and mortality really exist, either on gardens or in adjacent areas, it is for every reason desirable that remedies should be sought. On the other hand, if the condition of the tea-gardens is generally satisfactory, and if employers have already shown that they are alive to their responsibilities for the welfare of the labour force and have made or are making efforts to remove such defects as exist and to mitigate by reasonable precautions the adverse influences of climate, it is highly desirable, both in the interests of the tea industry and of the public, that the facts should be ascertained and made known. This is all the more necessary, as the Local Government has very little information with regard to the actual working of the Duars system which is entirely free from Government supervision and control. The tea-gardens are not inspected by any Government officers, nor are periodical returns prescribed showing the strength and composition of the labour force, the wages paid, the nature of the arrangements for housing, food,

water-supply, general sanitation, and medical relief. It is, moreover, by no means certain that the existing arrangements for the registration of vital statistics are not capable of improvement.

This being the case, the Lieutenant-Governor is not in a position at present to express, or even to form, any opinion on the conclusions arrived at in the report of Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley. He has, however, been advised that there are certain considerations of a general character to which sufficient weight does not appear to have been given by these gentlemen and to which the attention of the Committee should be directed. It has been suggested to him that no account has been taken in the report of the connection which is believed to exist between the amount of sickness and mortality among new coolies and their physical condition on arrival from the recruiting districts, or of the fact that the period during which the enquiry was held was one of scarcity and distress in the recruiting districts, leading to the emigration of an exceptionally large number of new coolies, whose physical condition must have been lowered by distress conditions in their own districts before emigration. It will be for the Committee to examine how far the causes of sickness and mortality of new coolies come into operation before their arrival on the garden and how far they arise on the garden itself. In testing the conclusions arrived at by the authors of the report, the Committee should endeavour to ascertain whether and to what extent the facts collected by them were those of an exceptionally unhealthy year.

In dealing with the economic influences at work affecting the physical comfort and well-being of the coolie population, considerable stress has been laid on the fact that the average coolie in the Duars does not work for more than from 15 to 18 days in the month. This average is taken from the Report of the Labour Committee of 1906. It is not clear on what data the Committee arrived at those figures. In the Hon'ble Mr. Arbutnott's report of 1904 on the Duars system (paragraph 8) the estimated average is stated, on the authority of a former Deputy Commissioner of the district, to be between 18 and 20 days. It will be the duty of the Committee to make as correct an estimate as possible on this point on such materials as are available. In connection with absences from labour it has been suggested to the Lieutenant-Governor that insufficient account has been taken in the report of the extent to which coolies are engaged in cultivation and other subsidiary occupations. Special enquiries are necessary on this point, as although the Lieutenant-Governor has no exact information regarding the extent to which coolies cultivate, he is advised that in the cultivating season the number of working hands falls off considerably.

5. In order that the work of the Committee may be facilitated the following terms of reference have been prepared. It will be the business of the Committee—

- (a) to ascertain the actual conditions under which coolies live, and to collect information regarding wages, number of working days, housing, food, water-supply, sanitary and medical arrangements;
- (b) to enquire into the condition of the neighbouring *dasti* population living outside tea gardens;
- (c) to enquire into the treatment of new coolies;
- (d) to enquire into the extent to which coolies engage in cultivation or other subsidiary employments;
- (e) to enquire whether the Duars system of working under sardars has an injurious effect on the health and well-being of coolies;
- (f) to compare the condition of coolies on gardens where payments are made direct and on gardens where payments are made through sardars;
- (g) after examining the sanitary condition of a few selected gardens to prepare model schemes of improvement;
- (h) to enquire into the value of the returns of vital statistics now reported and advise whether compulsory registration should be insisted on; and finally
- (i) to advise Government whether recourse should be had to special legislation to enforce proper sanitary and medical arrangements.

6. The Lieutenant-Governor thinks that, in the first place, the Committee should obtain from employers such statistics as may be available. This should cover, if possible, the three years 1907, 1908, and 1909, as well as the current year, and should deal with garden population, labour force, immigration and return of coolies to their native districts, births and deaths, sickness, wages, working days, and cultivation and other subsidiary occupations. Information should also be called for regarding the medical and sanitary arrangements on each garden and the method of payment

in force, and the Committee should endeavour to obtain some information regarding the growth of the *ex-tea* coolie population in the district outside tea gardens and the extent to which colonisation in the district by tea-garden coolies is proceeding. As it may not be clear, when these statistics have been obtained and tabulated, what value can be attached to them, the Committee should direct special attention to this point and report their opinion as to the value of the figures obtained. The census, sanitary and other statistics contained in printed or office reports bearing on the subject should also be examined.

Simultaneously with the call for statistics it would be well if you placed yourself in communication with Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley, informing them why the Committee had been convened and inviting them to place at the disposal of the Committee any facts other than those mentioned in the report which they may have collected during their enquiries. This is especially desirable, as the report does not appear in all cases to disclose the facts on which Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley have based their opinions, and it would indeed appear that in many cases facts have been quoted rather by way of illustration than as proof of conclusions.

7. No less important than the collection and critical examination of statistics will be local inspections of the gardens themselves. You will no doubt arrange with the members of the Committee to inspect as many gardens as possible, the Committee, as a whole, considering the reports of its individual members, and for the purpose of preparing model schemes of improvement for a few selected gardens [item (g) of the terms of reference] the advice and assistance of the Sanitary Commissioner and Sanitary Engineer will be at the disposal of the Committee. In carrying out local enquiries advice should be freely given to employers who may express their willingness to carry out improvements. Finally, it would be well to record the evidence of a number of leading planters, but the Lieutenant-Governor leaves it to you to decide whether this could best be done at the beginning or towards the end of the enquiry.

8. On the statistics collected, on the local inspections made, and on the evidence recorded the Committee should be in a position to submit a full report, and this report in addition to covering the terms of reference enumerated in paragraph 5 of this letter, should, as already stated, examine to what extent the conclusions arrived at by Captain Christophers and Dr. Bentley were based on facts collected in an abnormal year, and should also examine the value to be attached to the statistics collected. It is desirable that the enquiry will be as thorough as possible, but it is hoped that the Committee will be able to submit its report after four months. On this point I am, however, to ask you to advise Government not later than the 15th May when the Committee has been at work for some weeks and the extent of its labours can be gauged.

APPENDIX C.

No. 1-99D.C., dated Jalpaiguri, the 21st April 1910.

From—The Hon'ble MR. F. J. MONAHAN, I.C.S., Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division,
President, Duars Committee,

To—The Managers of Tea Gardens in the Duars.

On behalf of the Committee appointed by Government Resolution No. 43T.M., dated the 26th March 1910, I have the honour to say that the Committee would feel much obliged if you would furnish them with information under the following heads with regard to the gardens under your control. Should you not be in a position to supply all the information asked for, the Committee would still be glad to be favoured with replies on those points on which you may be able to enlighten them, and they will welcome any other facts or statistics illustrative of the sanitary and economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies in the Duars live, and opinions as to whether any, and if so, what, remedial measures are required. The Committee guarantee that the name of any garden for which statistics or other information may be furnished by you will not be published without your express permission.

2. Heads under which information is required—

- (i) Name of garden.
- (ii) Total acreage under tea.
- (iii) Garden population.

State as accurately as possible the total population of the garden classified as—

- (a) Men.
- (b) Women.
- (c) Children.

The figures furnished under these heads should include the whole population living on the estate, and not merely those working upon the garden. Infants in arms should be included under the heading (c).

(iv) Labour force—

- (a) State the number of men, women and children on the garden labour books at the present time, giving separate figures for each.
- (b) Give figures under the above heads for each of two selected months during the year 1909, one month being representative of the season when the labour force was at its maximum strength, and the other of the season when the force was at its lowest.
- (c) Give similar figures for the months thus selected in each of the years 1907 and 1908 or in one of those years, if records of both are not conveniently available.
- (d) If possible, give figures of "individuals working," *i.e.*, number of men, women and children, separately, who turned out to work on any day during the month, for each of the months for which figures are given under (b) and (c).

(v) Average daily muster—

- (1) State the average number of (a) men, (b) women and (c) children shown daily on the muster roll of the garden during the last month for which figures are available.
- (2) If possible give similar figures of average muster of each of the selected months in respect of which answers were furnished to question (iv) (b) and (c).

N. B.—Figures are required showing the average number of coolies turning out to work, not of tasks performed.

(vi) Classes of coolies—

State as accurately as possible in the following form what percentage of the labour force is presented by each of the following classes:—

Class of coolie.	Percentage of labour force.				
Chota Nagpuris
Sonthals
Paharias
Others

(vii) Recruitment—

Give figures in the annexed Form A showing the number of recruiters employed and of coolies of different classes recruited for four years.

- (viii) What was the gross outlay on recruiting in 1909, inclusive of Calcutta expenditure and advances? Of this amount what sum has been recovered from the coolies recruited in that year; what amount has been written off as recruiting expenditure (*i.e.*, paid by the garden); and what amount remains to be recovered from coolies (sums due from *sardars* or *recruiters* to the garden, and not recoverable from the coolies recruited, being excluded)?

- (ix) What items of expenditure and advances on account of recruitment of coolies are ordinarily recovered from the coolies after their arrival on the garden?

- (x) State as accurately as possible the number of coolies who left the garden for their homes at the close of the last working season.

If possible separate figures should be given for each of the four classes specified in question (vi).

- (xi) State the rates of task (*hasiri*) in force upon the garden for work of different kinds. State the length of time taken to perform the above task by a coolie of average working capacity.

- (xii) State the monthly rates of task wages (*hasiri*) paid to men, women and children, respectively.

(xiii) Coolies' earnings—

Give figures in the following form showing the *total* amount paid to labourers of all kinds resident in the garden in each of the months in respect of which figures were supplied in answering question (v) :—

Year.	Month.	Total amount paid to		
		Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5

NOTE.—Payments made to the managing, clerical, medical or other superior establishments, or to persons not resident on the estate should be omitted from this statement. It should include all payments made to labourers resident on the estate, such as daily wages of coolies, wages of tea-house hands and of masons, carpenters and sawyers resident on the estate, leaf pice, and payments to garden coolies for ticca work (terracing, etc.), firewood, brick-making and carting.

- (xiv) Are payments of wages made direct to the coolies or through sardars? If payments are made through sardars, are any steps taken to ensure that the sum which eventually reaches the coolie is sufficient for his maintenance?
- (xv) (1) Are complaints of withholding their wages frequently made by coolies against sardars? By whom are disputes of this nature settled?
(2) Have any strikes occurred on the garden within the past five years? If so, state the duration and supposed cause of each.
- (xvi) Is any control exercised by the manager over the manner in which advances are recovered by the sardars from newly recruited coolies?
- (xvii) (1) Is it the practice for sardars to retain the wages of newly recruited coolies on account of advances made, and to give them a subsistence allowance until the advance is repaid? If so, at what rate is subsistence allowance ordinarily given?
(2) Within what period can a coolie of average working capacity ordinarily pay off his original advance?
- (xviii) What provision, if any, is made for the support of sick coolies, and of those who remain absent from work in order to look after the sick? If arrangements are left to the sardar, what amount does he allow for subsistence to coolies absent from these causes, and is it usually adequate?
- (xix) What arrangements, if any, are made for providing attendance upon sick coolies who have no relatives to look after them?
- (xx) Describe the arrangements, if any, made by the management for the supply of provisions to the labour force.
- (xxi) Has scarcity leading to abnormally high prices occurred within your experience; if so, in what years?
- (xxii) Do any garden sardars keep shops for the supply of provisions to coolies? If so, how many such shops are there?
- (xxiii) State the name and distance from the garden of the nearest market at which supplies can be obtained by the coolies.
- (xxiv) (1) What means of subsistence, if any, are available to the coolie population living on the garden, over and above their earnings on the garden?
(2) State, if possible, how many coolies (a) have cultivation of their own or share the profits of cultivation with others, (b) breed cattle or other livestock, (c) perform contract work outside the garden, such as wood-cutting, sickling, sawing, building and road repairs.
(3) State the quantity of land (a) within and (b) outside the estate which is cultivated by coolies employed upon the garden.
- (xxv) Are the coolies provided with house accommodation by the garden or do they build their own houses? In the latter case does the management provide materials free for buildings and repairs?
- (xxvi) State the names of any *bastis* colonized by former coolies or sardars of the garden in its neighbourhood.

(xxvii) Water-supply—

What arrangements are made for supplying water to the coolies for drinking and other purposes? Is the drinking water-supply liable to pollution? Have the coolies facilities for bathing?

- (xxviii) Does the estate employ a European Visiting Medical Officer? If so, state briefly the nature of his duties.
- (xxix) Does the estate maintain a resident "Doctor Babu"? If so, state his name, qualifications, and date of qualifications.
- (xxx) Does the estate maintain a hospital? Or is there any recognized place to which coolies who are seriously ill can be removed?
- (xxxi) Are any rules or orders in force relating to the manner of attendance upon the sick? If not, what is the procedure ordinarily followed by the "Doctor Babu"?
- (xxxii) What arrangements, if any, are made for providing special diet for the sick, and who looks after its preparation?
- (xxxiii) What registers, if any, are maintained by the "Doctor Babu"? Are these checked and scrutinized by the Manager or the Visiting Medical Officer? If so, how often?
- (xxxiv) (1) State, if possible, the average daily number of sick in each of the years 1907, 1908 and 1909.
- (2) Also state, if possible, the average daily number registered as sick in each of the selected months for which figures were given in answering questions (iv) (b) and (iv) (c) above.
- (xxxv) State, if possible, the total amount spent on medicines, imported and local, and on medical comforts, during each of the above years.
- (xxxvi) Give a brief account of any anti-malarial measures, such as quinine prophylaxis or petrolage, which may have been adopted on the garden.
- (xxxvii) Have these measures been effective in diminishing the prevalence of malaria, regard being had to the experience of former years?
- (xxxviii) Where the system of quinine prophylaxis has been adopted, in what quantity and in what form, and how often is it issued to individuals? Is it issued by the "Doctor Babu" or by sardars?
- (xxxix) Is quinine issued to dependants, children, and non-workers living in the lines, and in adjacent bastis?
- (xl) (1) What is the attitude of the coolies towards quinine treatment?
- (2) Is any special form of tasteless quinine used for young children?
- (xli) Is any charge made for medicines? If medicines are supplied free as a rule, have any instances come to notice in which charges were made or fees demanded by the "Doctor Babu"?
- (xlii) What are the arrangements in force as regards vaccination? Is it performed free of charge?
- (xliii) State the total number of births on the estate in each of the years 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910 to date.
- Figures should be given for as many of these years as possible where figures for all are not available. The figures are required for the whole population living on the estate, and not for the labour force only.
- (xliv) Give figures in the annexed Form B showing the number of deaths occurring on the garden in each of the years 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910 to date.
- Figures should be given for as many of these years as possible where figures for all are not available. Figures are required of deaths among the whole population living on the estate and not for the labour force only. Deaths of infants and young children should be included.
- (xlv) State the number of persons repatriated from the gardens owing to disease or deformity during the past five years.

FROM A--(QUESTION vii).

Class of coolies.	1907.					1908.					1909.					1910.					
	Recruiters employed.	Number of coolies recruited.				Recruiters employed.	Number of coolies recruited.				Recruiters employed.	Number of coolies recruited.				Recruiters employed.	Number of coolies recruited.				
		Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.		Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.		Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.		Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
1. Chota Nagpur																					
2. Sonthals																					
3. Paharias																					
4. Others																					

FORM B—(QUESTION xlv).

Causes of death.	Age.	1907.				1908.				1909.				1910.				
		Number of deaths.				Number of deaths.				Number of deaths.				Number of deaths.				
		Under 1 year.	1—12 years.	13—50 years.	Over 50 years.	Under 1 year.	1—12 years.	13—50 years.	Over 50 years.	Under 1 year.	1—12 years.	13—50 years.	Over 50 years.	Under 1 year.	1—12 years.	13—50 years.	Over 50 years.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Malarial fever																		
Bowel diseases—(Dysentery, diarrhoea)																		
Anæmia																		
Respiratory diseases																		
Cardiac diseases																		
Cholera																		
Measles, and other epidemic diseases ...																		
Other causes, including accidents ...																		

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APPENDIX D.

EVIDENCE OF WITNESSES.

Haihaipatha, the 11th April 1910.

Mr. L. C. Daunt, Manager of Haihaipatha Tea Estate—

I have experience of the Duars since December 1885. Any one coming to the garden for work is shown in the daily attendance or *haziri* book. The names of coolies are entered in this book when they first arrive at the garden and remain on the book until they have left the garden or permanently ceased to work. It is possible for the name of a coolie to remain on the books for eight or nine months after he has ceased to work or left the garden. The names of coolies on leave or absent recruiting remain on the books. It is misleading to calculate the average number of days on which coolies turn out to work from the total numbers of coolies shown in the *haziri* book. Coolies engage in cultivation, labour on the railway and in the bazar (e.g., wood-cutting for local shop-keepers); that is, in my opinion, one of the causes of their irregular attendance on the garden. The chief cause of the irregular attendance is that by working on a limited number of days a coolie and the members of his family can earn sufficient for their maintenance in comfort and have something over for savings. I regard sickness as one of the causes of irregular attendance during the rainy season, but not as a principal cause. The *haziri* book does not show causes of absence for work. The sick register only shows persons treated by the Doctor Babu.

It is an invariable practice to give work to all coolies who turn out. A coolie who does only half a task is paid for only half a *haziri*. Such cases are not of common occurrence. An average task can be finished in between three and four hours. It is impossible to put pressure upon coolies to make them turn out to work. From June to the middle of November in the plucking season many women can earn as much as eight annas over and above the *haziri* earned. The men can earn extra pay by hoeing and plucking. I allow sardars to pay coolies when I regard them as capable of managing their coolies well, and of paying them without any complaints. When complaints are made against sardars I take the payment of coolies into my own hands. With good sardars I prefer the system of payment through the sardar. I recover the advances made to the sardars according to what they can pay. A sardar generally tells me how much should be deducted each month from his dues on this account. He, in turn, recovers the advances from the coolies, but I have no record of the rates at which recoveries are made. Advances to be recovered from new coolies include railway fare and, roughly speaking, average Rs. 9 or Rs. 10. If I found that the sardar was retaining the coolie's pay so as only to allow the latter a small living wage, I should at once take the payment of coolies out of the sardar's hands. I have not come across any such case.

I allow no shops in the garden. The bazar is quite near and shops are not necessary. Large number of coolies come up for a season only. I cannot say what proportion of the labour force these coolies constitute: they would be less than 10 per cent. There are *bastis* to the south and east of the garden: the inhabitants are former coolies of the garden or their descendants. Their principal source of support is rice cultivation, but many of them come to the garden for work. Most of these former coolies cultivate as *adhidars* under Bengali *jotedars*; but many of them are acquiring jotes of their own to the east of the district. New coolies are not segregated unless they are suffering from any contagious disease. In my opinion the Chota Nagpuri and Sonthal coolies stand the climate best. The Paharia does not thrive at this level. The north-west coolie is practically useless. I have not noticed any outbreaks of disease among coolies recruited during years of scarcity in recruiting districts. I don't think that sardars charge interest upon advances made to coolies. If I heard of such a practice I should stop it immediately.

I was in Cachar for 15 months. I prefer the Duars system of free labour to the Assam system. It is better from the coolie's point of view and I believe that he does better work in consequence of his being free to work or not as he chooses. Statistics regarding births and deaths are compiled by the Doctor Babu. When the death occurs of anyone living on the estate, four coolies are told off to bury him, and as burying the dead is shown as a *haziri*, it is possible to keep an accurate account of the number of deaths. Births are reported by the sardar. I think that every death is reported. There is not the same check on the births and the reporting is probably not so accurate.

I don't think that any legislation is necessary for the protection of coolies or the enforcement of labour contracts. I prefer that things should remain just as they are. Any interference with the coolie's private life would have the effect of diminishing

the labour supply. By legislation the Duars planter would lose the advantage which the free system gives him over the Assam planter. The Duars system has its disadvantages, but these are counterbalanced by the fact that labour is voluntary. I consider that the Duars planter is on very close touch with his coolies. As an assistant I knew personally every coolie on my garden. I am personally acquainted with the majority of coolies on this garden. A manager generally does much in the way of settling disputes and grievances, and so gaining the confidence of the coolies.

I have no objection to official inspections so long as they are purely advisory.

Coolies would not submit to being detained in an in-door dispensary.

Glencoe, the 12th April 1910.

Mr. G. F. Stoddart, Manager, New Glencoe Tea Estate—

I have eighteen years' experience in tea planting, having spent 4 years in Cachar and the last 14 years in the Duars. A coolie is put on the books on the first day on which he turns out to work, generally two or three days after his arrival. He remains on the books until he leaves the garden, absconds, or dies. A coolie would remain on the books as long as he is on the garden even though he had ceased working. Recruiters absent in their country remain on the books. The name of a coolie going on leave would remain on the books until it was ascertained that he would not return to the garden. The *haziri* book shows the whole labour force. A woman gets a pice extra for every pound of tea plucked over 16 pounds which is the *thica* or task: practically every woman earns extra pice. Sometimes, especially towards the end of the season, we reduce the *thica*, in December it is often as low as 12 pounds: the object of this is to encourage the coolies and to induce them to come to work freely.

The garden coolies hold 176 acres of *dhan* land within the estate at a rental of Rs. 263-2. They also cultivate for outsiders and have interests outside the garden. They work for contractors employed by the Forest Department and also as carters. They also find employment in the *dhan* cutting and transplanting season; all this gives the management a good deal of trouble. I certainly do not think that the majority of coolies who do not go to work, absent themselves owing to sickness. I believe that they absent themselves as a rule on business of their own or because of bad weather. When rice is dear coolies turn out in much larger numbers than when prices are low: this was particularly noticeable a couple of years ago in 1907-1908. Coolies are given leave to build their houses. On completion of the houses they are credited with four *hasiris*. For repairing houses they are allowed three *hasiris*. Materials are supplied free.

In 1909 the number of coolies recruited was 188. The cost of recruitment, including railway fare, comes to about Rs. 12 a head or something under. The average railway fare comes to Rs. 4-2 per head, the cost includes actual expenses and bonuses paid to sardars.

The average duration of a hoeing task would be 3½ to 4 hours. The duration of a plucking task would depend on the thickness of the flush. Coolies engaged in plucking continue to work after the completion of the *thica* or task. It is the invariable custom to give work to anyone turning out to work. Extra work is only available as a rule between June and November.

Coolies are paid through the sardars. I think this the only system feasible. Occasionally coolies require information from me or from the Babu as to the state of their accounts. Coolies are debited with advances made to them in the recruiting district and with their railway fare: ordinarily not more than Rs. 12. It takes them between ten months and a year to repay these advances. If a sardar tried to deduct too much from a coolie's wages the coolie would complain at once. I do not believe that it is the practice for sardars to allow only a living wage to coolies. My experience is that coolies come to me at once if they have any grievances on this account. Sardars do not charge interest on advances. Coolies are by no means backward in voicing their grievances. Ordinarily, a recruit makes up his mind to stay in the garden for three or four years. There is a fair amount of migration from garden to garden. I do not regard this as due in any way to ill-health among coolies. In my opinion coolies move about less than they used to and are less liable to panic and more amenable to advice in cases of epidemic. The Doctor Babu keeps a death register and ascertains deaths when he goes round the lines. He is supposed to go round the lines every day. The line *chaukidar* is also supposed to report sickness and deaths in the lines. I think reporting of deaths

on tea-gardens is as accurate as can be expected. I cannot be certain as regards the children. Coolies make their own arrangements for burying the dead. But they are allowed a *hasiri* if they ask to be credited with one on this account.

I think the Duars system preferable to the system of working coolies through the penal contract which was in force in Cachar, both for the employer and the coolie. An employer who can manage labour has far less trouble under the Duars system than under the penal contract system. I do not think for a moment that sick coolies are neglected as a result of this free labour system. If sick coolies were neglected a garden would soon get a bad name with the labour force, and this is the thing of all others which it is most important to the management to avoid. The walls of coolies' houses in Cachar were generally of mud plastered ekra grass. Probably the plinths of the Cachar houses were higher than they are as a rule in the Duars. I don't think that coolies would go into hospitals willingly if they were established. I am entirely opposed to legislation regarding contracts. I regard that as the one thing to be avoided. Legislation to secure better sanitation would probably result in diminishing the supply of labour. I believe that managers as a rule are in close touch with their coolies. I should welcome inspections by Government officers if their duties were limited to the giving of advice.

Nedam, the 12th April 1910.

Babu Srigopal Mukherji, Manager of the Nedam Tea Estate—

I have thirty years' experience of the tea industry and fifteen years' experience of the Duars. I have also had experience of the Darjeeling and Terai tea districts. No coolie is brought on to the *hasiri* book in any month until he has performed a *hasiri*. In addition to the coolies brought on to the *hasiri* book I allow for 25 per cent. as non-workers in estimating the labour force. We make abstracts of the *hasiri* books every week. The average number of days worked in a month by men and women is about 20. This I call a fair average. The chief cause of the attendance being so low is that the coolies are much given to sitting at home and drinking *pachwai* which they brew themselves. What they earn is, in my opinion, sufficient to keep them in comfort. Those who are thrifty save plenty of money. I could borrow Rs. 1,000 from a family of good working coolies who have been 20 years in the Duars. I have done so in the past. Oraons and Mundas are the most hardworking and thrifty. Sonthals and hillmen are not nearly so careful. In my opinion absence from work is due more to the drinking habits of the people than to sickness. After a bazar day, the number of coolies turning out is often as low as one-third of the force. I do not think that sickness is prevalent among the coolies to any noticeable extent. August to November inclusive are the unhealthy months of the year.

I recruit my coolies entirely from Chota Nagpur by sending recruiters from the garden every year. On an average I send out 25 recruiters, for the most part sardars and dafadars; and they bring back about 75 coolies altogether. It costs on an average Rs. 11 to recruit a coolie, exclusive of the pay and allowance of a recruiting agent. Including the latter charge the cost would be about Rs. 20. This does not include coolie's railway fare which is subsequently recovered from the coolie. Each recruiter gets a bonus of Rs. 2 on every coolie recruited. An additional source of expenditure, not included in the above, is the loss which may result from coolies absconding before their advances have been paid off: these advances are generally remitted and written off against the sardar. I tried recruiting in the Sonthal Parganas and got about 115 men last year. They bolted after being on the garden for a couple of months. I lost about Rs. 2,000 over this in advances and recruiting agent's pay. In the previous year I also lost money over Sonthals, so I have given up recruiting in that district. The rates of wage are Rs. 6 for males, Rs. 4-8 for females and Rs. 3 for children. A man will finish his hoeing task in three to four hours. Women generally get a plucking task of eight seers. We keep the same task throughout the year, but in December we are very lenient with the coolies and pay them for less than a full task. I pay extra pice at the rate of one pice for every pound over the 16 pounds. Women will earn as much as eight annas over and above their task in a day during the full plucking season. We supplement our tea house staff with garden coolies during pressure of work and give them double *hasiri*. During the heavy season a woman can earn from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 a month in tasks and extra pice. Men work most in the winter because they do not fall ill then. A hardworking man can earn up to Rs. 10 in the busy season by double *hasiri*. There is no cultivation on this garden. But a few coolies on the garden share

cultivation with persons living outside the estate. These would not be 5 per cent. of the total number. The labour force is practically supported by the garden. I only lose a few coolies in the cultivating season. If I find a man absenting himself from the garden to do other work, I tell him to give me my advances back: this generally has the effect of making him work. I pay coolies through their sardars except a few *nij* coolies who are attached to no sardar. I call *nij* coolies those who prefer to be paid direct by me owing to mistrust of the sardars. Coolies frequently ask how their accounts stand. They have disputes with the sardar. Often when the sardar and coolies quarrel we pay the coolies the full amount of their demand and pay them direct afterwards, though we allow the sardar commission on them. We are obliged to adopt this system in order to satisfy sardars and coolies. When a coolie comes into the garden he has received an advance of his railway fare, *kharcha*, and a couple of rupees to settle up matters before he left his country. The amount ordinarily due from him would be about Rs. 8. Usually this would be recovered in about 8 months at the rate of Re. 1 per month. In recovering from coolies paid through the sardar, I cut the amount from the sardar, giving him an account of the sums thus cut. It is not correct that sardars keep the pay of the coolies and allow them a living wage only. Managers exercise too close a supervision over sardars for this to happen. Coolies would object at once to this: they come to the manager for assistance even in connection with their family disputes and are in very close touch with managers. No sardar could attempt to underpay his men. Coolies do not come forward with their grievances freely in the first six months of their stay on a garden, after that they become more confident. Very few coolies go back to their homes from the garden: not more than 5 per cent. now-a-days. They do not come up for a season, but with the intention of making a long stay. Houses, medicine and fuel during the rains are supplied to the coolies free of cost. Repairs to houses are also executed free of cost. About 12 per cent. of my coolies become "bastiwallas" and are lost to the estate. I don't give work to these men when they come for it, as they only come when work is light.

New coolies are not segregated. The Oraons look very healthy when they arrive, but there is no doubt that their condition of health is reduced by the climate of the Duars. It is not under-feeding but the climate which affects their health. I should like to see higher plinths to all the houses inhabited by coolies. I believe that the general health of the labour force would be much improved if high plinths were insisted upon. Information regarding births and deaths is furnished by the line chaukidar to the Doctor Babu. I do not think that coolies coming to the Duars should be placed under any contract. The knowledge that they were likely to be placed on contract would deter them from coming to the Duars. Moreover, this system is open to many abuses. I should welcome inspections by Government officers and be ready to accept their suggestions.

Nakhati, the 13th April 1910.

Mr. W. Grey, Manager, Nakhati Tea Estate—

I have had ten years' experience of tea, including 15 months spent as Manager of the Tarajan Estate in Lakhimpur, Assam.

A census was taken of the population of the lines: the population was 1,169 souls: this includes infants in arms and old people unable to work. On an average coolies turn out to work on 18 or 20 days in a month. They stay at home to look after their household affairs: they can well afford to do so. There are three bazars in the neighbourhood of the garden which they visit—Batakhal, Baradighi and Mal. They stay at home generally after getting drunk at Batakhal: this happens especially after pay day. Then they spend a lot of time in drying, cleaning and husking their *dhan*. I am absolutely certain that illness is not a cause of their absenting themselves from work. Women with small children do not work during the cold season: they wait until the leaf comes on. This garden has never had any difficulty in getting coolies. It is our practice to send recruiters to the districts of Ranchi, Chaibassa and Dumka. A European and three Babus generally go down to recruit for this and five other gardens in the neighbourhood. This year we have got 194 coolies up to date. I can give figures for the last five years.

The cost varies according to the ease with which coolies can be obtained in the recruiting districts. This year the cost will be high as coolies are not emigrating freely. I prefer Oraons and Mundas: they are more regular workers than Sonthals, and work to save money. They cultivate after their work is done, whereas a Sonthal prefers to go hunting and fishing. The rates of wage here are Rs. 6 for men, Rs. 4-8

for the women and Rs. 2-4 for children. Children work for the most part in the cold weather: in the rains not 25 per cent. of them do any work. The task are 35 laggis (12 feet) of light hoeing for men and 25 laggis for women, 12 to 15 laggis of deep hoeing for men and 8 to 10 laggis for women, but the latter seldom do deep hoeing here. The plucking work is 24 lbs. for women and 26 lbs. for men. This, however, varies with the seasons: it might even go down to 4 lbs. when leaf is scarce as, for instance, at the present season. Plucking is medium here, as the tea grows a very big leaf. A task of light hoeing takes about 4 hours at the outside and of deep hoeing about six hours. A woman will take on an average about 5 hours to complete a plucking task. A pice a seer is paid for extra leaf. A woman can easily earn as much again as her *hasiri* in the plucking season, that is, from June to October, inclusive: at other seasons they do not get much chance of earning more than their pay: men earn most of their extras in double hoeing, but they also get a pice a seer for plucking after completion of their *hasiri* when leaf is plentiful. An industrious man is out plucking after 11 A.M. during the rainy season, after finishing his task. I never refuse work to any one whom I regard as one of our labour force, that is, to any one living in the lines. An industrious man's total monthly earnings in the busy season would be anything between Rs. 8 and Rs. 11: he could quite easily earn Rs. 10 a month.

One hundred and forty-six acres of *dhan* cultivation are held by 26 sardars at a rental of Rs. 296. Probably a number of coolies are sharing in this cultivation. We lose a good deal of labour in consequence of coolies going to work in the bastis and to cut *dhan*. When a coolie turns up again after absenting himself for these causes, there is nothing to be done except to put him on to work: we cannot afford to lose him. We have over 40 carts working daily, all owned by coolies: at present these carts can earn a rupee a day. Cattle are usually purchased by coolies upon advances made by the garden, which are recovered by slow instalments. There are 300 or 400 cows and buffaloes in the lines. I know of 44 pairs of buffaloes which are owned by coolies. I regard this as one of the reasons why we have little difficulty in recruiting. I rent portion of the Sungachi jungle at Rs. 102 for grazing purposes, and have taken a patta in the forest at a rental of Rs. 168-12 for the supply of fuel to coolies: this is supplied free to them: they go to cut it themselves. But we also sell wood to them at a low rate from our fuel stacks when they are in need of it. On the whole, coolies have not much opportunity of earning wages outside the garden. We pay coolies through the sardar when they are satisfied with him. If the coolies quarrel with the sardar about rates, we find it more convenient to pay them direct, but the sardar gets his commission all the same. I think these disputes are generally due to the inability of sardars to keep accounts. I find that the Chota Nagpur sardars are best in this respect and have least trouble with them. One of our writers keeps an evening school for which we pay him Rs. 5. I much prefer the payment of coolies through sardars. I have heard it said that the sardar cheats the coolies, but I never knew a case of cheating proved against a sardar. Coolies constantly come up to know how their accounts stand. I do not believe that sardars who receive coolies' pay only allow their coolies a pittance. The coolies see other coolies being paid direct by the manager and it is not likely that they would fail to bring to notice their grievances if they found that they received less from the sardar than coolies who were being paid direct. Coolies come up very freely with their grievances: they appeal to me in their family quarrels and constantly come up when they have disputes about money or wish to claim extra pay. New coolies are usually shy at first and only acquire confidence in time. But I do not think it possible for sardars to oppress new coolies. A sardar who did so would soon get a bad name and lose his connection in the recruiting district. I consider that managers are in very close touch with the coolies now-a-days. Assistants have great opportunities of getting into touch with them.

Advances are recovered from coolies by monthly deductions of their pay. It is my practice to leave it to the coolie to fix the amount to be recovered from him. I find coolies very reasonable in this respect. The amount ordinarily recoverable from a new coolie is half his railway fare, *kharcha*, and any advance which may have been made to him for paying his debts in his country, or altogether about Rs. 6 or Rs. 7. We give new coolies time to settle down before we begin to deduct advances from their pay: generally we wait until August. Where new coolies are paid through sardars, the advances are recovered from the sardar, but to my own knowledge sardars frequently return after the deduction has been made and say that there is not enough money to go round among the coolies. In such cases we always let the sardar have as much as he wants: they are as a

rule quite reasonable in their demands. A good number of coolies go back to their homes after one, two or more years, it is quite impossible to give average figures. I have no doubt that the fact that a man can go away when he likes, is one of the causes why we have so little difficulty in obtaining labour. I should say that 75 per cent. of the coolies are in no way indebted to the garden. I have known coolies come up for a season only. I remember one batch of Oraons who remained up to July and then returned home to cultivate. Not many coolies from this garden have settled in the bastis. There is not much touch between this garden and the bastis, and the number of coolies settling down as cultivators is small.

Sickness is more prevalent during the rains than at other seasons. It is worse at the beginning of the rains. I have no reason to suppose that new coolies are more liable to illness than others. Perhaps Chaibassa coolies are more liable to sickness than others. We do not get starved coolies here such as are seen in Assam. This statement also applies to coolies received by us in years of scarcity. There was an outbreak of cholera on the garden in 1906. In that year a very large number of coolies were recruited (separate figures given).

The Doctor Babu keeps the birth and death registers: he gets the information from the line chaukidar, but there is no rule compelling the chaukidar to report. I have had experience of Assam and consider that the Duars system is far preferable. The managers prefer it and the coolies prefer it. I should be entirely opposed to the placing of coolies on contract in the Duars. They come to the Duars because they have no fear that they may be placed on contract. I prefer to work with an absolutely free coolie. I do not think any good would result from inspections by District Officers. But some good might be done by inspections of medical officers. I would certainly like to see higher plinths for all coolies' houses. I do not think that coolies would come to an in-door hospital.

Sungachi, the 13th April 1910.

Mr. R. Garner, Manager of the Sungachi Tea Estate—

I have been 5½ years in the Duars. I have been on this garden for 2½ years as an assistant and have recently taken charge as manager.

I prefer paying coolies through sardars as long as the system works smoothly. Where the sardars and coolies fall out, it is most convenient to pay the coolies direct. Sometimes coolies come and ask to be put into the *nij patti*, that is, the coolies with whom the manager deals direct. I do not for a moment believe that it would be possible for sardars to make away with the pay of coolies or to oppress them. Coolies are quite ready to let the manager know their grievances and would not keep quiet if they thought they were being swindled out of their earnings. I know that they understand the system of payment. I do not think that oppression of new coolies by sardars is possible. New coolies go to the garden in which their relations and friends reside: few coolies are friendless when they arrive at a garden.

Eighty-five coolies cultivate *dhan* on 257 acres at a rental of Rs. 759 in this garden, but they have many shareholders in their cultivation. I do not think that we lose much labour by coolies going out to work for cultivators or bastiwallahs. Many of them keep cattle, goats and pigs. As a rule advances are given to them by the garden for the purchase of cattle. The whole of the carting for the garden is done by coolies. Twenty pounds is the average plucking task for women. Plucking above the task is paid for at the rate of a pice a seer. Many women complete a plucking task in four hours, but much depends upon the class of the tea: sometimes it takes nearly a working day to complete. The hoeing tasks ordinarily take from three to four hours to complete: a man can easily do a double task in a day if he chooses. I do not think that sickness is one of the main causes of coolies not turning out to work. They have their cultivation, their cattle and *dhan* to look after: moreover they are attracted to different bazars in the neighbourhood which they can visit on two working days in the week. I do not think that they absent themselves to any extent from drunkenness. I should say that about 10 per cent. of the coolies have been born on the garden. I think that sickness among coolies is more prevalent in the rains than at other times, but this may be due to the fact that we notice it more at the period of the year when we want as many coolies as possible. I regard the general condition of coolies as good. They seem remarkably happy, and I do not consider that they ever suffer from want of food or necessities. New coolies are not segregated unless we have reason to suppose that there is

something wrong with them. I have not sufficient experience of the garden to be able to say whether any particular class suffers, especially from sickness. I regard Oraons as the healthiest. The Doctor Babu ascertains the births and deaths by personal inquiry. I am not in a position to say whether any benefit would ensue from placing the coolie on contract. I have not had any experience of Assam. I consider that managers and assistants are in very close touch with coolies.

Meenglass, the 14th April 1910.

Mr. R. Davidson, Manager of Meenglass Tea Estate—

I have seventeen years' experience of tea in the Duars.

Coolies work on an average for twenty days in the month. I once offered a bonus of a rupee in the month to any coolies who worked 20 days or more in the month, but the number earning it was insignificant. I can't remember the exact number. Sickness is not the cause of coolies absents themselves. They can attend bazars on two working days in a week, this is one of the principal causes of a low muster. And I think that they find that where the family works for 20 days in a month they can live in comfort. We pay all coolies except those in the tea house, through the sardars. I have a *nij-patti* which any coolie who is discontented with his sardar may join, but it seldom contains more than two or three people, and my experience generally is that a coolie who joins the *nij-patti* applies after a time to be paid again through his sardar. I pay the *nij-patti* coolies myself. I don't think it possible for a sardar to oppress his coolies or to take a portion of their earnings. I am sure that a sardar would lose his coolies if he attempted such practices. They might stay with him for a time, but he would lose them as soon as the season was over. Some sardars have as many as 170 coolies: others only four or five. A popular sardar requires to be a good man of business, or if he is himself illiterate, he must have a good *bahidar*. He has to assist the coolies in many ways: he generally makes advances to them for weddings and funerals. Coolies with grievances complain to me freely, but I get very few complaints against sardars. When coolies leave a sardar, it is very difficult to know the reason: some private dispute is usually at the root of the matter. Quarrels between coolies and sardars about short pay rarely come to notice. When such quarrels do occur, they are generally regarding the state of the coolies' advance account. We lose a number of coolies at the season of *dhan* cultivation and reaping. I know that three sardars on this garden have cultivation in the basti and that they send coolies out of the garden to work for them. Coolies own large numbers of cattle, goats, pigs: some of them own ponies. We give advances to coolies who want them for buying cattle and carts if we think that the garden requires a cart. Abundance of fuel is available for the coolies from the clearings which are being made for the extension of the estate. We supply bamboos and thatch for new houses, the coolies can get the poles from the clearances, and we allow from six to twelve *hasiris* to coolies employed on building their houses.

When we send out the recruiters at the end of the season, three or four coolies in each *fatti* take the opportunity of going home with them. Some of them come back again. In some seasons the loss in coolies is about equal to the number of coolies recruited. But much depends on the prosperity or otherwise of the season in the recruiting district, for instance, this year far more Sonthals have returned to their homes than have been recruited.

I consider that managers are in close touch with their coolies, and that they take the keenest interest in promoting their welfare. If a manager did not interest himself in the coolies, he would not get them to come to stay on the garden. I don't think that much good would be done by placing the coolies on any contract while they are on the garden. I think that better arrangements might be made for the treatment of sick coolies. I want to make an hospital for coolies and I should like to have the power of detaining in hospital a case which requires hospital treatment. I should like such power to be given to managers by legislation. I mean that managers should be in a position to take a sick coolie to hospital against his will, if necessary. If there was any danger of coolies leaving the garden in consequence, the manager could of course leave the case alone. But I think that there is perhaps too much nervousness about coolies leaving the gardens. I think that a coolie can make himself very comfortable in houses of the usual type seen in lines. They can construct raised *machans* in their houses if they like. But they are indifferent to consideration of health. I have given out cloth for mosquito nets which I afterwards found women wearing. I should like to be empowered to fine coolies for doing any act injurious to the health of the general community.

On the whole, I far prefer the free-labour system to any system of contract labour. I don't think that much good would ensue from periodical inspections by Government officers. If any system of inspections is established, his duties should merely be of an advisory character. It would be very heavy work for a doctor to go through lines and examine every coolie who was found in his or her house. I think that good would result from leaving a small house to be used as a dispensary in lines which are inconveniently far from the main dispensary. We could do with three-quarters of our labour force if a class of coolie were available to whom four annas a day was necessary for maintenance.

Ranicherra, the 14th April 1910.

Mr. W. L. Goss, Manager of Ranicherra Tea Estate—

I have had 23 years' experience of the Duars. A coolie on an average does from 15 to 18 days' work. A coolie who works this number of days can keep himself in very good condition. For eighteen days' work a coolie would earn about four rupees exclusive of "doubles." They absent themselves to cultivate land, to do their household affairs, and to recover themselves after a bazar day. Sunday is bazar day here and Monday is the day which I get the worst muster. I know of a case in which an Oraon family earned enough on the garden to enable him to buy land in his own village after three years: the family consisted of a man and his wife and some sons and daughters. I do not regard sickness as one of the main causes of absence from *haziri* among coolies. Drink is more responsible than sickness for such absences. I regard liquor shops in the vicinity of gardens as a serious nuisance. The majority of coolies are paid through sardars but there is a *nij-patti* of coolies whom we pay ourselves. I keep a *nij-patti* open for such coolies as have disputes with the sardars. Coolies come frequently with grievances against the sardar, alleging that he does not allow them sufficient *kharcha*. When I cannot settle the dispute, I allow the coolie to come into the *nij-patti*; it often happens that a coolie after remaining for a few weeks in the *nij-patti* goes back to his sardar. My assistant pays the coolie personally: a *bahidar* keeps the account. I can safely say that every coolie knows the number of *haziris* he has done in a month. Coolies know that the manager is always ready to listen to complaints, and my experience is that they act upon their knowledge. I do not think it possible for a sardar to limit a coolie's allowance to less than what is sufficient for a coolie's support without the fact coming to my notice. New coolies might possibly suffer at the hands of a sardar if they had no friends in the garden, but they get into the ways of the other coolies very quickly.

In the plucking season a woman can earn about Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 a month in addition to her *haziris*: she gets a pice for every pound plucked over and above the task of 16lbs. A good working man can easily earn his Rs. 12 a month in plucking and "doubles." I only wish that more of them would do so. The average duration of a task is between three or four hours.

I should estimate the amount of land held by coolies in the garden to be about 400 acres. This land is all held rent-free: the only condition I try to impose on them is that they should work on the estate in the morning. These coolies are paid for their work on the estate. Some of them live in the bastis outside the lines, but are shown on the labour roll. The coolies own about 40 pairs of buffaloes and I should say about 400 head of cattle altogether. The carts earn Re. 1-2 a day at this season. Nothing is charged for grazing: there are about 1,000 acres of waste attached to the estate upon which the coolies can graze cattle and cut jungle free. I found that houses built by contracting *gharamis* were very unpopular with the coolies, so I gave up the *gharami* system. I now give them all materials free and pay them for building their houses. I follow the same system as regards repairs. A furnished house costs the coolie nothing. There is little loss of labour in this garden in consequence of coolies migrating to the bastis. This is one result of the large amount of land available for cultivation on the garden. I should be prepared to give more land out for cultivation if I could get more labour in consequence.

I have seen coolies arrive from recruiting districts in very poor condition in years of famine; this was certainly the case with Dumka coolies recruited in 1908. There were not many casualties among these people: we gave them light labour to start with and they soon got into good condition and would frequently apply for permission to do hoeing tasks. Of course they were credited with full *haziris* for light labour. I consider that the condition of health of new coolies improves on the garden,

and that with care a coolie can be kept in first-rate working condition. I prefer Oraons and Mundas as coolies. As a rule I wait until the season of "doubles" commences before I begin to recover advances from coolies, that means that a coolie gets his full pay for the first three months he is on the garden. The recovery of advances is spread over about nine months. Roughly speaking, a Chota Nagpuri coolie costs about Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 to recruit. I pay the railway fare of the coolie. I am entirely opposed to any interference with the present labour system. The present system is especially advantageous to the coolie in that it is incumbent upon a manager to make his coolies happy and contented, and so to induce them to come to the garden. If the coolie were placed on agreement in this district, he would be much more unwilling to come to it, and the difficulties of recruiting would be greatly increased. The free-labour system is much the best adapted to the Duars. I am not prepared to offer any suggestions for the more effective control of the labour force on the garden. As a rule managers keep in close touch with their labour force. It is entirely to a manager's advantage and interest to do so. I do not see how any garden could be worked satisfactorily unless a manager made it his business to ascertain the wants and feelings of the coolies. I don't think that anything is to be gained by inspections of Government officers; there is such a diversity of views between different officers, and coolies regard inspections with suspicion: they are by nature very suspicious. The secret to success in tea planting is plenty of labour. A planter may wish at times to be in a position to compel his labourers to work, but he recognises that it would be bad policy for him to bring pressure to bear upon them. If labour is to be secured, coolies must be well treated. The labour force is, as a matter of fact, never up to requirements, and the management must conciliate coolies in order to retain them on the garden.

Bagracote, the 11th April 1910.

Mr. S. S. Luard, Manager, Bagracote Tea Estate—

I have ten years' experience of the Duars. An average coolie works for about 18 days in a month. He can live quite comfortably on what he learns in that number of days. I do not regard sickness as one of the main causes owing to which a coolie absents himself. He does so as a rule in order to look after household affairs and to attend to his cultivation. Every family of coolies in these lines is given a *bari* plot of 70' x 50' on which he ordinarily cultivates *bhutta* and *mandua*. Sunday is a bazar day, and the women absent themselves in numbers on Monday in order to husk *dhan* purchased in the bazar. Among these coolies, who are mostly Paharias, drink is certainly not a principal cause of absence on the garden. I am of opinion that large numbers of coolies save money. I get money orders from the coolies to be sent away for them after every pay day. No case ever came to my notice of a coolie who was actually suffering from want. I do not believe that such cases are possible in these lines: in my own opinion all coolies have ample to live upon.

I should say that coolies own about 200 buffaloes, excluding cart buffaloes, and a still larger number of carts and bullocks. Many of them sell milk and *ghi* and breed buffaloes for the market. No *dhan* is cultivated within the garden. A few have cultivation outside. A fair amount of Paharias go away during the cultivating season, chiefly in order to "sickle" grass in other gardens. We prefer paying coolies through sardars, but we keep a *nij-patti* for coolies whose sardar cannot keep his own accounts: in such cases the sardar draws his commission. I established a "*khas nij*" for coolies who quarrelled with their sardars, and I only got three coolies to enter it in three years. I am quite satisfied that the coolies themselves prefer the sardari system. I think that when a coolie has a grievance against a sardar, he does not keep it to himself but looks to the manager for assistance. Such cases have come to my notice, but the coolies are as a rule quite contented with their sardars. Coolies know exactly the number of *haziris* they have given a month and of their leaf-pice. If a sardar tried to cheat a coolie out of a day's *haziri*, the manager could hear about the matter at once. I do not at all agree with the view that managers and assistants leave their coolies entirely to the sardars. Managers and assistants have ample opportunities of ascertaining the wants of their coolies: it is to their interest to do so. It is quite impossible that new coolies should be oppressed in any way by sardars. A coolie would not remain on the garden if it was possible for a sardar to oppress him, or if he could not earn a livelihood from his work. No complaint was ever made to me by a coolie that a sardar detained him on the garden against his wish. A good plucker could easily earn Rs. 10 extra in a busy month. It seems to me that coolies turn out to work in the same numbers when rice is cheap as when it is dear.

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We recover railway fare advances and *kharcha* from new coolies, but we do not begin to make recoveries from them until they have been a couple of months on the garden. I have seen batches of emaciated coolies brought on to the garden. They got fat and improved in health very rapidly. I do not remember losing any by death. New coolies are carefully watched when they come to the garden and casualties among them would be immediately noticed. Advances are ordinarily recovered in eight months: this would be at the rate of one rupee a month or thereabouts, the advance would seldom be more than eight rupees: some coolies receive only their railway fare and a few pice. Houses are allowed free to coolies: they build the houses themselves and are credited with *haziris* for absence on this work.

I am quite content with the present system of recruitment. I do not wish to see coolies placed on any term of agreement upon their reaching the garden. I don't think that any good would ensue from inspections by Government officers. I think the coolie is happier by being free and that as a result of being happier, he works better; and the better he works, the greater the advantage to the garden. If coolies thought that they had to enter into an agreement, there would be much difficulty in recruiting them. Coolies would not come into hospitals for treatment. I know this from the difficulty experienced in segregating them when an outbreak of small-pox occurs. About half of the coolies on the garden are Paharias, the majority of the others are Chota Nagpuris. The line chaukidar is required to report births and deaths to the Doctor Babu. But he is not fined or punished for failure to report.

Washabari, the 25th April 1910.

Mr. A. A. Ross, who has recently taken charge of the Washabari estate, is of opinion that coolies do not work a full number of days in a month, because the amount earned in eighteen or twenty *haziris* together with their extra earnings in the heavy season afford them ample to live upon. He does not think that sardars cut the wages of the coolies, who frequently come forward with their complaints and grievances and would not hesitate to report against a sardar who did not allow them enough to live on or was guilty of mal-practices. There is little cultivation among coolies on the garden, but almost all the old coolies own cattle.

If a sardar becomes oppressive he could not retain his coolies and he has to keep on good terms with them in order to keep up his influence and prestige.

A number of coolies recently objected to the manner in which the sardar paid them. Mr. Ross now pays the coolies direct although still allowing the sardar his commission.

Phulbari, the 10th April 1910.

Mr. W. H. Child, Manager of Phulbari Tea Estate—

I have 21 years' experience of tea in the Duars. The average coolie works on about 18 days in a month. I don't think that sickness is the chief cause of coolies absenting themselves from muster. A coolie finds that he can support himself on 18 days' work when grain is at ordinary prices. He stays away to look after his private affairs; women stay away to husk *dhan*, and there is usually a marked reduction on Monday in consequence of the market day on Sunday. Drink may be to some extent the cause of this in the case of the men, but I do not at all regard excessive drinking as one of the main causes of absence.

A good working man can finish his light hoeing task in two and a half hours: the average time taken is three and a half hours, except in the rains when it would be 4½ hours. The "double" *hasiri* is less than the first *hasiri*. It is possible for a man to earn Rs. 13-4 a month in the "double" season, that is, for the six months, May—October inclusive.

Kharcha and railway fare are recovered from new coolies; *kharcha* includes any advances made to them for paying off debts in their country. I never deduct anything from a new coolie's pay during the first two months of his stay in the garden. A sardar would not be allowed to expend more than rupees ten or twelve in repaying the debts of a coolie in the recruiting districts. The railway fare is Rs. 4-4, ordinarily it would take a coolie twelve months or so to repay his advances. A new coolie would come to complain if the sardar attempted to recover too much from him. I don't think that there is any likelihood of a new coolie being afraid to approach the assistant or the manager with a grievance of this kind. Very few of the coolies recruited nowadays are

really "jungly"; 90 per cent. of them have been on gardens before. New coolies on arrival get a dose of oil and santonine: they get five grains of quinine daily for a month on arrival and then they are treated just as the old coolies who get five grains of quinine twice a week. New coolies are more liable to fever than old coolies, especially those who come from the hills. Deaths among new coolies are not more frequent than among the rest of the population. Disputes between coolies and sardars are settled by the manager. Such disputes are not of frequent occurrence and I think that they generally come to notice. Coolies who prefer not to be paid by their sardar can come into the *nij patti*: there are not many cases of this kind, and the change is made with the permission of the manager. It is entirely incorrect to say that coolies leave their interests to the care of the sardars. On the contrary they take the keenest interest in their accounts and all have a very good idea of the amounts due to them.

There must be 300 buffaloes owned by coolies on the garden. Apart from the carting done for the garden, it is the practice for coolies to let out their buffaloes on hire outside the garden. About 45 carts work on the garden. During November and December a coolie, with a good pair of buffaloes, can earn Rs. 60. The number of cows and bullocks owned by coolies is in excess of the number of buffaloes. I lose a good deal of labour in the seasons when *dhan* is cultivated and reaped. Coolies merely work as labourers, getting paid partly in cash and partly in *dhan* by the owners of the fields. The cultivating season is our busiest time. Within the garden there are about 140 acres of cultivation held by coolies. Some coolies go away to cut wood for contractors in the cold weather, but I try to prevent this as much as possible. A coolie who wants justice in any dispute with his sardar or with another coolie betakes himself as a matter of course to the manager. If he is dissatisfied with the manager's decision, he generally leaves the garden. Obviously therefore it is to the interest of the manager to go carefully into disputes, and it is the practice of managers to do so, otherwise they would be in danger of losing their labour. It is quite incorrect to say that managers are not in touch with their coolies: they cannot afford to be out of touch with them. I am entirely opposed to any legislation which would have the effect of changing existing conditions of labour in the Duars. If the coolie were placed on agreement, the effect would be a marked falling off in the number of coolies recruited. The Duars is a popular labour resort because coolies are entirely free. I have eight months' experience of Assam. I don't think that the Assam coolie works so willingly as the Duars coolie, and from what I saw of the Assam system, it compares unfavourably with the Duars system. I don't consider that any inspection by Government officers is needed. I do not see what good can ensue from such inspections. I think the effect of such inspections would be to cause uneasiness among the labour force: they are suspicious and easily unsettled.

I don't think that a good in-door hospital would be attended voluntarily by coolies. Any attempt to compel them to attend hospital would result in a loss of coolies: they would leave the garden.

20th April 1910.

Mr. W. Whitmore, Manager of the Bhagalpur garden—

I have had 13 years' experience in tea: all of it in the Duars. The majority of the coolies are paid through the sardars, but some coolies are paid direct at the sardar's request when the sardar cannot make arrangements to keep the accounts. A *bahidar* usually keeps the books of an illiterate sardar; the amount of his pay is a matter of arrangement between him and the sardars. A sardar does not necessarily superintend the work of the coolies: the work is supervised by dafadars appointed by the management. Ordinarily, a dafadar would look after about 50 coolies. A sardar may also be employed as a dafadar. Here 6 or 8 sardars are so employed. There are 28 or 29 dafadars and 126 sardars on this garden, which has an average working force of 1,400 or thereabouts. A sardar working as a dafadar gets his pay as dafadar in addition to his commission. As a dafadar he would superintend coolies other than those of his *patti*. The dafadar reports in the evening the total number of lines hoed: from this the number of tasks can be ascertained at once. The *haziri* book is written up from the daily report of the dafadars. Double tasks are reported in the same way. As a matter of practice, reports regarding bad work done by coolies are taken from three of the most respectable dafadars. Deductions are made from the tasks on the strength of these reports, for instance, a coolie reported against might only be allowed "half a *haziri*". It is not correct that the distribution of pay to individual coolies is left

entirely to the sardars : each coolie's account is kept independently of the sardar. The figures I have given showing average number of days that coolies work in a month, are calculated on the number of individual coolies at work. By this I mean the number of coolies who have worked on at least one day in the month. The chief cause of failure on the part of coolies to work on more days is that they find that they can support themselves by working on a limited number of days. Sickness is certainly not a principal cause. Drunkenness is not an important cause, I have not noticed that coolies here are apathetic as a result of ill-health. Coolies have cultivation of their own : some make baskets which they sell in the bazar : some work on the railway. They cultivate about 700 acres of rice land on the garden for which a nominal rent is paid. This land is settled with the sardars who divide it up among individual coolies. We usually calculate that three coolies will have an interest in an acre. The quantity of land settled with the sardar depends on the number of coolies in his *patti*.

The amount of *kharcha* allowed to a coolie from whom advances are being recovered, would be Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 a month according to local prices : it is intended as a subsistence allowance. A coolie to whom insufficient *kharcha* is allowed ordinarily complains to the manager and gets transferred to another *patti*. The sardar of this *patti* is responsible for his advances. The register of births and deaths is kept by the Doctor Babu. The sardar usually reports these occurrences to him, or the Doctor Babu gets the information himself when he goes round the lines ; he is required to see the whole of the lines within three days. I think the reporting of the deaths is accurate, except in the case of infants. The returns of births are probably not accurate. This year the bulk of the coolies recruited have been on gardens before, probably between 70 and 90 per cent. of them. In famine years we get numbers of new coolies. The European medical officer is required to supervise the work of the Doctor Babu and to look after the general health of the coolies on the garden. He is consulted by the Doctor Babu regarding any serious case in the lines. It is not the practice to hold parades of persons remaining in the lines. I don't think that the death of an adult can pass unrecorded.

I think that the coolies prefer to live in lines of the type usually seen on gardens. Some years ago mud-walled houses were provided, but coolies objected to live in them ; they are too hot and they harbour vermin. Coolies would not willingly attend an in-door hospital. I don't think any legislation desirable either for the protection of the coolie or for the benefit of the manager by the enforcement of labour contracts. I prefer that things should remain exactly as they are. Interference would have the effect of upsetting the labour force. Ordinarily no recovery of an advance is made from a coolie until the third month of his stay on the garden. He gets *kharcha* during the first and second months of his stay. New coolies are not segregated.

Grassmore, the 20th April 1910.

Mr. T. A. Whitmore, Manager of Grassmore—

I have had six years' experience of tea in the Duars. Disputes between coolies and sardars are settled by the managers ; there are generally a few such disputes on pay days. It is not at all probable that a coolie who had a grievance against a sardar would omit to bring it to the notice of the manager. A new coolie might be at first unwilling to come forward with a grievance, but he would soon learn from the others that he could get his case inquired into by the manager. I have not found by experience that new coolies are more liable than other coolies to oppression by the sardars. I think that such oppression is very rare. Coolies absent themselves from *hasiris* to do their cultivation, to husk *dhan* and to perform other domestic work. They prefer buying *dhan* to cleaned rice. Illness is not a common cause of absence on this garden. In my opinion apathy or laziness arising from ill-health is not a principal cause of absence. *Kharcha* or subsistence allowance is allowed to a new coolie during his first month on the garden. In the second month he gets paid for the work done by him without any deduction : in the third month the first instalment of his advance is recovered from him. The great majority of coolies on the garden are personally known to the manager or assistant. Women are always known personally, as they bring in the leaf, and weighing of the leaf is done in the presence of the manager or assistant. Deaths of children are not always reported. Deaths of adults are all reported by the sardar to the Doctor Babu. The line *chaukidar* is also responsible for reporting occurrences.

Ghatia, the 20th April 1910.

Mr. H. G. Catton, Manager of Ghatia—

I have 21 years' experience of tea, all of it in the Duars. The system of payment of coolies here is exactly the same as at Grassmore and Bhagatpur. There is a complete system of checking payments due to a coolie who has any cause of complaint against a sardar. Advances given to coolies in their country and their rail fare would be recovered from them on the garden. The *kharcha* or subsistence allowances made to them through the sardars when they first arrive, are also recovered from them. No account is kept by the garden management of advances to individual coolies. Only the accounts of the sardars are kept. Something between 8 annas and 1 rupee per week is allowed to a sardar as subsistence allowance for each new coolie for the first month of their stay on garden. Advances are recovered through the sardars. Advances made to individual coolies are not shown in the *hasiri* book. The only check on the sardar in the matter of recovering advances is the fact that the coolie is free to complain to the manager when he is being hardly treated. I get such complaints very rarely. I do not think that sardars are harsh towards new coolies as a rule. I remember a case in which some indolent coolies from Palamau complained that a sardar was not allowing them a subsistence allowance, but when I enquired into the matter I found that they had earned very little and that large sums were outstanding against them. Generally speaking it is to the sardar's interest to be in good terms with his coolies. The low average of *hasiris* in a month is mainly due to the fact that the coolies can earn enough to support themselves without working throughout the month and that their time is taken up with their cattle, their cultivation, and their household affairs. Excluding the lands round their houses, and on which *bhuta* is cultivated, the coolies cultivate 514 bighas of *dhan* land. Some of the sardars hold lands outside the garden and would get coolies from the garden to do cultivation. I lose a certain number of coolies in the cultivating and reaping season: they go to work for cultivators outside the garden: a certain amount of inconvenience is caused on this account. I make it a point to provide work for coolies who turn out for work. I do not think sickness a chief cause of failure of coolies to turn out to work. Their prosperity is a much more important cause. I consider that deaths of adults who are on the labour register are correctly reported. I am not certain as regards deaths of residents in the lines who are not on the register. The registers are taken to the thana once a week by the village chaukidar appointed by this garden. Ordinarily the work done by a coolie is checked by the dafadar, not by the sardar. I see no need for any legislation to put the relations between the management and the labour force on a better footing. The present system requires that a manager should deal very tactfully with his coolies, but I think it is the only system suited for the Duars, and that it secures the prosperity of the coolie. Sanitary regulations which interfered in any way with the daily life of the coolie would be of little use, and would unsettle the labour force. An in-door hospital would not be at all popular. My experience is that the coolies have no confidence in the Doctor Babu, and that they are equally indifferent to his treatment, whether he is competent or not. One would have to move very cautiously in the matter of persuading coolies to build better houses. I should not object to inspections by Government officers, so long as they did not have the effect of unsettling the labour force. In my experience the sardar's influence over the coolies is very small compared with the personal influence which the manager and his assistant exercise over them. The office Babu serves often as an intermediary between coolies and the manager. I attach the greatest importance to the existence of close personal touch between a manager and his coolies.

Jiti, the 21st April 1910.

Mr. J. G. Robertson, Manager of the Jiti Estate—

I have sixteen years' experience of tea, all of it in the Duars. There are about 40 dafadars in the garden, who are under 6 chaprassis or superior dafadars. Bad work on the part of a coolie would be reported to the chaprassi by a dafadar and to the assistant by the chaprassi, and such reports are invariably tested by an assistant. As a matter of practice, the assistant himself usually detects such work as is bad. Many dafadars are sardars and a sardar may incidentally have to look after the work of the coolies who are in his own *patti*. Twenty out of 48 sardars are either chaprassis or dafadars. As a matter of fact, if a coolie's *kasiri* is not completed in a day, he gets a chance of completing it on the following day. The decision as to whether a *hasiri* is completed or not, is never left to a dafadar or chaprassi but always rests with a

manager or assistant. About half the coolies are paid through the sardars. The Paharias always prefer payments in this way: about half the down country coolies prefer payment direct at the office. New and *jungly* coolies also Sonthals prefer to be paid direct; but coolies who can keep their own accounts prefer being paid through the sardar. New coolies and those who owe advances to the garden get *kharcha*, i.e., a subsistence allowance from the garden, which works out at about Rs. 2-8* a month per soul: this is paid them through the sardar. When a coolie does not get what he considers to be sufficient *kharcha*, he comes to the office and asks to be transferred to some other sardar's *patti*: his complaint is then investigated at once. The coolies are not in the least afraid to come to me with their grievances. No coolie would tolerate any arrangement which secured him less than a subsistence allowance: if he was not satisfied with his sardar he would appeal to the manager, and if he did not get satisfaction then, he would leave the garden. New coolies tell their grievances without any hesitation. Coolies frequently come to the office on pay day to ascertain from the office books whether the account of their *hasiris* kept by the dafadar is correct.

I do not consider sickness a principal cause of a coolie's absence from work. My muster roll drops by about 200 on Mondays by reason of the previous day's bazars; many of the men are recovering from the effects of drink, and women are engaged in drying the *dhan* purchased by them: this statement applies mainly to the down country coolies. I consider that the principal cause of absence from work is that the coolie does not require to work throughout the month in order to maintain himself in comfort. In the rains sickness is a principal cause of absence: on referring to the sick register, I see that as many as 50 coolies were incapacitated from sickness in September. The muster roll drops by about 100 in the cultivating season when the coolies are preparing their *bari* lands. Very few of them go away to cultivate for outsiders. The Doctor Babu is required to ascertain all deaths, either from the line *chaukidar* or by personal enquiry when he goes round the lines. He is expected to go round a third of the garden every day, that is, to make the full round twice a week.

It is quite impossible for a coolie to die without the fact being brought to the knowledge of the management. Deaths of infants in arms might escape notice, but other reporting is accurate. I say this, because I have been 14 years on the garden and am personally acquainted with every coolie employed upon it, except such as have been recruited this year. The names of new coolies are entered in the books as soon as they join. At the end of the year when the sardar comes for his bonus, the deaths of new coolies are gone into and the Doctor Babu would be called upon to explain if a death were found to have occurred without being registered. I think that if we could get a better class of Doctor Babu, the general health of the coolies on gardens would be considerably improved. I am not at all in favour of placing coolies on any agreement. I prefer that the labour force should be entirely free, the advantage of the system to the coolie lies in the fact, that unless the management make his life agreeable to him, he can leave the garden: a coolie who wishes to leave a garden need only make arrangements with the sardar of another garden, this is usually done on Sundays in the bazars. I am not in favour of any system of inspection by Government officers. I do not see that much good could result from such inspections. Here the sardars are allowed to select sites for their lines unless there is some special objection to their choice. Quinine is given out to coolies during the rains while they are at work. People in their houses are supplied by the Doctor Babu and line *chaukidars*.

Hope, the 21st April 1910.

Mr. D. J. Cameron, Manager of the Hope Estate—

I have seventeen years' experience of the tea districts in the Duars and Assam. I spent five years altogether in Assam. Sardars appoint their own dafadars but chaprassis are appointed by the management to supervise the work of the coolies. In practice, a dafadar is little more than a figure head as far as work is concerned: he never reports a coolie for bad work. The chaprassis very seldom report coolies for bad work; the management prefers not to trouble about the work of individual coolies so long as a good average is turned out. Chaprassis seldom report coolies for bad work: when such a report is received, it is investigated by the manager and assistant and it generally happens that the chaprassi has some grudge against the coolie, so nothing is done to the latter. After pay days coolies sometimes complain that the sardars have not credited them with the proper number of *hasiris*. A garden register is kept by a

Babu of the office, who goes out daily and enters the names of all the coolies at work, sardar, by sardar. That register is independent of all the other registers on the garden and serves as a check on the sardar. Complaints against the sardars by coolies are checked by means of this register. Such complaints are investigated and settled there and then. I keep a *patti* for coolies who are discontented with the sardar, this *patti* would contain about 20 coolies. And the coolies of certain sardars who cannot keep accounts are also paid directly by the office; these sardars practically do nothing more than keep their coolies together. New coolies receive their *kharcha* through their sardars; the amount paid to each individual worker works out at about annas 12 a week. But most of them get initial advances of about Rs. 3 to buy utensils and set themselves up on the garden. I have had no complaints from coolies that sardars do not allow them sufficient *kharcha*. I am personally acquainted with every coolie on the garden. They come to me freely with their small grievances, and I have not the slightest doubt that coolies having any serious grievances against their sardars would bring it to my notice at once. If coolies cannot get their complaints remedied, they leave the garden, whether advances are outstanding against them or not. When a coolie wants to leave a sardar he comes to the office and informs me of the fact he is then transferred either to another sardar's *patti* or to the *nij patti*, in either case the coolie's original sardar loses his commission. It is entirely to a sardar's interest that he should be on good terms with his coolies. When a sardar leaves the garden, it is found as a matter of experience, that his coolies follow him as a flock of sheep. The followers of a sardar are his friends and relations who attract to him in turn their own friends and relations.

Sickness is not one of the principal causes of an average coolie's failure to work on more than 19 working days in a month. He absents himself generally, because he finds that he and his family need not work every day in order to keep themselves in comfort. Wet weather, *dhan* husking and the care of their children are other principal causes of absence. They also devote a certain amount of time to cultivation of their *baris*. I lose a certain amount of labour owing to the acquisition of *jote* lands by coolies outside the estate: such coolies go away to live in the *bastis* but come back to work in the slack season; it is our practice never to refuse work. There is generally a falling off of 25 to 30 per cent. in the muster on a Monday, the day after the bazar day: this is due to the fact that many of the men are sleeping off the effects of intoxication and many of the women engaged in husking *dhan*. The line chaukidar is expected to report domestic occurrences; the Doctor Babu is also expected to ascertain such occurrences. I sign the birth and death register every Sunday before it goes the thana. I am perfectly certain that the registration of deaths of adults is accurate. In the case of new coolies dying who are not personally known to me, the sardar would claim *haziris* on account of their burial. I do not vouch for accuracy in the reporting of deaths of infants and children who are not on the labour force. The distribution of quinine is on the hands of one of the assistants and myself. The assistant goes round twice a week and supervises the giving of quinine to the adult coolies on work, two grains twice a week. Children on work get five grains twice a week. Later on in the season the women engaged on plucking get their quinine when they bring their baskets to the tea house. I have no doubt that there has been far less fever among the coolies since we began to distribute quinine systematically. Speaking from my experience in Assam, I should be entirely opposed to any legislation to the effect that coolies should be placed on agreement. The present system is highly advantageous to the coolies and I believe that it must be the most advantageous to the management in the long run.

I should not object to inspections so long as they did not have the effect of unsettling the coolies. I should object to being required to bring pressure to bear on the coolies, as a result of these inspections: the coolies might resent having their lines visited too frequently by strangers. When small-pox occurs, much difficulty is experienced in segregating coolies. They would not willingly go to an in-door hospital and would boycott it altogether if a death occurred there. When I first came to the Duars, managers were not in as close touch with coolies as they are now: they dealt chiefly with the sardars. But of late years all this has been changed as a result of increasing difficulty in obtaining labour. A manager must be in close touch with his coolies and lay himself out to meet their needs if he wishes to retain his labour force.

Hilla, the 22nd April 1910.

Mr. L. Ranger, Manager of Hilla—

I have 25 years' experience of the tea industry in the Duars. The garden Munshi, who is the head of the native supervising agency, has five chaprassis under

him, who also supervise the tasks of the coolies, and beneath the chaprassis are about 16 dafadars. Bahidars are also employed, who keep the *haziris* for the chaprassis. Reports of bad work by coolies are investigated by the assistant and are not left to be disposed of by any member of the native staff. The assistant checks every entry in the books of short *haziris*, in fact a short *haziri* is not entered against a coolie unless the assistant has initialled it. The books are not based upon the report of any of the sardars or dafadars. The account of a coolie's *haziri* can be turned up at any time. It is exceptional for a coolie to come to me to know the state of their accounts, but probably they ask the Babu. Payments are made direct to about half the coolies; the rest are paid through the sardar. In both cases the sardar takes his commission. Illiterate sardars prefer that their coolies should be paid by the office. I keep a *nij patti* for coolies who are dissatisfied with the sardar, it contains only a few coolies. I do not permit coolies to change their sardar, a dissatisfied coolie must come into the *nij patti*. New coolies get a *kharcha* of Re. 1 a week for the first month if they are working. In the second month a coolie gets whatever he earns, but advance payments are made to him as he requires it. I have known of cases in which new coolies, unfit for work, have said, "How can I work if I don't get *kharcha*". I have inquired into such cases and given *kharcha* freely when I found that it was required. There is no danger of sick coolies being overlooked when they first come to the garden. The sardar, the dafadar and the Doctor Babu are all on the look-out for such cases. Nearly all the coolies have their own relatives on the garden: single unattached coolies are very few.

I think that coolies absent themselves for so many days in the month because by working for half the number of working days they can earn enough to support themselves. Thus I do not give *doubles* at this season of the year for I know that if I did, the coolies would have earned so much by June and July that it would not be worth their while to turn out in the heavy season of the year. There is a marked falling off in the muster on the day following bazar days, probably 30 per cent. of the working force fails to attend. There is a similar falling off on the Shipshu bazar day and on the day following it. Shipshu is across the border in Bhutan. I make it a point to find work for a coolie who turns out to work. In 1907 sickness was certainly one of the main causes of absence of coolies, but since that year there has been a marked improvement in this respect. I do not lose many coolies in the seasons of reaping and cultivation; there is no outside cultivation in the neighbourhood of the garden to which they can be attracted. At one time the planters would have welcomed some system under which coolies would be bound by agreement. Now I do not think that there is anything to be gained by a change. The only advantage which the planter would gain by a system of agreement would be the power to compel the coolie to do better work. At present we have to take what we can get from the coolies. Legislation would lead to interference and inspections, and this might have the effect of unsettling the coolies. The establishment of any system of agreement would disorganise recruiting for some years at least. I don't think that inspections to secure better sanitation and better housing are necessary. The difficulty in the way of providing better houses and more permanent lines is the danger of an epidemic. I avoid interference with coolies' houses as far as possible. I don't believe that coolies would willingly attend an in-door hospital. A branch dispensary might be useful in some large gardens but not here.

A coolie owing an advance to a garden is more tied down than he used to be, as a result of the arrangements between gardens under which the garden to which he goes away, recovers his advance. He cannot escape his liabilities as he used to. November is the season at which coolies usually go home. There is nothing to prevent a coolie from doing so unless he owes an advance to the garden. A manager must remain in touch with his coolies if he wishes to retain his labour force. Coolies come to me freely with their grievances.

Nagrakata, the 22nd April 1910.

Mr. W. J. Milne, Manager of Nagrakata—

I have had twelve years' experience of the tea industry, ten of which have been spent on this garden.

There is no possibility of a coolie being cut for short work except by the order of an assistant. As a rule, I go round and inspect all the works myself and am pointed out bad work by the assistant. As a matter of fact, there is very little cutting on this account. I have scarcely ever come across a case in which a dafadar or chaprassi

reported against a coolie for bad work, in order to satisfy a grudge against him. There are, I think, 28 dafadars on the garden : about 20 of them are sardars. I discourage the appointment of sardars as dafadars of the coolies over their own *patti*: they are apt to waste time in talking to their people, instead of looking after the work. In practice, a dafadar reports bad work to the assistant who investigates then and there. Practically all the Sonthals and a few of the Nagpuris are paid direct from the office, and all the Paharias and the majority of Nagpuris through sardars. Generally, coolies are paid from the office when the sardars are illiterate or too lazy to keep accounts. A sardar to whose *patti* a coolie wishes to change is required to accept responsibility for any advance which may be due from the coolie. We commence to recover advances from coolies in the third month after their arrival on the garden. On the first month of their arrival they are allowed *kharcha*. New coolies are allowed *kharcha* at the rate of from annas 12 to rupee 1 a week. I have had cases of coolies complaining that the sardar does not allow him sufficient *kharcha*. In some such cases I have directed a sardar to pay more *kharcha* to the coolie. I do not think that a coolie would keep quiet over a grievance of this kind. As an assistant on the garden, I knew the names of every coolie employed. I find that coolies come to me very freely with their grievances.

I do not think that sickness is a principal cause of absence of coolies from their work. I regard drink as a more important cause; for instance, the muster roll generally shows a decrease of 25 per cent. on Mondays after the bazar. Women often absent themselves to husk *dhan* on that day, but the men are generally recovering from the effects of a drinking bout. I find that musters are affected by prices in the bazar. When food-grains are dear, coolies work much harder than when it is cheap. I am sure that a large number of the Santhals and Nagpuris do not work on the full number of days in the month, because they do not find it necessary to do so. About 100 coolies own jotes of their own outside the garden: these men are lost to us during the cultivating season, when we need them most. About 100 acres of garden land is owned by garden coolies. I rely upon the Doctor Babu to ascertain births and deaths in the lines in the course of his rounds. I do not think it possible for the death of a new coolie to escape the notice of the manager or his assistant. The name of a new coolie is entered in the *haziri* book and if no work is shown against him in any month, an enquiry is made as to what has become of him; this serves as a check upon the reporting of deaths by the Doctor Babu. I had a complaint a couple of years ago that a sardar was taking interest on his advances to coolies as he was himself paying interest to a *kaya*. I called up his debtors and forbade them to pay interest to him. In the rains we put on an extra man to assist the Doctor Babu in the preparation of quinine. The Doctor Babu goes round the lines every second day and distributes quinine to those who need it. Distribution of quinine to all at the time of leaf weighment is mere waste of medicine, as many of the coolies will not eat it although they accept it. I am absolutely opposed to any legislation which would have the effect of substituting the Assam system for the free labour system of the Duars. I think that inspections by Government officers are unnecessary; such inspections might be misunderstood by the coolies who regard all innovations with great suspicion. Coolies on this garden prefer thatched houses to those with the tin roofs. On the whole, I believe, they would object to a general order enforcing the building of houses with high plinths. They would also object to the housing of the sick in an in-door hospital. Coolies are imbued with the idea that a single dose of medicine ought to cure them at once: this makes the treatment of the sick a matter of difficulty.

Naya Saili, the 22nd April 1910.

Mr. J. Armour, Manager of Naya Saili—

I have 27 years' experience of the tea industry, nine months in Cachar, the rest in the Duars. I do not think that any change is necessary in the system under which labour is recruited in the Duars. I do not wish that coolies should be placed upon any form of agreement. I am quite satisfied with the present system. We leave as much freedom as possible to the coolies in the matter of house building; we provide the materials and allow three *haziris* to every member of a coolie's family for this purpose. A coolie can build himself a perfectly comfortable house if he wishes to do so. I do not think that orders prescribing higher plinths for coolies' houses would be objected to by the coolies. I am in favour of high mud floors to houses.

The assistant would always investigate complaints of bad work by coolies and would not sanction the cutting of a coolie's *haziri* on this account, except in case

where a report was made by a Munshi on whose word he had strong reason for relying. It would be impossible for a manager to retain his labour if such complaints were not investigated by a trustworthy agency. Where a sardar happens to be dafadar over the coolies of his *patti*, it is to his advantage *not* to complain against a coolie for bad work, for the greater the number of *haziris* credited to a coolie, the higher the sardar's commission. It is not possible for a sardar to leave a coolie without sufficient means of subsistence. It is to the sardar's interest as well as the manager's that coolies should be contented. Coolies come to me freely with their grievances, and I have no doubt that they would let me know at once if they had a serious grievance against their sardar. I have not noticed any diffidence on their part in approaching the management. If a sardar maltreated his coolies, he would lose them together with his advances. Coolies work for only 16 days in the month on an average, because they can afford to do nothing during the rest of the time: many of them have other means of subsistence. Nearly all the coolies on this garden have cultivation on their *bari* land: they have about 100 acres of *dhan* cultivation. There are many cattle on the garden. I know of a case in which a working coolie and his family sold cattle worth Rs. 200 a short time ago. I find that the Nepalese suffer severely, not from fever, but from pneumonia, this is usual on low-lying gardens. Sickness is not, in my opinion, one of the principal causes of absence of coolies from *haziri*. Labour is always shortest on Monday, the day after the bazar day.

Coolies during the first month of their arrival on the garden get a rupee a week whether they work or not. They are entered in a register on arrival with the amount of the advances which are issued to them as a matter of course. The death of a new coolie who was not entered in the *haziri* book could always be ascertained at the time of recovering advances. I believe that if the coolies be accustomed to the systematic use of quinine, a general improvement can be effected in their health.

Bhagalpur, the 23rd April 1910.

Mr. E. G. Sillar, Superintendent of the Duars Tea Company—

I have sixteen years' experience of the tea industry, all in the Duars with the exception of three months, which I spent in Assam.

I am entirely in favour of a continuance of the free labour system in the Duars. I believe that any change in the direction of placing coolies on agreement would have the effect of interfering seriously with our labour supply. I do not think that coolies could be induced to remain in in-door hospitals. They object to hospitals in any form. I have always found that interference with the lines and with the coolies' manner of living is resented by them. It would be possible to insist that the plinth of a house should be of a certain height when a new house is required to be built in the lines. The introduction of such a rule would no doubt entail extra expense upon the garden, but the management would be prepared to incur any reasonable amount of extra expense which would have the effect of improving the health of the labour force.

I am of opinion that on the great majority of gardens the manager and assistant protect the coolies against any oppression by *sardars*. Managers and assistants are expected to be in close touch with their coolies and to enquire into their grievances. When a manager is in touch with his coolies, the latter come forward freely with their grievances. In this company a manager who was found to be out of touch with his coolies would not be retained in his appointment. A new coolie, if he were not being well treated by the manager and were afraid to approach the manager or assistant would bolt from the garden. I suppose that there may be cases in which coolies who want to leave the Duars and owe money to a garden, cannot get away owing to inability to raise their railway fare. But it far more frequently happens that they get back to their country and that their advances are never recovered from them. I do not regard sickness as one of the principal causes of absence of coolies from muster. They absent themselves chiefly because they can earn a livelihood by working on only a limited number of days; this view is borne out by the fact that when prices are high, we get far better musters. Coolies remain at home to look after their cattle, to husk *dhan*, to attend to their cultivation and generally to look after their household affairs; and no doubt a good many are kept from work by sickness. Although leg-sores are prevalent in the rains, the hot weather is, in my opinion, their most unhealthy time. The musters are usually low in the season of cultivation when the coolies can earn wages in the *bastis* with which the gardens

cannot possibly compete; this is usually the case throughout the month of August. I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by inspection of the gardens by Government officers. I am required to make monthly inspections of the gardens worked by my company. Quinine cannot be forced upon coolies, and the advantages of its use can only be brought home to them gradually. I believe that the general use of quinine has of late years improved the health of coolies throughout the Duars. We should be very glad to get a better class of Doctor Babu. But it is not my experience that an increased rate of pay secures a better man. The company would be quite ready to increase the pay if better men could be secured in this way. Ordinarily, a Doctor Babu gets from Rs. 45 to Rs. 60, inclusive of allowances.

Kurti, the 23rd April 1910.

Mr. P. Bryer, Acting Manager, Kurti Tea Estate—

In the morning the Committee visited the Kurti tea garden, went round the lines and interviewed Mr. P. Bryer, who is Acting Manager of the garden.

Mr. Bryer has recently come to Kurti from the Chalsa tea district. In his opinion there is practically no danger of a coolie being cut his *haziri* at the instance of a dafadar or of a sardar employed as a dafadar. A coolie is not cut any part of his *haziri* except after local inquiry as to his work by a manager or assistant. In practice reductions are very seldom made on this account. It is very unlikely that a coolie who was not allowed sufficient for his subsistence by a sardar would fail to bring the fact to the notice of the manager. Mr. Bryer has had several such cases brought to his notice by coolies and generally speaking has not found that coolies are at all backward in letting managers know their grievances.

Mr. Bryer sees no possibility of the deaths of new coolies escaping notice. In this garden new coolies are entered in the *haziri* book as soon as they join the garden, whether they work or not, and inquiry would, as a matter of course, be made regarding coolies who had failed to put in an appearance. Mr. Bryer has eight and a half years' experience of tea in the Duars: he is averse to any change in the present system under which coolies are recruited and would not care to see coolies placed on agreement. Under the present system a manager is required to exercise a good deal of tact in dealing with his coolies, otherwise he might lose labour, but he is not inclined to regard this circumstance as an argument against the system.

The 24th April 1910.

Mr. W. S. J. Thomson, Manager of Chengmari—

I have 23 years' experience of the tea industry in the Duars.

The majority of my supervising establishment are not sardars. It is practically impossible for the *haziri* of a coolie to be cut at the instance of dafadar who has a grudge against him: the supervision exercised by the managers and assistants is too close. A coolie *haziri* is written up every day in the office: many sardars keep no accounts of their own and write up their accounts of *haziris* entirely from the office books. About one-third of the coolies are paid direct from the office. I am prepared to pay any coolie direct who wishes to be paid in this way. My experience is that coolies prefer to be paid by the sardar, because they get small advances from the sardar. No case of interest being charged by a sardar has ever come to my notice. The coolies know that sardars are not charged interest by me. For instance, during the last few weeks I have made several advances to coolies for marriages: they came up to me for money and their sardar stood security for them. Sardars used to be financed largely in the past by *kayas*: nowadays they are almost entirely financed by the garden, this is due to the growth of closer relations between the management and the coolies. Coolies come to me freely about their personal grievances and their household affairs. It is essential to the success of the garden that a manager should know his coolies well and be able to exercise a personal influence over them. New coolies get a rupee on their arrival at the garden and twelve annas a week during the first month of their stay on the garden; in the second month they are paid whatever they may earn. The advances are paid to the new coolies in my presence through the sardar. I do not see how a sardar could possibly secure any advantage from cutting down the allowances of new coolies. He would lose labour as a result of doing so as well as his commission on the *haziris* of individual coolies. Moreover, jungly coolies, who might be afraid to approach a manager when they first come to a garden, are few and far between. The large majority of new-comers to the Duars have relations on the garden. I make it a point to make a coolie, who

wishes to leave the garden, accept his full pay in order to keep up the good name of the garden. I entirely deny that the main cause of absence of coolies from muster is sickness. In support of this view I would point out that a coolie who is allowed to earn Rs. 24 by doing "doubles" in two months is practically useless for the next two months, because he has earned enough to maintain himself in comfort for that period. I found this out when opening a new garden and was compelled to spread out over four months work which might have been done in three. A coolie will not do work more than is necessary; it often happens that if one or two members of a family work exceptionally well, the others merely loaf. Speaking generally, it does not pay the management that coolies should earn large sums, not because the management wishes to make money out of the coolies, but because heavy work and the consequent large earnings are followed by periods of idleness which often occur at the time when the garden is in most need of labour. The aboriginal coolie is entirely thriftless and has no idea of saving money. I have often gone through the lines in wet weather when a flush is on, trying to persuade coolies to turn out to work. Probably not five per cent. of the coolies in the line are sick: they talk and laugh with each other and seem to be in the best of health, but I am usually told that it is too wet to go out to work. I have 431 *bighas* of *dhan* land being cultivated by coolies on the garden. In former years I was opposed to cultivation by coolies, for much labour is lost owing to this cause. But I had to enter into competition with other gardens, and found that it paid me in the long run to provide cultivation for coolies. I have more land available for cultivation and intend to settle as much of it as I can. The muster falls considerably owing to this cause in July and August when I am most in need of labour.

Any enactment which would require a coolie to be placed on an agreement would be ruinous to the tea districts in the Duars. The reason why we get labour so freely in the Duars is that the coolie knows that he can get back to his country when he likes. Sonthals stay up here about three years as a rule. Of 636 Sonthals and Nagpuris who were recruited in 1909, 144 went home at the end of the season. It stands to reason that men of this class will not consent to be bound by any agreement. Coolies would not attend in-door hospitals. I have sent sick ones into the hospital at Jalpaiguri for treatment, but they generally ran away. I went in at one time for building permanent houses of a good type for coolies, but I could not get the coolies to occupy them and abandoned the idea. A rule directing that coolies should build new houses on a mud platform, higher than those generally seen at present, could be enforced without any difficulty. I think that there has been an improvement in the general health of the coolies since the introduction of the general use of quinine. It is given three times a week at leaf weighing, and the Doctor Babu gets round the lines three times a week and distributes it to those who stay at home. I do not think that the health of the Duars calls for any action by Government. Managers fully realise the importance of keeping their coolies in health; if they are not careful in this matter they lose their coolies. The garden which offers most advantages gets most coolies. Inspections by Government officers would probably have the effect of undermining a manager's influence. I do not think that much benefit would result from such inspections.

Looksan, the 24th April 1910.

Mr. J. Thompson, Manager of Looksan —

I have 9 years' experience of tea in Assam and 11 years' experience of the Duars.

If a coolie is not credited with a full *haziri* on account of bad work, he can ascertain the fact at once by inquiring at the office where the *haziri* book is written up. I have myself found that inquiries are frequently made by coolies as to the number of their *haziris*. I do not allow any of the native staff to cut the pay of coolies: inquiries into reports on bad work are always made by me or by one of my assistants. The majority of sardars on the garden are *dafadars*: there are no fixed rules confining their authority to the coolies of any particular *patti*. The majority of my coolies are paid through sardars. There is a *nij patti* on the garden, but it is a very small one. I do not press coolies for repayment of their advances. I am perfectly sure from my experience on this garden that if a coolie were not allowed a sufficient sum for maintenance by a sardar, he would come to complain to me at once. I find as a matter of experience that coolies come to me freely with their grievances: they would not be at all likely to keep to themselves a serious grievance of that kind. About 50 per cent. of the coolies on the Looksan garden have been there for periods of between

ten and fifteen years, consequently they know me very well. It is possible that a sardar might try to take advantage of an entirely new batch of coolies : one or two such cases have come to my notice and I was able to remedy the grievances of the coolies. New coolies get a *kharcha* of a rupee a week for the first month of their stay on the garden ; as a rule we do not begin to recover advances until the third month of a new coolie's stay.

I do not regard sickness as one of the main causes of the absence of coolies from muster. It is not necessary that a coolie should work on all the working days of a month in order to support himself. Coolies who work only 18 days in the month generally earn more than Rs. 4, for most of them do extra work over and above *haziri*. The *haziri* or task can be completed in from two to three hours. There is a considerable drop in the muster roll after bazar days and also at the season of cultivation. About 200 acres of rice land is cultivated by coolies on my garden : nearly all of them have also cultivation around their houses. It is practically impossible for a new coolie to die without the fact coming to the knowledge of the management. New coolies are entered in the muster roll as soon as they join the garden, and inquiries are made as a matter of course regarding those who do not work during any long period. The Doctor Babu is expected to report all deaths ; he ascertains them when he makes the round of the lines.

I am opposed to the taking of any agreement from coolies employed in the Duars, I say this after having had nine years' experience of the Assam system. I do not think that coolies would attend in-door hospitals. I think that it would be quite possible to enforce an order directing that houses built in the lines henceforward should have mud floors or plinths of a certain height. I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by inspections of the Government officers. Such inspections would probably have the effect of unsettling the labour force. It is certainly not the case that managers leave their coolies entirely in the hands of their sardars. There may be individual managers who are lax in this respect but they are very few in number. It would not pay a manager to neglect the coolies : a manager who did so would probably lose his appointment. Five grains of quinine are given to the women and men when they weigh in with the leaf. The Doctor Babu distributes it to those who stay at home when he goes round the lines : he can make the round in two days. I believe that the general health of the labour force has been improved since the use of quinine became general. The Doctor Babu on this garden gives me satisfaction.

Gandrapara, the 26th April 1910.

Mr. B. Gollan, Manager of Gandrapara Estate—

I have 14 years' experience of tea in the Duars. No one of the native establishment is allowed to cut a coolie's *haziri* for bad work. As a matter of fact, the cutting of a *haziri* for bad work is not at all of common occurrence, but when reports of bad work are made, the manager or his assistant goes out to inspect the work, and decides what should be done. About 27 dafadars supervise the work of the coolies and are themselves subordinate to four chaprassis. These chaprassis report direct to the manager or the assistant ; many of the dafadars are sardars, but it does not necessarily happen that a sardar employed as a dafadar has charge of the coolies of his own *patti*. It is entirely a matter of chance of what coolies a dafadar may be in charge during the day : there is no fixity about this. Coolies are paid here entirely through the sardars. We have no *nij patti*. If a coolie has a grievance against his sardar, I refer the case to a *panchayat* composed of the working headmen, chaprassis or dafadars as the case may be, and presided over either by myself or the assistant. Ordinarily, the number of persons composing the *panchayat* would be at least twenty. The aggrieved coolie and the person complained against are required to appear and state their cases before the *panchayat* and to produce their witnesses if any. A thorough enquiry is made, and the decision of the *panchayat* is generally unanimous. Domestic and social troubles are all settled in this way. This procedure is very popular with the coolies and they frequently have recourse to it. I never give a decision on any dispute in which coolies are interested without referring the case to the *panchayat*. Complaints by coolies to the effect that sardars have not allowed them sufficient money for their maintenance are extremely rare. Such complaints are referred to the *panchayat*. If a coolie is found to have a just grievance against a sardar, it is open to him to join the *patti* of any other sardar. It would take a new coolie of average capacity about nine months to pay off his advance. Deductions are made from his earnings in the

second month of his stay on the garden if he works regularly. My experience is that both the sardar and the management have to work very carefully with new coolies in order to prevent the contingency of their leaving the garden. New coolies are not at all backward in expressing their grievances.

I think that the average number of *haziris* performed by a coolie in a month is comparatively low, because the coolie is free and independent and does not find it necessary to work on every day. Of course there may be cases of sickness, but a coolie can earn enough to keep himself in comfort in 18 or 20 days. Sickness is not in my opinion one of the main causes of absence. Coolies have their own social and domestic affairs to attend to, such as visiting, looking after cultivation, *dhan* husking and cattle-tending. I lose a certain amount of labour temporarily during the cultivating season. Coolies have about 20 or 30 acres of land for *bhadoi* cultivation and a few, who have cultivation outside the estate, come and work at times. All the garden carting is done by coolies. Chota Nagpur coolies thrive very well on this garden and are in a large majority. A new coolie from an outside district (*e.g.*, Nagpur) is supposed to be brought on the muster roll at once, and inquiries would be made, as a matter of course, if it was found that he was not working. It is not possible that such a coolie could be ill for a time or die without the fact coming to the notice of the management. Special interest is taken in new coolies. One of the assistants on the garden is required to exercise a general supervision over sanitation in the lines and to interest himself in the health of the coolies. There is a direct order from the agents to this effect. Deaths are ascertained and brought on the register by the Doctor Babu. No case of a death, which was unreported by the Doctor Babu, has come to my notice. I regard the present system as altogether preferable to any system under which coolies would be bound to the garden by agreement. I see no necessity for any legislation to enforce closer supervision by managers over the health of the coolies or better sanitation in the lines. I believe that managers are now fully alive to the necessity of maintaining the health of the coolies and providing for their comfort as far as practicable. Inspections of gardens by Government officers are not in my opinion necessary. I do not think that coolies would attend an in-door hospital; they regard it as a place to which people are brought to die. I believe that orders could be enforced, directing that the mud plinths of new houses should be of a certain height.

Banarhat, the 26th April 1910.

Mr. D. G. H. Holloway, Manager of the Banarhat Estate—

I have 15 years' experience of the tea industry—three years in the Terai and 12 in Duars. There is absolutely no possibility of a coolie losing a *haziri* for bad work without an inquiry by the manager or assistant. As a matter of fact, bad work is generally detected by a manager or assistant: it is very difficult to induce dafadars to report against coolies. Some of the sardars happen to be dafadars, but there is no rule about this. An account of each coolie's *haziris* is kept in the office and a coolie who has any complaint to make against a sardar for cutting his pay, can ascertain the number of his *haziris* by inquiry at the office. I inquire into all such complaints myself. If a coolie cannot get on with his sardar, I put him into the *nij patti* until his advances are cleared. The sardar still draws his commission and loses nothing by this. No case has come to my notice of a new coolie being without relations and friends on the garden. If he were afraid to approach the manager with any grievance against the sardar, his relatives would no doubt do so. So far as my experience goes, the relations between sardars and the coolies are entirely satisfactory. I have experience of other gardens on which payment is made direct to coolies. I have no marked preference for one system over the other. I have never heard of a sardar charging interest on advances made to coolies. I give advances for weddings here in order to keep up the popularity of the garden. Most of the sardars have money transactions with the *kayas* of the bazar as well as with the garden: it is their habit to be in debt. I am quite satisfied that coolies who feel that they have been cut too much by their sardar, complain to the management without any hesitation.

Sickness is certainly not one of the main reasons of a coolie's absence from work. The main cause of a low muster rate is that coolies can support themselves in comfort without working on the full number of working days. One of the chief causes of absence is the large number of bazars in the neighbourhood: there are five days in the week in which a coolie can attend bazars. Coolies are allowed to take up small areas round their houses for *bari* cultivation, but I find it necessary to prohibit *dhan* cultivation, as if it became general among them, it would be impossible to control the

labour force. It is difficult to make a census of the cattle, as the coolies would misunderstand our intention. They own a large number of buffaloes, cows and goats and have ample lands for grazing. New coolies on arrival are produced before myself or the assistant: those who seem in weak health are at once sent to the Doctor Babu for examination. *Haziris* are allowed to four coolies for burial of the dead. The *chaukidar* is instructed to report every death to me personally. If the case reported has not been under the Doctor Babu's treatment, I send him word to examine the body before it is disposed of. New coolies on arrival at the garden receive one rupee; this is given to men, women and children alike. They get a second *kharcha* of from rupee 1 to annas 12 after a week or a fortnight: after that the sardar takes them over. More is advanced when occasion justifies it. Advances would ordinarily be recovered within a year, but the period may be longer. It sometimes happens that sardars bolt from the garden owing a large sum as advances. When this happens, I do not hold his coolies responsible, but write off the amount as a bad debt. *Haziris* are allowed to those coolies who are told off to look after sick persons who have no one to look after them: the Doctor or the sardar would report such cases. Comforts, such as milk, brandy, brand's essence, etc., are supplied on the recommendation of the Doctor Babu.

I am entirely opposed to any change which would have the effect of bringing the Duars system into line with the Assam system. It is no doubt the case that my coolies are free to leave me at any time, and that I have to take pains to attach them to the garden, but, on the other hand, I know that they would be unwilling to come to the Duars upon any agreement. I don't think that the lines are sufficiently permanent to require any special sanitary precautions. Coolies are constantly changing the sites of their houses on one pretext or another. I find that it pays me to fall in with their wishes in this respect. The European medical officer exercises a general supervision over the Doctor Babu. I think that orders prescribing that houses should be constructed with higher mud plinths would be resented by the coolies as interfering with their own system. I find that they object even to having old litter removed from their compound when new houses have been built. In-door hospitals would be boycotted to a certainty. I have sometimes found that coolies are unwilling to seek even the Doctor Babu's advice until cases of sickness have become very serious. I do not think that inspections by Government officers would serve any useful purpose. Coolies are very prompt in the expression of their grievances. If they find that their wrongs are not redressed, they leave the garden. Coolies are left to decide for themselves whether they should take quinine or not. As long as they are in good health, they are disinclined to take it.

Note taken at Kathalguri, dated the 26th April 1910.

Babu N. O. Neyogi, Manager of the Kathalguri Garden, says that he has a labour force of 800 coolies for 400 acres of tea. He incurs practically no expense on account of recruiting but relies upon the advantages offered by his garden as a means of attracting coolies. He has settled 400 acres of land with them for *dhan* cultivation and is strongly of opinion that when a garden is as healthy as Kathalguri, a manager need only offer cultivation to attract labour. He is of opinion that sardars take a few annas monthly from the earnings of the coolies, but do not keep back pay unless they fear that coolies may bolt: the latter acquiesce in this arrangement and quarrels are of rare occurrence. There is (according to him) practically no sickness on his garden, and the Doctor Babu has nothing to do and is now working as a clerk. The garden is so popular that numbers of coolies leave other gardens in order to work upon it: this accounts for the fact that very little recruiting is done in the labour districts. The sum outstanding in advances to coolies is very small and is practically made up of loans on account of weddings and social ceremonies. Oraons are the best coolies and save large sums of money: Sonthals are also good workers. The coolies live in great comfort and are far better off than in their own homes.

The 28th April 1910.

Mr. W. L. W. Renny, Manager of Haldibari—

I have had twelve years' experience of the tea industry in the Duars and five in Assam.

Coolies are very rarely cut for bad work. We find it difficult to get dafadars to report against them. If a report of bad work is made, the manager or assistant holds an inquiry on the spot. A sardar with twenty coolies is allowed a dafadar to supervise work: where he has less than twenty coolies, he does dafadar's work himself

but not necessarily over his own coolies. The dafadar's duties merely consist in supervising outdoor work. About 400 coolies are paid individually and the balance through sardars. The individual payments are made at the request of the sardars who are illiterate and cannot keep accounts. In my opinion sardars would prefer that the management should pay the coolies direct; but this would mean a good deal of extra trouble. I have never received a complaint from a coolie that a sirdar would not allow him sufficient to live upon. My experience is that coolies do not hesitate to bring their grievances before the manager, and I have no doubt that such cases would come to my notice if they occurred. A coolie who was dissatisfied with his sardar would apply to be transferred to another *patti*: this often happens when disputes occur. It is not to a sardar's interest to press his coolies, for this may result in his losing them. A new coolie's name is entered in the *hasiri* register as soon as he joins the garden. The sardar would naturally see that this is done, as his commission depends on the entry being made. If a new coolie dies, the matter must necessarily come to light: his non-attendance would be apparent from the blank space opposite his name in the *hasiri* register and enquiries are made monthly to keep the muster roll up to date.

It is incumbent on the Doctor Babu to go round the lines every day and to keep a record of births and deaths. The low average of attendance is mainly due to the fact that the coolies have to attend to their cultivation as well as to their work on the garden. We have not been short of labour since we began to offer land freely for cultivation. We begin to recover advances from a new coolie in the second month of his stay on the garden. Giving out cultivation reduces our labour force in the cultivating season, but there is a rule that a coolie receiving land must put in 15 days' work on the garden. As a matter of fact, this is not regularly enforced and coolies are only reminded of it when there is a big flush. About 300 buffaloes, 200 cows and bullocks and a quantity of goats and pigs are owned by coolies: they cart for the factory as well as for outside factories. At present 40 carts are working for Banarhat. Hospitals are possible in Assam, because the coolies are not particular about their *jat*. Here hospitals would be very unpopular as the coolies preserve their caste by living in self-contained communities and would strongly object to going to an in-door hospital. I consider that the Duars coolie is of a far better class than the Assam coolie: this is mainly because they are free in the Duars and can conform to their caste restrictions and live just as they do in their own country. I do not desire any change in the Duars system. I do not think that anything is to be gained by inspections of Government officers. Quinine is given to the women three times a week in the rains: this is done when they weigh in with the leaf. People in the lines are given quinine by the Doctor Babu who makes the round every day. *Haziris* are allowed for attendance upon sick coolies who have no relatives to look after them, when the sardars or the Doctor Babu bring such cases to notice.

Telipara, the 28th April 1910.

Mr. J. Turner, Manager of Telipara—

I have 4½ years' experience of the tea industry, all in this district of the Duars.

Coolies are paid direct from the office. We abandoned the sardari system, because when coolies bolted to other gardens, we found it impossible to prove that they owed advances to sardars; consequently sardars were unable to repay their advances to the garden. I am quite sure that coolies prefer to be paid direct by the garden: under the old system disputes as to accounts between them and the sardars were frequent. Payments are made direct into the hands of the coolies. A coolie's *hasiri* can only be cut after the bad work, for which he has been reported against, has been examined by the assistant. Deaths of new coolies cannot escape the notice of the manager: advances are made to them individually; and, as a matter of course, the recovery of these advances is carefully watched: moreover, they are entered at once on the *hasiri* register and inquiries are made regarding any persons who have ceased to work. I find that coolies come to me very freely with their grievances. It is absolutely incorrect that sickness is one of the main causes of absence from work. New coolies are subject to fever until they become acclimatized. They absent themselves from work, because they do not require to work every day in order to earn a living. Almost every family in the garden is interested in *dhan* cultivation. About 500 acres within the estate are under *dhan* cultivation. We take a rent of Rs. 3 an acre: moreover about 100 acres are under *bari* cultivation. Although we lose labour as a result of this, the cultivation makes the garden attractive, and I feel sure that if any attempt were made to stop cultivation, we should lose a number of

coolies. I think that the class of coolies which we get here would strongly resent being placed under any form of agreement. Some sanitary improvements might be effected, but in other respects matters should remain exactly as they are. More might be done to keep the lines clean. I think that Government inspections would have a bad effect: coolies prefer not to have their lines visited by outsiders. Most of the *bastis* outside the borders of the garden are inhabited by *ex-coolies*. Each year we lose labour by the migration of garden coolies into the *bastis*.

The 28th April 1910.

Mr. K. D. Murray, Manager of Binaguri—

I have 32 years' experience of the tea industry in the Duars, the Terai and Darjeeling. I should be entirely opposed to any legislation in the Duars which would require agreements to be taken from coolies. The coolies are quite happy in their lines, and I do not think that arrangements to enforce better sanitation are necessary. I am not in favour of inspection by Government officers; such inspections might be productive of unrest among the coolies. Coolies come freely to the Duars, because they appreciate the freedom from restraint which they enjoy there: on this account we get a far better class of coolie than the Assam gardens. Sickness, though no doubt a cause of absence from *haziri*, is not, in my opinion, a chief cause. I have not yet had a census made, but I have no doubt that there are at least 1,000 head of cattle in the lines, and the care of cattle takes up much of a coolie's time. There is no *dhar* cultivation on this garden, but most of the coolies have plots of *bari* attached to their houses. A considerable number of coolies leave the garden every year for the purpose of taking up cultivation in the *bastis*. Any scarcity would bring them back to the garden, but most of them leave permanently. Most of the garden sardars go to the *bastis* to cultivate after they have made money and attract many of their own coolies from the gardens: many *bastis* have sprung up in this way. Coolies are paid individually by the manager or assistant—not through the sardars: I prefer this system. It ensures that the management is in close touch with the coolies and this justifies the extra trouble involved. The sardar gets his usual commission for the coolies, though he does not touch their money: he is also responsible for the repayment of advances made to coolies who bolt from the garden. Coolies come to me freely with their grievances. I have the sardars up and inquire myself into all complaints that are made. *Haziris* are allowed for the burial of coolies; moreover, the line chaukidar's special duty is to report all deaths and domestic occurrences. New coolies are entered in the *haziri* books as soon as they arrive; and continued absence on the part of any coolie would be detected in the *haziri* book and inquired into as a matter of course. There is no possibility of the death of a new coolie escaping notice. I have not observed that new coolies are more liable to sickness than others. They get Rs. 2 a head on arrival, this amount is treated as a recruiting advance—not as *kharcha*—and is recovered whenever they are in a position to repay it. Some coolies who were recruited in January offered to refund portion of their advances in March. I have, as a rule, been quite satisfied with the work of my Doctor Babus. I do not think that the coolies would voluntarily attend an in-door hospital.

Birpara, the 29th April 1910.

Mr. J. M. Morgan, Manager of Birpara—

I have seventeen years' experience of the tea industry—all in the Duars.

No coolie's *haziri* is cut for bad work without my knowledge. Bad work is hardly ever reported by daffadars, and the only means by which it is detected is inspection by myself or by my assistants. At present practically all the coolies are paid through sardars. Any coolie can receive payment direct from the office if he wishes, such a coolie would be put in the *nij patti*. At present there are none in the *nij patti*. Coolies prefer being paid by the sardar, as they can get advances more promptly and conveniently from him than they can from the factory. Coolies who quarrel with one sardar are often transferred to the *patti* of another under whom they wish to serve. I have not had complaints from coolies that their sardars do not allow them enough to live on. I have made special inquiries on this matter lately and can get no information of any such case having occurred. Coolies come to me freely with their grievances, and if they had a grievance of this nature, I should certainly hear of it. A manager, who was out of touch with his coolies, would not be able to retain his post for any length of time. New coolies are paid *kharcha* at the

rate of Re. 1 per week for adults and annas 8 a week for children during the first month of their stay on the garden. In the second month no deduction is made from their earnings; in the third month recoveries of an instalment would be made if the coolie was in good health and his earnings justified it. Coolies complain to me from time to time that too large an instalment is being recovered from them by the sardar. I hold a personal inquiry into such complaints and generally decide in the coolie's favour. I am not in any hurry to recover advances, and find that it pays in the long run to be lenient in this matter, but I am dealing mainly with Oraons, who are saving and thrifty in their habits.

I do not regard sickness as one of the main causes of the low average of working days on which coolies actually work. Drunkenness has more to do with this than sickness. There is always a marked falling off in the muster roll after the bazar day, and it is still more marked after the bazar that follows upon pay day. In the cultivating season a certain number of coolies leave the garden to cultivate *dhan* on hire in the *bastis* where they get annas 4 daily and some rice. I have about 200 acres of *dhan* land let out to sardars for which I get about Rs. 1,500 rent: moreover these sardars undertake to let me have their coolies at the busy season. Some of the sardars also cultivate outside the garden, chiefly through garden coolies. I have a 6,000-acre grant, of which only 1,146 are under tea. Coolies have ample lands for grazing cattle and for collecting firewood. I provide all building materials for coolies and allow them six *hasiris* for constructing their houses. New coolies receive particular attention: it is an understood thing that *kharcha* is to be paid to them every Sunday. The sardar often takes payment by himself, but if he is in debt or not solvent, he produces the coolies to receive the *kharcha*. The line chaukidar is required to report all sickness in the lines. It is a great loss to a sardar if a new coolie dies or remains ill, for he is responsible for the advance made to the latter. The names of new arrivals are entered in a register on arrival, but this register is not used for purposes of reference. Coolies are entered in the *hasiri* book when first they attend muster—not when they first join the garden. Coolies work better when prices are markedly high. This is a healthy garden, and much of the sickness that occurs is traceable to over-indulgence of the coolies in drink. I am not in favour of placing the coolie under an agreement, and I see no need of enforcing any sanitary measures. Although the pay offered to Doctor Babus is high, the work is not congenial to Bengalis, for going round the lines involves a good deal of exertion, and it is difficult to get the right stamp of man for the work. Coolies would not voluntarily attend an in-door hospital. I think that inspections by Government officers would have the effect of unsettling the coolies. I am not in favour of such inspections. I believe that an order by managers directing that the mud plinths of houses in the lines should in future be built to height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet or 2 feet could be enforced.

Tasati, the 29th April 1910.

Mr. T. F. Hughes, Manager of Tasati—

I have 17 years' experience of tea in Darjeeling, Assam, and the Duars. I pay all the Chaibassa and Sonthal coolies direct from the office. The Chota Nagpur coolies prefer to be paid by their sardars. The Chaibassa and Sonthal men take *kharcha* of annas 8 every week from the office which is deducted from their earnings on pay day. I never hear any complaints from coolies that sardars do not allow them enough to live upon. As they come to me very frequently with their grievances and also to inquire about their dues, I have no doubt that they would come to complain against a sardar who held back their pay, and that if they failed to get redress, they would bolt from the garden. I do not think that new coolies are likely to be oppressed in this way; they almost always have relatives and friends on the garden, and their shyness, if they have any, soon wears off. New coolies are entered in the *hasiri* book at once, and failure on their part to attend would at once be noticed: moreover, sardars who have advances outstanding against new coolies would not fail to bring to notice the fact that one had died or ceased to work. And the Doctor Babu is required to make the round of the lines every day.

Bazar days are in my opinion the chief cause of absence of coolies from muster; on this garden the coolies can attend bazars on every day except Friday. Sickness is not a principal cause of absence. Coolies have patches of cultivation attached to their houses: there is only a little cultivation on the garden, but they are interested in land in the *bastis* round the garden, of which there are many. This year I have written off about 200 coolies—Oraons and Sonthals who have made money and settled in the *bastis*. I get high musters in December when I least want them but low musters in the cultivating season. The Doctor Babu distributes quinine in the lines every morning to fever patients.

Any serious cases are reported by him to me. There are three line chaukidars who are also required to report sickness. The coolies build houses themselves out of materials supplied to the garden—eight *haziris* are allowed for building a single house. New coolies begin on *kharcha* and deductions are made on account of their advances as soon as they have anything to receive in excess of Re. 1-8 a month. I have eight years' experience of the Assam system. I do not think that the industry in the Duars would benefit by the introduction of the Assam system. If coolies were placed on agreement, it would be very difficult to recruit them. They would not willingly attend in-door hospitals. Some Doctor Babus are very good, but if the standard is to be raised, their pay should be raised. I do not think the visits of Government officers would have any useful result; such visits would frighten the coolies.

Dalgaon, the 29th April 1910.

Mr. W. P. Thomas, Manager of Dalgaon—

I have 16½ years' experience of tea in the Duars. Coolies on this garden are paid entirely through sardars. I do not have a *nij patti*: when a coolie complains that a sardar is not keeping his accounts properly, I hold a personal inquiry. In such cases, I consult both the *haziri* book and the monthly book (which is based on the *haziri* book) to ascertain what is actually due to the coolie: both books are kept entirely independently of the sardars. The assistant checks the *haziri* by counting the number of men who are "on the hoe." The actual names of the coolie on *haziri* would be supplied by the *bahidars*. There are three *bahidars*—for men, women and children: they see every coolie themselves. Altogether three sardars work as *dafadars*; they take notes for their own information of the coolies who are working. A sardar gets a pice commission on every *haziri*. I do not permit my assistant to cut *haziris* for bad work: this is done by myself only. I do not cut a *haziri* until I have satisfied myself by personal inspection that bad work has been done. Coolies' grievances are generally brought to my notice by my three assistants who have more time to talk to them in the course of their work than I have. When I hear of a grievance, I make it a point to see the coolies concerned and to try to remedy it as far as possible. Where any dispute regarding pay cannot be settled, I pay the coolie direct from the office. I have no doubt that any case in which a coolie's pay was kept back by a sardar, or in which too large an instalment was recovered, would come to my notice very shortly after pay day. There is the alternative that a coolie might bolt; but when this happens, I can always find out the cause upon inquiry. I give sardars *kharcha* for new coolies at the rate of about a rupee a week when they first start. I try to arrange matters so that not more than a rupee a month is recovered from coolies drawing single pay. Something more might be recovered from a coolie who was earning "doubles," but allowances are made and leniency shown on numerous pretexts. As long as a coolie is working and willing to stay on the garden I do not press him, my object being to get work out of the coolie and at the same time to keep him contented. New coolies are entered in the muster roll at once on arrival. Where a noticeable series of blanks is shown on the muster roll against a new coolie, inquiry is made as to why he is not working. I allow *haziris* to four coolies for burying the dead. The Doctor Babu is required to go round the lines and ascertain occurrences every day: the line chaukidar is also required to report deaths, so that there is a double check. I do not think sickness is the principal cause of the absence of coolies from muster. The real cause is that the coolie is well enough off to enable him to live in independence. I can show from my muster roll that attendance was much better in 1906 or 1907 when famine prices prevailed. Coolies have practically no *dhan* cultivation on this estate, but about half the labour force are interested in cultivation in the neighbouring *bastis*. Men who were employed as sardars on the garden when I was here in 1897 are now prosperous *basti-wallahs* in the neighbourhood of the garden: they attract numerous coolies to the *bastis*. I lose a good many coolies temporarily at the time of cultivation. I should be glad to have *dhan* land available for cultivation on the garden. I should let it out to sardars rent-free for the use of his coolies on two-thirds of the working days in the month. I pay Rs. 250 a year to Bipara as a grazing fee for the cattle of my coolies. I build coolies' houses by contract.

So far as my experience goes, I consider that the general run of managers are in close touch with the coolies. I should not like to see coolies placed under any form of agreement. Coolies would not come to the Duars freely if agreements were required of them. I do not think that any better arrangements are called for as regards sanitation. I do not see that much benefit could be effected by a better class of Doctor

Babu ; their position is somewhat difficult, as they do not, as a rule, receive much encouragement from the coolies who seem to have more faith in their own than in Doctor's medicines. They expect medicine to cure them at once. I doubt whether coolies would attend an in-door hospital. I do not think that inspections by Government officers are called for. The effect of such inspections would be to unsettle the coolies. I am not prepared to say that it would be practicable to issue orders that houses should in future be built with a high plinth : the extra expense involved in giving effect to this suggestion would be considerable.

Lankapara, the 30th April 1910.

Mr. H. R. Cheshire, Manager of Lankapara—

I have seventeen years' experience in tea—all in the Duars.

The plains coolies on my garden are paid individually and the hill people through the sardars. The management prefers payment to individuals and the coolies of the plains prefer it also ; on the other hand, the hill coolies prefer being dealt with through sardars. Probably three-fourths of working coolies are hillmen. I keep the plains coolies quite separate from the hillmen ; they live in separate lines and work on the low lying portion of the garden. No dafadar or chaprassi can cut a coolie for bad work ; the most that they can do is to report bad work. Many sardars are employed as dafadars. The coolies realise that their individual accounts are kept in the office ; these accounts are kept by *bahidars* and are checked by the assistants. Coolies come occasionally to ask how many *haziris* have been credited to them. The Munshi is authorised to cut *haziris* for bad work on certain occasions on which the assistant would not have time to enquire ; but this scarcely ever happens ; as a rule a *haziri* is not cut until inquiry has been made into the case by a European assistant. The hill people generally take *kharcha* from the sardar once a week ; where they owe heavy debts to the sardar, it is no doubt the case that the latter keeps them going on *kharcha*, but if he did not give them sufficient *kharcha*, they would either run away or fall ill. In the latter case the garden would have to support the coolie and the sardar would lose his commission. I have frequently had complaints from coolies that their sardars were not allowing them sufficient *kharcha* : on inquiry, I have generally found that the coolie is in the wrong. Cases have repeatedly come to my notice in which sardars have supported sick coolies who have earned nothing for a long time, and I have no doubt that this is done as a rule. Plains men get advances of Re. 1 or Rs. 2 on their first arrival at the garden, and their advances are recovered as soon as their earnings are reasonably in excess of the advances made to them as *kharcha*. A coolie earning six rupees in a month would probably be cut two rupees if he were working by himself. If his wife were also earning, more would be deducted. If they earned Rs. 9 between them, I should probably cut Rs. 3 or Rs. 4. Advances are usually repaid in about six months. The heavy advances outstanding against recruiting sardars are worked off for the most part by allowing them bonuses.

The names of new coolies from the plains are checked with the agent's *challan* when they arrive on the garden ; they get advances then, and if they do not turn out to work, inquiries are made regarding them as a matter of course. New coolies from the hill would not be entered in any register until they had put in a *haziri* and were entered in the muster roll. When deaths occur in the lines, *haziris* are allowed for disposal of the corpse, and applications are invariably made to me on this account, except in the case of infants. The line chaukidars are responsible for reporting sickness and deaths daily at the office. The Doctor Babu can get round the lines completely twice a week and visits portions of the lines oftener. I am strongly of opinion that coolies do not work on the full number of working days, because it is not necessary for them to do so in order to support themselves in comfort. This, rather than sickness, is the chief cause of their absence. They cultivate on the lands attached to their houses, but have no *dhan* cultivation. I think that I could get more labour from the plains if I had *dhan* cultivation to offer to the coolies. Many of the long-established coolies have an interest in *dhan* lands outside the garden. I consider that the European establishment is, as a rule, in close touch with the coolies on a garden. Assistants usually know the name of every coolie on the garden and have ample opportunities of talking with them.

I am entirely opposed to any change which would affect free labour. To take agreements from coolies would check seriously the flow of labour to the Duars. Speaking for my own garden, I do not think that any medical or sanitary improvements are required. Coolies would not attend an in-door hospital, they would feel their caste

affected by having to go there. In the Duars they pay great attention to their social customs and caste restrictions. It would be possible to enforce an order directing that houses should in future be built with higher plinths. Managers might encourage the building of such houses, but the change could only be introduced gradually. It would be unnecessary to give any instructions of this kind to hillmen. I am entirely opposed to inspections by Government officers. Such inspections would have the effect of unsettling the coolies. We began to give quinine as a prophylactic measure to all working coolies during the rains last year. I think that the general health of the coolies improved in consequence, but last year was an exceptionally healthy one. Working coolies were allowed to take home quinine if they required it for any members of their family.

Hantapara, the 1st May 1910.

Mr. R. McLean, Manager of Hantapara and Dumchipara—

I have ten years' experience in tea—all in the Duars. There are 1,762 acres under tea in the gardens in my charge. I estimate that there are 3,267 people on the garden, 2,170 of whom are workers, including working children. Many people among the non-workers, although related to the coolies, support themselves independently of the garden—for instance, by keeping buffaloes and cattle. Nagpuri coolies are paid direct by the garden; they are kept better in hand in this way and their sardars are generally incapable of keeping accounts. Hillmen are paid through sardars. I have experience of both systems and think direct payments are best suited to the Nagpuris. Sardars of small *pattis* cannot afford to keep *bahidars*, and it is convenient to them that their accounts should be kept in office. The sardari system can be worked quite satisfactorily where the sardars are literate or can afford to keep *bahidars*. A sardar cannot afford to cheat his coolies by retaining their wages: he would lose them if he did. Where coolies are paid direct, the sardar gets his commission on the *haziris*. He is expected generally to look after his people on the garden and is responsible for repayment of their advances. Where coolies are paid individually, the advances recovered from them are credited in the books to the sardar. The items debited to newly-recruited coolies are advances made to them in their country and their railway fare. If they stay for a year on the garden, half the fare is credited to them as a bonus. Advances are ordinarily recovered from new coolies at the rate of Re. 1 a month, but practically nothing is taken until their earnings become high, this is usually the case in the heavy season when they can earn extra pay by "doubles": ordinarily advances are recovered within eight months of a coolie's arrival on the garden.

I seldom send recruiters into Nepal for *Paharia* coolies, but those who take leave generally bring back a few friends and relatives with them. Many *Paharias* send word by letter to their people to come down to work on the garden. Advances are generally made for recruiting the *Paharias*, but this is when they arrive on the garden: they then represent to me that they require money to pay off debts incurred on their journey to the garden. Advances to *Paharias* are recovered through sardars, who settle with their coolies the amount which is to be cut each month from the latter. I have had no complaints about too much being recovered from coolies at one time. I am sure that interest is not charged. Sardars may be in debt to the local *khayas* but I do not allow individual *Paharia* coolies to get into debt to shopkeepers unless the sardar stands security for them. Sardars do not keep shops themselves; I would not allow a sardar or anyone interested in shops to retain his appointment on the garden. The rate of wages and tasks are the same for coolies of all classes: the tasks are checked by the assistant. If a coolie's *haziri* is short, the assistant would have to inquire into the cause. A sardar employed as a dafadar over his own coolies would not report a coolie for bad work: he would be liable to lose his pice commission on the *haziri* by so doing: when a coolie is reported by a dafadar who is not his sardar, the coolie's own sardar would always defend the coolie's interests in order to save his own commission. A good many of the hill sardars are employed as dafadars. Only two Nagpuri sardars work as dafadars, but some one in the sardar's *patti* who can read and write is employed by the garden as his dafadar. A few sardars work as coolies. The average number of days on which coolies work is about 18. Those who are long established on the garden do not work as steadily as new coolies. Many long-established coolies work for four or five days in the month in order to keep their names on the books and enjoy the privileges of the garden: such men are interested in cultivation outside the garden—some as *adhiars* under *jotedars*. Most of the *bastis* between this garden and the railway are populated by *ex-garden* coolies. I have many coolies on the garden who have been home to their country and

returned again to Duars. I am opposed to any legislation which would change the existing system. To put a coolie under any form of agreement would seriously affect recruiting. An order directing that new houses should be built with the higher plinths could be enforced. The change would entail extra expense to the garden. I distribute quinine twice a week to coolies when on work. The Doctor Babu and dressers distribute it in the lines. I find that the Doctor Babu works satisfactorily if the manager keeps him up to the mark.

In practice an advance made to a coolie who subsequently dies, is remitted in favour of the sardar.

Hansmara, the 1st May 1910.

Mr. J. Lincoln Durant, Manager of Hansmara—

I have fifteen years' experience of tea in the Duars. The advantage of direct payments is that the coolie knows exactly how his account stands: moreover it enables the management to make a definite claim against other gardens for arrears due from run-away coolies. Coolies are paid direct here. I have experience of the sardari system. Coolies are sometimes cheated by sardars. I have known such cases, but a good sardar would not attempt to do this, as by so doing he would lose his coolies. As a rule, coolies will not complain against sardars in small matters. I do not think that sardars are unduly harsh on new coolies in the matter of recovering advances. As a rule, sardars will not be hard on new coolies but prefer to keep them in comfort. My experience is that 50 or 60 per cent. of the coolies are related to sardars or else live near him in his country, and that if a sardar oppressed a coolie, he would be boycotted in his country. Some sardars work as coolies, some as dafadars. Ordinarily, a Nagpuri coolie has nothing outstanding against him on his arrival at the garden except his rail fare and a couple of rupees advanced to him to pay debts, etc., in his country. Advances are not recovered unless a coolie has been a month on the garden. Over 80 per cent. of the coolies are Oraons. The cause of the failure of coolies to turn out to work is that by working on a limited number of days they can keep themselves in comfort. There is a noticeable falling off in the muster on the day succeeding the bazar day. Many stay at home as a result of intoxication. The cultivation of *dhan* in the *bastis* takes away many coolies in the season: many of them have relations in the *bastis*. I have lost about 1,500 coolies during the last eight years: they have left the garden to take up cultivation in the Mech and Garo reserve, having made sufficient money on the garden to enable them to take up land. There is *basti* cultivation on the southern boundary of the garden in which coolies are interested as *adhiars*. A few coolies are themselves *jotedars* in the *bastis*.

Houses for coolies are provided free of cost: if a coolie prefers to build his house himself, he is allowed to do so. I should not say that sickness was of one of the chief causes of a low muster roll. Coolies are quite happy in their houses: they tell me that they do not want better houses, as they are only here for a few years. It would be practicable to enforce an order that houses built in future years should have higher mud plinths, but this would involve the Company in a considerable amount of extra expense, and after this had been incurred, the coolies might leave the houses. Deaths of infants may not be reported in all cases. A heavy mortality on a garden would certainly prejudice people against that garden in the recruiting districts where the characteristics of different gardens in the Duars are well known. I am positive that coolies prefer being left to themselves. They are obstinate and superstitious. They believe firmly in witches as a cause of illness and evil. They have their own *ojhas* and doctors and disbelieve in most European medicines. They would not attend an in-door hospital. I do not think much would be gained by requiring a better class of Doctor Babu.

Dalsinghpara, the 2nd May 1910.

Mr. W. Trood, Manager of the Dalsinghpara and Toorsa Tea Estates—

I have 23 years' experience of the tea industry, 9 of which were spent in Cachar.

I pay my coolies through sardars. *Haziri* books showing the daily *hasiris* of the coolies and based on the reports of the *bahidars* are maintained in the office: from this a coolie can at once be informed of the state of his account for the month. These books are kept quite independently of the sardars: it often happens that a sardar will come up at the end of the month to check his own account with the *hasiri* book.

It is not sound policy to cut a coolie's *hasiri* for bad work; but sometimes a coolie who has been lazy is allowed only a woman's *hasiri*. Dafadars are unwilling to report against coolies, and bad work is in practice only detected by one or other of the assistants. It may occasionally happen that a sardar gets a coolie into his debt and does not allow him enough to live upon, but this is not at all usual: the fact would certainly leak out. Such practices on the part of sardars were not uncommon when I opened out this garden, but the *hasiri* book now serves as an effective check on *sardars*, and coolies often come up nowadays to know how their accounts stand. The coolie is getting a much better idea of the value of his labour of late years. Advances are not deducted from the wages of new coolies during the first three months of their stay on the garden. The sardars are called up in the middle of July, the amount outstanding against the coolies of each sardar's *patti* is made out and the sardar concerned is called upon to state how much he can refund monthly. Ordinarily, I require them to pay off advances before the close of the year. The distribution of the balance due collectively to the coolies within the *patti* is left entirely to the sardar. Extensions of the period for repayment are allowed freely, as for instance, when a sardar represents that his coolies have been ill. It would never pay the management to be harsh in this matter: a sardar who feels that he was being badly treated can always go away with his coolies to another garden.

It is practically impossible for a new coolie to die or be ill for any length of time without the fact coming to the notice of the management. The safeguard is that a new coolie's name is at once recorded on the muster roll; and his continued absence from *hasiri* would involve the space opposite his name in the register being left altogether blank: this would of course lead to enquiry. The statement that a coolie might die without the knowledge of the manager, assumes that the line chaukidars and the Doctor Babu, who are responsible for the reporting of deaths, entirely neglect their duties. Sickness is not a chief cause of absence of coolies from muster on this garden. My opinion is that coolies are so well off that the management cannot get sufficient work out of them. I have very poor musters after *hât* and festival days: the coolies have numerous *pûja* days on which they do not work. On the Dalsinghpara garden coolies can cultivate *bhutta* on their *bari* lands free of rent: probably 500 acres of land is under this crop. Owing to scarcity of water there is little land available for *dhan* cultivation. In my opinion the garden would gain considerably by having land to offer for *dhan* cultivation, as by this means coolies are induced to settle down and make the garden their home. Old established coolies who have made money show a tendency to leave the garden with their families and settle in the *bastis* where they take up land for cultivation. I lose a certain amount of labour in this way.

I consider that coolies in the Duars enjoy far more prosperity than the coolies in Cachar. I do not wish to see any change in the free labour system. To place coolies on agreement would certainly not benefit and would probably ruin the garden. I doubt whether coolies could be induced to submit to treatment in an in-door hospital. The building of coolies' houses on higher mud plinths would involve extra expense, and there is always the chance that the trouble and expense incurred may be mere waste, as coolies leave their houses on all sorts of pretexts. But something might be done on this direction.

Rangamati, the 3rd May 1910.

Mr. R. S. Hamilton, Manager of Central Duars, Rangamati Tea Estate—

I have seventeen years' experience in tea; all on this garden. Coolies are paid through their sardars. A few discontented coolies who do not get on with their sardars are kept in a *nij patti*. A coolie who does bad work may get credited with only a woman's *hasiri*, but this happens very seldom—probably not three times in a month. An assistant would always inspect the work and report to me if he thought it bad. None of the native staff have any authority in this matter, but the Munshi may report cases of bad work for inquiry by the assistant. The accounts of *hasiris* performed by each individual coolie are kept by the garden *bahidar* and checked by the assistants. The *hasiri* book is written up from the *bahidar's* report. A coolie who thought that the sardar was deducting too much from his earnings would certainly bring the fact to the notice of the Manager and ask to be transferred to another sardar. Cases of this kind come to my notice frequently and are remedied by transferring the coolie to another sardar if an agreement can't be effected in any other way. My experience is that coolies complain freely against the sardar: if they do not approach the manager, they go either to the *bahidar* or the Babu. There is practically no sickness on this garden. The cold season, when coolies

are liable to chills, is more unhealthy than the rains. Coolies work on an average for only 15 days in a month on this garden, because they are prosperous and do not find it necessary to work regularly. An area of 1,200 acres is let out to them for cultivation: this includes 200 acres of *dhan* cultivation which is irrigated by the turbine water, the rest is under maize. Every coolie on the garden has some interest in cultivation except perhaps a few newly-arrived Nagpuris. I have more land available for cultivation, but intend to let it out to new coolies, as I find that coolies are beginning to devote their whole time to cultivation and to work on the garden when it suits them, not when it suits us. It certainly pays a garden to allow a cultivation up to a certain limit, but when the limit is exceeded, the net result is loss to the garden. I think that the limit has been reached here: hitherto each individual has been allowed to take up as much land as he chooses, subject to the condition that he works for the garden. Coolies prefer gardens on which they can get cultivation.

New coolies are allowed to earn "doubles" from the time they arrive on the garden and are paid direct for the "doubles" every week. The sardar gets his commission on the ordinary *haziri* work done by them. We put new coolies in the way of earning "doubles" so that they may have money to carry them on: they are generally short of funds when they arrive on the garden. Advances due from new coolies are ordinarily recovered completely by the end of October. So far as this garden is concerned, I see no need for any alteration in the system under which coolies are recruited and provided for. I should like to have some authority over coolies who run away to the *basti* and to Bhutan and take up land for cultivation after taking advances from the garden. Much money was lost in this way when the garden was first opened out, but nowadays the practice is less common. I tried to establish an in-door hospital, but found that coolies would hide their sick relatives rather than have them taken there: the scheme did more harm than good. It is difficult to get a satisfactory type of Doctor Babu on the gardens: they are not physically suited to the work of going round the lines which is very hard. Oraons build bad houses because their intention is to get back to their country after making money. I do not distribute quinine.

Chuapara, the 3rd May 1910.

Mr. T. H. O'Donel, Manager of Chuapara Tea Estate—

I have thirteen years' experience of tea—10 in the Duars and 3 in Assam. Coolies prefer coming to the Duars, where they are free, to going to Assam under agreement. I prefer the Duars system.

This garden is a healthy one. Fever is most prevalent in August and September. Most coolies would object to going to in-door hospitals. An order directing that new houses should be built with higher plinths could be enforced, but would entail additional expense on the gardens. The cultivation of *dhan* outside the garden takes away a certain amount of labour during the rains. The majority of the coolies cultivate maize in their *baris*. The objection to allowing *dhan* cultivation is that it takes away coolies from the tea at the time when their labour is most needed. Drink rather than fever is an important cause of absence of coolies from muster. There is a liquor shop near the garden which is much resorted to by coolies.

Coolies are paid through their sardars. They fully realise that it is open to them to complain to the manager against any sardar who withholds too much of their earnings or oppresses them in any other way. As a general rule, coolies would not hesitate to complain. It is very unlikely that new coolies should be taken advantage of by sirdars. The fact that large numbers of coolies return to the garden after having been to their homes shows that coolies are generally satisfied with their lot. A sardar would always report the death of a new coolie for the sake of getting a remission of the advance made on account of that coolie. A new coolie is not shown in the *haziri* book until he has completed a *haziri*. But he is shown in a register of recruits which is referred to when a sardar's coolies are failing to turn up for work: the names of his coolies are then gone through and inquiries made as to the cause of each individual coolie's failure to work. *Haziris* are very seldom cut for bad work. In such cases the manager himself would invariably hold a local inquiry and the coolie is always allowed an opportunity of doing the work over again. The majority of coolies are prosperous. If any are in want, they have their own laziness to blame. Work is always available for coolies who choose to turn out. Quinine is not administered regularly on this garden. The Doctor Babu goes regularly on his rounds.

Kalchini, the 3rd May 1910.

Mr. H. J. Mounsey, Manager of Kalchini—

I have 24 years' experience of the tea industry. I have only come to the Duars this year : my previous experience has been in Cachar and Sylhet. I do not think that any attempt to improve the health of coolies in the Duars would be effective unless the coolies were bound by some form of agreement. The effect of any such measure would be to do away with the whole free labour system. The coolie in the Duars lives very much as he does in his own country and I suppose that it is on this account that the coolie comes to the Duars for labour of his own accord. I have not had much experience in the Duars, but I should say that the knowledge that they were liable to be put under any restraint in the garden would probably prevent coolies from coming freely to the Duars. Coolies are not as well housed in the Duars as they are in Assam, but most of them intend to return to their homes. They impress me as belonging to a better class than the Assam coolies are, and generally speaking, of better physique and look "fitter." Coolies will not stop on the gardens in the Duars if they do not like their sardar or have any grievance. My impression is that they are happy and contented : we certainly do not get as much work out of them as we did in Assam.

Kalchini, the 3rd May 1910.

Mr. F. E. Wood, Manager of Dima Tea Estate—

I have fifteen years' experience of the tea industry in the Duars. I pay the coolies through their sardars. I open a *nij patti* in a case where no sardar is willing to keep a coolie in his *patti*. At present no coolies are in the *nij patti*. A sardar is always willing to take a good worker into his *patti*. It has occasionally come to my notice that a sardar has deducted too much from a coolie's earnings. Complaints to this effect have been made to me : in the result, the sardar usually loses the coolie who gets transferred to another *patti*. It is not at all likely that such cases would happen without coming to the manager's notice. Coolies come forward very freely with their grievances. The sardar loses all the benefit of the coolie if he does not give him enough to live on : the coolie would be unfit for work and the sardar would lose his commission as well as his good name with the coolies. The cutting of a *haziri* for bad work is very rare : it would not pay us to do that. The chaprassi and dafadar are responsible for the work done and I should prefer fining them to cutting a coolie for bad work. A new coolie who fell ill would certainly not be neglected by his sardar, because it would not pay the sardar to neglect him. A Doctor Babu would get into very serious trouble if a case came to my notice in which a death had not been reported. Every new coolie is entered in the recruiting book. The advance recoverable from him is shown opposite his name and his thumb impression taken in acknowledgment of it. *Haziris* are allowed for the burial of coolies who die on the garden. Coolies can ascertain the state of their accounts at any time by enquiry at the office : they constantly seek information on this point.

All coolies established on the garden have *bari* cultivation. On the whole, I think that it pays to offer land for *dhan* cultivation : coolies are attracted to the garden by this. But the hardest working men are those who wish to return to their country. I am entirely opposed to any change in the system of free labour, because to put the coolie under agreement would be to keep away recruits. They come to the Duars because they can live here comfortably and in accordance with their own customs without being over-worked. I give materials and allow *haziri* for building. I insist on houses being kept 36 feet apart, but find it very difficult to enforce this rule. Of new coolies recruited I should say that 75 per cent. have been on gardens before ; many of my coolies migrate to the *basti* as soon as they have earned enough money to take up land for cultivation.

Atiabari, the 4th May 1910.

Babu H. N. Chakravarti, Manager of Atiabari, has 36 years' experience of the tea industry ; about 20 in the Duars and 16 in Assam. He has been manager of Atiabari for the past ten years. He pays his coolies through sardars and when disputes occur between coolies and sardars, he holds an inquiry and settles the matter personally. He does not believe that sardars can oppress coolies in any way without the matter coming to his notice. Many of his coolies have *bari* cultivation, but he is not

in favour of giving out *dhan* cultivation, as coolies bestow upon their fields much of the labour that is required for the garden. He recovers through the sardars advances made to new coolies and finds that the system works smoothly. He allows all materials for house building and as many *haziris* as may be required to coolies employed on this work. He considers that the Assam system under which coolies are bound by agreement to the garden would be entirely unsuited to the Duars. In his opinion a better class of coolie comes to the Duars than that which is recruited for Assam, and coolies in the Duars, generally speaking, are healthier and much happier than they are in Assam. He is of opinion that coolies are more prosperous on his garden than they can hope to be by taking up land in outside *bastis*, and says that very few of them emigrate. A coolie in good health works on about 25 days in the month.

Bhatkawa, the 4th May 1910.

Mr. E. G. Phillips, Manager of Bhatkawa Tea Estate—

I have nearly nine years' experience of tea—over six years' in the Duars and two in Assam. I prefer the free labour system for the Duars. It is quite true that the system exposes the garden to a loss of labour at any time, but by the exercise of tact the manager should be able to retain his coolies. No manager who knows his business can ever be out of touch with his labour. The coolies on this garden approach me at all times. On leave day they come to me very freely to tell me of their grievances. I am certain that a coolie whose sardar was holding back too large a portion of his earnings would bring the fact to my notice. New coolies who had not been on gardens before can always refer to our books to ascertain on how many days they have worked. Advances on account of *kharcha* are paid to sardars in a lump sum. It is quite impossible for the death of a coolie to occur without the fact coming to my notice. When I see a long series of blanks opposite a coolie's name in the muster roll I make inquiries at once to ascertain whether he is sick or has left the garden. When a coolie dies, the advance due from him is not in practice recovered from the sardar: if he bolts from the garden the sardar remains responsible for the advance. If a coolie never comes to work from the time of his arrival on the garden the sardar would not fail to inform me of the fact. The sardar arranges for the recovery of the advances due from the coolies in his *patti*, being himself responsible to the garden for the total amount due.

Excess in eating and drinking has more to do than sickness with the absence of coolies from muster. On Saturday, which is leave day here, the coolies spend their time in feasting and drinking, the result being that very few turn out to work on Sunday. At present I am offering "doubles" to all men coolies: they could earn Rs. 12 a month if they liked. Only ten or twelve of the whole labour force have availed themselves of this opportunity: the others offer all sorts of excuses for not going out. They are quite independent, and if I pressed them to work, some of them would leave the garden. Nagpuris, though pleasant people to deal with and good workers, are inclined to be thriftless and improvident. The letting out of cultivation on the garden on a nominal rent pays up to a certain point: but if a coolie gets too much cultivation, he ceases to work. There is practically no chance of a coolie losing a *haziri* for bad work without an inquiry being held first by the assistant. The munshi or chaprassi might cut a *haziri*, but he would have to tell me of the matter. I distribute quinine to workers on days when they get wet. I don't suppose they all take it, but I am sure that the use of quinine is getting more popular. I think coolies are better contented with houses built by themselves than with those built by the management. I am thoroughly satisfied with the labour force on this garden.

Phaskawa, the 6th May 1910.

Mr. J. Tyson Tyson, Manager of Phaskawa—

I have 16 years' experience of tea in the Duars. -

Coolies on this garden are paid through their sardars. I prefer this system, as it is the best adapted to the needs of the coolies: they can get their advances more easily from the sardar than from the manager. I have never heard of interest on advances being charged by sardars. Paharia sardars may sometimes be financed by *kayna*, but this is not a usual practice. Complaints are at times made to me by coolies that their sardars are keeping back too much of their earnings, but the complainants are generally members of the sardars' own family. If a coolie outside the *sardar's* own

family did not get satisfaction from the manager after making such a complaint, he would go to another garden. A chaprassi is authorised to send a woman at work back to house in certain cases, e.g., if by bad plucking she is found to be spoiling a bush; he is, however, required to bring all such cases to my notice. A chaprassi could not in practice cut a male coolie's *haziri* for bad work without my orders, and before giving orders I would generally inspect the work myself. I can't remember a case in which a chaprassi reported a coolie for bad work. The coolies on this garden work very well.

Numbers of coolies leave this garden for the *bastis*. I lost a gang of 40 in this way during last cold weather; they are now all settled in a *basti* and doing cultivation. They were only two years on the garden and I think that they cannot have saved much money. I worked out that their earnings came to Rs. 3-11 per head per month only: the sardar still owes me Rs. 100. A large percentage of coolies on the garden have *bari* cultivation: materials for houses are supplied to them free and they are allowed two *haziris* for building. Average earnings on this garden are low, but I am never at a loss for labour. The majority of coolies recruited have not been on gardens before. The population is distinctly a shifting one; coolies are constantly coming and going. The health of the garden is good. On Mondays, the day after the Hatiputa bazar, I get about half an average muster; this is due to drink. The failure of coolies to work on the full number of days is due to drink rather than sickness. Coolies have suffered during the last two years from bad crops; they have not earned so much as they might have earned by leaf pice; no cases of want on the garden have ever come to my notice. Practically every coolie on the garden has his own relatives to look after him. I do not wish to see coolies placed on agreement. The present state of affairs does not call for any interference by Government; managers may safely be left to effect such improvements as are necessary. I think that Government might issue definite instructions as to how births and deaths should be registered. I don't think that there is any need here for higher plinths to houses. New coolies are watched carefully so that, if they abscond, their advances may be recovered from another garden. They get *haziris* for building, washing clothes, etc.; and they are watched through the *haziri* book. A death would be noticed at once. The Doctor Babu is responsible for the reporting of all deaths; *haziris* are allowed to coolies for burying the dead. There is practically no possibility of a death escaping notice.

Jainti Hatipotha, the 6th May 1910.

Mr. C. Bearpark, Manager of the Jainti Tea Estate—

I have 21 years' experience of tea in the Duars, and have been altogether 4½ years on this garden. Coolies are paid through their sardars on this garden. I have no *nij patti* here. I do not care for the *nij patti* system, as the sardars are generally in close touch with the coolie and know his requirements better than the management can. A *nij patti* may be necessary on a garden where there are a bad lot of sardars. I have never had a complaint from a coolie that a sardar kept back too large a portion of his earnings. I am sure that if coolies had any grievances on this account they would let me know of them at once. I find that where the coolies have quarrels among themselves, they do not hesitate to apply to me for help. A dafadar or chaprassi might report a coolie for bad work, but a *haziri* would not be disallowed unless the manager or assistant had actually inspected the work. Usually the manager and assistant have to look out themselves for bad work: the lower subordinates are very unwilling to report. *Haziris* are very seldom disallowed on this account. If new coolies were being oppressed by a sardar and were afraid to report the fact to the manager, they would leave the garden; most new coolies have relatives on the garden. The *haziri* book is carefully watched to see if new coolies work regularly. Efforts are made to give them as light tasks as possible until they get accustomed to the garden. A new coolie is not entered in the *haziri* book until he has performed a *haziri*. His name and all particulars about him are entered in a register kept for this purpose; reference would be made to this register at the end of the year when a bonus is paid to the recruiter. This bonus is paid to the recruiter provided his sardar has no claim against him. If the sardar has any claim, the amount of the claim established is paid to the sardar or deducted from any sum that the sardar may owe to the garden.

The Doctor Babu is responsible for the reporting of deaths. He is expected to get round the lines three times a week. Sickness is not a principal cause of absence of coolies from muster. I believe that by working on a limited number of days coolies can support themselves in comfort, and this is the real reason why they do not work on all the working days. Last year the management had a strong labour force and

did not offer many "doubles."—This year all the male coolies have opportunities of earning "doubles" every day; this arrangement will continue until the middle of August. We are rather short of labour this year. The earnings of coolies in the heavy working months are quite sufficient to keep them in comfort during the cold weather when their earnings are small. There is always work for the coolies, even if we have to "make" it. If a coolie was even refused work the garden would get a bad name. About 60 acres of *dhan* land is within the garden let out to sardars who sublet to coolies. Every coolie on the garden may take up as much land for *bari* cultivation as he likes. Our musters after pay days, bazar days, and days in which *kharcha* is distributed, go down to about half the average. Drunkenness is the chief cause of absence on these days. I should say that this was a very healthy garden. Advances to new coolies are not recovered until the season of "doubles" and extra pice for plucking has started. Sardars are not expected to recover more than Rs. 2 a month from a coolie who is doing regular work. We have no means of ensuring that sardars comply with this rule. Advances to new coolies are all supposed to be cleared before the end of October, but a certain amount remains outstanding after that date. No case of a coolie suffering from actual want has ever come to my notice. I have no fault to find with the present system under which labour is recruited and organized on the garden. I should not care to see the coolies placed on agreement: they would be very difficult to recruit on any conditions of this kind. Coolies might be induced in the course of time to attend an in-door hospital if one were established; it would be very difficult to enforce an order directing that houses should be built with high plinths. It is even difficult to induce coolies to build their houses at a certain distance from each other. Here they get all buildings free and three days' *haziri* for building.

A number of coolies are here who have been on the garden ever since it was established. Coolies recruited during the last few years show a tendency to go to the *bastis*, leaving their advances unpaid. In fact, some Sonthal sardars seem to recruit simply for the purpose of getting coolies to settle in the *bastis*. I am sure that a garden profits by having *dhan* cultivation to offer. I should offer more cultivation if I had land available. Quinine is given systematically twice a week. The Doctor Babu distributes two-grain tabloids to children when he goes round the lines. It is no use to give quinine to women unless the children get it systematically, for women cannot turn out to work when their children are sick. I can't be sure that all the quinine administered is consumed, but the general health of the garden has improved considerably since distribution was first commenced.

Sankosh, the 7th May 1910.

Mr. C. S. Cresswell, Manager of Sankosh Tea Estate—

I have ten years' experience of the tea industry—fifteen months in Cachar, four months in Sylhet, three years in Chittagong, and the rest in the Duars. I pay the coolies through sardars with the exception of those employed in the tea-house and those who wish to join the *nij patti*. The latter would include coolies who have no relations on the garden and prefer not to be paid through a sardar and also those who may have had a dispute with a sardar. But coolies who have no relations on the garden usually join a sardar's *patti* as soon as they have settled down. I have had complaints from coolies that sardars have kept back too much of their earnings and have been able to remedy matters. But such complaints are not at all of common occurrence. I have no reason to suppose that coolies do not bring serious grievances to my notice or that oppression by sardars would not be brought to my notice. New and jungly coolies might be backward in bringing their grievances to the notice of the management when first they join the garden, but they are well able to take care of themselves after a month or two. New coolies get a rupee on arriving at the garden and *kharcha* subsequently when their sardar says that they require it. They are also allowed a rupee for expenses in their own country before they leave it for the garden. Advances are recovered in a lump sum from the sardar in such instalments as he can afford to pay. Ordinarily, advances to Nagpuris are completely recovered by September or October of the year in which the coolies are recruited, but Sonthals and hillmen do not pay up so quickly. We are always willing to allow reasonable time for repayment. The disallowing of a *haziri* for bad work is extremely uncommon. If a coolie has done a bad piece of hoeing work he is told to go over the ground again. There is practically no possibility of a *haziri* being cut without the orders of the manager or assistant. A new coolie is recorded in the *haziri* book as well as in the recruiting register: he is also called up and inspected by the manager.

When coolies cease to work, the fact is apparent from blanks opposite his name in the *haziri* book, and a manager who watched the register would certainly make enquiries as to the cause of his absence. New coolies are given light *haziris* in order to accustom them gradually to the work. Absence of hillmen from musters is chiefly due to sickness in the months of May, June, July and often in October. Nagpuris do not, as a rule, work on the full number of days in the month because they can support themselves in comfort by working for a portion of the month only. Drink is an important cause of absence: there is always a falling off in the muster roll after bazar days, especially after the weekly bazar across the Bhutan border. I lose a certain amount of labour through coolies going across the frontier into Bhutan. I think that a garden benefits by having a certain amount of land available for *dhan* cultivation; coolies are thereby attracted to the garden. About 130 acres of land within the garden are held by coolies and sardars. Paharias all have land allotted to them for *bari* cultivation and it is open to every Sonthal or Nagpuri to have a vegetable garden attached to his house. Materials for houses are supplied free. Coolies get paid "house pice" at the rate of annas 12 per man and annas 9 per woman at the close of the year. The houses of new coolies are built for them. Nagpuri coolies are prosperous throughout the year unless the season is one of scarcity. The Paharia is generally hard up; Sonthals remain in good condition throughout the year. About 40 per cent. of the Nagpuris are long-established on the garden. I lose a good deal of labour by coolies going out to the *basti* in the cultivating and reaping season: many of the Nagpuris work on hire and many are interested in cultivation outside the garden; coolies who own cattle have ample grazing on the garden waste land.

I do not wish to see coolies bound to the garden by any form of agreement. I think that it would be better if the coolie was dealt with direct by the management: the sardar might get his commission all the same. In this way the garden would be in possession of fuller information regarding the coolie. I do not think that Doctor Babus as a rule visit sick coolies in the lines unless they are called in. If in-door hospitals were built, coolies might be induced to attend them in the course of time. I think that an order could be enforced directing that houses in future years should be built with higher mud plinths. I see no necessity for any inspections by Government officers. I have been giving quinine regularly to coolies for two years. I can't say whether this has improved the general health of the force. Last year the Paharia coolies were made to swallow quinine in my presence or that of my assistant twice a week before they got their leaf pice. The Doctor Babu distributes to coolies staying at home when he goes round the lines.

Newlands, the 8th May 1910.

Mr. J. A. Macbean, Manager of Newlands Tea Estates—

I have eight years' experience of tea in the Duars and have also spent a year in Assam and Cachar. Coolies are paid through sardars on this garden with the exception of Sonthals and those who are in the *nij patti*. Sonthals are paid direct because of the difficulty of getting a reliable Sonthal sardar. We had Sonthal sardars before, but found that disputes about pay between them and their coolies were so frequent that we adopted the *nij*-system. Some outside coolies, *i.e.*, those who have come in without being recruited and have no relatives on the garden, as well as a few who have quarrelled with their sardars, are in the *nij patti*. Coolies have occasionally complained to me that sardars have kept back too much of their earnings and I have always held inquiries into such complaints and endeavoured to do justice. I think it improbable that cases of this kind could occur without the fact being known to me: it is quite impossible that this practice could be general among sardars. I prefer the sardari system because the coolies prefer it: they can get advances much more freely from the sardar than from the management and the sardar understands their needs better than a manager could hope to do. Again, if a coolie leaves the garden, a sardar can always find out where he is. One advantage of the *nij*-system is that it enables a manager to know his coolies better, but this is outweighed by the disadvantages. The Head Munshi has the power of disallowing *haziris* without reference to the manager or assistant: he is regarded as thoroughly trustworthy. *Haziris* are very seldom cut or disallowed. A good class of Nagpuri coolie, once he is established on a garden, would not leave except to visit his country or upon very grave provocation. Mal-Paharias Bhunyas and Ghasis are much given to wandering.

New coolies on first arriving are given *kharcha* for their reasonable requirements—one or two rupees for utensils, etc. This is paid individually and not through the sardars, but the sardars are debited with the amount. Railway fare is recovered from the coolies, but is repaid to the sardars as a bonus upon recovery. All advances are generally recovered by the end of November. New coolies are entered in the muster roll as soon as they join the garden. When the absence from work of a coolie for any length of time is noticed on reference to the muster roll, an inquiry is made as to what has become of him : in this way cases of sickness or death can be ascertained and a check maintained on the work of the Doctor Babu. I do not believe that sickness is the principal cause of absence of coolies from muster. The fact is that coolies earn sufficient to support themselves by working on a limited number of days in the month. They nearly all keep either cows or pigs or goats : nearly every Nagpuri and Sonthal is interested in *basti* cultivation, and practically every family grows *bhutta* or vegetables on homestead land. This is a healthy garden. Sickness is most prevalent at the beginning and end of the rains. On the whole, Paharias suffer more from sickness than any other class. There is a very noticeable falling off in attendance after bazar days. About 300 acres of *dhan* cultivation is let out to sardars who cultivate through the garden coolies. The sardar supplies the seed. I don't know what share the coolie gets of the crop. Many of the sardars are interested in land outside the garden : so are the coolies. I lose a good deal of labour from this cause in the cultivating and reaping seasons. I find that sardars while taking up land outside the garden like to keep up a connection with the garden, but I have lost a good many coolies who have left the garden for good to take up cultivation in the *basti*. I should have sufficient labour if the coolies care to work. I am offering "doubles" to every male coolie at present, but only about 10 per cent. choose to do a double *haziri*. I do not wish to see coolies in the Duars placed on agreement. Coolies are much freer and happier in the Duars : they come willingly to the Duars because they can lead their own life there. We get a much better class of coolie in the Duars than in Assam. I doubt if Doctor Babus as a class take much trouble in looking out sick cases in the lines. It is very difficult to get suitable men for this work. Better pay might produce better qualified men but more than mere qualifications is required. Energetic men who can gain the confidence of the coolies are wanted. The European medical officer comes round once in every ten days.

Coolies might be encouraged to build their houses on high plinths.

Matelli, the 23rd May 1910.

Mr. W. Alston, Manager of Matelli Tea Estates—

I have twenty-eight years' experience of the tea industry, 25 of which have been spent in the Duars and three in Sylhet.

Coolies are paid through sardars on this garden : we discourage the *nij patti*, as the sardars feel that they lose by it. At present eleven coolies who have quarrelled with their sardars are in the *nij-patti*. Disputes between coolies and sardars occur very rarely. I believe that such disputes usually come to notice : it is the practice for a coolie who is dissatisfied with his sardar to apply to be transferred to the *patti* of another sardar. Disputes are almost always about wages, but when I have gone into the accounts of the parties I generally find that the deductions made by the sardars are reasonable. Good sardars seldom have disputes with their coolies. No case of interest being charged by a sardar has ever come to my notice. Paharia sardars may be financed by *kayas*, but not Nagpuris or Sonthals. I find that coolies come to me very frequently with their grievances. We try to recover within a year all advances made to new coolies. Almost every coolie recruited has relations on the garden, and it is scarcely possible that too much might be cut from their earnings during the first year of their stay without the fact coming to notice. Almost 40 per cent. of the Nagpuris recruited have been on the garden before : the percentage in the case of Sonthals is much higher—in fact, they make it a practice to go down to their country and get recruited again for the sake of the bonus which the sardar gets. Coolies do not work on the full number of working days because they can support themselves in comfort by working on a limited number of days and because it is not in their nature to work constantly. We always get short musters on Monday by reason of the Matelli bazar being held on Sunday. I am confident that sickness is not a main cause of absence from muster. Domestic duties keep many of the coolies at home.

I am strongly in favour of the continuance of existing conditions in the Duars. The sardari system when properly worked reproduces in the main the conditions under which aboriginal coolies live in their own country, and to which they are best accustomed. The placing of coolies on contract in the Duars would seriously interfere with recruitment. On this garden we have been giving ten grains of quinine a week to working coolies for the past two years, and also to any coolies in the lines who care to take it. An in-door hospital would probably be regarded with suspicion. I think that an order could be enforced directing that plinths of houses should be built higher than they are at present. There is not much migration to the *bastis* from this garden. I was in Assam last winter. I think that the Assam coolie cannot compare with the Duars coolie in the matter of physique. It is impossible for a new coolie to die without the fact coming to the notice of the management. Even if the Doctor Babu failed to report the death, it would come to light at the time when the sardar draws his bonus: an enquiry is then made as to whether each coolie is working, and if he is found not to be working, as to the cause of his failure to do so. Moreover, the sardar generally applies for a remission of the advance made on account of a coolie who has died.

Indong, the 23rd May 1910.

Mr. W. H. Bryer, Manager of Indong Tea Estate—

I have two years' experience of tea in Assam, three years in Sylhet, and eighteen years in the Duars. Our practice here is to pay the coolies through sardars, but we pay direct to the coolies where they or the sardars prefer it. I get complaints occasionally from coolies that too much of their earnings has been cut by the sardar. I have found out as a rule that the sardar has acted fairly. If a sardar left the coolie insufficient to live on, the coolie would either complain to me or bolt. The real reason why coolies do not work on the full number of working days in a month is that they can earn enough to keep themselves in comfort without working every day. They are detained at home by drinking bouts, domestic work, marriages, etc. When the season of cultivation begins, about forty coolies a day go to the *bastis* to cultivate for their friends. I have given out about 100 acres of *dhan* cultivation free of rent to sardars last year: this serves to keep labour on the garden. It has never come to my notice that new coolies have been victimised in any way by sardars. Very few of the new recruits are unattached: nearly all have relatives on the garden. I do not think that more than 10 or 15 per cent. of the recruits have been to gardens before. A young Munda woman, newly recruited, complained to me a short time ago that the sardar had not paid her the full amount of her earnings. On inquiry I found that the sardar had made a mistake and that her claim was correct. New coolies are entered in the *haziri* book on their arrival on the garden, and the book is watched to ascertain whether they turn out to work. If they fail to work, inquiry regarding them is made from the sardar. It is thus practically impossible for a new coolie to be sick for any length of time without the fact coming to the notice of the management. Many of the sardars take goods on credit from the *kayas*, but they pay up at the end of the month. It seldom happens that a sardar is heavily in a *kaya's* debt. I never heard of interest being charged to coolies by sardars.

I consider that the coolies who come to the Duars are of a distinctly better and more respectable class than the majority of Assam coolies. My experience is that coolies emigrate in family parties much more to the Duars than to Assam: this undoubtedly helps towards keeping the coolie respectable. Physically the Duars coolie is the finer man of the two. I am opposed to putting coolies on contract in the Duars: it would upset the present system seriously. I am quite satisfied with the present system of recruitment. Most managers would like to have more control over their coolies, but if agreements were taken from coolies, it would be impossible to recruit them in the same numbers as at present. I do not know whether much benefit would ensue by employing better qualified Doctor Babus. Well-qualified men may be wanting in energy: an improvement could be effected by securing the services of men who were well-qualified and energetic at the same time. This garden has a fairly close connection with the recruiting district: a good many coolies go to their country every year and return to the garden.

Chalouni, the 24th May 1910.

Mr. L. Drysdale, Manager of Chalouni Tea Estate—

I have 13½ years' experience of tea—all on this garden.

Paharias on this garden are paid through sardars: about 75 per cent. of the other coolies, including all the Sonthals, are paid direct. We pay direct to the

"Madesias," as we keep all accounts of their attendance : this being the case, it is more convenient to pay them direct. They do not object to this procedure. We made advances direct to all new coolies, except Paharias, and keep a separate account of the advances made to each individual. Complaints against sardars for keeping back too much of a coolie's earnings are made to me perhaps twice in a year. We encourage coolies to report any grievances that they may have regarding their pay, and I am practically certain that all disputes on this account between coolies and sardars come to notice. Many of the Paharias living in the lines have no intention of working regularly on the garden ; they have their *bari* crops and their cattle and do not find it necessary to work. Many Paharia families living in the lines provide only one or two workers. The "Madesia" coolies have not nearly so much cultivation as the Paharias : they do not care to cultivate : they prefer to live close together and do not leave space for cultivation between their houses, but they could easily take up land for cultivation if they chose to do so. The musters of "Madesia" coolies are much affected by local prices : this is especially the case with Sonthals who turn out to work much more regularly when prices are high. With prices as they are at present, they support themselves comfortably by working from 18 to 20 days a month. I have not found that a year of high prices affects the general health of the garden. I am not prepared to say that Paharias are more prosperous than "Madesias" : they have more cultivation, but they do not earn so much in wages.

The average of sick coolies is shown by the register to be only about 30 a day : regard being had to the number of the labour force, it cannot be said that sickness is a chief cause of absence from muster. Many of our coolies have gone to the *bastis* after earning sufficient money to take up cultivation. We lose a good deal of labour owing to "Madesias" going down to the *bastis* to cultivate *dhan*. Paharias also leave the garden during the season when work is heaviest in order to take up "sickling" work on other gardens. I should say that about 30 per cent. of the coolies recruited annually have been on gardens before. I do not want to see agreements taken from coolies. There is a general belief in the Duars that the free labour system is best suited to local conditions. I think that the general health of the labour force could be improved by the introduction of a better class of Doctor Babu. The difficulty is that a well-qualified man cannot be induced to leave the dispensary. The "Madesia" coolies themselves are not very amenable to medical treatment and do not take much care of their children. It would be impossible to induce coolies to attend an in-door hospital. I think that the general health of the labour force has improved in consequence of the distribution of quinine.

Nageswari, the 24th May 1910.

Mr. W. Finlay, Manager of Nageswari—

I have 15 years' experience of tea in the Duars.

Coolies are paid through the sardars with the exception of about 100 Sonthals who are paid direct because their sardars are illiterate and not reliable. I prefer the sardari system. My experience is that sardars are over-lenient with their coolies, and far from cutting large sums from their earnings allow them to get heavily into debt. The sardari system is practically a family system. Occasionally complaints are made by coolies that sardars have cut too much of their earnings. I enquire into such complaints personally and find as a rule that the coolie is in fault and that he has not attempted to work off his debt. I do not think it possible that new coolies could be seriously ill without the fact coming to the knowledge of the management. I go round my lines once a week and the Doctor Babu goes round daily. The coolies are entered in a register on their arrival at the garden, and the register is referred to when the recruiter applies for his bonus later on in the year. Enquiries are then made as to whether each coolie is working or not. The Doctor Babu is responsible for the reporting of deaths on the garden. I have never had a death brought to my notice which he had failed to report. The sick register will show that sickness is not a chief cause of the failure of coolies to turn out on every working day. That register includes cases of sickness which the Doctor Babu may find out when going round the lines as well as those which are treated at the dispensary. In the cold weather coolies go out visiting their friends or doing contract work : on Mondays and Tuesdays there is always a short muster by reason of Sunday being bazar days. The real reason of their absence from work on so many days is they have domestic duties to occupy them and that by working on 18 or 19 days they can keep themselves in comfort. I estimate that I lose nearly 100 coolies daily in the season of rice cultivation by reason of the going to the *bastis* to work as labourers. It has never come to my notice that sardars charge interest to coolies. But I have known sardars borrow money on interest in bazars in order to finance their coolies.

My experience is that the majority of the coolies recruited on this garden have been on other gardens before: it is a common practice for coolies to return to the Duars after being in their country for a couple of years. The Nagpuris are in close touch with their homes: they often come to the office to get money-orders drawn out in favour of their relations in their own country. I do not think that anything would be gained by putting coolies on agreement: it is far better that they should be allowed to come and go freely. Any system of agreement would be detrimental to recruiting. I do not think that a better class of Doctor Babu is needed, as he is under the control of a European doctor who sees all the serious cases, and he is competent to treat trivial cases. I tried to induce coolies to attend an in-door hospital during an outbreak of measles on the Hope Garden some years ago. The coolies avoided it: they prefer to be ill at their homes in the midst of their friends and relations.

Chalsa, the 25th May 1910.

Mr. E. Greenway, Manager of Chalsa Tea Estate—

I have six and a half years' experience of tea—all in the Duars.

About 300 of the coolies are recruited from Gorakhpur: these come, as a rule, without their families: only 40 of them are women, and they do not bring children. They work practically every day. The first batch of coolies who came from Gorakhpur remained for the cold weather only. They save their earnings and bank with their sardars. They keep good health and are quite satisfactory. We pay coolies through the sardars except when the latter are unable to keep accounts: this is usually the case with Sonthals. I have had no complaints against sardars for keeping back too large a portion of coolies' earnings. I think that if coolies had grievances on this account they would bring them to notice. I think that the management exercises sufficient control over coolies. I see no necessity for taking agreements from them. I find that coolies work very satisfactorily.

Yong Tong, the 25th May 1910.

Mr. A. H. R. Cowdell, Assistant Manager of Yong Tong Tea Estate—

We pay coolies through sardars with the exception of Sonthals, whose sardars are illiterate and cannot keep accounts. Sonthals much prefer to be paid direct. Quarrels between sardars and their coolies rarely come to notice: it sometimes happens that a coolie to whom an advance has been refused by a sardar gets a change into the *patti* of another sardar. I do not for a moment believe that sardars allow coolies less of their wages than suffices to keep them in comfort. If a sardar attempted such a thing his coolies would leave him. Coolies can keep themselves in comfort by working on an average for 18 days in the month. Sonthals work even less than this: they are very thriftless and devoted to hunting in the forest and lead a hand-to-mouth existence. Only to-day I saw about fifteen Sonthal women, who might have been out earning *hasiris*, looking for roots and *sag* in one of our forest clearings. Drinking bouts, drying rice, the care of children, and other domestic duties are the causes of failure of coolies to turn out to work. I am sure that sickness is not a principal cause.

Kilcott, the 27th May 1910.

Mr. J. R. Cargill, Manager of Kilcott Tea Estate—

I have eleven years' experience of the tea industry—all in the Duars.

We pay 75 per cent. of the coolies direct and the balance (mostly Nagpuris) through sardars. The direct system has been in force for the last three years: it was started in the case of a few coolies only, but the majority of the coolies have come to prefer it. The coolies who work best prefer to be paid through sardars: irregular workers prefer the direct system. I do not think that it is the practice of sardars to deduct too much from coolies' earnings: if a sardar attempted to do so, the coolie would join the *patti* of another sardar. I have never known a case in which a coolie who was in bad health suffered from hunger or neglect. Sick coolies generally are looked after by their friends and relations. Unattached coolies are very few: a coolie will change his garden to be near his friends and relations. Sickness is not a chief cause of the failure of coolies to turn out to work. A coolie who is really ill is shown on the sick register, and those who are anæmic or convalescent are given light

tasks. Cases may happen in which adult coolies are lying sick in the lines without the fact being brought to notice, but these are the exceptions. The Doctor Babu gets round the lines every day. Advances made to new coolies are recovered from them individually. I think that the condition of coolies is improving every year as a result of better medical supervision. I am not in favour of any change being made in the Duars system. I do not wish to see coolies placed on agreement. It is not correct to say that managers are out of touch with coolies. Coolies refer all their disputes and family quarrels to the managers, and the assistants on the garden know them all by name. It would be practicable to insist that houses built in the lines in future years should have higher plinths, but the coolies themselves do not want this: they say it is not their *dustoor*. The Dumka Sonthals build higher plinths than other coolies.

Jalpaiguri, the 3rd June 1910.

Mr. D. H. Lees, Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri—

I have had twelve years' experience of the tea districts in the Darrang, Kamrup, Sylhet and Cachar. I have inspected tea-gardens in all these districts. I have been in charge of Jalpaiguri district for nearly eighteen months. I have visited some of the local tea-gardens but have had no occasion to make any detailed inquiries into the condition of coolies. From what I have seen, I consider that the Duars coolies are of better physique than those nowadays recruited for Assam, and that they are well off and live comfortably. Speaking generally, I have been struck by the inferiority of the houses occupied by coolies in this district to the houses in Assam gardens. I do not remember having seen houses with grass walls in any coolie lines in Assam. But better materials are available in Assam, and I notice that even in the *bastis* here, grass is used for houses. So far as I have observed, the Nagpuri coolie, who settles in a *basti*, is not better housed than if he were in tea-garden lines. I have not noticed whether Nagpuri settlers in the *bastis* construct high plinths to their houses. Colonisation by tea-garden coolies is taking place to a noticeable extent in the Duars. Paharia settlements are numerous in Alipur Duars, but I cannot say whether the majority of settlers have been employed as coolies on tea-gardens. I have occasionally been asked by officers of the recruiting districts for information as to the whereabouts of coolies. It may be that malpractices were alleged, but I am not sure about this. I have never received complaints against the sardars or against managers of gardens from any one in this district. Such complaints were of frequent occurrence in Assam. No case of riot in which tea-garden coolies were concerned has come to my notice. I have not come across any destitute *ex-coolies* in the hospitals or elsewhere in this district. I am not in favour of the introduction of compulsory registration of vital statistics or of the Chaukidari Act on tea gardens. But the Chaukidari Act might be introduced in gardens in which the management deliberately neglected to collect vital statistics.

Jalpaiguri, the 3rd June 1910.

Captain O'Brien, I.M.S., Civil Surgeon of Jalpaiguri—

I have been nearly twenty months in medical charge of this district. I have not had occasion to make any detailed inquiries regarding medical and sanitary arrangements on tea-gardens. The only dispensary in the neighbourhood of tea-gardens in this district is Kumargram. It is chiefly attended by Meches and indigenous people. I do not remember a single instance of sick or destitute tea-garden coolies being treated as in-patients at any dispensary of the district: on the other hand, a considerable number of railway coolies from Chapra and Mozaffarpur suffering from under-feeding and chronic malaria are treated. The "Doctor Babus" on tea-gardens are ignorant as a class: 75 per cent. of them are unqualified and some of them not even of the compounder class. Speaking generally, I have been struck by the satisfactory physical condition of tea-garden coolies. In Naya basti, a quarter of Jalpaiguri inhabited chiefly by the servant class, the splenic index of 597 adults was found by me to be 6 per cent., and of 161 children under 10 years, 32.8 per cent. It should be noted that the great majority of the adults were males. The persons examined had been under the quinine prophylactic treatment for two years. In the same quarter the number of fever cases in 1908 was 668 and in 1909, 519. I do not consider that any reliance can be placed on the form of vital statistics for tea-gardens submitted annually to my office. I do not think that the examination of monthly returns of vital statistics of tea-gardens would entail much extra work on the Civil Surgeon's office, if such returns were insisted on.

Jalpaiguri, the 3rd June 1910.

Mr. E. F. Ainslie, Subdivisional Officer of Alipur Duars—

I have 5½ years' experience of this district. I served 6½ years in Chota Nagpur and nearly 4 years in the Sonthal Parganas. I had no occasion to make detailed inquiries into the condition of coolies on the estates of the Duars, but I have had opportunities of seeing a good deal of their mode of life since I came to this district. I think that tea-garden coolies are as well, if not better, off than small cultivators and farm servants. They attend markets in large numbers and they spend money very freely; in fact, I am told by local merchants that their expenditure on cloth is extremely large. No complaints of coolies having been fleeced by their sardars have ever come to my notice; on the other hand, sardars have complained to me against coolies who have absconded whilst owing them considerable sums of money. I have not noticed that the condition of new coolies is worse than that of those who are longer on the garden. I had one complaint from a coolie last year of ill-treatment by a manager of a garden. On inquiry I found the complaint to be quite false. This is the only case I can call to mind in which a complaint was made against the management. On two occasions I have received reports from the recruiting districts of women having been abducted: these women on being examined said that they came to the Duars on their own free will, that they were happy and did not want to return to their country. When I was in Palamau, I was much impressed by the feeling of the people towards the Duars: they were quite willing to go there, mainly because they believed that they could get back to their homes again. The number of coolies who settle down to cultivation in the east of this district is very considerable: the majority are from Ranchi district, but there is also a fair sprinkling of Chaibassa men and Sonthals. Most of them come in as *jotedars*. Some of these return to work on tea-gardens, leaving relatives to carry on the work of cultivation. A large number of cases have come to my notice in which Oraon coolies have bought out Mech and Garo *jotedars*. In fact they have colonised the Garo reserve to such an extent that it has now become impossible to evict them. I have been much impressed with the excellence of their cultivation: their condition is very prosperous. In this reserve the house of a Nagpuri settler is not to be compared, in point of comfort, with the house of a Mech. For the most part the houses are of grass, just as in the tea-garden lines: only a few of the coolies have mat-walled houses. I do not think that Oraons are much better housed in their own country than on the tea-gardens. The only destitute people, who come to hospital from tea-gardens, come from the Assam gardens.

Jalpaiguri, the 21st June 1910.

Mr. J. A. Kellie, Engineer-in-Chief of the Bengal Duars Railway—

I have been stationed in this district since November 1907. We issue concession tickets only to those coolies who leave the garden with a certificate from the manager. But a person coming to the Duars from Chota Nagpur, the Sonthal Parganas or any of the recruiting districts can get concession tickets merely by saying that he is a tea-garden coolie, so I do not think that figures based on concession tickets showing arrival of coolies in the Duars are altogether reliable. There was a marked reduction in the number of coolies proceeding to the Duars in December 1909 and January—March 1910, as compared with the number in the corresponding period of the previous year. We get practically no coolies from tea-gardens as labourers on the line. We have to raise our rates where the railway line lies in the neighbourhood of tea-gardens. Coolies on the permanent-way near tea-gardens get Rs. 9 a month and free quarters. A certain number of railway coolies leave the railway during the leaf-season and go to tea-gardens. The staff suffers more from fever on the Bengal Duars line than on other railways of which I have experience. Contractors working for the railway employ hillmen as far as possible during the cold weather: these men usually come down the Teesta Valley and join the railway at Bagrakot. Other railway coolies are chiefly from Bihar and the North-West. Contractors make their own arrangements for housing their coolies. Chota Nagpuris do not come to work on the railway from the tea-gardens or from their own country. Tea-garden managers have taken up contracts on the railways during the off season and carried them out through their coolies, but coolies will not work independently of their sardars and managers.

Jalpaiguri, the 21st June 1910.

Mr. J. A. Milligan, I.C.S., Settlement Officer of Jalpaiguri District—

I have four years' experience in this district. I am preparing figures showing the names of the holders of land in the Duars coming from Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas, whether as *Jotedars*, *Chukanidars* or *Adhiars*. I have received information that the Meches are receding before the settlement, and that in order to avoid settlement operations, they are retreating to Goalpara. Their lands are being taken up by tea-garden coolies. I do not think that much land outside tea-garden grants is held by coolies who are still employed on tea-gardens. Around Madari hat the settlers are almost entirely tea-garden coolies and Paharias. I should say that the level of general prosperity among these settlers is high. A settler on a piece of jungle would certainly require some capital to start with: ordinarily, a settler would bring his own cattle from a tea-garden. Many tea-garden coolies buy their *jotes* outright from a Mech or Rajbansi. Cases have come to my notice in which coolies have purchased *jotes* with the assistance of their manager. In Jalpaiguri district there are very few compact villages: the houses of cultivators are always far apart from each other. I regard the tea-garden population as prosperous and contented to all outward appearances. I have not come across any tea-garden coolies in a state of destitution. I have been impressed during my stay in the district with the general prosperity and scarcity of beggars.

The settlement establishment works over an area of about 800 square miles. The health of the establishment employed in tea-gardens has been better than that of the staff employed in the *bastis*. This year the whole establishment, consisting of about 1,700 people, was employed in the Alipur tahsil; and ill-health was far more prevalent than in previous years. I attribute this to the fact that Alipur is the most unhealthy part of the district. It has occurred to me that there should be a central hospital in each tea district near the European Medical Officer's bungalow in which serious cases could be kept under his immediate care. Much might be done to improve the lines by filling up hollows and puddles near houses and cutting away jungle. I have seen a great deal of improvement effected during the last four years and am of opinion that there has been a marked growth in the interest taken by planters in their labour force.

Kumlai, the 5th July 1910.

Mr. C. E. McEwan, Manager of Kumlai—

I have eighteen years' experience of tea in the Duars.

Direct payments are made to the *pattis* of about five sardars in order to avoid trouble between coolies and the sardars. This was found necessary as the sardars got heavily in debt some years ago. The office keeps an account of each individual coolie's work: this account is based on the daily report of the garden *bahidar* who goes round and takes the names of the coolies at the muster in the morning. The name of a coolie who did not do his work would be reported at once to me or to the assistant by the munshi or chaprassis who are supervising the work on the field, but no deduction would be made from his *haziri* without a personal inquiry by my assistant. Among Nagpuris such cases occur very seldom: they always finish their work. Sonthals are not so hard working. The sardars have nothing to do with the supervision of field work, but some have *dafadars* to look after their coolies on the field. The garden pays the *dafadar*. Coolies go to work on the blocks haphazard, as they come away from the muster.

Advances made to recruits in their district and to new coolies when they first come to the garden, are recovered from the sardar; but an individual account is kept all the same for each coolie. New coolies get a rupee a head on their first arrival: there is no fixed rule regarding the amount which they may get as *kharcha* after that: advances for them would be made to their sardar, and a reliable sardar could get as much as he wanted. I never have had a complaint from a new coolie that a sardar was not allowing him enough for his subsistence. When prices were very high two years ago, I gave the sardars extra *kharcha*, though they did not ask for it. Nagpuri coolies compose almost the entire labour force on this garden, and a new coolie invariably has relations on the garden. If a sardar did not look after a new coolie, the coolie's relations would turn against him. Advances are recovered through the sardars who keep the accounts of individual coolies through their own *bahidars*. I have never had a complaint from coolies against the sardar for charging interest. If sardars borrow in the bazar, it is always in order to enable them to buy up or open out land. *Kayas* have come to me to know what was the financial condition of a

sardar who wanted to borrow money from them. I do not at all believe that coolies are in the hands of the sardar owing to indebtedness. Last pay day six or seven coolies recruited in March or April paid off the full amount of their advances in a lump sum. We make it a practice not to recover anything during the first three months of a coolie's stay on the garden. Every coolie who turns out to work gets a task. Ordinarily, men can earn "doubly" from March to October. On this garden even a boy could earn his doubly every day. I mean that the work involved would not be over severe for a boy who had not yet reached his full strength. The contrary may be the case on gardens where the soil is heavier, though allowance would usually be made on such gardens by reducing the task. Sometimes when there is a strong flush it is necessary to put all hands on to plucking. When men are put on to pluck, they usually do more work than the bare plucking *hasiri*. As a rule, I think that women are more expert pluckers than men: they have more practice. The reason of the low average attendance is that the members of a family will not go out to work all together: some stay at home to do domestic work. Sickness is not a chief cause. Coolies consider that they have a right to stay at home. I think that coolies prefer to be paid by their sardar to being paid direct by the garden.

Bangamati, the 6th July 1910.

Mr. W. D. Coull, Manager of Bangamati—

I have 26 years' experience of tea in the Duars.

Coolies on this garden are paid partly direct and partly through sardars, but every individual's account is kept in the office independently of the sardar. Many sardars, rely upon the office register for their accounts. I have no special preference for either system. The best coolies are those who are paid through the sardars. Some sardars are unable to keep accounts: hence we pay their coolies direct and pay the sardar nothing more than his commission. When a new coolie comes to the garden we ascertain what advance he has got in his country and, after making out an account, we recover the arrear from him through the sardar. I believe that sardars make private advances to the coolies, but I don't think that they charge interest. In this garden it is not necessary for the sardars to borrow from *kayas*. It is absolutely incorrect that the coolies are entirely in the hands of the sardars and heavily indebted to them. Coolies often leave a sardar who will not advance money to them freely, and join the *patti* of any sardar who may be more liberal to them. Coolies usually take about Rs. 5 as *kharcha* after they reach the garden. They get Rs. 2 on arrival and Re. 1 on the first hat day. New coolies are not taking *kharcha* nowadays: they are earning so much during the plucking season. In 1907 I did not have to increase *kharcha* owing to high prices: there was only a slight rise in prices in this neighbourhood. I build houses in the lines by contract, as I can't spare garden labour for the purpose: probably the coolie would build himself a better house. The ordinary size of a house is 25' X 13'. The *gharami* puts up the house on the bare ground: the coolie can build himself a plinth afterwards if he likes. The cost of a house to the management works out at about Rs. 22. A house would be entirely renewed in two years. Materials are paid for entirely by the garden. Coolies build cow-houses and pig styes themselves with the materials supplied for their dwelling houses. I consider that an average coolie can easily perform double hoeing *hasiris* on all the working days of the month. Coolies work on 18 or 19 days in a month only because they make so much money.

APPENDIX E.

No. 262M., dated Jalpaiguri, the 18th April 1910.

From—The Hon'ble Mr. F. J. MONAHAN, I.C.S., President, Duars Committee,

To—Captain S. B. CHRISTOPHERS, M.B., I.M.S., Amritsar, Punjab.

On behalf of the Committee appointed by the Resolution No. 43 T. M., dated the 26th March 1910, of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to enquire into the sanitary and economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies live (copy enclosed), and in accordance with the instructions of Government, I have the honour to request that you will be so good as to place at the disposal of the Committee any facts on which the opinions expressed in the Report on Malaria in the Duars by yourself and Dr. Bentley (Second Report to the Advisory Committee appointed by the Government of India to conduct an enquiry regarding black-water and other fevers prevalent in the Duars) are based, other than those mentioned in the report.

2. In particular, the Committee would be glad to be furnished with any statistical or other information which may be in your possession or that of Dr. Bentley, on the following points:—

- (i) *Page 1 of the Report.*—"The Duars with its 150,000 immigrant coolies." The Committee would be glad to know upon what data this estimate of the number of immigrant coolies in the Duars is based.
- (ii) *Page 7.*—"Native contractors and sardars—usurious rates of interest". The Committee would be obliged by a brief account of the facts ascertained upon which this statement is based.
- (iii) *Page 25.*—Evidence in support of the view that general apathy arising from chronic malaria is accountable for unwillingness of coolies to work.
- (iv) *Ibid.*—Facts or figures may be cited in support of the statement that movement from garden to garden is extraordinarily frequent.
- (v) *Page 34.*—The Committee would be glad to know the name of the garden in the Dina-Torsa district on which a remarkable intensity of malaria was found.
- (vi) *Page 37.*—Any figures in support of the estimate that new coolies formed on an average 25 per cent. of the whole population of the lines. It may be pointed out in this connection that on the returns furnished to Mr. Arbuthnott from 67 gardens the annual rate of recruitment comes to 15 coolies per acre under tea. The total area under tea in the Duars at present being 83,365 acres, on this computation the average number of coolies recruited annually would be 12,505.
- (vii) *Pages 37 & 38.*—Such further statistics as are available may be given in addition to those furnished as illustrative of the statement that the great majority of coolies entering the Duars are free from malaria.
- (viii) Any comparative statistics showing greater prevalence of malaria in the Duars than in Assam generally, or in particular districts of Assam, e.g., the "Tezpur Bank", or illustrating the comparative unhealthiness of the Terai and the Duars.
- (ix) *Page 48.*—Facts may be furnished in support of the statement that the sardar retains the pay of the coolie and allows him merely a living allowance.
- (x) *Page 52.*—The name of the market at which prices of food stuffs were noted—any information as to prices ruling at other seasons and markets.
- (xi) *Page 53.*—Such facts as were ascertained may be furnished in support of the statement that among new coolies the standard of actual diet taken is very low.
- (xii) *Page 55.*—Such facts as were ascertained may be furnished in support of the statement that many coolies remain for years drawing a living allowance instead of their pay.
- (xiii) *Ibid.*—The Committee would be glad to receive any information available regarding cases that came to notice in which a coolie was "cut adrift" by a sardar.
- (xiv) *Page 62.*—Any facts recorded in support of the statement that under the sardari system a coolie is tied by his advance.

3. The Committee would be glad to know over what period your enquiry extended.

APPENDIX F.

No. 22S. dated Kasauli, the 4th June 1910.

From—Captain S. R. CHRISTOPHERS, I.M.S., On Special Duty in connection with Malaria Investigation in the Punjab,

To—The Hon'ble Mr. F. J. MONAHAN, I.C.S., Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division and President, Duars Committee.

With reference to your letter No. 262M., dated the 8th of April, asking for certain statistics and data regarding certain points in connection with the Duars, I have the honour to forward the following additional information possessed by Dr. Bentley and myself.

Enclosure.*
1. On the Indian Hills, by E. W. Arnold. Two flagged paras.
2. Nine copies of charts of coolie lines.

* Not printed.

1. As noted in our report, page 73, the Census for 1901 gives the tea-garden population of the Duars as 133,287. In 1872 the population was only 9,432 as noted in the Census for 1891. The increase of population since that date has been almost entirely by immigration on the tea-gardens.

We were unable to obtain any reliable published information regarding immigration, migration, birth-rate or mortality upon the Duars tea-gardens, and this being so, any estimate of the population, it seemed to us, must be largely a matter of speculation.

Under these circumstances we quote the figure 150,000 which is that given by the Honorary Secretary and Chairman of the Duars Planters' Association in certain letters addressed to Government, etc., in 1906.

In a letter from the Honorary Secretary and Chairman, Duars Planters' Association, to the Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, dated from Chalsa, 14th May 1906, and published in the Report of the Indian Tea Association for 1906, page 190, the following paragraph appears:—

"The Duars Tea Industry includes about 70,000 acres of tea representing capital of over 2½ millions sterling. It produces some 36,000,000 lbs of tea and affords permanent employment to about 150,000 souls, involving a local annual expenditure of something like Rs. 75,00,000."

The italics are ours.

In another letter addressed to the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri from the Duars Planters' Association, dated from Chalsa, 28th August 1906, published in the same report, page 232, the following statement is made:—

"The Duars Tea Industry represents several millions sterling of invested capital; it affords employment *directly and indirectly* to over 150,000 souls."

The italics are ours.

2. It will be noted that this sentence forms part of a general indication of certain of the adverse influences which we believe are responsible in part (*vide* context) for the high intensity of malaria notoriously associated with excavation work, railway and road-making, jungle-clearing and so on, in tropical countries; in other words, with the condition we have for want of a better name called "Tropical Aggregation of Labour."

In the body of our report, when dealing with the application of these general principles to the Duars, we have considered at some length the effect of indebtedness and the system of living allowances (*vide* also this letter Nos. 9, 11, and 14) because we believe these to be important. Of usury, when dealing specifically with the Duars, we have made no mention, because we are unaware of its degree of prevalence or importance.

But to judge by the Darjeeling Gazetteer, pages 114-120, a very serious condition of affairs exists in the neighbouring gardens of the Darjeeling district. Here the sardar is referred to as the sufferer; but it is impossible to believe that he will take upon himself the burden of borrowing money at usurious rates of interest on behalf of the coolie, as noted in the following quotation, and not recoup himself in some way at their expense. It is obvious he can only be considered as a middleman in this respect:—

"On tea-gardens the state of affairs is even worse. The people incur expenditure recklessly, they look to their sardar for money, and he gets it from the money-lender. The hold of the latter over the labour force is so great that it is credibly stated that in some gardens paying Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 a month as wages to their employes, the *kaya* regularly attends on pay day, takes the whole amount from the sardars and then doles it out to the latter weekly, after deducting the interest due on the loans he has made."

Reference may be made also to the proposals referred to on page 119, line 20 of the Darjeeling Gazetteer, by which we presume are meant proposals to Government. We have seen it stated recently in press reports of the proceedings of the Darjeeling Planters' Association that definite appeals are to be made to Government to take steps to check the abuses of this system of money-lending to tea-garden workers.

We have been informed that there are some remarks on the subject of coolie indebtedness in the Duars in the new Gazetteer for the Jalpaiguri district, but we have been unable to obtain a copy.

An instance in the Duars, showing that money-lending among the coolies is not absent from that district, is the following:—

A man, whom we gathered either was or had been a garden sardar, and who seemed in a prosperous condition, told us that he lent sums of money to coolies varying from one rupee up to twenty rupees. On being asked the rate of interest he obtained for his money, he replied sometimes one anna per month per rupee and sometimes two annas; but he subsequently added that, if a poor person wanted to borrow a rupee he would have to pay four annas per month.

When referring to sardars in the Duars it may be noted that we have confined ourselves to pointing out that the Duars sardar has, if he wishes to exercise them, all the privileges of a money-lender.

Originally we understand that the commission paid by the garden to the sardar on the work done by his coolies, was fixed at the rate of two pice per day for each coolie turning out to work (*vide* Mr. Arbuthnott's report). Some few years back the amount of the sardar's commission was cut down to *one pice per day* for each coolie turning out to work (Assam Labour Committee Proceedings). It is specially recorded that practically no opposition was made by the sardars to this reduction, which is rather surprising, seeing that it really meant the cutting down by one-half of what might seem to be their chief source of income.

If we take the average days worked by the coolie at from 15 to 18 per month, we can estimate that on the average a sardar may expect to draw (at the rate of one pice per day) from 4 to 4½ annas per coolie per month, or between three and four rupees per coolie per annum. Out of this sum the sardar is supposed to make good losses by death and bad debts.

In view of what is generally known regarding money-lending in India, and with the knowledge that in this country the lending of money by one native to another involves as a general rule the payment of interest; a system such as that prevalent in the Duars whereby the making of personal loans by a sardar to a coolie is deliberately encouraged (for the sardar is supplied with capital by the garden for the specific purpose of making loans to coolies), can only be regarded with grave suspicion; and the onus of proof that such a system, admittedly leading to indebtedness, does not also lead to usury or illicit commissions, and under certain circumstances to the oppression of the debtor, should rest with those who support such a system.

3. We are afraid from the wording of the question that our point as to the effect of physical conditions on the working powers of a community, has not been understood.

If the members of a community are subsisting upon a resting (or sitting) diet, rather than on a working one, they can no more work than an engine whose fires are fed by insufficient coal to keep up steam pressure, can pull a train; and if the members of a community are anæmic, with blood incapable of properly supplying their tissues, it is equally certain that they cannot do the work of healthy people. Hence poverty of diet and poverty of blood inevitably result in a reduced amount of energy, available for work, and whenever either of these conditions occurs in a community the output of work has in some way to be lessened, consciously or unconsciously. The reduction in the working efficiency of any labour force from either of these causes can only be made apparent to the layman (short of actual prostration of the workers by sickness) by the occurrence of "laziness".

What we have termed "apathy" is a condition quite defined and highly characteristic of the effects of malaria. It is remarked upon in many works upon the subject. Such cases are or should be recognised by any medical man of experience, but their nature is rarely appreciated by the layman; hence the commonly expressed opinion referred to in the passage quoted by you.

NOTE.—We may be permitted to point out, however, that your question somewhat stretches the meaning of our actual words. We do not state that *all* unwillingness of coolies to work is due to apathy arising from chronic malaria. We refer to one of the effects of malaria.

Our experience has shown us that usually when a coolie is singled out as "lazy" it often happens that he is found to be suffering from anæmia much more likely to have been the cause rather than the effect of his laziness.

We would even go so far as to say that our experience would lead us, wherever an excessive laziness was complained of in a labour force, to expect to find the presence of anæmia in proportion.

Dr. Bentley who has had great experience among tea-garden coolies informs me that it is often possible in Assam to trace the history of so-called "lazy" coolies. An investigation into a large number of cases of anæmia and debility among coolies there almost invariably resulted in the discovery that the patients had been gradually becoming less and less able to work. The record of such cases in the garden *haziri* books might show something like the following:—First some weeks or months of steady work, then occasional days of leave, sick leave or otherwise, and now and again a "half *haziri*" showing that the coolie had been to work but had failed to complete his task. Finally, these half *haziris* would increase in number, until perhaps the record of incomplete tasks appeared in regular succession with only an odd day or so of full work now and again. By this time the coolie had usually gained a reputation

for "laziness" and had probably been frequently reported by the chaukidars as absent from work and reprimanded by the overseers and manager on account of incompleted tasks and bad work; but the examination of such a coolie by a medical man soon affords an explanation for this condition of things. A man in such a condition, if he appears at a hospital when a European medical man is present, is probably recognised as unfit and receives treatment; but unless he is so ill as to show unmistakeable symptoms, the average layman does not see anything the matter with him, beyond unwillingness to work. Doctor Bentley has on more than one occasion had coolies shown him by a Hospital Assistant as cases of "laziness" who were seriously anæmic and obviously suffering from severe palpitation.

The name "lazy disease" applied to anchylostomiasis in Porto Rico and the Southern States of America, is an expression of the same idea and indicates the proneness of the average layman to overlook the causes which often sap the energy of the worker and force him to abstain from labour as an unconscious protest against his condition. That the effect of malaria in reducing the efficiency of tea-garden labour in the Duars has received a certain amount of recognition is shown by the following paragraph quoted from the memorial submitted to Government by the Duars Planters' Association, asking for an enquiry into the occurrence of malaria and black-water fever in the Duars. Paragraph 10 of this memorial reads as follows:—

The insanitary nature of the district has a direct influence on the prosperity of the Tea Industry. In order to have an adequate complement of coolies in the busy season, we are compelled to keep in employment throughout the year a much larger staff than would otherwise be necessary; and the loss to the industry is heavy from the influence of malaria in undermining the efficiency of garden labour.

There is another point which must not be lost sight of in connection with the question of unwillingness to work on the part of the coolie and incidentally of factors serving to intensify malaria.

If the ordinary coolie happens to be so placed that he has not the wherewithal for a full evening meal, it is our experience that he will do anything rather than venture out to work. He will rather sit and do anything or go out and search for food in the jungle. It is not that a coolie objects to work on an empty stomach, for as a matter of fact the ordinary Indian labourer rarely takes more than a mouthful of food before going to work at daybreak, but he has an objection to work if he is not sure of his solid evening meal.

Coolies are said to "sit" nearly 15 days in the month, but what is the real significance of this? It may well be found that there are cogent reasons why they should do so. What is wanted is insight into this. At present without adequate knowledge of conditions affecting the coolie his action is attributed unconditionally to "laziness".

We are aware that there is an idea among the planters in the Duars that it is often merely a question of "prosperity" that the coolie is so well-off that he does not care to work. But among a very large proportion of the Duars coolies there was at the time of our visit very little visible sign of this prosperity, for the paucity of jewellery of intrinsic value among the majority of plains coolies is noticeable, and if more evidence were wanted, we have only to call attention to the fact that even at festival times the display of new clothing was meagre among this class of people. We have heard it stated that the amount of money annually remitted from the Duars to Chota Nagpur is proof of the general prosperity although more obvious signs may be less apparent in the Duars itself. But should the remittance money be raised by loan (*vide* the coolie mentioned in this letter No. 10, who borrowed Rs. 7 to remit home) this fact whilst an excellent testimony to the value of their credit would not be very good evidence of their prosperity.

More as an example of the reality of physical reasons for laziness and of the peculiar apathy induced by malaria, we append two flagged paragraphs in a very interesting work describing conditions upon what was evidently a newly-opened garden in the Wynaad. The first paragraph describes a condition which the planter himself recognised as physical inability to work; the second is a rather typical, pronounced, but we think not exaggerated example of true malarial apathy. Two good examples though less dramatic are described by us, page 61, line 30, and page 65, lines 19-25 of our report.

There is of course the other side to this question of unwillingness to work, the well-known tendency of the normal man to do no more than he is obliged, but here again we show the possibility (page 56 of our report) of the Duars' coolie being exposed to influences hardly calculated to stimulate industry.

4. We do not know of any statistics which would show the extent to which movement from garden to garden in the Duars takes place, and we are aware of the

fact that the phrase "extraordinarily frequent" expresses an opinion which must of necessity be more or less a matter of personal judgment. It is quite probable that among those whose experience is confined to tea-gardens in the Duars, the amount of movement which goes on among the coolie population would excite no surprise. That such movement takes place will, we think, be generally admitted, and the following quotation from a letter referring to tea statistics addressed by the Duars Planters' Association to the Indian Tea Association and printed in the report for 1906, page 78, gives expression to this view. The paragraph referred to reads as follows :—

.....In the Duars no labour can be said to be really "Permanent" since coolies are always liable to move from one garden to another, and some managers enter their average coolie musters in column 3 as "Permanent" and only cold weather and contractors coolies as "Temporary".....

The italics are ours.

Casual enquiry among coolies in the Duars will show how many of them have worked at one time or another upon different gardens. Our own experience has been that enquiry among less prosperous looking coolies especially, has almost invariably elicited the statement that they had previously worked on other gardens. On being asked the reason of their change, the answer has usually been that the air or water did not suit them, or that they had lost relatives by death. The following examples will illustrate what we mean :—

A coolie on being asked whether he had lost any children in the Duars, stated that he had lost a wife and three children on such and such a garden, mentioning the name of a garden in a different district to the one in which he was then living. On being asked if he had lived on any other gardens than these two, he replied that he had lived at another place for about two years, but his brother, who was with him and one of the brother's children, had died there and therefore he had removed. His brother's wife had gone to another garden after this event, taking with her the remaining child.

An old man, seen in company with two youths and a young woman at a railway station, stated in the course of conversation that he belonged to a certain garden. On being asked if he had come to that garden from his country, he replied that he had originally been recruited for another garden, but as his wife and eldest son died there in the first year, he left the place.

An oldish man, a plains coolie, came to us at one place and asked for medical treatment for his wife. Enquiry showed him to be a sardar. He had been eleven years in the Duars and two years in the Duars on the garden in which he was then living, having moved to this place with sixteen coolies who had followed him from another garden. Previously he had lived on another garden to this, thus he had been 3 on one garden, six years on a second and two years on the third. When asked the reason for such movements, he at once stated that he and his wife lost all their children on the first garden and so they left it; they had been all right for several years on the second garden, but then he himself fell ill and they decided to make a change; on the third garden he had been fit but his wife had been ailing and he thought that either the air or the water did not suit her. If she did not get better they would have to try another place. If he moved, most of his coolies would follow him as they had done previously.

Three coolies, a man, a youth and a woman, were seen one day going out to work. The man and the youth were anæmic; the woman had a big ulcer on her leg; they stated that they had been six, four and two years in the Duars. They had each originally been recruited for other gardens. The man and the youth changed their gardens because they did not feel fit there; the woman left her first garden because her husband died there.

As a result of many conversations of this kind we formed the impression that a large proportion of Duars' coolies belonged to what may be termed a "floating population".

We have had occasion to see or hear of parties of coolies numbering sometimes two or three and at other times twelve or more, either leaving a garden for another or arriving at a garden from some other one. Sometimes this exchange would be from places near at hand and sometimes from places many miles away. This movement of coolies is perfectly well known to any one familiar with tea-garden life in the Duars and is looked on largely as a matter of course.

Were it necessary to gauge the extent to which this movement takes place, it could best be done by examining the books of a number of gardens. We believe the books giving the labour rolls for a number of years past on a garden such as Meenglas, for instance, would give some idea to what extent this fluctuation and movement among garden populations takes place.

Reference may also be made in this connection to appendix 11* of our report, which shows, among other things, the extent of such changes in a test line, though this point was not then being specifically investigated and the line not chosen for any other reason than its convenience of situation. In the table which records what took place in this line of about 300 people during a period of six months at a time of year when migration is not usual to the extent to which it occurs later on in the season, it will be seen to what an extent coolies entered the line and left it for lines on other gardens. The change was so considerable in fact that it was felt observations of the kind lasting over more than six months would scarcely be of any value for our purpose, which was to ascertain roughly the death-rate.

5. The context to our remarks will show that the intensity of malaria on the garden was remarkable chiefly in view of the extraordinary absence of standing and other water suitable for the breeding of anopheles mosquitoes. The garden was Hun-tapara and the conditions are referred to on page 33 of our report.

* There are other gardens in the same district in which the scarcity of apparently suitable breeding places for anopheles mosquitoes may be seen and yet the intensity of malaria present among the people is remarkable. Some of these gardens are mentioned on page 33, but they do not exhaust the list of gardens which may be placed in this category.

6. It will be seen by reference to our report that the minimum estimate given by us for immigration into the Duars is 12,000 persons, which corresponds very closely with the figure 12,505 mentioned by you. There is, however, no reason for thinking that immigration is always the same from year to year. We do not think the figure for any year can be arrived at by the averages of other years since there is every reason to suppose that conditions in the recruiting districts might lead to a very much larger number of coolies being imported in some years than in others. A point that we think of importance is the fact that there is no certain knowledge on this matter, as no returns of any kind are required from the gardens.

We attach copies of nine rough charts of lines examined by us in the Duars. These charts, which are all that we have in our possession at present, were arranged to show the houses in the occupation of coolies newly recruited from their country. The figures in these examples taken collectively show amongst 567 houses, 34 per cent. occupied by new coolies. In line No. 8 we were informed that about 300 out of a total of 600 coolies were newly up that year. It will be seen that on the same garden another line was well supplied with new coolies (No. 7, about 25 per cent.) On a garden not represented among these charts 90 to 100 hill coolies and about 400 plains coolies were recruited during the year. At the time of our visit the garden population was estimated to be about 2,000 persons. In this case it will be noted that the proportion of new coolies imported must have again exceeded 25 per cent. of the garden population.

The arrival on a garden of non-workers (small children and dependants) among gangs of labourers who have been newly recruited is, we believe, not recorded. Some allowance would have to be made in the Committee's estimate of 12,505 for these, if, as may be presumed to be probable, the calculation of the number of coolies per acre includes only working coolies.

7. Among batches of people from the plains seen shortly after their arrival in the Duars and not recorded in our report, we may mention the following :—

- (1) 37 adults; men and women, none with spleen, one slightly anæmic. 5 young children, none with spleen.
- (2) 12 adults and 3 young children, none with spleen.
- (3) 39 young children, seen on a garden a short time after their arrival in the Duars, 2 with spleen.
- (4) 25 young children from Chaibasha a few weeks after their arrival in the Duars, none with spleen.
- (5) 51 miscellaneous coolies, adult males, seen either singly or two or three at a time on various gardens shortly after their arrival in the Duars, none with either palpable spleen or anæmia.

Many other coolies were examined from time to time but the results have not been recorded.

As stated in our report, groups of coolies coming from certain localities sometimes showed a good deal of malaria, but such cases were in the minority, whereas the conditions as regards enlargement of spleen in coolies resident in the Duars is demonstrated by the extremely high rates given in our report on black-water fever. The difference in fact between new coolies up only a few days or weeks and older residents

was so marked that in estimations of spleen rates we, whenever possible, excluded new coolies from the figures. Had they been included, the figure in almost every case would have been lowered. The effect of a few months' residence is well shown in the example given on page 38, line 1, of our report.

Our remarks relative to the freedom from malaria of new coolies is also supported by Dr Bentley's experience in Assam. Many hundreds of new coolies from the neighbourhood of Chota Nagpur and the Sonthal Parganas (labour much used in the Duars) have on their arrival on the gardens shown on an average only 5 per cent. with enlarged spleen.

As regards coolies newly come from Sikkim and the Darjeeling Hills, of whom a large number enter the Duars, we do not think that any one with experience of these people would suggest that they were subject to malaria to any great extent in their own country. In the Duars these hill people show a spleen rate which often approximates to 100 per cent.

8. We have no statistics to deal adequately with this matter. We think it possible from the form of the question that we are thought to consider the labour system in Assam preferable as regards the health of the coolies to that in the Duars. We have, however, carefully refrained from expressing such a view. The conditions are very different and it would require more opportunities than we have had of comparing the two districts.

Two considerations, however, favour the view that Assam as a whole is less malarious than the Duars:—

- (1) The fact that black-water fever, a disease now recognised on all sides as the outcome of malaria in an intense form, has been relatively much more frequent in the Duars than in Assam.
- (2) The fact that the Duars, judging by result, has tacitly admitted its inability to employ certain classes of labour commonly used in Assam; attempts at introducing such labour into the Duars having proved, so we have been informed, highly disastrous.

In Assam unhealthy gardens are well known owing to the fact that accurate returns of vital statistics are insisted on from garden managers. Moreover, Government officials have to inspect all gardens at regular intervals, examine garden books and make most minute enquiries into questions regarding pay, sick allowances, and everything which may effect the well-being of the coolies.

In the Duars, so far as we could gather, registration is very lax; even gardens notorious throughout the whole district for their unhealthiness have returned (so we have been informed) such small numbers of deaths as to make them compare favourably on paper with some of the healthiest communities in England.

Under these circumstances the difficulty of comparing intimate knowledge of one district with comparative ignorance of another is very great, and, all things considered, great care would be required not to attribute to Assam a degree of unhealthiness really based upon its more accurate statistics.

9. As the new coolie on entering the Duars is almost invariably in debt to his sardar for an advance, and, as he requires supplies of food immediately on his arrival, it is, we believe, customary to make him an allowance of money which generally goes by the name of "kharcha". This allowance has generally to be repeated at intervals of a week or so to enable the coolie to make purchases of food from time to time. These allowances must not be confused with the "batta" allowances ordinarily paid to servants when travelling; etc., which are given in addition to their wages. The "kharcha" is a "living or subsistence allowance" but it is charged against the coolie and either deducted from his pay or added to his advance account.

In some cases "kharcha" is paid into the hands of the coolie by the planter. Most coolies, however, speak of receiving their "kharcha" from their sardar and we gather that it is as a rule only on certain gardens or for special classes of labour, e.g.; coolies from Chaibassa, that the planter deals direct.

We have been informed that the usual rates of "kharcha" are from twelve annas to a rupee in the case of a man; from eight annas to twelve annas in the case of a woman; and from four annas to eight annas in the case of a working child. Dependents and non-working children do not, as far as we are aware, receive any allowance, but are entirely dependent upon their relations.

The following instances happen to be in our possession (*vide* remarks at the end of our letter):—

- (1) A man and his wife newly up from their country with an infant in arms and a family of small children. The man informed us that he had received Re. 1 "kharcha" with which to feed himself and his family for a week.

- (2) A man, his wife and four small children, who had received Re. 1-8 between them for a week's subsistence. The children were all too small to work; the man had received Re. 1 and the woman annas 8.
- (3) A coolie a year in the Duars informed us that his pay, if he worked full time for the month, was Rs. 6. His sardar paid him Re. 1 a week upon which he lived. He had never received his pay, as he had an advance. When this advance was paid off, he would get his pay, but he was unaware of the exact amount of his advance.
- (4) On one garden two girls were seen out at work gathering tea prunings. One of them was sitting under a tree with an attack of fever on her. They were both miserably thin and anæmic and clothed in rags. They told us they were sisters, their mother was dead and they lived with their father, who was an old man who could not do hard work. They stated that they had that week received only annas 12 between the three of them. Some weeks they had received as much as annas 8 per head. They did not get pay in addition to this allowance because they had advances. When their advances were paid off they expected to get pay.
- (5) A man, several months upon a garden, who told us he received Re. 1 a week.
- (6) A woman with a husband and two children, the woman being ill. She informed us that she sometimes got annas 4 and sometimes annas 8 per week.
- (7) Two youths, coolies of a few months' standing, one being dull-witted, who were getting Re. 1 and annas 12 per week, respectively.
- (8) A man and his wife who received 14 annas between them.
- (9) A coolie woman, with a child of three years, one year in the Duars. Her husband was dead and she got Re. 1 a week.

Among coolies receiving allowance of the kind mentioned, the system appeared to be accepted as a matter of course and we gain the impression that the arrangement is an established custom among a considerable proportion of the Duars sardars and their coolies. The only complaint, if one is made by the coolie, is of the insufficiency of the allowance.

Prosperous coolies, most of whom have been a considerable time in the Duars, have told us that they received their full pay, but enquiry among such people invariably elicited the statement that they owed no advance. We think it would be instructive to ascertain the average days of work done by a number of coolies possessed of no advances as compared with the days worked by indebted coolies. It is a significant fact that we have heard frequently remarked upon in the Duars, that when there is a chance of coolies earning good "ticca" or "doubles" (extra pay) which is, we believe, usually paid direct into the hands of the coolie instead of through the sardar, the daily musters go up.

Note.—It is customary on tea-gardens to set a day's task or "haziri" for most classes of work. This task has to be completed before the coolie can earn "ticca". A coolie who completes his task each working day will receive his full monthly wage at the end of the month, unless deductions have to be made from it. In the Duars this monthly wage is usually paid through the hands of the sardar. For certain classes of work coolies can earn "ticca" or "doubles" which is really very like overtime work. The day's task has first to be completed and any work done after this, whether picking leaf or hoeing, is paid for at a higher rate. The amount earned in this way is usually paid direct into the hands of the coolie.

10. The name of the market at which we obtained the rates mentioned was Mal. We made frequent enquiries in different parts of the district with regard to the prices of rice and *dhan*. The rates we quote for Mal held good with very slight fluctuations for a number of months. It is doubtful if the price of common rice was ever appreciably less than eight seers for the rupee. The price of rice appeared to have been very high from 1906 in which year, owing to floods, prices reached the abnormal figure of Re. 1 per 3 seers (*vide* No. 11).

11. We are aware that among planters there is a very general impression that coolies as a class are well off; and that this impression is true as regards a large proportion of the settled and prosperous coolies we would not attempt to dispute. But most planters whom we have met appear to have the vaguest ideas as to the diet really necessary for the working coolie or the amount of food actually taken by him. Their impression that the coolie is well fed is, we believe, largely gained by the fact that on bazar days it is no uncommon thing to see coolies who have purchased fowls, pigs, etc., at the local market, going to their homes laden with these luxuries; but it only needs a little observation, especially in a year when prices of rice and *dhan* are high, to show that besides these more prosperous people there are very much larger numbers

who can only afford to buy the merest necessities of life, and these too in amounts which are often barely sufficient to sustain them in health. It is to this class of people that we have drawn special attention in our report.

The following instances will indicate the class of case to which we refer:—

- (1) A coolie, one year in the Duars, informed us that he received Re. 1 from his sardar every week. He stated that his monthly rate of pay was Rs. 6 but that he would not get this until his advance was paid off. Originally he had received an advance of Rs. 10 in his country and subsequently he had required Rs. 7 for land charges on his *khet*. This sum he had borrowed from his sardar and remitted to his country. He did not know the present amount of his advance.

He had spent annas 14 of his week's allowance of Re. 1 on rice. He thought that he had got 6 seers, but he could not tell if the grain-seller had not cheated him. The remaining 2 annas he had spent on salt and oil. He had finished all his tobacco and had no money to buy more but would borrow some from one of the other coolies and return it next week.

He had no coat and only possessed a dhoti, a cotton cloth, and the remains of a blanket upon which he slept. He had two earthen cooking pots and no other property of any description. He had tasted flesh 3 months previously when his sardar gave a dinner and he got the leg of a fowl for his share. He and another man had spent 4 annas on liquor two months before. They shared it between them. Probably his sardar would sometimes give him some rice beer; but he could not afford to obtain it for himself. If he were fortunate he might pay off his advance and buy a coat in two or three years.

This man was a typical Oraon coolie, looking fairly fit and appeared contented with his lot. He said he had no fever but that recently he had been getting pain in his belly. He was slightly anæmic. He had left his wife and relations in his country where he had land. He came to the Duars to earn money for his land charges.

- (2) A sick woman, a new coolie, informed us that she had only a little rice to eat as the sardar only gave annas 4 and sometimes annas 8 "kharcha".
- (3) A man with a sick wife and five small children had no money and only about 2 seers of rice and a little salt in the house. He said he received Re. 1 some days before. He and his family had only eaten a little parched rice that morning; they would boil the remainder that evening but they had nothing to eat with it except salt. The children were miserable looking and appeared to be underfed.
- (4) A man and his wife and four small children one a baby in arms, had purchased a week's supply of food from the bazar, with Re. 1-8. They had no more money. They had obtained about 10 seers of rice, some salt, a little oil and some chillies. When asked if this was enough for a week, they replied, "what can we do, we have only got Re. 1-8 'kharcha'."
- (5) A widow woman, with a child of three years, suffering from dysentery, when asked what she and her child ate, said "only rice, what else can I afford." She had received Re. 1 that week.
- (6) Two girls (referred to elsewhere), who lived with their old father, stated that they could only get a little rice to eat, as between the three of them they had only got 12 annas that week.

In addition to these observations we have frequently observed and interrogated coolies returning from bazar. Many among newer and less prosperous coolies appeared to purchase little else but rice, and when questioned upon the point, they almost invariably made the same reply: "how can we afford anything else". Among this class of coolie, extras in the shape of dahl, onions, potatoes and other little luxuries are not commonly eaten when prices of the staple food, rice or *dhan*, are high. Many new coolies also cannot gain the advantage of buying *dhan* because unless they can have the use of a *dhenki* they have no means of cleaning it. Single people especially among the men therefore almost invariably buy rice rather than *padly*.

Many coolies supplement their fare by gathering herbs or digging up roots in the jungle. A casual walk into the jungle, even at comparatively long distances from a coolie line, will often reveal the extent to which this method of obtaining food is practised.

On one garden a weakly looking Sonthal coolie was seen, who had gathered a small basket of roots instead of going to work. He told us that he had no rice in

his house, but was going to exchange some of the roots for grain. It is evident that a coolie cannot work and at the same time be obtaining food in this way.

In considering the diet of coolies it is obvious that the facts referred to on pages 51 and 52 of our report have a bearing. The cases noted above appeared for the most part to be receiving the recognised amount of allowance (i.e., Re. 1 for a man per week, etc.), but this allowance seemed, at the prices then current, to allow of very little else than rice and salt—a diet which maintained for any length of time is inadequate to sustain health.

In regard to ruling prices, we may remark also that a few months of high prices, when perhaps coolies are not able to earn extra pay, must have a very serious effect on sickness, if the narrow margin we have shown to exist be taken into account.

This fact is well illustrated by what occurred in the Duars in 1906 when owing to floods, famine prices ruled and in some parts (Nagrakata) rice was selling at 3 seers the rupee (*vide* Report, Indian Tea Association, 1906, page 217, *et seq.*) This year (1906) was so unhealthy for Europeans and so many cases of black-water fever occurred that the Duars Planters' Association memorialised Government for an enquiry.

We have in our black-water fever report shown the connection between black-water in Europeans and malaria in native communities among whom they live. In the Duars' report we have pointed out the effect of inadequate diet in intensifying the malaria of native communities. If, as we believe, there is this relation between malaria and diet, then there is a direct connection between the scarcity of 1906 and the sudden increase of black-water fever among Europeans in that year.

12. We believe it is recognised by planters that it takes a considerable time for a coolie to wipe off his advance. Our impression is that at the end of a year most coolies recruited for the Duars still owe an advance to their sardar, *e.g.*—

A coolie a year in the Duars in receipt of a weekly allowance from his sardar, who expected to work off his advance in two or three years.

A coolie woman in receipt of Re. 1 a week, who owed Rs. 7 advance, had already been nearly a year in the Duars and did not know when she would be able to clear off this debt.

A coolie who had been a year in the Duars, owed an unknown amount to his sardar, was receiving "kharcha," Re. 1 per week.

Without wishing to labour the point we append the following calculation which seems instructive:—

	Rs.	¢
Average monthly wage earned by man ...	4	9 0
Living allowance for man at Re. 1 per week, 31 days to month ...	4	6 10
Towards debt to sardar per mensem ...	0	2 2

We may expect the period to be especially extended in the case of coolies who suffer much from sickness or who have helpless relatives dependent upon them.

13. In replying to this question we may preface our remarks by the statement that at no time did we seek for evidence of this nature; but we were forcibly impressed with the fact that there did not appear to be anything to prevent such happenings. The following cases, which came to our notice quite by accident, indicate that the kind of thing referred to may occur:—

(1) A coolie woman from Chota Nagpur was seen in a garden line; she was anæmic and dropsical. On being questioned, she stated that her husband was dead. She had been resident in the Duars several years and her husband and two or three children had died upon the garden in which she was living. She had one son, a boy of 10 years, who went to work. She had worked until she became too ill about a year ago. She got no allowance from the sardar but was dependent entirely upon the earnings of her boys and the little she could make by cleaning rice for other coolies.

(2) A coolie man was seen in an almost moribund condition in a small hut in a bazar near a tea-garden. He stated that he had come from a neighbouring garden where he had worked for some time. Lately he had been unable to work. He had a very large spleen, was very anæmic and greatly swollen with dropsy. We gathered that he had no friends and relations, and that he had been subsisting for some time on the charity of other coolies. He was not in receipt of any allowance from his sardar, and it was a long time since he had worked, as he had been first laid up with dysentery and then become swollen and very weak. He had managed to crawl as far as the bazar in the hope of obtaining assistance by begging.

- (3) The body of a youth, a hill coolie of about 15 or 16 years of age, was found lying within the Railway fence close to a tea-garden coolie line. The body showed great emaciation, but the belly and lower limbs were dropsical. The spleen was greatly enlarged and the conjunctiva were jaundiced. None of the garden coolies professed to know anything about him, but after some enquiry it appeared that he had been seen in the neighbourhood and had begged and been given a little food. He was supposed to have come from a neighbouring tea-garden.
- (4) A plains coolie of weak intellect was seen in a garden line. He did not belong there and no one could tell where he came from, for though he said he had worked on a tea-garden, he did not know the name of the place or of the manager. He was very emaciated and was suffering from dysentery. He explained that he had come to the garden where he was seen for the purpose of begging.
- (5) An oldish coolie woman, anæmic and dropsical, was seen in a garden line in company with a young woman, suffering from a bad ulcer on the leg. The young woman was her daughter-in-law. The old woman stated that she had been unable to work regularly for nearly a year, although previously she had worked regularly. She did not receive any allowance from the sardar as she was not working now, but she was dependent upon her son and daughter-in-law.
- (6) A youth from Chota Nagpur was seen in a small shed in a garden line. He was frightfully anæmic and swollen with dropsy. He was suffering from dysenteric symptoms and the floor of the hut and the charpoy on which he was lying were in a disgusting condition. He was so nearly dying that he could not speak. He was quite alone, had no blanket and was nearly naked. There was no sign of food in the place and no property of any description beyond an empty gumlah. Enquiry showed that he had no relations, and there was no one to look after him, and he had been a long time ill. His sardar, who was living in a house near by, stated that he gave him rice but he would not eat.
- (7) A coolie, suffering from intense anæmia and dropsy and with quartan parasites in his blood, was seen in a garden line in the Dam Dim district. He complained of dysentery and was in an utterly miserable state, and evidently not far from death. On enquiry we learned that he had been recruited from Dumka and had been in the Duars some months. He appeared to be homeless, friendless, and entirely dependent on charity.

14. The Duars system of sardari recruiting appears to have originated from the "Kamia" labour system prevalent, we believe, in Chota Nagpur and the adjacent districts a number of years ago. Under that system it was the custom for poor people, who wished to raise money for any purpose, to accept an advance from anyone who would employ them, binding themselves in return to work either for life, for some definite period, or until the debt was paid off.

But whatever the origin of the Duars system, the advance which has been received by the coolie at the time of his recruitment is considered by him as a kind of bond when he first comes up to the Duars, and this idea has been expressed to us by coolies not long in the Duars, with whom we conversed. We think that the idea that the advance ties the coolie to his sardar is fully admitted in Mr. Arbuthnot's report and in the evidence given in the Duars before the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee; and the rules of the Duars Planters' Association relating to labour also seem to bear out this view, when they make special arrangements for recovering the advances owed by coolies who may move from one garden to another.

These rules read as follows until quite recently, but we cannot say if they have been amended:—

Extract from Duars Labour Rules.

Rule 1.—If coolies shall, when indebted, leave a tea estate belonging to any member of the Indian Tea Association, who shall have subscribed these rules, under the management of A, and be found on another estate belonging to any other member of the said Association who has subscribed these rules under the management of B, then, if at any time within three calendar months from the date of the arrival of the coolies on B's estate, A shall write to B, stating that the coolies were employed under A's management, B shall thereupon either turn such coolies out of his estate or pay to A the money due by the coolies at A's estate, whichever B prefers.

NOTE. In the application of the foregoing rule an account of the money due by and to the coolies at A's estate, authenticated by A, shall be accepted by B as correct.

It is unnecessary to comment upon this rule beyond pointing out that it appears to indicate that the coolie in the Duars owing an advance to his sardar may find his movements restricted by this fact; he is in fact, unless he absconds, so successfully as to avoid recognition, more or less tied either to his own garden or to gardens willing to accept responsibility for his personal debts. If his advance has reached an inordinate figure, he may find that a number of gardens are closed against him. We have heard of one case where a young coolie man wished to marry a girl in another garden. His advance stood at Rs. 85, however, a sum for which the garden upon which his chosen bride lived would not accept responsibility. The girl's parents would not consent to her leaving the garden on which they lived. This man found himself tied by his advance. Of course we do not suggest that the advance constitutes a bond in the same sense that an agreement or indenture does, for it is not a legal tie; but that it acts in a manner limiting the freedom of the coolie in many ways must be admitted; and we think that careful enquiry among coolies, sardars and managers would demonstrate this even if it had not been so clearly indicated in the respective reports of Mr. Arbuthnott and the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee. No one can reside in the Duars tea district for long without having it brought to their notice that coolies are not entirely free to go about from garden to garden, but may be followed by their sardars and perhaps brought back. In view of these facts we consider that there is every reason to believe that advances are tacitly understood to form a bond between the coolie and the sardar or the garden.

Quite apart from the binding of any particular coolie however to his garden is the question of his inability to leave the country for good should he wish to; for until the coolie has paid off his advance we see no means by which he could obtain money to do so. If sent recruiting, we have to bear in mind the point referred to on page 47 of our report, for it is not likely that a coolie will be given an advance to go to his country unless there is good reason for the sardar to believe he will return.

In a small line, noted in Appendix II, no less than six men who had gone recruiting had left families behind them.

In the foregoing Dr. Bentley and myself have given such information as we were able to. We may, however, be permitted to note —

- (1) That in the Duars statistical data, even as regards such questions as Nos. 1 and 6, are very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain; and it will be obvious that under the conditions of our enquiry we had no special powers to obtain statistics.
- (2) Our enquiry was a scientific one and did not include the taking and recording of evidence.

Several of the questions asked may be said to refer to abuses. We at no time made any attempt to search out such matters. Where anything of this nature has been called attention to, it has been more in the nature of an illustration of our meaning than as a supposed exposure of the Duars. We have in answering the questions justified ourselves, but we do not mean to imply that there is anything "scandalous" in the conditions; but we do wish to draw attention to the enormous importance both to the coolie and the tea industry of the perhaps obscure but none the less real economic influences we have attempted to portray in our report. Delay in the appreciation of the importance of such influences must, it seems to us, merely postpone the day when the bringing together of coolie labour can be undertaken without leading to the exaggerated amount of sickness which so consistently accompanies it and stultifies its object.

15. Dr. Bentley proceeded to the Duars in July 1907. I joined him in December 1907. We left the Duars in January 1909.

APPENDIX G.

1. Number of gardens. 50
2. Total acreage under tea (of 50 gardens) 50,628
3. Garden population :—

Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4
34,355	39,790	23,612	97,757

4. Labour force

Actual (1910):—

Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4
28,145	36,109	7,300	71,554

—	1907.				1908.				1909.			
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Maximum ...	23,817	31,031	4,655	59,503	26,154	33,810	5,364	65,328	29,560	36,814	5,992	72,366
Minimum ...	21,035	27,339	4,349	52,723	22,661	29,793	4,916	57,370	24,086	32,515	5,039	61,640
Mean ...	22,426	29,430	4,502	56,358	24,408	31,801	5,140	61,349	26,823	34,665	5,515	67,003

5. Individuals working:—

—	1907.				1908.				1909.			
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Maximum ...	19,550	26,466	3,349	49,365	21,188	28,740	3,645	53,573	24,474	31,867	4,093	60,434
Minimum ...	15,947	22,630	2,854	41,431	17,386	24,054	3,207	44,647	19,061	25,800	3,216	48,077
Mean ...	17,749	24,548	3,101	45,398	19,287	26,397	3,426	49,110	21,763	28,833	3,654	54,250

6. Average muster:—

Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4
17,439	22,981	3,530	43,950

Latest months for which figures furnished.

—	1907.				1908.				1909.			
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Maximum ...	15,336	20,106	2,311	37,743	16,367	21,435	2,633	40,435	19,224	24,539	3,716	47,479
Minimum ...	11,853	15,900	1,924	29,677	12,968	17,587	2,095	32,650	13,880	18,998	2,360	35,238
Mean ...	13,589	18,008	2,118	33,710	14,667	19,511	2,364	36,542	16,552	21,768	2,538	40,858

7. Number of adult workers per 100 acres under tea—

On present labour force	...	126
On mean labour force, 1909	...	121
On mean individuals working 1909	...	99
On mean average muster, 1909	...	75

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APPENDIX H.

Year.	Month.	Number of gardens.	Labour force on which average is taken.			Average earnings.		
			Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1907	January	10	4,764	6,143	842	Rs. 5.6	Rs. 2.7	Rs. 1.4
	February	9	4,044	5,489	886	7.1	3.2	1.8
	March	8	3,361	4,428	774	5.6	3.2	1.3
	April	13	5,461	6,716	945	6.9	3.1	1.3
	May	6	2,501	3,206	599	7.9	3.6	1.6
	June	3	1,131	1,473	221	6.6	3.3	.8
	July	9	4,531	5,786	554	8.2	5.7	1.6
	August	4	1,584	1,946	188	5.6	5.4	1.7
	September	5	1,353	1,601	233	6.6	4.8	1.7
	October	7	2,331	3,254	622	6.2	3.2	1.3
	November	16	4,985	6,712	1,420	5.7	3.1	1.8
	December	19	8,112	10,831	1,511	4.9	2.5	1.4
	Average for 1907		6.4	3.6
1908	January	11	3,980	5,184	910	5.7	2.9	1.1
	February	13	5,430	6,817	1,114	7.8	3.5	1.7
	March	16	6,996	9,464	1,589	5.6	2.8	1.4
	April	14	6,771	8,806	1,236	6.8	3.2	1.0
	May	5	2,430	3,032	610	6.3	3.1	.8
	June	6	3,341	4,455	671	7.1	3.7	.7
	July	12	5,773	6,990	817	8.4	4.8	1.3
	August	7	3,389	4,140	533	5.9	4.9	.8
	September	7	1,931	2,189	220	6.5	4.6	1.8
	October	8	2,203	3,394	507	7.1	3.6	1.4
	November	14	5,087	7,284	1,383	5.7	3.7	2.2
	December	24	10,180	13,378	1,728	5.6	2.8	1.4
	Average for 1908		6.5	3.6
1909	January	9	4,536	6,043	809	5.5	2.8	.9
	February	15	7,188	8,685	1,317	7.3	3.5	1.7
	March	16	7,568	10,513	2,033	5.4	2.9	1.2
	April	11	6,374	8,313	1,042	6.5	2.9	.9
	May	7	3,411	4,182	738	6.9	3.1	.8
	June	5	2,836	3,553	556	6.9	3.2	.5
	July	14	6,422	7,749	886	8.3	4.5	1.7
	August	9	4,723	5,428	742	6	4.7	1.4
	September	8	2,317	2,597	358	6.4	4.8	1.9
	October	8	2,403	3,452	498	5.8	3.3	1.4
	November	14	5,167	6,987	1,302	7.1	3.3	1.9
	December	31	13,889	19,376	2,913	5.7	2.6	1.2
	Average for 1909		6.4	3.4	1.2
Average for 3 years		...	...	...	...	6.4	3.5	1.3
1910	February	3	1,462	1,926	280	5.9	3.5	.7
	March	24	14,775	18,425	3,023	6.1	2.8	1.2
	April	19	7,415	9,982	1,605	6.7	2.6	1.1
	Average for 3 months		5.9	2.9	1

APPENDIX I.

Year.	Month.	Total number of gardens.	Total labour force of gardens.			Number of coolies who worked on any day in the month.			Average earnings calculated on figures in columns 7, 8 and 9.		
			Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1907 ...	January ...	9	4,202	5,668	722	3,240	4,679	916	Rs. 6'7	Rs. 3'3	Rs. 2'5
	February ...	9	3,513	4,767	750	2,921	3,981	456	8'5	3'6	2'7
	March ...	8	3,361	4,428	774	2,716	3,893	522	6'9	3'6	1'9
	April ...	11	4,524	5,589	715	4,030	5,051	674	7'6	3'4	1'5
	May ...	6	2,501	3,206	599	2,447	3,184	505	8'1	3'6	1'9
	June ...	3	1,131	1,473	221	931	1,207	139	8'1	4'1	1'3
	July ...	9	4,531	5,786	554	4,066	5,048	410	9'1	5'7	2'2
	August ...	8	1,368	1,594	153	1,266	1,393	135	5'8	6'2	2'1
	September ..	5	1,553	1,001	233	1,241	1,531	172	7'2	5'1	2'3
	October ...	7	2,331	3,254	622	1,621	2,427	329	8'9	4'3	2'5
	November ...	14	4,635	6,292	1,290	3,766	5,242	961	6'9	3'5	2'3
	December ...	18	8,112	10,831	1,511	6,348	9,275	1,181	6'2	2'9	1'8
Average for 1907 ...		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7'5	4'1	2'1
1908 ...	January ...	10	3,826	5,022	877	2,666	3,847	442	8'1	3'7	2'2
	February ...	9	4,747	6,070	962	4,276	5,522	743	8'5	3'6	2'1
	March ...	16	6,996	9,464	1,589	5,708	8,187	1,121	6'8	3'3	2'1
	April ...	14	6,771	8,806	1,236	6,016	7,668	780	7'6	3'7	1'6
	May ...	4	2,178	2,881	568	2,012	2,616	410	6'8	3'3	1'
	June ...	6	3,341	4,455	571	2,883	4,120	405	8'2	4'1	1'1
	July ...	12	5,773	6,990	817	4,993	5,955	526	9'7	4'9	3'1
	August ...	6	3,185	3,908	481	2,371	3,068	239	7'7	5'9	1'6
	September...	6	1,878	2,109	203	1,750	1,892	143	6'9	5'2	2'
	October ...	8	2,203	3,394	507	2,095	2,924	314	7'5	4'1	2'3
	November ...	13	4,811	6,973	1,239	3,959	5,429	1,057	6'9	4'	2'7
	December ...	22	9,795	12,776	1,633	7,829	11,064	1,341	6'9	3'	1'8
Average for 1908 ...		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7'6	4'1	1'9
1909 ...	January ...	8	4,067	5,343	711	3,090	4,297	471	7'1	3'3	1'1
	February ...	19	6,560	7,818	1,276	5,698	7,267	916	8'9	3'5	2'1
	March ...	16	7,568	10,513	2,033	6,142	8,918	1,320	6'7	3'5	1'8
	April ...	11	6,374	8,313	1,042	5,499	7,220	720	7'5	3'4	1'4
	May ...	7	3,411	4,182	736	3,146	3,929	454	7'5	3'3	1'3
	June ...	4	2,238	2,711	446	2,074	2,631	348	7'4	3'7	6'
	July ...	13	6,194	7,498	825	5,648	6,941	545	9'1	5'4	2'5
	August ...	7	3,671	4,783	652	2,921	3,364	347	7'	6'1	2'5
	September...	7	2,243	2,499	344	2,110	2,161	239	6'7	5'5	2'4
	October ...	7	2,253	3,281	455	1,924	2,751	393	6'7	3'9	2'
	November ...	13	4,892	6,534	1,207	4,067	5,155	955	8'4	4'2	2'3
	December ...	20	13,593	18,867	2,863	11,277	15,821	2,052	6'8	3'1	1'7
Average for 1909 ...		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7'5	4'	1'3
Average for 3 years ...		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7'5	4'1	1'9

APPENDIX J.

Year.	Months.	Number of garden.	Total labour force of gardens.			Average muster.			Average number of days on which coolies worked.			Average earnings calculated on average muster.		
			Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1907	January ...	9	4,203	5,663	722	2,143	3,375	339	13	16	12	Rs. 10.2	Rs. 4.7	Rs. 2.4
	February ...	6	3,722	5,167	786	2,530	3,565	391	16	16	11	10.3	4.5	3.3
	March ...	6	3,361	4,423	774	2,065	3,002	379	16	17	12	8.9	4.7	3.7
	April ...	11	4,524	5,530	715	3,418	4,010	447	19	18	16	8.9	4.3	3.3
	May ...	5	2,281	2,970	560	1,663	2,068	275	19	18	13	10.	4.9	3.3
	June ...	3	1,131	1,473	221	643	844	85	14	14	7	11.5	5.0	3.9
	July ...	9	4,531	5,786	554	2,022	3,653	236	17	17	11	12.7	3.2	3.3
	August ...	3	1,334	1,700	136	847	1,115	53	17	17	11	9.5	3.5	5.7
	September ...	4	1,155	1,341	172	816	845	86	17	15	9	8.9	6.9	4.3
	October ...	7	2,331	3,254	622	1,403	1,786	281	16	14	12	10.3	5.9	2.9
	November ...	13	4,507	6,111	1,255	2,643	3,401	744	15	14	15	9.1	4.9	2.9
	December ...	17	7,732	10,408	1,445	4,211	6,040	774	14	15	13	9.1	4.3	2.7
	Average for 1907		10.	5.6	3.2
1908	January ...	10	3,926	5,023	677	1,932	3,083	357	13	16	10	11.1	4.6	2.8
	February ...	11	5,004	6,432	1,031	2,456	4,661	636	17	18	15	11.0	4.5	2.7
	March ...	16	6,966	9,464	1,589	4,132	5,799	833	15	15	13	9.4	4.7	2.7
	April ...	13	6,467	8,459	1,208	4,354	5,417	644	17	16	9	9.9	4.9	3.1
	May ...	4	2,178	2,821	568	1,608	1,670	166	18	15	7	9.1	5.2	2.6
	June ...	6	3,241	4,455	571	2,179	3,071	265	16	17	12	10.9	5.4	1.7
	July ...	12	5,773	6,990	817	3,717	4,221	385	17	16	12	12.1	6.9	2.8
	August ...	7	3,369	4,140	533	1,763	2,325	140	13	14	6	11.3	6.7	3.2
	September ...	6	1,731	1,891	205	1,203	1,106	82	13	15	10	9.1	7.6	4.6
	October ...	7	3,010	3,173	477	1,333	1,788	245	17	15	13	10.	5.7	2.5
	November ...	13	4,811	6,973	1,369	3,074	4,124	914	15	14	17	9.3	5.2	3.1
	December ...	21	9,650	12,570	1,666	5,353	7,332	901	14	15	14	10.	4.9	2.7
	Average for 1908		10.3	5.6	2.8
1909	January ...	9	4,067	5,343	809	2,107	3,242	323	13	15	10	10.4	4.4	2.4
	February ...	14	6,615	7,860	1,183	3,044	6,143	707	16	18	14	10.2	4.3	2.7
	March ...	16	7,563	10,513	2,033	4,536	6,818	961	15	17	12	9.1	4.6	2.5
	April ...	11	6,374	8,313	1,042	3,764	5,611	378	15	17	9	11.	4.4	2.6
	May ...	7	3,411	4,183	738	2,532	3,756	244	19	17	8	9.4	4.8	2.5
	June ...	4	2,228	2,711	446	1,518	1,656	136	17	16	7	10.1	5.8	2.2
	July ...	13	6,194	7,493	835	4,363	4,632	456	10	16	14	11.8	7.3	2.
	August ...	8	3,919	4,922	654	2,363	3,592	263	15	14	10	9.4	6.4	2.4
	September ...	7	2,049	2,241	340	1,373	1,320	130	17	15	9	9.2	7.6	4.9
	October ...	8	2,253	3,251	455	1,313	1,800	224	15	14	12	9.8	6.	2.6
	November ...	12	4,753	6,533	1,174	3,024	3,843	692	15	15	15	11.1	5.4	3.1
	December ...	20	13,423	18,535	2,843	7,754	10,930	1,435	15	15	13	9.7	4.4	2.5
	Average for 1909		10.1	5.6	2.7
Average for 3 years		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10.1	5.6	2.8
1910	February ...	3	1,402	1,926	230	949	1,415	86	15	17	7	9.1	4.7	3.5
	March ...	24	14,776	18,425	3,023	6,721	11,492	1,546	15	16	13	10.3	6.5	2.5
	April ...	19	7,415	9,382	1,605	4,717	5,843	746	16	16	12	9.06	4.2	2.5
	Average for 3 months		9.4	4.9	2.6

APPENDIX K.

JALPAIGURI.

Months.	Quantities of common rice sold per rupee in seers and decimals of a seer of 80 tolas.											
	1899.	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.
January ...	15 8	15 12	12 8	12 4	13 6	13 4	12 12	9 10	7 4	7 0	6 12	11 0
February ...	16 0	16 8	12 8	12 11	13 8	14 0	13 4	9 0	7 2	7 8	7 6	13 8
March ...	16 0	16 0	12 8	12 8	13 6	14 0	13 4	8 14	7 12	7 10	7 10	13 0
April ...	15 0	15 12	12 4	12 0	13 0	13 12	12 12	8 12	7 10	7 12	7 10	13 12
May ...	15 0	15 4	11 12	11 8	12 0	12 12	12 0	8 0	7 6	7 8	7 12	13 4
June ...	15 0	14 0	11 4	11 2	11 8	12 0	11 12	7 14	7 0	7 8	7 0	12 4
July ...	16 0	14 8	10 8	10 12	11 6	12 4	11 8	7 12	7 0	7 8	7 0	...
August ...	14 12	15 0	10 8	11 0	11 0	11 12	10 12	7 0	6 14	6 12	7 0	...
September ...	14 0	14 8	10 4	11 4	11 0	11 12	9 8	6 8	6 14	6 0	7 4	...
October ...	13 0	12 12	9 12	11 0	11 0	12 0	8 10	6 12	6 10	6 2	7 8	...
November ...	13 12	12 8	9 12	11 0	11 0	12 0	9 2	6 6	6 12	7 0	7 12	...
December ...	16 0	12 12	11 14	11 8	12 8	12 4	9 8	7 4	7 4	7 0	10 6	...
Average ...	15 0	14 7	11 4	11 10	11 16	12 12	11 3	7 12	7 2	7 1	7 0	12 12

ALIPUR (SUB-DIVISION).

Months.	Quantities of common rice sold per rupee in seers and decimals of a seer of 80 tolas.											
	1899.	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.	srs. ch.
January	10 0	14 8	13 0	...	...	10 0	7 0	7 4	8 0	10 0
February	10 0	14 8	13 0	...	...	10 0	7 0	8 0	8 0	12 0
March	9 8	14 0	12 8	...	...	8 0	7 0	7 12	8 0	12 0
April	9 8	13 0	13 0	...	...	8 0	7 0	8 0	8 0	12 0
May	9 0	12 8	12 10	...	...	8 0	6 14	8 0	8 0	12 0
June	9 0	11 0	12 14	...	...	8 0	6 14	8 4	8 0	12 0
July	9 0	10 0	12 8	...	...	8 0	6 8	7 12	8 0	...
August	11 0	10 0	10 8	...	...	8 8	8 8	8 0	8 0	...
September	13 8	10 0	12 8	...	...	8 8	8 8	7 4	9 0	...
October	12 0	10 0	13 0	...	...	7 8	6 14	7 12	8 0	...
November	13 0	11 8	13 0	...	...	6 8	6 8	8 0	8 8	...
December	13 0	11 0	13 8	...	...	6 12	6 12	8 0	0 0	...
Average	10 11	11 13	12 10	...	...	8 2	7 2	7 12	8 3	11 10

APPENDIX L.

Note by Major A. Leventon, I. M. S.

Markets and food-supplies.—The following hâts were visited on the hât days and with one exception (Hantapara) minute enquiries were made as to prices, etc. No

notice was previously given of our arrival and there was no possibility of prices, etc., being "cooked" for our benefit:—

Bytagool (Mal), Dam Dim sub-district	...	...	11th April 1910.
Looksan Nagrakatta "	...	...	24th April 1910.
Hantapara Dina Toorsa "	...	...	1st May 1910.
Hansmara Alipore Sub-division	...	...	1st May 1910.
Matelli Che'sa Sub-district	...	...	22nd May 1910.

At (Mal) Bytagool hát.—Approximately 3,000 to 4,000 people present and it is surmised that 6,000 to 8,000 people come to buy and sell. There was abundance of food-grains offered for sale:—

Paddy 25 to 26 seers to Re. 1.

Dal 2 to 2½ annas per seer.

Not much in the way of vegetables, but onions and garlic in plenty and cheap; 4 heads for a pice.

Rice, husked and cleaned, 12 to 13 seers to Re. 1; 8½ seers of fine rice.

Beef in plenty, annas 4 a seer, pork annas 6. Tobacco, soap cigarettes and small articles were freely offered. The general aspect of the coolies was that of a cheerful and prosperous crowd; there was hardly any drunkenness. They were, generally speaking, a healthy looking lot, and what was singularly remarkable was the absence of beggars.

Looksan hát.—One of the central hâts of Nagrakatta Sub-district. About 2,500 people buying and selling and much merchandise offered. There was a big well without any cement lining. It is a regular hát with commodious stalls. Prices at the time of our visit:—

Paddy, annas 8 for a kerosine tinful to 12 to 12½ seers.

Rice, 8 to 12 seers to Re. 1, according to quality.

Dal, 2 to 3 annas per seer.

Kalai, 7 pice to 2 annas "

Salt, 5 to 6 pice "

Tobacco, 4 to 6 annas "

Potatoes, 3 pice to 2 annas ", according to quality.

Sugar, 4 to 5 annas "

Masala, 4 to 12 annas "

Onions, 2 annas "

Fowls, 2 to 4 annas according to size.

Pigeons, 4 to 5 annas.

Mustard oil, 7 to 8 annas.

The remarks made concerning the people seen at Mal apply to this garden also.

Hantapara.—Went though this hát before the buyers had fully assembled; lot of stuff was being offered for sale. Paddy, 24 to 25 seers per rupee; dal, 2 annas 3 pies and Kalai, 1 anna 9 pies to 2 annas per seer.

Hansmara.—Saw the hát in the afternoon when probably the full stress of the traffic was over. There seemed to be quite a surplus of paddy, as there were several cart-loads yet unsold. There was a pukka well in the paddy market. The shops looked as though much trade was done in small articles and cloth. The crowd was a cheerful and contented one, very ready to talk; we spoke with several people who had gone home to their country and had come back with their relatives. Paddy, 24 to 25 seers; rice, 10 to 12 seers, other articles were at normal prices. The former remarks regarding absence of beggars apply here also.

Matelli hát.—This is an enormous and well organised hát, being the central market of the Chalsa Sub-district. There is a splendid well in the bazar, built by Hara Chand Babu. The bazar, which is a wide street of pukka shops, some of which had become delapidated, was practically empty, everybody had gone to the hát which was only a couple of hundred yards off. The hát had commodious and well arranged stands and a good well. Thousands of people were present, buying and selling, and, judging by the number of trinkets and ornament shops, there must be a high degree of prosperity in the neighbourhood. A curious kind of restaurant was noticed where tea and baker's bread and cakes were offered; there were several of these.

Enormous mounds of grain of every kind and food stuff of every variety, including dried fish, were exposed for sale. Prices were normal and similar to those prevailing at the foregoing hâts. Even in this enormous hát, there was a singular absence of beggars.

APPENDIX O.

Spleen Count.

Name of garden.	Number of children examined.	Enlarged spleen found.	Spleen rate.	Remarks.
1	2	3	4	5
Haihaipatha ...	...	...	96.0	Number of children not recorded.
Glencoe ...	27	15	55.5	
Nedam ...	25	21	84.0	
Nakhati ...	31	23	74.2	
Sungachi ...	21	14	66.6	
Meengluss ...	27	25	92.6	
Ranicherra ...	19	14	73.7	
Phulbari ...	92	74	80.4	
Bhagatpur ...	11	11	100	
Grassmore ...	32	24	75.0	Oraons.
Ghatia ...	14	13	92.8	
Hope ...	15	12	80.0	
Jiti ...	11	9	81.8	Newly arrived Chota Nagpuris.
" ...	48	41	85.4	Working Nepalese children.
" ...	64	37	57.8	Old resident plains children.
Banarhat ...	5	4	80.0	New children.
" ...	57	11	19.3	} Old "
Binnaguri ...	138	67	48.5	
" ...	11	7	63.6	New "
Birpara ...	117	73	62.4	Old " non-working.
" ...	80	43	53.7	Old working children.
" ...	19	8	42.1	} New children.
Dalgaon ...	41	26	64.1	
" ...	104	64	61.5	Old "
Hansmara ...	14	7	50.0	New "
" ...	47	21	44.7	Old "
New lands ...	8	7	87.5	
Sathkya ...	56	45	80.4	
Samsing ...	49	6	12.2	Nepalese children upper lines.
" ...	25	18	72.0	" lower
" ...	33	5	15.2	" upper lines " working children.
" ...	35	22	62.9	Plains children.
Chalsa ...	25	22	88.0	} In different lines.
" ...	50	27	54.0	
Mutelli ...	24	20	83.3	
Indong ...	56	23	41.1	} Chota Nagpuris.
Nageswari ...	44	29	65.9	
" ...	28	27	96.4	Nepalese.
Murti ...	21	17	80.9	
Zuranti ...	7	6	85.7	
Total ...	1,536	933	61.07	

APPENDIX Q.

Model scheme by Lieutenant-Colonel F. R. Ozzard, I.M.S.

To give some definite idea of typical coolie lines, a concrete instance is taken and the directions in which improvements might be made are discussed.

A sketch map,* of part of the lines on a large tea estate, has been prepared in illustration.

The lines lie some distance south of the Darjeeling hills, on table land with a steady and considerable slope southwards towards the plains. Boulder formation is reached at very little depth below the surface soil, and there are considerable tracts of sandy soil.

The ground on which the coolie lines are built, it will be observed, is intersected by nullahs and water-courses, and the sides of these are often raised into steep bluffs.

From the regular slope of the land and its intersection by deep nullahs it follows that the surface drainage is excellent, even after very heavy rain the water runs off at once.

The coolie huts, it will be noticed, are laid out in parallel lines, with regular intervals between them, and there is no overcrowding of site.

* Not printed.

The huts are well made of thatch and are quite weather-proof. In almost all ere is, at least, some plinth, and in lines with such excellent surface drainage high plinths are not necessary. Some huts with roofs of corrugated iron have been erected as an experiment, and in one case, with ridge ventilation. The experiment is to be considerably extended next year. Huts are built to accommodate a family, or with two distinct compartments under one roof (semi-detached). The superficial space allowed per man seems adequate.

The water-supply is, for the greater part of the year, derived from a series of wells on the sloping sides of the tributary nullahs and to one side of the larger nullahs and water-courses.

In addition to the supply from these wells there is a piped supply from a spring south of the A lines.

This supply is used only in the dry season, when the wells fail. The spring is below the drainage flow of the lines, but is separated from the main group of lines by a water-course (the bed of this is usually dry). The spring is surrounded by uncultivated land. It yields an abundant supply throughout the year. Water is pumped by a steam-pump near the spring along large-bore iron pipes to tanks at convenient places in the lines—first to the A lines, then to an elevated feed-tank—and is thence led across the nullah to a tank in the B lines. The tanks are well raised above ground on posts, are roofed over and provided with stop-cocks for drawing water.

There is a steam-pump and water tank at the factory but water from this is not used for drinking purposes.

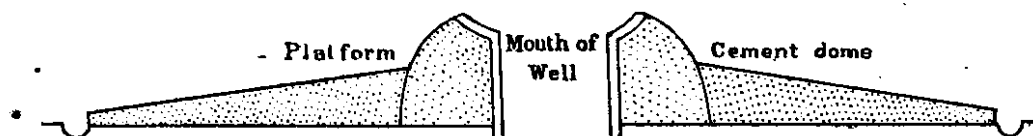
The dispensary is at the office.

The wells in the map are numbered successively, start from the bungalow, north-west of the factory, southwards through the A lines, and then eastward to the B lines.

No. (1) Well, north of the factory, on the side of a shallow nullah draining from land clear of habitations, is a soundly built brick "pucca" well, cement lined, with a good parapet, and roofed over. It is fitted with a good hand-pump but the spout of the pump does not deliver clear of the parapet, so water is apt to wash back from this into the well. The defect can easily be remedied.

No. (2) This is an old kutchā disused well. A trial excavation for a new well alongside this is being made.

No. (3) Alongside a small stream is a Raneganj earthenware ring-well. The joints are properly laid in cement, the upper ring projects above the ground and is surrounded by a narrow platform of cement. It would be advisable to support this projecting ring by making a cemented dome, thus :—



No. (4) On the side of a nullah is a similar Raneganj earthenware ring-well. Both these wells have the joints cemented right down to the bottom and are about 30 feet deep.

No. (5) On the slope of a nullah, somewhat south-west of the lines, at the corner is of unlined boulder except for a brick-work parapet and a brick lining, extending only a few feet down. This is uncemented and largely broken away. The well is close to coolie huts but a little west of the main subsoil drainage from these. The surface protection is inadequate, it should be protected from flood washings, and the lining should either be made pucca or a Raneganj ring-well should be substituted. A better site should be sought for.

No. (6) Very close to the bed of the nullah is similarly an unlined boulder well with broken brick top. It is situated too near the bed of the nullah, and the contained water is practically the surface water of the nullah. A better site should be sought for, preferably on the other bank of the nullah, with the nullah bed between it and the lines.

No. (7) Alongside a deep nullah with high bluffs and immediately south of the huts on the bluff. This also is an unlined boulder well with broken brick top, and is similarly liable to surface pollution and in the line of subsoil drainage from huts. The site is not good, but if the well is properly lined, the water will have to go through such a thickness of earth as to render it fairly safe.

No. (9) On the other side of the river and west of the B lines, on the ground sloping from the lines to the river, is a large unprotected boulder well with brick top. This well seems hardly necessary with a better well in a better site close to it.

No. (10) Immediately north of the preceding well, but in a far better site, as it is not exposed to the flood washings from the B lines nor is it in the line of subsoil drainage. This well is soundly built of brick pucca to the bottom (45 feet) and is well protected.

No. (12). In the centre of an open amphitheatre, east of the main road running through the B lines, there is a deep Kaneeganj ring-well (80 feet). Though this is in a slight hollow and though there are huts all round it, yet, in view of the depth of the well and of the distance of the huts, it may be considered quite safe, if protected from storm flood water. Washings from the lines should be headed off by drains at some distance above.

Considerations as to possible Improvements.

Of course in considering any schemes of improvement one must remember that the coolie is a free man, that he has strong prejudices, and that he cannot be dragged into sanitation. Furthermore, for every scheme, the point must be well debated as to whether the probable benefits are commensurate to the cost incurred. One cannot with any justice impose ideal sanitary schemes, suitable for a civilized community, on a commercial undertaking employing coolies, free to come and go, and used to conditions far from sanitary, and who, however perfect your arrangements, cannot with certainty be made to avail themselves of the benefits thrust upon them.

Possible improvements will be considered under the headings:—

- (i) Site and Drainage.
- (ii) Housing.
- (iii) Water-supply.
- (iv) Medical arrangements.

(i) *The site.*—As explained above, is excellent, and surface drainage very good. No large drainage schemes need for a moment be considered, but constant supervision is required to see that, in digging up earth for plinths, stagnating pools are not left; an alignment and linking up in the direction of the drainage flow is all that is required.

(ii) *Housing.*—Over-crowding of site by the erection of supernumerary building is to be prevented as far as possible. As regards the structure of the huts, little can be said, a well made thatch hut with a well rammed plinth is all that can be desired. The verdict on the experimental iron-roofed huts with ridge ventilation is awaited with interest, but with ridge ventilation very liberal overlapping must be allowed to avoid the great discomfort from driving rain. The roof should also overlap well to form a verandah. The dimensions of an experimental hut in the B lines are 20' x 15'—height at sides apart from plinth 6'—height at apex 10'. The supporting posts are timber. The cost of such a hut is about Rs. 85.

(iii) *Water-supply.*—The possible schemes that suggest themselves are:—

(1) Construction of a well on the higher ground north of the factory, with pump for raising the water to a group of tanks, and thence distributing it in pipes, by gravitation, to tanks in the various lines.

(2) Utilisation, throughout the year, of the present pipe-supply obtained from the spring south of the lines.

(3) Construction of a well near the factory, water being pumped up and distributed in pipes to tanks.

(4) Improvement of the existing well-supply. In deciding between these schemes cost must naturally be one of the main determining factors, and on this point I have been unable to get any estimates.

No. (1) Would be an ideal scheme, assuming that the water layer could be struck at a reasonable depth, as the site would be well above all drainage from any huts, and the pumping involved is merely the pumping to the height of a tank, the lines being at a lower level. The objections are—it involves the construction of a new properly protected well, possibly of great depth, a pumping station away from the factory and a new pipe installation.

No. (2) Scheme. The spring apparently yields good water, analysed, I believe, with satisfactory results, and there is already a pipe installation in working order. A double engine would probably be required in place of the present one, and the spring would have to be properly protected. The ground round it would have to be kept clear and fenced in. An oval shaped area, 200 feet in the long diameter, running north and south, and with the greater part of the oval north of the spring would need protecting. I am informed that the height water has to be pumped from this

spring to reach all the lines is 326 feet, and that therefore the cost of pumping all the year round would be prohibitive. No exact estimate was given at the time of our visit.

No. (3) Scheme. A site proposed for this is at well (2) in a cup-shaped hollow, west of the factory. The site is not very desirable as it is a hollow immediately south of the main road, and has a few coolie huts north within the drainage area. If this site were chosen, the road drainage would have to be diverted from the drainage area, the coolie huts immediately north abandoned and the well would have to be lined with sound hydraulic cement for a considerable depth down. Good protective drains would be required to head off flood washings from the hollow. The advantage of a pump well here is that the engine-house would be close to the factory and therefore easily under the supervision of the engineer, and above the level of the lines.

The fourth scheme alone remains, should all the above schemes prove impracticable on account of cost, and it must be remembered they must be carried out thoroughly or not at all, for where you are relying on a single well or spring it must be absolutely protected. You are putting all your eggs into one basket, so above all things the basket must be safe; one case of cholera, if the well or spring is not protected, may spread the disease throughout all the lines, so if the former schemes are impracticable, we must fall back on improvement of the general well-supply.

No. (4) Scheme. In many cases the sites of the present wells are not well chosen and in other cases there are faults in construction. These points have been adverted to in the description of the wells. Certain general considerations regarding shallow wells may however be adduced here.

Wells on low-lying ground liable to flooding, and in hollows, require very careful protection and construction. If after a flood or after heavy rainfall the water in a well is turbid, it shows the well is not safe. Surface wells should have no source of contamination within a minimum distance of 50 feet all round, if the soil is sandy, or within 100, if the well is in gravel soil and if the soil is very porous, the radius of protection should be doubled.

It must be remembered that the nearer the ground water level approaches the surface the greater is the risk of contamination, so that it is not advisable always, apart from the obvious risk of surface pollution, to choose sites in hollows and beds of nullahs, where the ground water is just below the surface. The direction of flow of the ground water must also be borne in mind, it will be in the downward general slope of the land and towards water-courses. The drainage area of a well will lie chiefly on the side from which the ground water flows. A site on a slope on the farther side of a nullah is preferable to the slope leading down from huts, and, where possible, the site should be to one side or above the flow from huts.

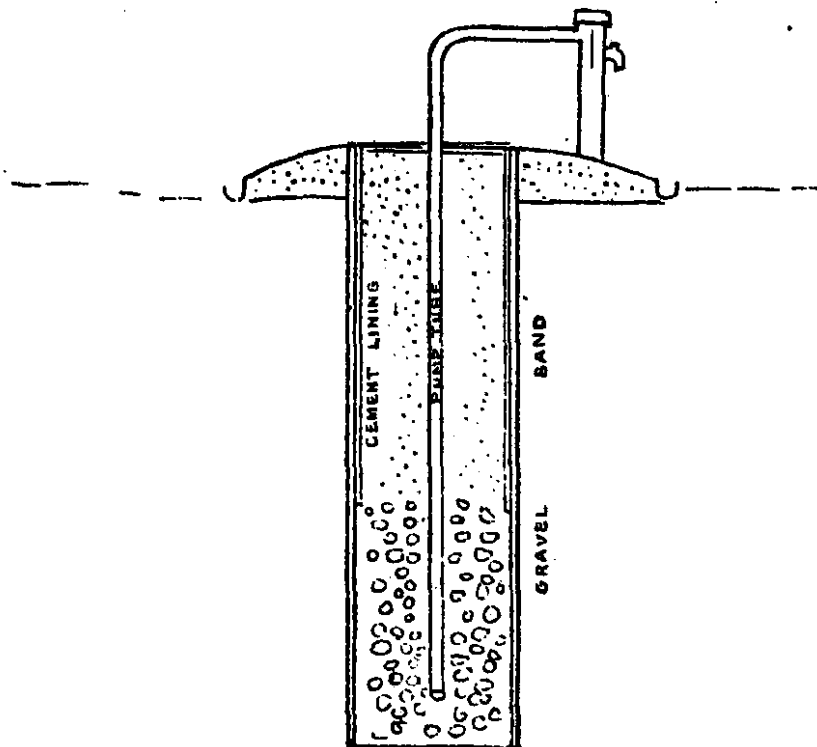
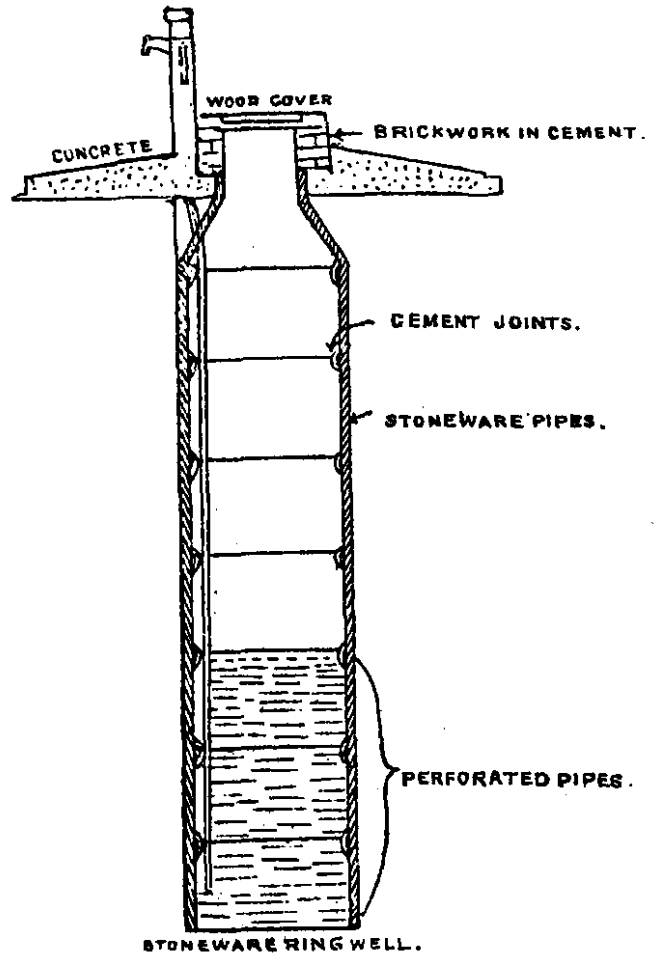
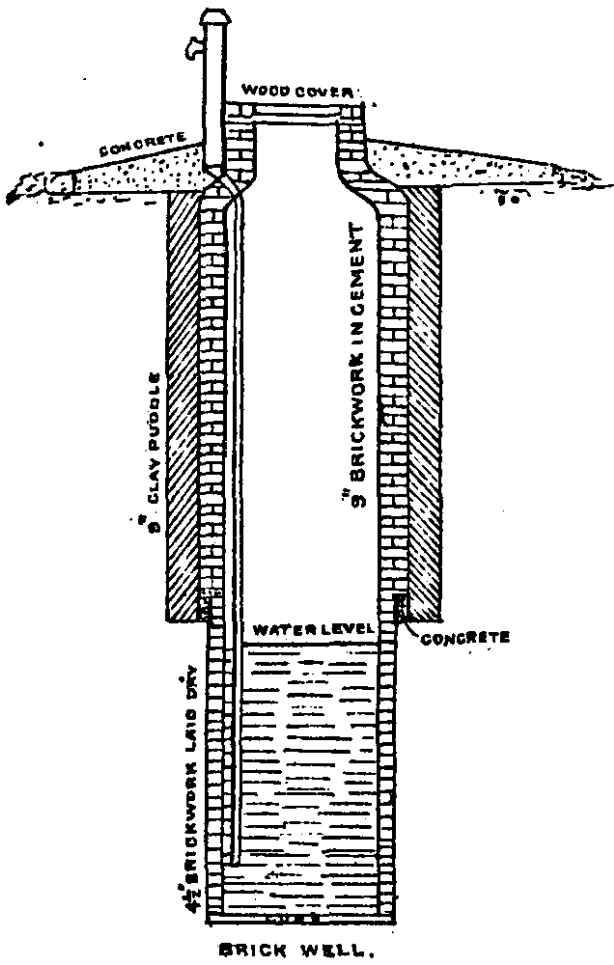
The general requirements in the construction of a well have been alluded to in the report, and they are briefly :—

- (1) A proper parapet.
- (2) A cement platform with drain.
- (3) Steining, in brick wells with hydraulic cement for at least 20 feet down, or using properly cemented glazed earthenware rings.

Of course, where coolies use their own buckets and ropes for drawing water, there is always danger of contamination. It is very desirable that an attempt should be made to induce them to use a specially provided bucket and chain on a pulley, but I believe their prejudices are very strong on this point. Where it is practicable, in shallow wells, a pump delivering clear of the mouth of the well is safer. Shallow wells in doubtful sites can be rendered safer by fitting up a pump and then filling up the water bearing area with gravel, the rest of the well being filled with sand. This forms a filter for surface water flowing back into the well. Diagrams illustrating this and the construction of simple wells are appended.

(iv) *Medical arrangements.*—The only point that need be discussed here is the site of the dispensary.

I am inclined to think that at the factory buildings there should only be a central store-room for drugs and dressings, etc., and that the main dispensary should be built just north of the A lines, the "Doctor Babu" spending the greater part of his time here, and indeed being housed here if possible. The dispensary would have a room for dressing or treating cases, part being partitioned off for making up medicines, and a large verandah where patients could wait. A smaller branch dispensary, stocked with medicines and dressings of urgency, could be established in the B lines. The Doctor Babu would visit this at definite specified hours daily and would wait here for a specified time.



METHOD OF RENDERING DOUBTFUL WELL SAFE.
BY FILLING WITH GRAVEL & SAND

APPENDIX R.

Model scheme by Major A. Leventon, I.M.S.*

This garden is situated in a level stretch of country, a few miles south of the foot of the hills, and differs from many other gardens in that it is nearly flat with only a gentle slope. Broken hilly country in which many of the Duars' gardens are situated, affords a kind of natural drainage, and often presents suitable sites for the erection of lines, but on a fairly level plain, such as this, considerations for drainage and housing arise which are practically non-existent on gardens near the hills.

The population is approximately 1,700, consisting mostly of sturdy Chota Nagpuri coolies.

The site is well adapted to the needs of the tea-garden, being nearly in the centre of the estate and having open spaces of the west, south and south-east. There is a gentle slope towards the south which ends in marshy ground by the Railway. A wide main road runs through lines A and B and another passes by line C. The drainage is capable of being improved during the cold weather and dry season, there is hardly any necessity for drainage, but the place is subject to a heavy rainfall during four months of the year and drains to be effective during this season would have to be large and well looked after. There is over-crowding in lines A due to the causes mentioned in the paragraph which describes housing.

The lines consist of 3 main groups, the individual housing being commodious. Each house has a bari of greater or lesser extent surrounded by a fence; the baris touch but lanes are left here and there. The coolies have considerable wealth in the shape of carts and buffaloes, cattle and small live-stock and these contribute largely to the causation of sanitary defects. Coolies as a class are very clannish, they prefer to live in communities formed of a particular tribe, and this sometimes leads to site overcrowding by reason of new-comers joining hamlets of their fellow tribesmen on the garden, and through people marrying and setting up house for themselves near their relatives. It cannot be expected that coolies should house their cattle, etc., elsewhere than in their baris, and where space is somewhat contracted, it is easy to imagine that in the course of time, a given set of lines may become over-crowded to a great extent, and serious site pollution occurs. More especially so, since the site being almost level, the annual cleansing by the rains will not be as effective as it would on a hill garden site.

The housing left little to be desired except in the matter of plinths; thatch and khagri are plentiful, but the place is subject to high winds in the season and for this reason only very stout timber posts are used for uprights and beams.

Water is obtained from 9 large wells. During the dry season the ground water level is very low and wells have to be sunk at a great cost, to a depth of 80 feet or more to be effective. The teahouse well is provided with a steam pump and is 92 feet deep; it never runs dry even in the greatest drought as it has probably tapped a spring and contained 30 feet of water in April-May. The other wells were all about 80 feet deep and contained a plentiful supply of water. A couple of new wells are being sunk, and the excavations which have reached 45 to 50 feet contain no water. A glance at the map will show that the wells are placed at judicious intervals throughout the lines. Water is drawn from all the wells in the lines by bucket and rope. The wells are soundly built with brick lining and cement pointing and are guarded by parapets and platforms and an area is reserved round each well. Where the new wells are being excavated, the soil was observed to consist of gravel below 3 feet of clay.

Medical. A well qualified resident doctor is in charge and has his dispensary near the factory.

Suggestions for improvement and model scheme.

As over-crowding may cause trouble when least expected, especially when a fire or epidemic breaks out, it should be avoided or reduced as much as possible. The reduction of a colony which has already established itself on a given patch of land, is a delicate task, and should be approached with considerable tact and caution, more especially as the people are free labourers, of independent attitude, and more or less impatient of restraint, and unpopular orders regarding limitation of clan busties might lead to disturbance of relations between the management and the labour. But if, in the opinion of the visiting medical officers, any condition of over-crowding and consequent site-pollution exists, an effort should be made to thin out such places as far as possible.

* Plan accompanying not printed.

Lines A show signs of commencing over-crowding, and the suggestion is therefore made that another set of lines should be established on the grass land south and west of lines A. In plotting out these new lines, as much space as possible should be allowed to intervene between them and the old lines. It would be well if a beginning could be made by getting a few families from the centre of lines A to start the new colony and so relieve the congestion in those lines.

More efficient drainage is required. This could be accomplished readily by digging drains on either side of the roads through the lines; all these drains should run south towards the marshy land near the railway line and should be connected with and fed by surface drains in the lines. Attention should especially be paid to them during the rains. It is not suggested that they should be pukka; the numerous cattle and carts in the lines would soon break up any pukka drains unless numerous culverts were made, which would cost far too much. The line cleaning gang, which is usually employed, might be supplemented during the rains by a couple of men whose business it would be to keep the main and tributary drains clear and repair damage and ruts made by cattle and carts.

The housing would be improved if each house had a good raised plinth; ground-damp and a certain amount of discomfort during the rains would thus be lessened. The earth which is dug to make these plinths could be "borrowed" in such a way as to make excellent surface drains, but care should be taken that the borrow-pit drains are aligned so as to run direct to the main road side drains and be as far removed as possible from the wells.

Whenever water is drawn from well by hand, an element of danger exists in the rope and bucket used, as well-water may easily be polluted by these. As the water level often sinks down to 55 to 65 feet below the surface, it is useless to suggest pumps. A fixed chain and a pulley and bucket are also useless, for coolies are most conservative in the practice of using their own utensils for drawing water. To suggest a piped water-supply means suggesting considerable expense, but it is worth considering.

The tea-house well, a big, wide well of 92 feet which evidently has tapped a spring, might be utilized. It is already fitted with a steam pump for raising water for the factory and bungalow, the power being obtained from the factory (water being drawn by hand when the engines are not working). A system of iron tanks on a raised platform would readily afford a head of pressure, and the lines could be supplied by means of pipes to service stand-pipes or to a series of small tanks fitted with taps and placed at regular or convenient intervals in the lines; the length of piping required would not be very great. The tea-house well is mentioned as it is already fitted with a steam pump, but well No. 5 would be more central; it would have to be fitted with steam pump and engine. Any well selected as the central source of supply, must be most rigidly protected and watched, as its pollution might result in a widespread outbreak of disease.

The present wells are brick-lined with cement pointing: the lining should be replaced by a steining of sound hydraulic cement carried down to a depth of at least 20 feet. Pointing is always falling out leaving apertures through which leakage may occur into the well; moreover bricks are generally porous.

The platforms round the parapets should always be maintained in good order and supplied with pukka drains leading washings and waste water away to a safe distance.

At present there is a dispensary near the factory and the resident doctor also visits the lines daily; his work would be greatly facilitated and he would be of more benefit to the coolies if a subsidiary dispensary were opened in the northern corner of lines C where people of B and C could assemble for treatment. The dispensary might be quite small, but should have good accommodation for waiting patients.

As this garden is situated near several others and communications are not difficult, the question of a central in-door hospital serving several gardens might be discussed between the various managements. Such a hospital might be built near the visiting medical officer's bungalow, which is within easy reach of the gardens concerned and might serve as a means of inducing coolies to avail themselves of the benefits of in-door treatment under the immediate supervision of the visiting medical officer.

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REPORT

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.. OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE,

1921-22.



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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM.

Orders by the Governor in Council.

Appointment of a Committee to enquire into the conditions of tea garden labour in Assam.

Extract from the Proceedings of the Governor of Assam in Council in the Finance Department, No. 8555F., dated the 26th November 1921.

RESOLUTION.

In pursuance of the undertakings given the Government of Assam have decided to appoint a representative committee to enquire whether, in view of the great rise in prices which has occurred during recent years, the remuneration paid to the labour force on the tea gardens of the province is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and a reasonable degree of comfort.

A committee composed of the undermentioned gentlemen is accordingly appointed to enquire into the conditions of coolie labour on tea gardens in Assam, and in particular (1) to enquire whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice and clothing, garden-land and the like is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort ; (2) to enquire whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the above-mentioned concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages ; or, if not, whether it is possible for the value of such indirect remuneration to be so expressed in terms of money wages that the actual total remuneration received by the coolies can be readily exhibited ; and (3) to make any recommendation which seems desirable for improving the conditions of labour on the tea gardens.

The Hon'ble Mr. J. C. Arbuthnott, C.I.E., *President.*

Rai Bahadur Giris Chandra Nag, M.L.A.,

Major H. B. Fox, M.L.C.,

Babu Ramani Mohan Das, M.L.C.,

Mr. D. S. Withers, M.L.C.,

Srijut Siva Prasad Barua, M.L.C.,

Mr. T. MacMorran,

Rev. Dr. O. O. Williams,

Khan Sahib Wali Muhamad, Extra Assistant Commissioner,
Central Provinces,

} *Members.*

Mr. J. A. Dawson, I.C.S., *Member and Secretary.*

ORDER.—Ordered that a copy of the foregoing Resolution be forwarded to the Commissioners of Divisions in Assam, and that it be published in the *Assam Gazette* for general information.

By order of the Government of Assam,

A. W. BOTHAM,

Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

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REPORT

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PARA. 1.

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It may be useful to give a brief review of the events leading up to the appointment of the present Committee as announced in the Resolution printed at the beginning of this Report. It will be seen that the Committee was appointed to enquire generally into the conditions of tea-garden labour in Assam and with particular reference to the question whether in view of the great rise in prices which has occurred during recent years, the remuneration paid to the labour force is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and a reasonable degree of comfort. In taking into consideration the wages or cash earnings the Committee have been asked to estimate as far as possible the pecuniary effect of concessions in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice and clothing, and estate land given out for rice cultivation, and to enquire whether it is possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by these and any other concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages; or if not, whether it is possible for the value of such indirect remuneration to be so expressed in terms of money wages, that the actual total remuneration received by the labourers can be readily exhibited. The Committee was finally invited to make any recommendations which seem desirable for improving the conditions of labour on tea-gardens.

Appointment of a Committee to enquire into the conditions of tea-garden labour in Assam.

In the Resolution on Immigrant Labour in Assam for the year 1920-21, Finance Department No. 8476F., dated the 23rd of November 1921, which covers the year ending on the 30th of June 1921, it is stated that the period was "unfortunately marked by much unrest, culminating in rioting and violence in certain areas, and in the Surma Valley in what is known as the Karimganj exodus."

In giving an account of the other disturbances in the Assam Valley the Resolution refers to the series of riots in the Doom-Dooma group of gardens in the Lakhimpur district in September and October 1920, and two serious cases of rioting in the Darrang district, at Monabari tea estate in October 1920 and at Halem tea-estate in March 1921. There is a further reference to the occurrence of several riots "of varying degrees of seriousness" on Tezpur gardens in the Darrang district in October 1921 which finally led to the appointment of the present Committee of Enquiry at the end of November.

In the Resolution dated the 26th of November 1921 which appointed the Committee and defined the terms of reference, there is no allusion to any of these unfortunate incidents, but as it is stated in paragraph 7 of the Resolution on Immigrant Labour, that the causes of these outbreaks will almost certainly come under the review of the Committee of Enquiry, the question has received careful attention and Members of the Committee have visited most, if not all, of the estates on which serious disturbances or riots have occurred within the last 18 months. The scope of the Enquiry has therefore necessarily been widened beyond the original terms of reference. In any case, the consideration of recommendations for improving the conditions of labour on tea-gardens opens but a wide field for investigation.

Incidentally, the Assam Labour Committee of 1906 dealt with the question of wages and recommended a rise in the initial wage under Act VI of 1901 from Rs. 4 and Rs. 5 to Rs. 5 and Rs. 6 in order to encourage recruitment by making conditions in Assam more attractive. They observed that the evidence recorded in the recruiting districts showed that "the wage which is offered on the tea-gardens is no longer an attraction in many of the parts from which Assam recruits its labour." Since then there has been no enquiry by any Committee into the question of tea-garden wages in Assam. But the subject has steadily engaged the attention of Government and has been invariably dealt with in the Annual Immigration Reports.

1906

CHAP. I
PARAS. 2-3. In the last of these reports the provisional conclusions are that "there has been an increase of wages which was much more marked in the Assam Valley than in the Surma Valley, and that while wages have not risen to a degree commensurate with the general rise in the cost of living, the earnings of the tea-garden labourer and his family are sufficient to support them in a standard of comfort superior to that prevailing in their home districts." Considering the wide and scattered areas in different provinces from which labour for the Assam tea-gardens is recruited, the Committee are not in a position to express an opinion, still less to criticise this statement, nor are they aware of the nature of the evidence on which it is based.

2. Towards the end of 1920, Deputy Commissioners of tea districts were asked to make enquiries into the adequacy of wages earned on tea-gardens. The Government of Assam has in fact from time to time during and since the war, made careful enquiries as to whether wages in tea-gardens have risen in proportion to the cost of living and members of the Government have discussed the subject with representatives of the tea industry on more than one occasion.

In the first week of May 1921 thousands of coolies left the Chargola Valley in the Karimganj subdivision of Sylhet district in the Surma Valley. Details will be found in Chapter II. This exodus and the subsequent events at Chandpur concentrated public attention on tea-gardens and a certain section of the Indian Press contained allegations of the bad treatment accorded to tea-garden coolies in Assam. In a *Communiqué* on the subject of the Chargola exodus issued by the Government of Assam in the beginning of June 1921 the following statement occurs:—

"...The Government and the tea industry have for some time past recognised that in view of the rise in prices some readjustment of wages is called for throughout the province, and special enquiries which are nearly complete have already been made. The only reason why a commission had not been appointed to go into the matter is the depressed state of the industry which makes it impossible for most gardens to contemplate any increase in expenditure. But the Government repudiate altogether the allegation that the wages given in the case of the striking coolies were starvation wages; and they are fully prepared to examine further the whole question of wages when the present excitement has subsided and they consider the time to be opportune..."

It will be seen from this that the Government of Assam recognised that an enquiry into tea-garden wages was desirable but that owing to the depression in the tea industry the time was inopportune. Had a Committee of Enquiry been appointed at that time when political agitation was at its height in connection with the exodus, it was apprehended that an impression might get abroad that the Committee had received a mandate to increase tea-garden wages which it might be impossible to carry out owing to the financial position of the industry. It was thought that the enquiry should await a time when the industry was more prosperous and when the atmosphere was freer from political prejudice. At one time it was proposed that the enquiry should be confined to the Surma Valley, if not to the area from which the Chargola exodus took place. The Indian Tea Association were averse to restricting the enquiry to the gardens in the Karimganj subdivision which had been affected by the exodus, in case the finding might convey a wrong impression as regards the tea industry generally in the Province of Assam. It was pointed out that estates in the Assam Valley, owing to the more favourable prices obtained for their tea, had, in many cases, been able to grant an increase of wages, whereas estates in Sylhet and Cachar were incurring heavy losses. It was undesirable that public opinion should be incorrectly informed as to general conditions as the result of an enquiry limited to one locality. Finally, the view was accepted that any enquiry to be undertaken should deal with conditions on tea estates in the whole province.

In October 1921 when a series of riots occurred in a group of gardens in the Darrang district in the Assam Valley, the Government of Assam considered that the promised enquiry should no longer be deferred. By this time the financial position of the tea industry had considerably improved, but the political outlook showed distinct signs of deterioration.

3. It should not be imagined, however, that the question of labour and wages had not meantime been engaging the attention of the tea industry. In the latter half of 1920, and the early months of 1921, when tea estates, specially in the Surma Valley, were working at a heavy loss, and when the future was uncertain, it was realised that expenditure should be curtailed as far as possible, but Managers were instructed by their Agents to see that the labourer did not suffer. As a rule, the budget provision for payment of labour was not reduced. In some cases gardens were unable to provide the usual amount of overtime work, but coolies were encouraged to take up land for cultivation, and leave was freely

given to those who asked for it. In some instances Managers were able to employ a portion of the labour force on outside work such as the repair of Local Board roads. Gardens sold rice to their coolies at a price below the market rate and, in some cases, cloth was given *gratis* or supplied at a reduced price. About the middle of 1921, when the outlook for the tea industry seemed brighter, agency houses drew the attention of Managers to the question of the adequacy of wages, and called for reports. The question of wages had also received the close attention of the Indian Tea Association for some time past.

CHAP. I
PARAS. 3-7.

4. A Committee of ten members was constituted. Rai Bahadur Girish Chandra Nag, M.L.A., who had originally agreed to serve sent in his resignation in the end of November on the ground that his health was unequal to a prolonged tour and that he would be unable to discharge his duties as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Of the remaining nine members, Messrs. Fox and Withers, Srijut Siva Prosad Barua and Babu Ramani Mohan Das are tea planters. Mr. McMorrin of Messrs. Duncan Brothers and Co., one of the chief tea Agency houses in Calcutta, was appointed as representative of the Indian Tea Association. Dr. Williams of Karimganj is a medical missionary of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission. Khan Sahib Wali Mohammad, Deputy Commissioner in the Central Provinces, represented the recruiting districts in that area. Mr. Withers was appointed in virtue of his position as nominated Labour Member on the Assam Legislative Council.

5. Before the Committee assembled on the 9th December at Gauhati, the *questionnaire* had been drawn up and sent out by the Secretary to Managers of all tea estates. A copy of these questions with the forwarding letter will be found in the Appendix. It was recognised that it would be impossible for the Committee to visit more than a small proportion of the gardens and to examine more than a limited number of witnesses and the object in framing the questions which were made as comprehensive as possible, was to obtain the maximum of information as regards present conditions on tea-gardens. Notices were sent to the local Indian newspapers and were also circulated in Bar Libraries in the province inviting members of the general public who could give useful information on the subject of the enquiry to communicate with the Secretary. The various sub-committees in the tea districts were also asked to send replies to certain questions (Nos. 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 25, 33, 34, 36, 39, 40, 73, 75, 76, 83 and 85). Three hundred and eighty-three sets of answers have been received. In some cases, joint replies have been sent in for a group of gardens. After meeting at Gauhati the Committee toured in the Darrang district, dispersing at Mangaldai on 21st December for the Christmas holidays. They met again at Sylhet on the 5th January, toured in Sylhet and Cachar in that month and visited Lakhimpur and Sibsagar in February and Nowgong in March. The few gardens in Kamrup are neither typical nor important. Tea cultivation is subsidiary to zemindari on more than one estate. No replies were received from Managers and the Committee did not consider it necessary to visit any gardens in this district. The total adult labour population is only 2,829.

6. One hundred and thirty-nine witnesses were examined at convenient centres mainly planters (European and Indian), but the evidence of garden medical officers, district officials, the Commissioner of the Surma Valley and a few non-official Europeans and Indians was also recorded. The Committee were invested with no powers to compel the attendance of witnesses. In the course of the enquiry, 99 tea-gardens were visited, attention being mainly devoted to inspection of the lines, hospitals, sanitary arrangements and to examination of the pay registers and other garden records. In order to cover as much ground as possible and at the same time to avoid any chance of disturbing the labour force, the Committee usually divided into parties of two or three members. In this way, it was generally possible to visit two or three gardens in one day. Members recorded notes on any points which called for particular attention in the course of their inspection. The gardens selected were of three classes (a) typical representative gardens; (b) gardens where conditions were perhaps open to criticism; and (c) gardens where there had been strikes or disturbances in the previous 18 months.

7. It can hardly be said that conditions in the cold weather of 1921-22 were ideal for the purpose of conducting an enquiry of the kind. When the Committee started touring in the Darrang district in December, the strength of the non-cooperation movement was conspicuous in its outward and visible aspects. As regards the tea-gardens, the most noticeable phase of the movement at this time was interference with garden bazaars. This usually took the form of attempts, often successful, to prevent supplies from reaching these bazaars, and to establish

Political conditions in the tea districts at the time of the Enquiry.

CHAP. I rival markets with the obvious intention of creating discontent and unrest among
 PARAS. 7--9. the labour force. In Sylhet the non-co-operation movement was not so visibly prominent, being overshadowed by the Khilafat agitation. In January the sight of thousands of Khilafat volunteers in procession through Silchar town which is practically the centre of the numerous tea-gardens in that district, showed the strength of the revolutionary movement in Cachar. There was ample proof of attempts on the part of the non-co-operators to interfere with garden bazaars, and latterly of a dangerous movement to enlist tea-garden coolies as volunteers with a distinctive display of caps, sashes and badges. In Dibrugarh probably owing to the fact that there are comparatively few Assamese villages in the main tea district area, which forms a more or less solid block, the activities of the extremists were not much in evidence.

8. In Sibsagar, on the other hand, for more than a month previous to the arrival of the Committee the non-co-operation campaign had been vigorously conducted. Throughout the district attempts had been made by the apostles of the new regime to interfere with garden bazaars and to induce vendors of paddy and villagers to refuse to sell it to tea-garden coolies except at exorbitant rates notwithstanding the excellent harvest. At the same time coolies were incited to demand exorbitant wages to enable them to buy rice or paddy at prohibitive prices in order to create an impossible position for the employer. The situation was met by the importation of large quantities of rice at considerable expense although ample local supplies were available had they not been held up as the result of the campaign of race hatred and boycott. The movement, however, collapsed as soon as effective measures were taken by the Government to realise the land revenue. The Committee found that previous to their arrival, and also to some extent during their stay in the district, strikes had occurred on many gardens usually with a demand for extravagant wages. The majority of these strikes were peaceful and after two or three days' absence the coolies returned to work on the same conditions. While the Committee were at Sonari, the centre of the Singlo Company's gardens, a strike occurred at Suffry tea estate. The Committee had arranged to visit this garden, but as the district officials with armed police were actually on the garden engaged in dealing with the disturbance, it was obviously inexpedient to attempt an inspection. In the Sibsagar district it was suggested for the first time that the Committee, by its presence, had encouraged labour unrest and strikes. At a meeting of the Jorhat Sub-Committee of the Assam Valley Branch of the Indian Tea Association held on February 15th, the programme of the Committee in the Jorhat subdivision was discussed, and the following resolution was passed:—

"Regarding the proposed visits to individual gardens the Committee was strongly of opinion that these be confined to the examination of books, lines, etc., and that no personal enquiries be made from coolies, or the labour in any way interfered with. It was considered that any such enquiries would be misunderstood and would create an opposite impression to that intended and would certainly be used by agitators to further their own ends.

"The garden staffs contain many such agitators and these would distort the meaning and object of the whole Commission."

On the other hand, there was little outward or visible sign of the non-co-operation movement during the stay of the Committee in the Jorhat subdivision. At this time a force of 500 Assam Rifles had been deputed to march through the district. The object of this demonstration was to show that the Government possessed the means to deal strictly with disorder should occasion arise. There was now little, if any, attempt to interfere with garden bazaars. Villagers, who had withheld payment of land revenue, influenced or intimidated by agitators showed the utmost alacrity in paying up the Government demand. The quartering of additional police in some parts of the district at the cost of the villagers had produced a good effect. The non-co-operation movement was far less conspicuous than it was in Darrang in December when there were no strikes during the Committee's visit to that district. In Nowgong in March there was no sign of the non-co-operation movement on the surface though towards the end of 1921 great activity had been displayed. These facts indicate the circumstances in which the Enquiry was conducted, also the special difficulties encountered in the Sibsagar district.

Examination
of labour
witnesses.

9. On more than one occasion the Committee considered the possibility and practical utility of examining coolie witnesses. Apart from the fact that the ordinary labourer is not sufficiently educated to give a fair and intelligent expression of his views before a Committee of strangers the time selected for the Enquiry was singularly inopportune and the difficulties attendant on this method of procedure consequently enhanced. Political agitators and volunteers were making every effort to disturb labour on tea estates. It is doubtful if reasonable and fair

conclusions would have been arrived at in any case by adopting this mode of enquiry and the risk of playing into the hands of unscrupulous agitators had to be taken into account.

The Committee can trace no previous attempt to record the formal evidence of coolie witnesses. In paragraph 153 of the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906, it is remarked that the Committee in the course of their tour conversed with labourers. The Duars Committee of 1910 state in their Report :—

“ The Committee thought that no useful object would be served, by recording formally the statements of coolies. Any coolies brought up to give evidence before a number of strange Europeans would inevitably become frightened and confused and no information of value was likely to be obtained in that way. Many opportunities were, however, taken by members of the Committee, when visiting coolie lines, to converse with the coolies and gather information bearing on their general condition.”

After careful consideration it was decided to follow this procedure when visiting estates and not to conduct a formal examination of witnesses in Committee. The evidence of the eye as regards the condition of the labourer on the estate, his possession of cattle, carts, livestock and poultry and land under cultivation, or the absence of such property, is a more reliable indication of his material prosperity or the reverse than the recorded testimony of illiterate witnesses selected at random or by the employer.

The Committee have endeavoured to conduct the Enquiry from the standpoint of the coolie's well-being. It has been recognised that to adopt any other attitude would have been to discount the whole aim and object of the present Enquiry. It is therefore hoped that a study of the Report will show that the Committee have consistently examined the question from the labourer's point of view.

10. The Committee desire to express their indebtedness to the garden Managers who devoted so much time and trouble to preparing and sending answers to the *questionnaire*, and to record their appreciation of the assistance rendered on the occasion of visits to tea-gardens when there was a general readiness to place all materials at the disposal of Members of the Committee.

STRIKES AND DISTURBANCES ON TEA-GARDENS.

Preliminary. 11. The present Chapter endeavours to deal with the principal disturbances and riots which occurred during the eighteen months previous to the appointment of the Committee and to analyse the causes. The opinions of Managers and officials as to the reasons for the recent unrest in tea-gardens are summarised. Allusion has already been made to the circumstances in which the Enquiry was conducted. This is supplemented by a short review of the political situation in both Valleys, with special reference to tea-gardens. Finally the conclusions arrived at have been briefly formulated.

The Doom-
Dooma riots
in Lakhimpur
district.

12. The first sign of trouble occurred at Hansara, a garden of the Doom-Dooma Company, on the 6th of September 1920 when different sections of the labour force refused to turn out to work. The complaint made was that the rice issued at Rs. 3 a maund was insufficient and of bad quality. The complaint about bad rice was found to be substantiated. On the 15th of September at Ralrang, a neighbouring garden of the same Company, the coolies struck work, a garden jemadar was beaten and two European Assistants attacked. More serious trouble occurred on the 21st of September at Pabhojan Tea Estate where the jemadar was severely beaten and the Manager's bungalow damaged by the mob. Next day a similar outbreak took place at Dhoedaam, an adjoining garden of the Pabhojan Tea Company. The Superintendent of Police was severely injured, a constable badly beaten, a European tea Assistant seriously assaulted and bungalow property destroyed. At Dhoedaam the main demands were that the allowance of rice which was sold at Rs. 3 a maund should be raised from 6 to 8 seers a week and pay increased from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8. On the 25th of September there was a disturbance at Samdang, a garden of the Doom-Dooma Company adjoining Ralrang. In this case three *kayas* shops were looted. On the 27th of September the coolies of Hukanguri, a garden adjoining Pabhojan but belonging to the Assam Frontier Company, raided the weekly *haat* at Bara Hajjan. A quantity of cloth and rice was carried off and in an affray some traders and also some coolies were injured. About the same time there was a disturbance of minor importance on Daisijan tea estate. On the 12th of October there was some trouble on the Deamuli tea estate in connection with the enforcement of garden discipline, but it had apparently no connection with previous disturbances.

13. The conclusion of the Commissioner of the Assam Valley, based largely on the reports of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Colquhoun, was that the failure of wages to respond to the enormous rise in prices and the ease with which the employees of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway had, by a strike, secured an increase of pay were quite sufficient to cause unrest among tea-garden coolies. There can be no doubt that the rice supplied by Marwaris to the Doom-Dooma Tea Company was of inferior quality. Paragraph 14 of letter No. 471F., dated the 30th October 1920, from the Commissioner to the Chief Secretary, may be quoted:—

“ 14. *Causes of the riots at Doom-Dooma.*—On this subject the Deputy Commissioner writes as follows:—

‘It is probable that there has been some incitement from outside, and Mr. Furze (Superintendent of Police), I understand, thinks that the Bengali staff on the gardens were concerned in the matter. It is I believe the fact that the clerks and moujdaris who were assaulted and threatened were usually Assamese and not Bengalis. My own opinion is that the late Railway strike was the chief incitement to combined action. I can throw no further light on the organization of the strikes. It is my opinion, and I have not yet met any planter who would venture to contradict it, that the coolie like a good many other people is less prosperous and has to content himself with a lower standard of living than before the war. On many of the older gardens where the coolies have their own land and cattle and work more or less as they please, these conditions are not felt so severely, but in the Doom-Dooma area where there is generally little rice land available and where discipline is fairly strict, there is undoubtedly a good deal of dissatisfaction.

The proposal to raise wages in 1918 must have been known to the clerical staff of the gardens, and it is not likely that they would have kept it to themselves.’

That there should be some unrest amongst the coolies is I consider no matter for surprise. According to the published returns the average wage earned by men calculated on the average working strength in the Dibrugarh subdivision was Rs. 10-10-9 in 1911-12 and Rs. 10-8-1 in 1918-19. I admit that wages in 1911-12 were unusually high but it is not to be expected that coolies will now be content with wages approximating those paid to them before the war. In 1918 the question of raising wages in the Doom-Dooma district was discussed and though the proposals put forward were negatived the fact that they had been made doubtless filtered down through the garden clerks to the

labourers themselves. Many of the employees of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway started life on tea-gardens. The Railway runs through or near many of the estates and the fact that the railway workmen had recently obtained a substantial rise in their wages through a strike must have been well known to the garden force. It is possible that there was deliberate incitement from outside, though of this there is little evidence, but the failure of wages to respond to the enormous increase in prices which had occurred and the ease with which the railway employees secured an increase in their pay were quite enough to cause unrest among the garden coolies. High prices are to some extent mitigated in the Doom-Dooma district by the practice of supplying rice below cost prices, but it is probable that this rice was of a poorer quality than in previous years as it is understood that several of the Marwaris who had made forward contracts had lost heavily on them and it is not unnatural that they tried to reduce their losses by supplying grain of an inferior quality.

Dhoedaam and Pabhojan, the two gardens on which most damage was done, treat their labour well, but though they pay their coolies wages fully up to the standard of the district the average wage given in September 1920 was substantially lower than the average wage paid in September 1919 and a downward tendency in wages which had already failed to respond to the abnormal increase in prices was bound to produce dissatisfaction amongst the coolies.

Garden Managers generally, I believe, recognise that an increase of wages would be desirable but unfortunately at the present moment tea is being produced on most gardens at a heavy loss; few, if any, estates are working at a profit and proprietors and managers are bound to work as economically as they can. It is generally recognised that the main encumbrance of the labour force is the first charge upon an estate, but concerns which are losing money every day cannot treat their coolies with the liberality which firms making large profits are able to do ..."

These remarks are quite irrelevant as regards the Doom-Dooma and Pabhojan Tea Companies. The Pabhojan Tea Company paid a dividend of 35 per cent. in 1918 and 1919 and 25 per cent. in the disastrous year, 1920.

The Doom-Dooma Company paid a dividend of 15 per cent. in 1918 and 1919 and 10 per cent. in 1920.

14. Hansara and Dhoedaam were visited in February 1922. The lapse of time between the strikes and riots and the visit of the Committee rendered it difficult if not impossible to arrive at independent conclusions. As regards Dhoedaam, the Commissioner has stated that the average wages in September 1920 were substantially lower than for the same month in 1919. One explanation of this is that the coolies received no pay for four days while they were out on strike in September 1920. There seems to have been no complaint as to the quality of the rice supplied at Dhoedaam and Pabhojan, though the rice supplied at Hansara was admittedly of inferior quality. The wage returns show that the earnings of these gardens for March and September 1921 considerably exceeded the earnings in the same months of 1920. The majority of the Committee accept the conclusion that the disturbances were primarily due to the failure of wages to respond to the great increase in the cost of living. A contributory cause may have been the success of a strike on the Dibru-Sadiya Railway in July. The line runs through the Doom-Dooma gardens. Managers were convinced that the disturbances were due to incitement from outside agitators. But there is no direct evidence in support of this view.

15. On the 16th of October 1920 the coolies at Monabari and the out-garden Kato-nibari, struck work, looted some shops, and assaulted Indian members of the garden staff. Three members of the Committee visited this garden. Letter No. 5003, dated the 23rd November 1920, from the Deputy Commissioner to the Commissioner, dealing with the causes which led to the riot was shown to the Manager who agreed with the findings. The Committee, in the circumstances, have no hesitation in accepting the conclusions arrived at by the Deputy Commissioner. These may be summarised as follows.

Monabari
riot in
Darrang
district.

16. The causes of the outbreak were entirely economic. The Manager had long before the riot realised that his coolies were not receiving an economic wage and had some months before drawn the attention of the Managing Agents, Messrs. Macleod and Company, to the fact, but without result. The Deputy Commissioner states that the rate of wages in force had remained unchanged for a quarter of a century, in fact since the garden was opened. This, if anything, understates the case. In October 1920 the rates were Rs. 5 a month for men, Rs. 4 for women and Rs. 3, Rs. 2-8 and Rs. 2 for working children, according to age; Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 was the initial wage for newly imported coolies under Act VI, and rice was provided at Rs. 3 per maund so that on this estate the coolies were worse off than they would have been 20 years ago under that Act. The question of bonus has not been overlooked. Records of cases show that new coolies were put under 939-day agreements for petty advances of Rs. 9. And up to 1918 agreement advances to old coolies were

CHAP. II deducted at the rate of Re. 1 per month from their pay. The Deputy Commissioner writes :—

"...In view of the enormous increase in the cost of all foodstuffs and of all articles of wearing apparel, I think no further comment is necessary. Even when full allowance is made for '*ticca*' earnings, and for the fact that paddy rations are supplied at a rate considerably below cost price, the total pay earned by the labour force on this garden (as well on some other gardens in this district) is not sufficient to enable the coolies (with their families and dependents) to live in decent comfort...."

Owing to the curtailment of expenditure, due to the depression in the tea industry, the first items of work to be reduced were those which in normal times enable the coolies to earn "*ticca*" (overtime earnings). This may be illustrated by a comparison of the average earnings of September 1919 and 1920 :—

		September 1919.	September 1920.
1		2	3
		Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men...	... ..	9 11 3	7 11 6
Women	... ..	11 4 10	7 0 9
Children	... ..	6 3 1	4 3 4

17. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the coolie had, *pari passu* with his decreased earnings, to pay more to the garden for so-called concession paddy. Previous to 1920, the rate was fixed at Rs. 2-4 a maund; in the course of 1920 the rate was gradually raised to Rs. 3-6 from July onwards. The paddy was not paid for in cash, but debited against the coolie's individual account and carried on from month to month, recoveries being effected as far as possible on each pay day. An increase in the rate of recovery of these advances, on the ground that there had been some extra *ticca* earnings on account of plucking in September, brought matters to a head. At the time of the riot a sum of Rs. 23,300 was outstanding against the coolies for paddy advances on a working labour force of 2,857. In addition to this, the garden had incurred in the first nine months of 1920 a loss on paddy transactions of Rs. 36,647, this sum representing the difference between the cost price of the paddy to the garden and the price at which it was retailed to the coolies and debited to their account. The Deputy Commissioner observes :—

"...These so-called losses are, in my opinion, 'deferred pay' to which the coolie has for some time been economically entitled. Had the Directors and Managing Agents, when it became obvious that the cost of living had permanently risen and was still rising, boldly faced the situation, and increased the rate of coolies' pay to make it a real living wage, it would probably have cost them no more than the present circuitous system which will sooner or later involve the writing off as irrecoverable of huge outstanding balances and would have been far less embarrassing to the immediate management and infinitely more satisfactory for the coolies...."

and again :

"The system of paddy advances now in vogue is in my opinion vicious in principle and the sooner it is done away with and replaced by a proportionately adequate increase in actual pay, the better it will be for all concerned."

18. The working force had about 2,000 persons dependent on them. These had to be maintained from the wages earned by the workers *plus* any income which might be derived from cultivation or other sources. The Monabari Tea Estate owns a considerable area of rice cultivation, but not every coolie by any means had a share in it. With the exception of rice used in hospital and to feed indigent and weakly labourers on the hotel system, rations were only issued to workers. The ration for a man, it is admitted, was more than sufficient; for a woman not quite enough, and for a growing boy or girl inadequate. It was clear that the entire coolie population, including dependents, could not live on the rations supplied but had to supplement them from other sources. Shortly before the riot, the Manager discovered that the boxes used for measuring the rations contained less than the supposed quantity. By actual test, the Deputy Commissioner found that "a family consisting of, say, father and mother and 3 children, was thus being robbed of 8 pounds of *dhan* every week—a very serious item in times of stress." It is only fair to add that these old boxes were in use long before the Manager joined the garden and had been recently discarded for others which gave a generous measure.

19. Another grievance was the high price of clothing. The coolie with his diminished earnings was unable to buy new clothes when required. The garden had provided some standard cloth, but the supply was very limited. Evidence was obtained that the doctor babu in the out-garden had been exacting bribes from coolies for granting sick leave. CHAP. II.
PARAS. 10—
22.

20. The Deputy Commissioner remarks in his report :—

“What is now needed, it appears to me, is a closer study of present-day economic conditions in the tea districts by the Directors and Managing Agents of the Companies concerned, coupled with the grant of greater freedom of action to the Manager on the spot.”

In a subsequent letter he pointed out that though there was “abundant evidence to show that prior to the riot the Agents were not sufficiently well-acquainted with the detailed working of the system of management for which they were initially responsible and did not therefore adequately appreciate the economic significance of the recent rise in the cost of living, they had since made ample amends.” The coolies’ pay was raised by Re. 1 immediately after the riot to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 and again in January 1921 to Rs. 6-12 for men, and in the beginning of March to 5 annas and 4 annas a day for men and women; considerable outstanding advances were written off to the amount of Rs. 19,880 and a system of weekly payments was instituted. If the coolies before the riot had received an adequate wage, there was no necessity to introduce these substantial increments of pay. A special order was given on the 19th of January 1921 that *ticca* was not to be cut down. It has been noted that for about two years prior to the riot the agreement advance which used to be deducted monthly had been treated as a real bonus; that from the 1st of August 1920 allowances of half pay for 4 months and full paddy rations had been given, in the case of pregnant women, also compassionate allowances on a small scale in special cases of hardship from the 1st of October 1921.

21. On the 21st of March 1921 there was a serious riot at Halem tea garden. A very large number of the coolies assembled near the estate office in the afternoon and announced their intention of handing in their tools and ceasing work. They then beat the garden jemadar and mohurrir mercilessly. Later on, the Manager of Halem and the Manager of a neighbouring garden, on arrival at the scene, were attacked and severely beaten. A Halem riot
in Darrang
district.

22. The finding of the Deputy Commissioner was that the riot was deliberately planned beforehand. It was accompanied by acts of great violence, and largely inspired by social and political propaganda. Examination of the registers showed that the coolies had been receiving an adequate wage with liberal sundry concessions. The portion of the Deputy Commissioner’s report of 25th April 1921, dealing with the cause of the disturbance, may be quoted :—

“The labour force on Halem consists of a very large element of native Christians—there are three churches on the garden built and maintained by the garden for the Church of England, the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran communities. These coolies are mainly Mundas from Ranohi and neighbourhood. The Lutheran denomination was before the war supervised by a German pastor and it is not impossible that their present attitude is partly the outcome of his teachings. Many of these native Christians are literate and their religious interests are looked after by pastors and pundits of their own caste. Sometime before the riot the chief resident pandit by name Christoson obtained leave to go to his country from which he returned shortly before the riot. Since his return the Manager had noticed a gradual growth of a feeling of sullenness and discontent among the coolies for which no apparent cause could be assigned. No grievances were formulated but a spirit of ‘ca’ canny’ began to pervade all forms of garden work. The Manager was at first inclined to blame his Jemadar and work Mohurrirs for this attitude, but the riot showed that the Manager’s suspicion was unfounded as these men were the first to be attacked by the rioters. This feeling of discontent came to a head some two days before the occurrence when the coolies who had been sent out to do a specific work deliberately scamped the work. I visited the work in question and satisfied myself by experiment that the task assigned was very reasonable and that the coolies had no cause for complaint on this score. I also personally tested the unit prescribed by the garden management for plucking and hoeing and found that the tasks assigned were exceedingly light. The men’s hoeing task for which they receive a daily wage of five annas was completed in some cases under two hours and in no case exceeded three and a half hours. The soil of this garden is very friable and easy to work. Similarly with the plucking unit. In numerous cases the minimum unit prescribed was more than doubled by some of the plucking women before noon and in no case could the task assigned be considered to be hard. This garden is worked on the modified unit system. If a coolie turns out to work he has to perform the minimum unit which is well within his power, and if he so desires he (or she) can go on and earn very much more by extra work for which the coolies receive liberal *ticca* pay. It is I believe beyond a doubt that these Munda Christians have been largely influenced by the social and semi-political propaganda which appears to be now pervading the Munda country. The Manager had noticed that for sometime before the riot correspondence between the coolies and their own country had enormously increased, and it was also reported that a number of subscriptions had been sent by Christian coolies towards the expenses of this social and political propaganda in their own country. The visit of the pundit to his own country appears to have increased his sympathy with the movement, and on his return there is no doubt that he and his friends have attempted to spread it on the garden and on other gardens in the east of the district where Christian Mundas are to be found.

CHAP. II " 4. Simultaneously with the spread of this movement local non-co-operators have been holding meetings at *hats* and other populous centres in the east of the district and it is significant that the day before the riot Chandra Nath Sarma presided over a non-co-operation meeting at Gahigaon *hat* which is not far from Halem and which is attended by numerous Halem coolies. No evidence is forthcoming to prove that Chandra Nath Sarma or any other non-co-operator directly incited the coolies but from the language used by the coolies in the course of the riot it is evident that their general attitude has been affected by the prevalent social and political propaganda....."

23. This garden was visited by three members of the Committee who found that the coolies were well paid and contented. The Committee have no hesitation in accepting the conclusions arrived at by the Deputy Commissioner.

Chargola
exodus in
Sylhet dis-
trict.

24. On the 1st and 2nd of May 1921 non-co-operation meetings were held at Ratabari in the Chargola Valley. These meetings, particularly on the second day, were attended by many garden coolies especially from Anipur Tea Estate which is about a mile from the place. The Manager of Anipur informed the Sub-Inspector of Police who had warned him some days beforehand about the impending meeting that he would not prevent his coolies from attending lest their suspicions might be aroused. According to the police reports, the main themes of the speeches were the Khilafat wrongs and non-co-operation, but in the first meeting one Radha Krishna Pande of Silchar who spoke in Hindi impressed on the coolies the fact that their present daily wage was inadequate and that it should be raised to 12 annas for men, 8 annas for women and 3 annas 6 pies for boys. He quoted the example of some gardens near Lakhipur (in Cachar) where the coolies struck for an increase of pay. He amiably compared tea-garden Managers to Satan. He further stated that the English nation had seized India by foul means and that now *Swaraj* could be attained through non-co-operation. At the second meeting the same speaker urged the coolies to demand wages of 8 annas a day for men, 6 annas for women and 3 annas 6 pies for children, and if their grievances were not redressed to cease work like the coolies of Khoreal Tea Estate in Cachar. Next day about 750 labourers and dependents left Anipur on their way to Karimganj. This was followed by a general exodus of coolies from other gardens in the Valley. The solitary exception was Bidyanagar Tea Estate, which did not lose a single coolie. On the 15th of May about 335 coolies left Kalinagar, a garden in the Valley near Bidyanagar managed and owned by Indians. At the time of the exodus a few hundred coolies also left Longai, Adamtilla, Lalkhira, Baitakhal and Eraligul gardens in the Longai Valley which is separated from the Chargola Valley by a low range of hills.

25. The following statement shows the number of labourers and dependents who were employed on the 1st of May 1921 and the numbers who left during the exodus :—

Statement showing for the gardens in the Chargola and Longai Valleys the number of labourers and dependents who were employed on the 1st May of 1921 and the number that left during the exodus.

Tea gardens.	Total number of coolies in the garden on the 1st May 1921.			Total of columns 2-4.	Number of coolies who left during the exodus.			Total of columns 6 to 8.	Remarks.
	Workers.				Workers.				
	Under agreement.	Not under agreement.	Dependents.		Under agreement.	Not under agreement.	Dependents.		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Dullaboherra ...	931	374	755	2,060	371	139	258	768	
Singlacherra...	715	415	626	1,756	215	209	137	561	
Maguracherra ...	278	455	249	980	211	310	129	650	
Kekragool ...	833	222	674	1,729	377	132	373	881	
Goombhiracherra ...	482	193	273	948	440	140	319	899	
Oliviacherra ...	621	173	629	1,423	469	100	540	1,109	
Chargola ...	835	256	588	1,639	329	185	286	800	

CHAP. II. The *Communiqué* issued by Government on 5th June 1921 regarding the exodus
 PARAS 25— will be found in the Appendix.
 28.

23. The view which finds general acceptance with employers in the Chargola Valley who lost their labour is that the exodus was entirely due to political agitation. On the 6th of May while the exodus was in progress a meeting of officials and local planters was held at the Dullabcherra Planters' Club to discuss what steps could be taken to check the exodus. The Appendix contains a copy of the minutes of the meeting drawn up by Mr. Webster, the Commissioner of the Surma Valley Division. Item No. (6) states :—

“ There is a consensus of opinion that present wages are too low and that the wage of a man for a fair task should be six annas and of a woman four annas and that unless these rates are conceded a large proportion of the coolies will strike work or desert.”

Some of the Managers have deposed that the minutes, and in particular, the passage quoted, are not a correct statement of the conclusions arrived at. Others have suggested that they were overawed by the presence of officials when they expressed the opinion that the rates in force were too low and that the wage of a man for a fair task should be 6 annas and of a woman 4 annas. The Committee regret that they are unable to accept this view. Mr. Hunter of Bidyanagar Tea Estate, a senior planter, who took part in the meeting has stated that the proposed increase in wages was not due to official pressure. The Commissioner of the Surma Valley is quite definite on the point that the local planters themselves admitted that the wages were insufficient and must be raised. He adds that there was some difference of opinion as to the extent of the rise which should be given. It is unfortunate that two Managers, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Bather, who took an active part in the discussion had proceeded to England before the Committee visited the Valley.

27. A noticeable feature of the so-called exodus is that a large proportion of the deserters were coolies of comparatively recent importation. Over 42 *per cent.* had been less than 4 years on the gardens. In the Valley, recruiting in 1918-19 had been unusually heavy and the class of coolie imported in that year under famine conditions is a matter of notoriety. The new coolies were mostly Chamars. It is admitted that many arrived in such a condition as rendered them easy victims to the influenza epidemic then raging in the gardens. Many of the survivors were so reduced in health and strength as to be incapacitated from doing a fair day's work or earning a living wage.

28. Shortly after the exodus, detailed enquiries were instituted on several of the Chargola gardens which had lost a large proportion of their labour force. The finding was that in some gardens many coolies prior to the exodus were not earning a living wage, that there were cases of oppression of low caste coolies by sardars of superior caste, that others were employed by the Indian staff on private work and that there was some lack of sympathy on the part of the European staff. The Ratabari meetings were found to be largely responsible for the sudden exodus. The general conclusion was that the recruiting of an inferior type of coolie had paved the way for the agitator and facilitated his methods of propaganda. The following extract from the Deputy Commissioner's report may be quoted :—

“ 6. I think the cause of the exodus was that the appeal of non-co-operators at the Ratabari meetings found a ready response in the hearts of the coolies of low caste who had been recruited in the last few years, many of whom were never physically fit to do a hard day's work and others who were constitutionally lazy or unwilling to exert themselves. I am convinced that if the Agents of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association had been more careful in their selection of coolies and if the Calcutta Agents had not been so keen in getting hundreds of new coolies into the gardens in war time when tea was prosperous and money plentiful without troubling much about the quality of the recruits, the exodus, if it had taken place at all, would have been of much smaller extent. In brief, bad recruiting made the non-co-operation propaganda easy. It would have been better perhaps to spend more money on the old coolies, *e.g.*, by raising the rates. One result of getting so many new coolies is that with a more or less fixed budget allotment for coolies' wages the individual coolie cannot earn so much. The money has to be distributed among more people. What happens is that where a garden has a lot of useless, feeble or lazy coolies, they must be kept alive, and the hard-working coolies suffer. It would pay many gardens to weed out the riff-raff, but as these useless coolies have often got relations among the older and better coolies this is very difficult to do. From this point of view, it is quite likely that some gardens have really benefited by the exodus in getting rid of much bad material though there can be no doubt that the gardens that lost so much labour are meantime much undermanned and fresh recruiting will be necessary. In so far as the inferior coolies were getting a bare living wage in some of the gardens, in some cases their misfortune because they were physically unfit, in other cases their own fault because they were lazy, we may say that to some extent economic causes had something to do with the exodus, but this was only secondary. At the same time I do not mean to convey the idea that those coolies who did not leave were getting a fair reasonable wage. A garden coolie, like everybody else, is entitled to more than a bare living wage, and, as a general rule, owing

largely to the rise in price of necessities, he was not getting this at the time of the exodus, as was admitted by the Managers. The new rates of 6 annas for men and 4 annas for women may or may not be excessive; for good hard-working coolies I do not believe they are. But there are so many factors to be taken into consideration, the class of the coolie, his disposition to do an honest day's work, the length of time he has been on the garden, the amount of cultivation he has inside or outside the garden, other ways of supplementing his earnings, and other considerations. It has also to be borne in mind that the coolie as a rule is helped by other earning members of his family. Then, in some tea districts, the price of necessities may be dearer than in others....." CHAP. II
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29. The following table shows the earnings, calculated on the average daily working strength, on six typical gardens in the Chergola Valley in March and September 1920 and in March 1921:—

	March 1920.	September 1920.	March 1921.
1	2	3	4
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Maguracherra—			
Men	7 6 8	6 11 0	8 4 4
Women	5 7 1	5 10 2	4 7 9
Children	4 2 8	4 2 11	2 11 7
Bidyanagar—			
Men	7 11 9	9 0 4	9 6 2
Women	4 12 8	5 2 1	5 11 7
Children	3 6 1	3 9 2	4 14 1
Kalinagar—			
Men	6 12 5	7 13 1	6 4 11
Women	5 10 3	6 14 7	4 15 0
Children	4 3 10	4 13 6	2 15 9
Goombhira—			
Men	5 15 3	6 1 6	5 10 11
Women	5 6 4	6 0 7	5 5 7
Children	3 9 6	3 7 3	4 7 1
Mukameherra—			
Men	5 5 10	6 3 3	5 5 1
Women	4 4 2	5 1 0	3 11 7
Children	3 6 11	4 8 6	3 2 0
Anipur—			
Men	6 4 5	7 16 7	6 1 1
Women	4 14 10	5 14 7	4 5 9
Children	3 12 4	4 10 4	3 4 5

The earnings on Bidyanagar Tea Estate, especially for March 1921, are worthy of note. This garden had few new coolies. It was fortunate in the possession of an old settled labour force with a quantity of rice land for cultivation inside and outside the grant. Liberal leave was given, and the Manager was allowed a freer hand by his Agents. This garden lost no coolies. An examination of the registers for August 1920 at Olivacherra garden (Goombhira division) disclosed the fact that in the height of the plucking season, two gangs comprising inferior workers and new coolies were only earning on an average Rs. 3-8 a month as against Rs. 7-8 and over, earned by the best workers. In these two gangs, there were a large number of women earning 2 annas 3 pies a day, and many earning only one anna 6 pies. The low earnings in Mukameherra are remarkable. The pay registers showed an excessive number of quarter *haziras*. At the time of the exodus a full task or *hazira* in this garden was 4 annas 3 pies for men and 3 annas for women.

30. Rai Bahadur Panchu Gopal Mukerjee, Subdivisional Officer of Karimganj, is of opinion that the sudden exodus was mainly the result of the efforts of political agitators. He believes that propaganda had been carried on in the neighbourhood of the tea-gardens for some time previous and that matters culminated in the Ratabari

CHAP. II meetings, Documents placed at the disposal of the Committee show that towards the end of April 1921 certain upcountry men, admittedly non-co-operators, visited gardens in the Longai and Chargola Valleys, and presumably tampered with the coolies. That the exodus had a political aspect cannot be denied. The fact that the coolies, as they passed along the road, shouted "Gandhi Maharaj ki jai"—and that in their desire to return to their country as soon as possible they sold their cattle and other property on the road for ridiculous prices, corroborates this view. The Subdivisional Officer in his evidence referred to the large number of coolies of indifferent physique recruited in 1918-19 and stated that influenza in 1919;20 had reduced a large number of coolies on the gardens to such a condition that many of them were physically unable to earn a decent living-wage. He adds that during the exodus he found numbers of coolies in rags, many of whom appeared to be ill-nourished though the majority of those who left the gardens were in a good state of health and fairly well-clad. Dr. Dunlop, the Medical Officer of the gardens, states :—

"The coolies who left in the exodus were mainly new coolies and many were physically unfit. The gardens used to do their best to feed them up,"

and again,

"I should say that 80 per cent. of those who left were physically fit to do a day's full task."

The Deputy Commissioner, in the course of his enquiries, found that the wretched condition of some of the coolies on Goombhira estate had been brought to the notice of the visiting Agent who gave instructions that efforts should be made to assist them in every way. The Deputy Commissioner's note indicates what was done for the coolies on the gardens belonging to the Chargola Tea Association :—

"8. I may note on some benefits which the coolies get here. For some time it has been the custom to keep a *bhalkhana* in connection with the hospital. Coolies who were unable to work or who had been unable to earn enough to keep themselves could get two full meals a day, free of charge. The cost to the garden in the years ending March 1920 and March 1921 was Rs. 4,284 and Rs. 4,425, respectively. The Manager says the *bhalkhana* system was overdone. The loss on rice in the same two years was Rs. 10,585. In 1919 during the influenza epidemic it was necessary to give considerable help to the coolies in the way of advances. The Manager wrote to the Directors at home that such advances should be written-off as irrecoverable as the coolies were not responsible. This was accordingly done to the extent of Rs. 5,352. Another item was a small loss sustained by the garden in keeping a shop where some articles were supplied to them at the lowest rate possible to keep down the prices of the *mahajan*. New coolies coming up get full *haziras* for the first month, irrespective of the work done; after that many of them are put on easy jobs where they can earn their pay till they are fit to hoe. Unless in the case of a single man or woman, absolutely helpless, no sick *haziras* are given. They could get meals at the *bhalkhana*. Up to 1919 the agreements used to be for three years with total advances (not annual) of Rs. 9 and Rs. 6 for men and women, respectively. Since then advances of the same amounts are given annually."

31. In the course of the examination of witnesses, allusion has been made to the Surma Valley Conference which met at Sylhet on the 26th September 1920. The fourth resolution reads as follows :—

"In view of the fact that the European merchants and planters of the Surma Valley have systematically opposed the national aspirations and legitimate claims of the people,

"And in view of the fact that the said merchants and planters of this Valley have frequently oppressed and tyrannised the Indian employes under them and have more than once trifled with their lives,

"And in view of the fact that the Local Administration have, in spite of the repeated protests of the people of this Valley against such oppressions and outrages, failed to adopt effective measures to put a stop to such misdeeds,

"And in view of the fact that the Assam Administration has identified itself with the said European merchants and planters,

"This Conference is of opinion that complete non-violent non-co-operation with the said European merchants and planters is the only effective measure to guard against the continuance of such actions."

"And as a first step this conference urges the people of this Valley to adopt the following programme :—

- (1) To refuse to take service under European planters and merchants ;
- (2) Gradual withdrawal of those who are already in such service ;
- (3) Non-acceptance of briefs by lawyers from such planters and merchants ;
- (4) Refusal on the part of the people of this Valley to grant fresh leases or to renew, whenever possible, the old ones after the existing term ;
- (5) Immediate withdrawal from all such association with such non-official Europeans ;
- (6) To abstain from attending any party or gathering in which such non-official Europeans are invited."

It seems not unreasonable to hold that the Chargola exodus was partly the result of the policy of advocating a gradual withdrawal of Indian employees in the service

of European planters and merchants. The police accounts of the speeches delivered at the Ratabari meetings are meagre, but they may be supplemented by the evidence of Mr. Gunnery, the Manager of Anipur, and others. It is of interest to note that documents seized by the police show that in June 1921 when many Chargola coolies were stranded at Karimganj, more than one Indian zemindar and the Manager of an Indian tea-garden approached the Secretary of the Congress Committee, Karimganj, with offers to find employment for the labourers on their estates.

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The Chairman of the Assam Labour Board who made enquiries in the Central Provinces with reference to reports that many of the Chargola coolies wished to return to the gardens found that there was nothing in them and he was unable to trace any particular batches. Mr. Milligan has also stated in his evidence that some of the Chargola coolies who had returned to their homes complained to him that they only received 2 annas 6 pies a day on the gardens. There is evidence too that the coolies who returned to their homes in the Gorakhpur district of the United Provinces, were able to earn much better wages than on the Chargola tea-gardens and evinced no desire whatever to return. The Report on the Revenue Administration of the United Provinces for the year ending 30th September 1921 states:—"The demand for labour was again in excess of the supply, and wages rose in consequence proportionately to the increase in the cost of living, so that labourers did not suffer. The Commissioner of Gorakhpur mentions that four to five thousand labourers returned to Gorakhpur and Basti in or about the month of June in consequence of the agitation in the Assam tea-gardens, and were absorbed without difficulty." The general conclusion arrived at by the Committee is that the exodus was partly due to the bad economic conditions existing among certain sections of the labour force on the Chargola tea-gardens, particularly in the case of coolies imported in recent years, notably 1918-19, but that the Ratabari meetings, and probably secret propaganda among the coolies, in pursuance of the anti-British programme deliberately adopted by the Sylhet Conference in September 1920, were to a great extent responsible. They cannot believe that the exodus would have taken the form it did, that the coolies would have deserted the estates *en masse*, had it not been for the speeches delivered at the political meetings in the vicinity, which gave the final impetus to discontent engendered by conditions prevailing on the plantations.

32. During September and early in October 1921 several minor strikes occurred on gardens in the Thakurbari area of the Darrang district. The common feature of these strikes was a demand for higher pay—a minimum daily wage of 8 annas for men and 6 annas for women. The garden authorities in all cases were able to induce the coolies to return to work. The strikes spread to the gardens lying to the north and assumed a more serious aspect. During the Durga Poojabs at Sonajuli on the 9th of October the coolies, under the influence of liquor, beat the Superintendent of the Company and the Manager. The Deputy Commissioner at once proceeded to the spot in order to make enquiries. The coolies complained of low rates of pay, excessive work and inadequate leave owing to the reduction of the labour force, the high price of food and clothing and, in some instances, it was alleged that pay was withheld on the charge or suspicion that absconders had been assisted to leave the garden. Next day, on the 10th of October, a serious riot occurred at Kacharigaon where the Manager and some of the Indian staff were seriously assaulted. The complaints made to the Deputy Commissioner were that the tasks were excessive, that insufficient leave was given on market days and for paddy cultivation, that during the previous month work had to be done on three Sundays out of the four, that a reduced labour force was required to do the work previously done by a larger force, that young children and persons in ill-health were made to do heavy work and that coolies were often called up to the office for disciplinary reasons. The most serious outbreak took place at Dhendai on the 14th of October where the Superintendent of Police was severely beaten and some members of the Indian garden staff injured.

Riots at
Sonajuli,
Kacharigaon,
Dhendai.

33. The Deputy Commissioner in his letter of 23rd December 1921 to the Commissioner has reported on the causes of these disturbances. At Rupajuli, the garden where the first of the minor strikes occurred, the Assistant in charge had temporarily raised the rates of pay pending the return of the Manager. This had an immediate effect on neighbouring gardens where the labourers believed that the strikers had secured a permanent rise.

34. In the great majority of the gardens on which strikes occurred the Manager was a junior Assistant, sometimes with an insufficient knowledge of the vernacular, and often too prone to refer the complaints of the coolies to the garden clerks instead of making personal enquiries. On the gardens on which the most serious disturbances

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took place, complaints against the garden babus were very bitter and insistent, and there was evidence that money had been extorted by them from the coolies under various pretexts. The Deputy Commissioner has remarked that "an Assistant who is more or less on his trial as Manager is severely handicapped in his relations with his Directors or Managing Agents. He is apt to be driven at times to increase his output or to extend his cultivation or to reduce expenditure, and in his zeal to prove himself worthy of his charge, he is apt to overlook the coolies' standpoint and to exact from them an increasing amount of labour."

35. As regards Kacharigaon Tea Estate, it was admitted that on three out of the four Sundays preceding the riot pressure had been applied to turn the coolies out to work. In this garden the coolies had good reason for complaint "that they had not sufficient leisure to attend to their own cultivation, to do their weekly marketing and to look after their family affairs generally."

36. The Deputy Commissioner was also satisfied that the complaints about short weight and the poor quality of foodstuffs obtained at the shop of the garden *kaya* were well-founded. At Sonajuli complaints were made that the tasks were not reduced for fine plucking. The Manager admitted that though this was nominally the case, due allowance was made at the time of weightment. The Deputy Commissioner considers that "this is obviously open to grave objection."

37. It was also found that in two of the gardens where the outbreaks took place, the coolies' pay was held back for disciplinary reasons, in some cases for several weeks. The Deputy Commissioner held that the excessive authority allowed on some gardens to sardars and chowkidars was open to criticism.

38. The Deputy Commissioner had no doubt that the unrest was in some measure due to economic causes. Wages had been slightly raised from time to time, but had not kept pace with the increase in the cost of living, and the pinch was felt mostly in the matter of clothing. Labourers had "almost unconsciously but none the less certainly become impregnated with the world-wide dissatisfaction with existing conditions," and "this dissatisfaction had of course been accentuated by the very crude social and political teachings with which coolies have inevitably been brought into contact during the political ferment of the last few months." He adds:—

"Though there is no evidence that the major outbreaks were instigated by political agitators, there is evidence that one or two subsequent incidents connected with tea-gardens have received encouragement from the local Congress party. An ex-coolie who was found inciting the Dibru-Darrang garden labour force, nominally to eschew opium and liquor but in reality to strike work, was openly recognised as a Congress volunteer at the time of his trial and after his conviction, and a number of Belsiri coolies who came into Tezpur to complain openly visited and were entertained at the local Congress camp, and there is no doubt that the activities of volunteers in the villages created an atmosphere which was favourable to the occurrence of strikes and outbreaks among ignorant coolies."

The Deputy Commissioner has worked out the average daily cash earnings of an average adult coolie in the three gardens on which the October riots occurred:—

	March 1919.	September 1919.	March 1920.	September 1920.	March 1921.	September 1921.
I	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sonajuli	3.2	4.5	1.3*	5.2	4.3	4.8 annas
Kacharigaon	4.4	4.1	3.5	5.4	3.8	5.8 "
Dhendai	3.3	4.9	3.1	4.6	4.1	5 "

* The Deputy Commissioner doubts the accuracy of this figure.

39. Members of the Committee visited Dhendai and Sonajuli. It was found at Dhendai that some tasks were excessive and that there was a tendency to overdrive the coolies. Kacharigaon except for a visit to the hospital, was not inspected, owing to the absence of the Manager. The Committee accept the report of the Deputy Commissioner who had the advantage of making enquiries immediately after the riots.

Suntok riot
in Sibsaigar
district.

40. On the 22nd of June 1921 a large body of coolies of Suntok, a garden of the Assam Company, looted *kayas'* shops, beat the garden sardars and damaged buildings in the mohurrirs' lines. The average earnings for the previous month, May, were for men Rs. 6-0-10, and for women Rs. 4-8-10; for June the

wages were slightly higher. The garden is worked on the unit system. The General Manager stated that coolies could, without difficulty, have earned more. In the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner, the real cause of the outbreak was that the coolies' earnings had been regularly subjected to illegal deductions by the garden clerks who were singled out for attack in the riot. Coolies with grievances were not allowed to approach the Manager. This garden was visited by two Members of the Committee who found that a complete change in the Indian staff had been made after the riot. The earnings of the coolies in recent months were found to be satisfactory. The Committee believe that the conclusions arrived at by the Deputy Commissioner are correct.

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41. In April 1921 a strike took place at Nahortoli in the Dibrugarh subdivision. The Deputy Commissioner has stated in evidence that at the same time strikes for higher pay occurred on several other gardens and that at a meeting of the local planters held in April, it was resolved to give a rise of one rupee per month. The cause of the trouble at Nahortoli was undoubtedly economic. The Agents, Messrs. James Finlay and Company, objected to give the rise of one rupee apparently on the ground that the concession would be regarded as a surrender to the strikers. On three separate occasions the Deputy Commissioner sent police to the garden on the demand of the Manager who was ultimately informed that a police force could not be kept indefinitely on the garden simply because his Agents refused to accept the general decision. Finally the rise was granted.

Nahortoli
strike in
Lakhimpur
district.

42. Two Members of the Committee visited this garden and found that in the cold weather of 1920-21 opportunities for *ticca* work had been restricted, that the earnings of March 1921 were very low, and cases of half *haziras* not infrequent. There were coolies who, after deductions had been made for cloth and rice advanced, not only received no wages whatever in cash at the end of the month, but were weighted with further debt to the garden. In September 1921 the wages of men and women were appreciably higher with comparatively few half *haziras*. It should be noted that before September 1921 the pay had been raised by one rupee. The wage returns for 1920 and 1921 are given below :—

—				March 1920.	September 1920.	March 1921.	September 1921.
1				2	3	4	5
				Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men	...	...	...	7 3 5	9 4 11	6 1 4	10 7 11
Women	...	...	...	5 0 11	7 14 7	4 4 7	9 8 1
Children	...	...	...	4 4 5	3 14 4	3 10 7	4 5 11

In March 1921 "new women," that is to say, women who had been about two years or less on the garden, were paid at the rate of only Rs. 4 a month, and it is not a matter for surprise that they found it impossible to live on this wage. Women coolies of longer service who were paid at the rate of Rs. 5 a month in March 1921 had more in hand at the end of the month. The Manager seems to have done his best to urge the Agents to raise the pay, but they refused to move in the matter so long as police were available as strike-breakers. The majority of the Committee agree that the Agents were entirely responsible.

The Committee have been constrained to pass some strictures in cases where, owing to the system of rice advances, the labourer has been reduced to what is practically a condition of servitude, in that although he is fed by the estate, he is unable to pay for his food and receives no cash wages at all at the end of the month, with sometimes an increasing load of debt accumulating round his neck. But fortunately such cases are quite exceptional.

43. Managers and District Sub-Committees were invited to send replies to the following questions :—

Opinions of
Managers
and others
on the cause
of unrest on
tea gardens.

" 15. Is it a fact that there has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour during the past few years? If so, to what do you attribute it? State your own experience. Were you aware of a feeling of unrest apart from any caused by the efforts of political agitators and do you think that without these efforts the unrest would have manifested itself?"

" 16. To what extent do you attribute disturbances among tea-garden labour to the incitement of agitators? If possible, give your own experience.

" 17. Have coolies had any real grievances—economic or personal—of which agitators could make capital? If not how do you account for the sporadic nature of the troubles that have occurred?"

The general reply given to question 15 is that there has been no widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour apart from that due to political agitation. As regards question 16 recent disturbances among tea-garden labour are attributed entirely to the action of agitators. The reply to question 17 is that though in some cases labourers may have felt the increased cost of living, gardens have done their best to alleviate conditions. There are, however, instances of more qualified replies. For example the Tezpur Sub-Committee state that they do not believe there was any widespread feeling of unrest prior to 1921, and they do not think that where coolies were well paid and looked after, any trouble would have manifested itself, but for political agitation. They attribute much of the recent trouble to the work of agitators but allow that it is impossible to ignore the economic factor altogether. Unfortunately the high cost of living synchronised with a time of great depression and monetary stringency and undoubtedly the coolie, like the whole community, has suffered. The General Manager, Amgoorie Tea Estates, Sibsagar, submitted the following reply :—

Question No. 15.—"There undoubtedly has been unrest during 1920 and the early part of 1921. I think it may be attributed chiefly to economic reasons. Yes, I believe, it would have done so, because the industry generally refused to recognise the urgent necessity of increasing the coolies' pay with the increasing cost of living."

"These remarks do not apply to the end of the present year, 1921, when the rates of pay have been increased and coolies enabled to earn easy *tees* throughout the year, I believe, on the generality of gardens, and the cost of living has also fallen considerably as compared with 1920."

"Trouble now threatens from agitators who are endeavouring with considerable success in many districts to stop garden supplies and artificially to raise prices and inciting coolies to make unreasonable demands."

Question No. 16.—"I believe that economic reasons tended to make living harder, and coolies impoverished and discontented, and much more likely to be influenced by agitators than would otherwise have been the case: it has made it more urgently necessary for managers to be in close personal touch with their labour in order to remedy legitimate causes of discontent."

Question No. 17.—"Yes, I believe both economic and personal grievances. Personal grievances will always be present among large numbers of ignorant labourers, and it is necessary to ascertain, enquire into and remedy these promptly and fairly and see labour is not worried needlessly."

44. Managers in their evidence have generally stated that the unrest on tea-gardens is due to political agitation. Some Indian witnesses attribute the unrest to economic rather than to political causes.

Babu Nagendra Nath Dutta of Sylhet states :—

"My impression is that this labour unrest is partly due to the all-India labour unrest and partly to political propaganda";
and again:

"The unrest among the masses would appear to be due more to economic causes than to political causes, but the economic unrest is now assuming a political form."

Mr. Gupta, Manager of Vernerpur Tea Estate, Cachar, says :—

"There has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labourers recently owing, in my opinion, to the dearth in the cost of living, and not to any political causes."
and he adds that political agitation has very slightly affected the coolies.

Official witnesses agree that considerable weight must be attached to economic causes. The evidence of the Commissioner of the Surma Valley Division, with regard to the economic conditions in the Chargola Valley prior to the exodus, has been recorded. With reference to other parts of the Division, his opinion is that a rise in wages was certainly necessary on some gardens and that on others it would be desirable. In reply to a question as to whether it was reasonable to infer that the troubles on tea-gardens were due to political agitation, Mr. Walker, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, said :—

"I do not think, I can answer that 'Yes' or 'No.' From a purely superficial view people might be inclined to that inference, but I would not support it at all."

The opinion of Rai Bahadur Panchu Gopal Mukerjee, Subdivisional Officer, Karimganj, is that the non-co-operators had a large field for propaganda among the discontented portion of tea-garden labour in the Chargola Valley. Again he states :—

"Before going on leave in 1920, I visited most of the gardens. It is very difficult to say whether the wages that were being earned then were sufficient to feed and clothe the labourers as that must naturally depend on the working capacity of each individual. Those who were able to earn well looked quite healthy and well off, but others who did not appear to be in good condition would probably have been unable to earn enough by reason of their poor health or through laziness so that the difference is obvious. Of course, I would not say that the wages that were being paid in 1913 were enough for 1920."

Mr. Lainé, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, has stated that economic reasons were the sole cause of the Monabari riot and played a considerable part in the riots of October 1921. He is also of opinion that there are still a number of gardens where

wages should be raised. Mr. Cosgrave, Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, in discussing strikes in that district, states:—

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"It will be seen from these details that in the year 1921, there were numerous garden strikes in the Dibrugarh subdivision but that there was no rioting or violence used to the garden staff, European Indian, and that there is little or no evidence to show that the strikes were due to the influence of Congress agitators. In my opinion the strikes were mainly due to economic causes, i.e., the high cost of living."

Mr. Phillipson, Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, in reply to the question how economic reasons were responsible for strikes in his district, says:—

"It is an extremely difficult question to answer, but I should say that had all the coolies been more contented, agitators would have had far less influence. On the other hand, had there been no agitation the coolies might have been a little slower to disclose their grievances or make a great noise about them. I think, both causes must be taken together; one reacts on the other."

Mr. Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, in answer to a question as to whether the wages of coolies had risen in proportion to the cost of living, replied that this was not the case but that he thought a coolie could earn more than a living wage and that the coolie did not differ from the general community in having cause to make any complaint on this score.

45. The fourth resolution passed by the Surma Valley Conference at Sylhet on the 6th of September 1920 has already been referred to. There was no visible result of the policy then enunciated until February 1921 when three up-country emissaries arrived at Srimangal and addressed coolies belonging to some of the Balisera gardens, pointing out that they were oppressed and should no longer remain in the service of their employers. Similar advice was tendered at two meetings held in the Lungla Valley in the end of March and beginning of April, the result of which was a prolonged strike on Lungla garden. The culminating point was reached a month later in the Chargola exodus in Karimganj. Simultaneous strikes occurred on gardens in the Dholai Valley in South Sylhet in the first week of May. At the meetings held at Ratabari on the 1st and 2nd of May and at Adampur in the Dholai Valley on the 1st of May, not only were Managers libelled, but the coolies were urged to demand higher wages—usually a daily wage of 8 annas for men and 6 annas for women. The issue of orders under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, prohibiting meetings within seven miles of tea gardens in Sylhet, put an end to the haranguing of tea-garden coolies at public meetings. In the Cachar district strikes began in April 1921, and continued at intervals, throughout the year. Some gardens lost coolies, but not to any large extent. The effectiveness of the speeches made at meetings in Sylhet and Cachar was enhanced by the fact that they were frequently delivered in Hindi which specially appealed to the coolies. It is of interest to note that two of the leading up-country speakers were arrested and convicted.

Political situation in the Surma Valley.

46. It is probable that secret propaganda had been carried on for some time at the gardens in the Chargola Valley. Otherwise, it is difficult to account for the extent and suddenness of the exodus. There is also no doubt that after the prohibition of meetings an insidious campaign was being conducted surreptitiously in some gardens. A Muhammadan was convicted of spreading stories among the coolies in the Dholai Valley, that the garden wells had been poisoned; a *sadhu* was also imprisoned for tampering with coolies on one of the Habiganj gardens.

47. In both Sylhet and Cachar agitators did their best to unsettle labour by interfering with garden bazaars. These attempts were met by the issue of orders prohibiting the establishment of rival bazaars and, in Cachar, by quartering additional police in, at least, one disaffected area.

48. In the middle of 1921, some anxiety as regards supplies and the attitude of garden labour was caused by the strike on the Assam-Bengal Railway which serves both districts. Managers were, however, able to obtain supplies by river. In January 1922, there was a short-lived movement in Cachar to enlist tea-garden coolies as Congress volunteers. In the Surma Valley generally, and especially in Sylhet, from the middle of 1921, the Khilafat side of the revolutionary movement was the more prominent.

49. In the Assam Valley no well-defined line of action was laid down corresponding to the Sylhet resolutions of September 1920; at least no programme was openly drawn up. There were, however, in the winter of 1920-21 clear indications that attempts would be made by agitators to unsettle garden labour. These, however, did not attract special attention till the hot weather of 1921 when there was a marked interference with garden bazaars, especially in the Darrang and Sibsagar districts. From that time onwards, the non-co-operation movement gathered strength and grew more intense. The Dibrugarh subdivision of the Lakhimpur district was affected less than the rest of the Valley, probably because it contains

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fewer Assamese villages, and a greater mixture of races, and a large tea-garden population concentrated in a compact area. Political agitation was, however, by no means absent, and several individuals were convicted or prohibited from addressing meetings. According to the Deputy Commissioner, there is little or no evidence that the Doom-Dooma riots or the strikes of April and May 1921 in the Dibrugarh and Panitola tea districts were due to the influence of Congress agitators. Nowgong is not an important tea district, and although the non-co-operation movement was conspicuous in the past cold weather, its effect on gardens was negligible. Attempts to interfere with bazaars, though for a time successful, were in the main defeated by the action of Managers who opened private bazaars on the estates.

50.-In the Darrang and Sibsagar districts, non-co-operators directed their main activities towards interference with garden bazaars. In Sibsagar, when orders prohibiting the establishment of rival bazaars were issued, the agitators endeavoured to intimidate or persuade villagers not to sell rice to coolies except at exorbitant rates. Documents seized disclosed the existence of a plan to induce coolies to abandon the garden bazaars in order that they might be more easily influenced by professional agitators and volunteers who dare not venture inside the lines or garden grants. The papers included lists of tea-gardens, post offices and garden bazaars. From April 1921 onwards, numerous strikes occurred on tea-gardens in both districts, especially in Sibsagar. The coolies demanded enhanced wages, but generally resumed work after a peaceable strike of two or three days' duration. Exceptions were the riots at Suntok and Suffry in Sibsagar, and the riots of October 1921 in Darrang.

51. There was more than one case of assault by Assamese villagers on Europeans. The arrest of many prominent agitators in the Sibsagar and Darrang districts after the Criminal Amendment Act, XIV of 1908, had been brought into operation, led to a cessation of more open activities. In January 1922 refusal to pay land revenue and the boycott of the law courts were conspicuous features of the revolutionary programme. The march of 500 Assam Rifles through the Sibsagar district, and the quartering of additional police in disaffected areas in both districts succeeded in restoring peace and order. In March the situation had become more or less normal.

Conclusions.

52. In the latter half of 1920, and the beginning of 1921, owing to the unfavourable rate of exchange and the crisis in tea, many gardens found that their resources were crippled, at a time when the coolies required special assistance to enable them to meet the high cost of living. In view of the depression in the tea industry, and the uncertainty as to the future, an increase of wages was considered impracticable. Gardens found it difficult to induce Banks and Agents to advance money to carry on, and the case of some concerns owned by Indians was particularly critical. An increased wage bill might well have meant in some instances the temporary or permanent closure of gardens, and the dispersion of the labour force. Help was given to the coolie in the shape of concession rice, and, to some extent, of clothing. Opportunities for overtime earnings had to be restricted. It is not surprising that there was unrest among tea-garden labour. The Committee are satisfied that though economies had to be effected, Managers did their best to see that the labourer did not suffer. Their inability to provide full employment on the estates was met by granting coolies liberal leave, by encouraging them to take up land for rice cultivation, and in some instances by arranging for outside work on the construction and repair of Local Board roads.

53. In these circumstances, the fact that non-co-operators found a congenial field for their activities was only to be expected. The short historical retrospect indicates that full advantage was taken of the opportunities. The Committee are convinced that the agitators who interfered with garden bazaars and who addressed coolies in meetings on the subject of low wages and mal-treatment were mainly actuated by the desire to unsettle and disturb labour and not by any benevolent intentions of improving the material condition of the labourer. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with racial feeling. The aim of the non-co-operators in the tea districts of Assam, as elsewhere, was avowedly revolutionary, and this is the only interpretation which can reasonably be placed on the policy of civil disobedience which was so insistently advocated last cold weather.

54. The Committee are of opinion that, though their main task is to enquire into present conditions on tea-gardens, a brief review of the political situation was essential to obtain a correct perspective. At the same time an analysis of the causes of the more serious disturbances and riots indicates that the economic factor cannot be ignored. The Committee desire to dissociate themselves from the view that political agitation was the sole and only cause of the recent unrest in tea-gardens. They hold that the unrest was due to a combination of economic and political conditions, and that undoubtedly the existence of economic grievances rendered coolies more ready to listen to the exhortations and incitements of non-co-operators and other agitators.

CONCESSIONS.

55. Under Act VI of 1901 (sections 132-136) the provision of house accommodation, water-supply, sanitary arrangements, hospital accommodation and medical attendance was compulsory, also the supply of food-grains at a price to be fixed by the Local Government which in the case of rice was Rs. 3 per maund. The omission to provide house accommodation, water-supply, sanitary arrangements and rations in accordance with the Act and rules framed by the Local Government was punishable with severe penalties. And the failure to provide hospital accommodation or to make provision for the medical care and treatment of labourers as required by the rules made under the Act was also punishable by fine up to Rs. 200 for each week during which the default continued (sections 189, 190). The idea that these requirements are to be regarded as concessions, is, therefore, of comparatively recent origin. When the Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 recommended an increase in wages in order to attract labour from the recruiting districts, they observed "It is no use saying that the planter provides the coolie with extras which should count in lieu of wages. This is not considered, and will not be considered by the person who is being asked to emigrate," and it may be conceded at once that this represents the attitude of the average labourer on a tea garden as regards most of these so-called concessions. The Committee do not of course wish in any way to minimise the enormous expenditure incurred by large Companies in Upper Assam or elsewhere in the province on the provision of permanent lines, an elaborate water-supply, excellent hospital accommodation and up-to-date medical and sanitary arrangements, but only to present the point of view of the labourer: Preliminary.

In the first term of reference concessions are defined as consisting of "free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, and the like." There is some doubt among the Members of the Committee as to how far it is correct to apply the term "concessions" to all these items. The Committee agree that the provision of rice and clothing at rates cheaper than those prevailing in the open market can be termed concessions. With the abolition of Act VI, the obligation to supply rice at three rupees a maund when the market rate exceeded that figure ceased. There is no longer any legal obligation as regards housing and medical attendance, but if these were not provided by the estate the labourer would presumably either have to pay house rent or build his own house. To this extent, free housing may be called a concession. On the other hand, it is usually essential from the point of view of the employer that the labourers should live in certain definite areas as a matter of administrative convenience. If the garden failed to provide doctors, hospitals and medicine, the coolie might have to make his own arrangements, and incur a certain expenditure, unless he resorted to a Local Board dispensary, or, as is more likely, the State intervened and compelled estates to contribute to a medical fund towards the upkeep of central hospitals and dispensaries as is done in Ceylon. To this extent, free medical attendance may be called a concession. It is clearly to the interest of the employer to keep his coolies fit for work, and it would be short-sighted policy, instead of providing medical attendance, to leave them to their own resources. In fact, it is a matter of enlightened self-interest for the employer to provide free housing and medical attendance, though the legal obligations no longer exist. As regards "garden land," many coolies add appreciably to their income by cultivation. In so far as the employer loses the services of the coolie while he is engaged on his own cultivation, particularly in the busy tea season, the disadvantage is more than counterbalanced by the fact of labour being more settled on the garden, and it is now generally recognised that estates which are in a position to allot land to their labourers are in a particularly fortunate position. The various concessions may now be examined in detail.

56. There is considerable diversity in the system of housing on tea estates. In Housing, some gardens coolies live in separate houses with a vegetable garden attached to each, and in others in more or less congested barracks. In fact, broadly speaking, there are two systems, the system of barrack lines and that of the *bustee* or small village. The former prevails on gardens where the location of a large labour force in a small area is more or less obligatory, and the latter, where more space is available for groups of houses constituting a scattered hamlet or village. The Committee endorse the opinion expressed by the Assam Labour Committee of 1906 in discussing the necessity for greater freedom of labour: "Most of the aboriginal or semi-aboriginal races object to close contact with men of other castes; in their own country they lived in separate villages or *talas*. It is repugnant for them to live in a common

CHAP. III PARAS. 56-57. barrack. Every facility will have to be given to separate castes to form their own little hamlets and assimilate as far as possible their life on the tea garden to their life in their own country." Unfortunately on some large estates owing to want of foresight there is no room for hamlets, any more than for rice cultivation, grazing, and fuel reserves, as the main area of the grant is under tea cultivation. Barrack lines, especially in the Assam Valley, are usually substantial structures, often with iron roofs and brick walls. It is probable that where the coolie is compelled to live in congested barrack lines under more or less artificial conditions there is a tendency towards more rigid disciplinary methods, as perhaps is inevitable in the interests of sanitation alone. Speaking generally, every effort is made to provide the coolie with good houses, and the initial and repair cost of lines must often be considerable. In some estates in Sibsagar the system of building barrack lines abutting on the public road does not seem to be conducive either to health or comfort, but in such cases there is probably a limited choice of sites owing to the extent of the area taken up by tea. There are gardens where coolies are allowed to build their own houses, thatching grass and other building materials being available free from the grant. The Tara Tea Company on the eastern verge of the Doom-Dooma district affords an interesting example of both systems. The estate consists of 3,600 acres, of which 1,200 acres are under tea. There is one set of barrack lines with iron roofs inhabited by East Coast Uriya coolies. A staff of sweepers is maintained and iron latrines are provided which are said to be used by 80 per cent. of these coolies. There are three sets of widely scattered *bustee* lines which are really coolie villages with *baris* and cultivation on high and low land adjacent. In these hamlets the coolies build their own houses and receive an advance of Rs. 5 in the first instance to enable them to do so; a large proportion of the labour force live in these hamlets and all have an option and no one is compelled to live in the barracks. The Cuttack Uriyas, however, are said to prefer the barrack lines while coolies from the Kalahandi State and aboriginal or semi-aboriginal labourers prefer the village system. About 300 acres of rice land are available for which 4 annas a *bigha* is charged and no rent is charged for high land attached to the hamlets on which crops of vegetables and mustard were being grown. This estate enjoys exceptional advantages. Managers differ as to whether a coolie prefers to live in houses provided by the garden or built by himself and opinions are probably coloured by individual experience of particular districts and classes of labour. It is possible that coolies of some castes are gregarious and prefer to live in barrack lines; most coolies, however, particularly those belonging to aboriginal races, prefer detached houses built by themselves, and like to live with people of their own race or community.

The cost of houses varies considerably, depending on whether they are of the ordinary *kutchha* type or more substantial buildings. In Sylhet the Manager of Amoo Tea Estate estimates the initial cost of a coolie's house, including labour and materials, at Rs. 60 and allows Rs. 15 for annual repairs. In the same district the Manager of Satgaon states that the average annual cost varies from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 for a house of two rooms accommodating two families. "The average cost per adult is Rs. 3 per annum which represents the actual concession for the house." These estimates are for houses of a *kutoha* type. On the other hand, houses of a more permanent character in Upper Assam built to contain two families, may cost Rs. 300 but they do not require so much expenditure on annual repairs and are possibly cheaper in the long run.

If a money value has to be placed on housing, the Committee think that it would be unfair to put it higher than the rent which would be derived from a house of the type which the coolie himself would build.

Medical attendance.

57. Most gardens are equipped with an ample supply of medicines and surgical appliances, and on large estates the expenditure on hospitals, and medical stores is a very considerable item. Generally speaking, the Indian medical staff on tea gardens is qualified, but there are naturally variations in efficiency. Much depends on the personality of the doctor and on the interest he takes in the coolies and their various ailments. Most companies and large estates retain the services of a European medical officer who pays periodical visits to the various gardens. The central hospital at Labac in Cachar which serves 14 estates belonging to different companies is probably unique of its kind and is in every way an admirable institution. Bacteriological work is carried on, lectures are given, and Indian Assistants receive training to fit them for garden medical work. The Committee have been told that in the Surma Valley coolies object as a rule to remain in hospital as in-door patients, and it is probably correct to say that only serious cases are to be found in these hospitals. At the same time, the Committee think that the in-door accommodation is often of an inferior character and that if hospitals were

made more attractive, coolies would be more inclined to use them. The Committee are not unmindful of the fact that some gardens cannot afford elaborate hospitals and that too great an insistence on attendance at hospital is resented by the coolie. Many hospitals in the Assam Valley fulfil all modern requirements and leave nothing to be desired. In particular, mention may be made of the hospitals of the Pabhojan Tea Company where no expense is spared to provide every requisite for the treatment and cure of patients. On the other hand, at Monabari Tea Estate, the in-door accommodation consisted of temporary grass huts attached to a dispensary. Hospitals in the Dibrugarh subdivision, where colder climatic conditions prevail, than in most other districts, are often provided with hot water pipes. From the coolie's point of view the Committee do not think that a money value can fairly be placed on medical arrangements which include expensive hospital accommodation and European medical supervision. It would be as reasonable to expect the policeman or the sepoy to regard money spent on hospitals, medicines and doctors as part of his pay. Sick *haziras* and hospital diet have, however, a distinct pecuniary value and expenditure on this account is included in the half-yearly wage returns.

58. In the Resolution on Immigrant Labour for 1920-21, a statement is given showing the acreage of land held by labourers whose names are still borne on the garden books. The statement gives the area held and revenue or rent paid by tea-garden coolies as settlement-holders under Government, as tenants of garden lands, and as tenants of other landholders:—

STATEMENT X.—Statistics showing the amount of land held by labourers still on the garden books.

Subdivision.	As settlement-holders under Government.		As tenants of the garden.		As tenants of other landholders.		Total.	
	Area.	Revenue.	Area.	Revenue.	Area.	Revenue.	Area.	Revenue or rent.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Acres.	Rs.	Acres.	Rs.	Acres.	Rs.	Acres.	Rs.
Cachar Sadr ...	2,068	2,478	14,750	44,814	1,217	7,697	18,035	54,490
Hailakandi ...	2,203	1,819	5,325	13,435	289	1,643	7,817	16,897
North Sylhet ...	161	194	905	1,664	730	4,446	1,796	6,304
Habiganj ...	18	33	3,225	2,785	117	356	3,360	3,174
South Sylhet ...	238	279	6,141	6,537	1,042	5,304	7,421	12,120
Karimganj ...	547	750	4,908	5,438	664	3,235	6,114	9,423
Kamrup Sadr ...	55	129	981	1,444	55	244	491	1,817
Darrang Sadr ...	1,223	3,042	8,003	11,648	836	5,675	10,062	20,365
Mangaldai ...	284	517	1,100	1,209	103	459	1,487	2,185
Nowgong ...	500	1,273	2,525	3,500	220	617	3,245	5,390
Jorhat ...	635	1,628	6,663	16,602	1,573	9,068	7,871	28,199
Sibsagar ...	2,170	6,261	9,129	14,422	2,186	16,198	13,485	36,879
Golaghat ...	765	2,893	3,220	15,112	428	1,296	4,513	19,301
Lakhimpur Sadr ...	4,471	6,934	34,545	19,460	916	3,992	39,932	30,386
North Lakhimpur ...	514	1,162	813	1,386	...	...	1,327	2,498
Total ...	15,847	29,893	100,728	1,58,908	10,376	61,128	126,951	2,49,427
Average rent or revenue per acre.	...	Rs. a p. 1 13 8	...	Rs. a p. 1 9 3	...	Rs. a p. 5 14 3	...	Rs. a p. 1 15 5

The total area is 126,951 acres. The same report shows that there were 571,526 adult labourers living in tea-garden lines and on estate land. With an even distribution, this would mean over one-fifth of an acre per adult or perhaps two-fifths of an acre per family. Fifteen to 20 maunds of paddy per acre may be

taken as a fair estimate of the crop in a normal year. A maund of paddy is equivalent to 26 or 27 seers of rice of which the average price may be taken at Rs. 5 a maund. It is obvious that coolies who are fortunate enough to hold land enjoy a substantial addition to their income. If part of the area is under sugarcane, the coolie would at present make a considerable profit by selling the *gur*. Another fact which emerges from the statement is that the coolie generally pays a much lower rent to the garden than is exacted by an outside landlord. In the year ending 30th June 1921, *ex-tea-garden* coolies held 232,022 acres directly from Government. In paragraph 263 of the Assam Labour Enquiry Report of 1906, it is stated that the area settled by Government with time-expired coolies was 112,000 acres, so that the expansion since that year is marked.

59. It may be of interest to cite a few instances of gardens favourably situated in respect of land for cultivation :—

Silcuri (Cachar)—1,200 acres in the grant are held by 1,226 adult coolies; the adult garden population is stated to be 650 men and 623 women; rent for paddy land varies from one to two rupees a *kedar* or *bigha* (one-third of an acre) and for sugarcane land five rupees a *kedar*.

Samambagh (Sylhet)—400 acres, rent free; practically every adult has land; labour force 552 men and 573 women.

Amluckie (Nowgong)—2,160 *bighas* held by 740 coolies; labour force 869 men and 823 women. If a coolie or a member of his family works 200 days in a year, two *bighas* are given rent free and 12 annas a *bigha* is charged for the rest.

Brahmaputra Tea Company (Sibsagar)—4,600 *bighas* rented at 8 annas a *bigha*; labour force 3,167 men and 3,302 women; practically every coolie has land.

Majuli Tea Company, Behali Division (Darrang)—1,335 *bighas* rented at 8 annas a *bigha* held by 482 adult coolies; labour force 614 men and 568 women.

Jokai Tea Company, Panitola Division (Lakhimpur)—3,062 *bighas* rented at 8 annas a *bigha*; labour force 1,234 men and 1,511 women.

60. Generally speaking, a nominal rent is charged. But economic rents up to Rs. 6 an acre are not unknown. When crops have failed or where the coolie has felt the economic pressure severely as in 1919-20, rents are frequently remitted. As a rule, there is an understanding that when a coolie holds land some members of his family must work for the garden, and the obligation is usually fulfilled. Coolies are rarely ejected from the land except as a disciplinary measure. In some gardens the distribution of land is uneven and there is always a risk that if a manager tries to remedy this, his action will be resented as an attempt to interfere with vested interests. It is natural that those who hold more than what appears to be a fair share should object to a redistribution, especially if they have had the trouble of originally clearing the land, or if it has been sold or mortgaged to them. In some gardens the land in possession of coolies is regularly surveyed and mappel and leases are issued. Land is of little use to the coolie unless he gets sufficient leave to cultivate it and to reap the crops. Of late years the tendency in most estates has been to grant more liberal leave for this purpose. On gardens where it was necessary owing to the depression in the industry to restrict opportunities for overtime earnings, coolies were encouraged to open out land for rice and sugarcane cultivation. As is inevitable, new coolies have no land for cultivation. It takes a coolie three or four years at least to save sufficient money to set up a holding with the necessary livestock. The available land is often already in possession of the older residents, and some time may elapse before a holding falls vacant. While it may be readily conceded that the profits derived are an addition to the coolies' income, the uneven distribution of land among a labour force fluctuating from year to year makes it extremely difficult to arrive at any money equivalent which would be of practical assistance in determining the value of cultivation to the average labourer on an estate. It would not be impossible to extract the cases of individuals who hold land and to calculate the value as far as they are concerned, but it would be obviously incorrect to say that the money value of the total crops divided by the number of coolies on the books represents an addition to the wages of the average coolie many of whom, especially new immigrants, have no land at all. Another point is that the coolie receives no pay when he is engaged on his own cultivation situated within or without the estate grant, so that the wages foregone would have to be deducted from the gain on produce sold or retained for home consumption.

As to how far the allotment of garden land for cultivation can be termed a concession, there is a divergence of opinion. One view is that the measure of the concession is the difference between the rent (if any) charged by the garden and the rent which the coolie would have to pay for similar land outside the garden. Another view is that the concession is the market value of the crops, less the rental pail and the economic value of the labour spent in cultivating the land. The soundness of this view is open to question. The Government of Assam, in a desire to encourage land settlement in certain areas, has frequently held out inducements to ryots in the form of concession rates, sometimes with an initial rent-free term. It would hardly be maintainable that the concession consisted in anything more than the difference between the rent (if any) charged and a fair economic rent. The value of the crops would form no part of the concession. Government has also settled with Managers at concession rates considerable areas of waste land in the neighbourhood of tea estates for allotment among their coolies. In such cases the concession consists in the low assessment of land revenue. It is in the interest of the employer that the coolie should be kept contented on the estate by having land to cultivate and the Committee do not consider it a practical proposition to attempt to fix any money value for the concession of land for cultivation.

61. On almost all gardens cowherds usually paid by the estate are employed to look after the cattle belonging to the coolies. The importance of reserving grazing land has not always been realised by garden Managers or by Settlement Officers. Where grazing land is available on an estate no charge is made. Usually there is a garden pound in which cattle straying in the tea are detained. There is no reason to think that the system of impounding cattle or imposing fines is abused. Fines imposed for cattle impounded are often refunded and sometimes utilised for the benefit of the coolies on the occasion of the Durga Poojahs or other festivals. Provided the cattle are sent to the nearest Government pound within 24 hours, the system of garden pounds does not appear to be illegal.

62. On most estates there are ample facilities for obtaining firewood from the garden grant or the adjoining jungle. Some gardens, however, for instance in the Doom-Dooma district, are less fortunately situated owing to the omission to retain reserves for fuel when tea cultivation was being extended. It is now realised that it would have been wiser policy to have left blocks of forest or jungle for this purpose. In other cases where gardens have been opened on grass land, firewood must always have been a difficulty and permits have to be taken out from the nearest forest reserves, as for example on some estates in Mangaldai and Bishnath. On the Upper Assam Company's gardens near Dibrugarh coolies receive an additional cash payment in lieu of firewood. In the cold weather tea prunings are utilised and some estates have been actually obliged to plant quick-growing trees on account of the scarcity of firewood.

63. It is not an uncommon practice to give loans free of interest for buying cattle, for marriage expenses and similar purposes. This is apart from the advances or bonuses given with Act XIII agreements. Such loans are naturally given only to reliable working coolies, who can give personal or other security, and the concession tends to keep the coolie out of debt to money-lenders and shopkeepers.

64. Under Act VI of 1901 and the previous Labour Law Act I of 1882, the supply of rice at a price not exceeding Rs. 3 a maund was compulsory and regarded as part of the labourer's wage. When Act VI fell into disuse in the Surma Valley some twenty years ago, rice was cheap in that area—seldom dearer than Rs. 3 and often cheaper,—and it was not anticipated that the average price would rise to Rs. 5 and in years of scarcity to Rs. 7 and Rs. 8 a maund. As has been stated the main provisions of the Act were repealed in the Surma Valley in 1908 and as regards the important tea districts of Upper Assam in 1915. Nowadays the term 'concession rice' usually means rice sold to the labourer by the employer at rates below the current market price when it exceeds Rs. 5 a maund. In recent years, particularly in 1919 and 1920, when rice was exceptionally dear, and to a less extent in 1921, many gardens sold rice at rates below those ruling in the local market. For the year 1920-1921 Managers were asked by Government to show the loss sustained on the sale of rice to coolies in a separate column in the half-yearly wage returns. It would not, however, be correct to assume that the loss sustained by the garden represents the monetary advantage gained by the labourer; it might be less or more and would depend on the fluctuations of the market, which might rise or fall after the estate had purchased the rice. The point of view of the labourer and of the employer is not necessarily identical. For instance, if the estate bought rice at Rs. 6 a maund, and the price afterwards fell to Rs. 5, though the loss to the estate on rice supplied at

CHAP. III Rs. 3 a maund would be Rs. 3 on every maund sold, the gain to the labourer would
 PARAS. 64-67. be Rs. 2 and not Rs. 3 if he could buy it in the market at Rs. 5.

There are two distinct classes or rates of rice concession. On many gardens in the Doom-Dooma district rice has always been available to the coolie at Rs. 3 a maund. These estates are not situated in a rice-growing area. Most of the rice for the very large coolie population has to be imported at great expense. The general cost of living is higher than in other tea districts. Some inducement is also necessary to retain labour on gardens forming a solid block of tea cultivation which provide few amenities and side interests for the coolies. The practice of selling rice at Rs. 3 a maund has in any case been continued since the repeal of Act VI. Again in the Golaghat subdivision of Sibsagar, the Brahmaputra Tea Company have always supplied their coolies with paddy at Rs. 2 per maund. These gardens are not situated in an expensive district and the coolies possess a large area of land for rice cultivation. Elsewhere the general practice is to stock and sell rice to coolies in years of scarcity when the market price is unduly high or exceeds Rs. 5 a maund. This concession is more common in Assam than in the Surma Valley. Previous to 1919, it was comparatively rare for gardens in Sylhet and Cachar to stock rice, but in many gardens in the Lakhimpur district, where prices run higher on the average than in Lower Assam, the practice is of long continuance.

65. Some gardens keep rice in stock for the benefit of new coolies who may at first find difficulty in getting full value for their money owing to ignorance of the local vernacular or insufficient acquaintance with market rates and local conditions. The average coolie looks forward to the weekly market day as a welcome variety in his monotonous existence and prefers to go to the bazaar, or to the village to bargain for his rice or paddy and other supplies rather than have recourse to the garden store. When rice is supplied by the shopkeeper or contractor, the bags are carefully examined by the Manager or his Assistants. The acceptance of bad rice has led to serious trouble among the labour force in more than one case. There is no doubt that there are shopkeepers who deliberately mix bad rice with good and endeavour to palm it off if precautions are not taken and the rice carefully examined by reliable agency. The temptation has been very great in order to avoid heavy losses on contracts, due to fluctuations in the market price. Cases are not unknown when the coolie has been defrauded by the subordinate garden staff using false measures or boxes containing less than the amount for which the coolie pays in cash or by deduction from his pay at the end of the month. There is necessarily a limit on the quantity of "concession rice" which a coolie is allowed to buy and the Committee have no reason to believe that the ration is not sufficient in most cases. But when a coolie depends solely on his garden earnings for the support of his family, care should be taken to see that the amount of rice allotted is sufficient for the needs of the children. Some gardens meet the difficulty by giving free midday meals to the children on the estate.

66. It is impossible to put an exact money value on the rice concession from the coolie's point of view. This could only be done if statistics as regards particular estates were carefully worked out. Details would be required as regards the number of coolies who buy rice from the garden, the quantities purchased, the current market rate and the garden selling price. Where rice or paddy is always sold to the coolie at a fixed rate as in many gardens in the Doom-Dooma district and in the Brahmaputra Company, the task is easier if the current bazaar prices are known. As regards gardens which do not sell at fixed rates or which normally only stock rice or paddy in years when it is exceptionally dear, the sliding scale which is preferred to an increase in the cash wage renders accurate calculation an impossibility, without the collection of intricate statistical information. For part of 1919, in 1920 and for some months in 1921, many tea gardens had, owing to the difficult financial position, to restrict their expenditure in this respect as in other directions.

67. In the Resolution on Immigrant Labour for 1920-21 the following statement is given of the amount of grain (paddy and rice) supplied by tea gardens to labourers

and the price charged for it during the year ending 30th June 1921 :—

CHAP. III
PARA 67.

District.	Amount of grain supplied to labourers.	Price charged to labourers.	Market price as returned.
1	2	3	4
	Mds.	Rs.	Rs.
Cachar	Paddy ... 190	549	569
	Rice ... 149,841	8,59,635	10,88,336
Sylhet	Paddy ... ..	...	...
	Rice ... 218,090	11,40,543	13,93,218
Kamrup	Paddy ... 2,084	4,674	6,391
	Rice ... ..	...	...
Darrang	Paddy ... 37,954	1,31,741	1,30,594
	Rice ... 16,695	1,01,170	1,44,993
Nowgong	Paddy ... 10,164	34,194	43,302
	Rice ... 36,729	1,96,598	2,71,364
Sibsagar	Paddy ... 93,340	3,28,781	3,95,420
	Rice ... 60,102	3,02,182	4,67,528
Lakhimpur	Paddy ... 104,726	3,90,413	4,31,002
	Rice ... 387,760	17,28,768	30,48,667
Total	1,117,675	52,19,248 — 22,60,686	74,79,934

By far the heaviest loss was incurred by estates in the Lakhimpur district—Dibrugarh subdivision. It may be of interest also to show from the same Resolution the amount of land held by labourers on the garden books and the number of adult labourers living in the lines and on estate land :—

District.	Acreage of land held by labourers.	Adult labourers on 30th June 1921.	Price charged to labourers for grain supplied in year ending 30th June 1921.
1	2	3	4
			Rs.
Cachar	25,847	80,838	8,60,184
Sylhet	18,691	96,896	11,40,543
Kamrup	491	2,829	4,674
Darrang	11,549	82,101	2,32,931
Nowgong	3,245	15,330	2,30,792
Sibsagar	25,869	141,211	6,30,963
Lakhimpur	41,269	152,321	21,19,181

CHAP. III
PARAS. 67-69.

In paragraph 8 of the Resolution, it is pointed out that the instructions issued for the collection of statistics showing the losses on rice were somewhat complicated and occasionally misunderstood so that the complete accuracy of the figures cannot be guaranteed. This must be borne in mind in drawing any conclusions. The heavy losses in Lakhimpur were mainly incurred by the large companies which supplied rice at Rs. 3 a maund. In 1920 the Assam Frontier Company lost Rs. 2,42,909; the Doom-Doona Company about the same amount, and the Budla Beta Company Rs. 93,685. In that year the Brahmaputra Company in Sibsagar lost Rs. 1,39,220 by supplying paddy at Rs. 2 a maund. In gardens which did not sell at these low rates, Rs. 5 a maund was the common concession rate, both in Assam and the Surma Valley. In both valleys the rate was in some cases Rs. 4. On the other hand, in some gardens (for instance in the Longai Valley, Sylhet, except Bhubrightat tea estate) 7 seers for a rupee or about Rs. 5-11-0 a maund was the rate. Others again gave an extra seer for the rupee over the market rate. There are instances where the labourer paid over Rs. 6 a maund for garden rice. Considering the adult population and the area of rice land held by coolies, the amount of rice sold in the Darrang district seems insignificant in comparison with Sylhet and Cachar. From the answers submitted by Managers in Darrang, it appears that a good many gardens did not supply rice while in other cases the losses were trivial. It may be that concession rice was not so necessary as in other districts where earnings were lower. An increase in wages was given in many gardens in Darrang in 1920 and 1921.

Clotting and
Blankets

68. Before the war many gardens used to give blankets free of cost or at reduced rates to new coolies, or sick and weakly individuals. When prices rose during and after the war the concession was extended. Previous to the war the extent to which clothing, mainly in the form of *dhotis*, *saris* or cold weather coats, was given free or at reduced rates was negligible; but from 1917 when cloth rose in price, many gardens sold them below the market rates. Others indented for standard cloth as long as it was available. Some gardens, especially in the Lakhimpur district, sell blankets and warm coats at less than the local bazaar rate to those who wish to take them.

Judging from the answers to question No. 68, the Committee are of opinion that, generally speaking, free or cheap clothing is not given to any large extent. Now that the price of clothing is falling, this form of concession will tend to disappear. Witnesses have been asked whether the coolie is as well off for clothing as he was before the war. The replies vary, but the Committee have no doubt that in the majority of cases he is not so well off. The tea-garden coolie is not singular in this respect. At the last meeting of the Legislative Assembly at Delhi, Mr. Rhodes, M.L.A., President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, stated that whereas before the war there were about 18 yards of cloth per head of population in India, the average has now fallen to 10 yards. It has been argued that the amount spent by the coolie on clothing is an insignificant part of his total expenditure on the necessaries of life. At the same time outside the narrow radius of Assam where the tea-garden population represents much less than one *per cent.* of the total population of India, competent observers have expressed the opinion that in the political unrest of the past two years, the universal dearness of clothing has played a more important part than is generally recognised.

Possibility
and desirability
of converting
concessions
into money
wages.

69. The Committee have been asked to consider whether it is possible and desirable to convert the various concessions into an equivalent in money wages. The general reply given by the planting community is that it is neither possible nor desirable. Some witnesses, however, state that it is possible and desirable to convert the rice concession into a money equivalent. The replies given by District Sub-Committees to question 73 on the subject may be quoted:—

North Sylhet :—

"Consider it both impossible and undesirable from both garden and coolie points of view. The time for building and repairing houses is when men are especially required for garden works. Many are incapable of building good houses. Free houses would develop into clusters of houses and be insanitary, etc. A coolie would never pay for medical attendance. Coolies invariably prefer buying rice in the town bazaars even if they have to pay slightly more and receive short measure. It is only when rice is scarce or exceptionally dear that a coolie takes it from the garden. As regards clothing the agreement bonus meets with this requirement. Garden land, as with free houses and medical attendance, would involve complicated accounts for the garden and would never be understood by the coolie."

Chargola Valley :—

"We do not consider it would be in the interest of the coolies or the employers."

Longai Valley :—

"It is impossible to carry out the suggestion, and in view of the fluctuating prices of rice and clothing no stable value would be placed on these concessions. Such a proposition would not benefit the garden and would not be understood by the coolie."

Lungla Valley :—

"Not desirable from either point of view."

North Cachar :—

"It was considered that it might be possible, but certainly not desirable, either from the garden or coolies' point of view, that concessions now given should be converted into an increase of wages. Concessions are given with due regard to the comfort, health and welfare of the coolie. If concessions were converted into cash we would be compelled to confine ourselves to hard business."

Happy Valley (Cachar) :—

"We consider the indirect remuneration brings the Manager more into touch with his coolies and is desirable also from the point of view of the coolie in that he is always able to get free assistance to help him over a bad time."

Tezpur :—

"We don't think it either possible or desirable to convert the various concessions into an increase in money wages. The coolie, like most working men, is improvident, and unless the garden came to his assistance in cases of child-birth, sickness, etc., the mortality would greatly increase."

Jorhat :—

"We do not consider it possible or desirable from both the coolies and the garden point of view that present concessions should be converted into an increase in money wages. Take housing—is the garden to charge a rent? If so, this would have to be cut from the coolies' pay and the result be the same, besides creating material for a grievance. If coolies had to build their houses the position would be impossible. And what about new coolies?"

"In hospitals it would be impossible to charge for medical attendance, and in any case the coolie would be earning nothing at the time. There would be no medical arrangements at all if the coolie had to provide them himself."

"Cheap rice being supplied is a guarantee against profiteering on the part of local shopkeepers and as a check, in this way alone is invaluable."

"The Manager must always take personal charge of the weak, the thriftless, improvident and lazy or they would drift from bad to worse. These concessions form an inseparable part of this personal touch and if done away with there would be no obligation on the part of the Manager to look after such. The sick would be neglected and thieving and begging become rife among the lazy and thriftless."

Panitola (Lakhimpur) :—

"It is most desirable from the point of view of the garden that indirect remuneration should cease, but this is absolutely impracticable. The average coolie is a child in point of mentality and his thinking has to be done for him. To give him a large sum of money weekly or monthly and expect him to feed, clothe and be responsible for the welfare of his family and himself is to court disaster. His money, more often than not, would be spent on liquor, there would be no food and he and his family would have to beg, steal or starve as a man cannot work without food. At present his food and housing are assured and his money may be wasted without vitally affecting him or his dependents."

Nowgong :—

"In the interests of the garden—No; in the interests of the coolie—No."

70. The view of the Committee as regards housing, medical attendance and land for cultivation is that though there is a theoretical possibility of converting these concessions into a money equivalent this is impracticable and undesirable both from the point of view of the labourer and of the garden. As regards rice and clothing concessions, the Committee think that the labourer should have the opportunity of earning a sufficient wage without working overtime to enable him to buy rice and clothing in the open market, unless they are abnormally dear when he might reasonably expect the garden to come to his assistance. It is recognised that it is necessary to show special consideration to new coolies and weakly individuals but the Committee hold that the principle of payment in kind is open to objection in that it is optional, uncertain, and liable to abuse where the management is inexperienced or careless. In replying to question 2—as to what constitutes a decent living wage for a coolie—most witnesses in their evidence, and Managers in their replies assume that the price of rice does not exceed Rs. 5 a maund. This corresponds to the average retail price of common rice for the last ten years at district and subdivisional headquarters. In years of great scarcity like 1920 it would probably be necessary for a garden to sell rice at reduced rates to the coolies; and generally speaking, it would be advisable for gardens to have rice in stock with a view to check profiteering in the bazaar—not with the intention of selling it to the coolie at a specially cheap rate but at a reasonable market price.

Conclusions
of the Com-
mittee.

71. The case of gardens where rice has always been sold at a fixed, low rate is different. A possible solution of the question of concession rice is to be found in the policy adopted by the Assam Frontier Company who, in order to discourage sales from the estate godowns, give an extra wage of Rs. 3 *per mensem* to coolies who make their own arrangements as regards rice. But it is entirely left to the option of the

coolies to say which system of payment they prefer. Mr. Grayburn, the Superintendent, states that 45 *per cent.* of his labour force prefer the higher wage. The Company possesses a considerable area of land for rice cultivation, and coolies, who grow rice for their own consumption, probably prefer the higher cash wage. The Doom-Dooma Tea Company follows the same practice, but there are very few coolies who do not take rice. In the same district the Pabhojan Tea Company sell rice at Rs. 3 per maund to about 90 *per cent.* of their labour force. Both Companies possess only a limited amount of land for rice cultivation. The monthly rate of pay for rice-takers in the gardens of the Assam Frontier Company, with one exception, is Rs. 6 for men and Rs. 5 for women, whereas in the gardens of the Doom-Dooma and Pabhojan Companies, the rates are one rupee more. In all three concerns, the rates for non-rice-takers are Rs. 9 for men and Rs. 8 for women. Mr. Braddock, Superintendent of the Brahmaputra Company, states that two years ago he offered the coolies Rs. 2 extra a month if they bought their own rice. There was no response to the offer. Apparently the labourers had no desire to alter an old custom but preferred a comparatively low rate of wages coupled with cheap concession rice.

72. The Committee are of opinion that when rice was dear in 1919 and 1920 and when concession rice was given by so many gardens, an increase of money wages would have attained the same object, but they realise that to give a rise in wages would have been difficult in many cases owing to the financial position of the industry, quite apart from the question of the difficulty of subsequently reducing wages once a rise has taken place. The Committee regard the loss on rice in those years as the equivalent, to a varying extent, of money wages and as a reasonable method of meeting fluctuations in the cost of living without incurring the risk of a permanent rise in wages.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAP. IV.
PARAS. 73-76.

WAGES.

PART I.—PRELIMINARY : WAGES AND TASKS : COST OF LIVING.

73. The wages of tea-garden labourers are, for the most part, piece-work earnings, depending on the quantity and quality of the work turned out. Whether expressed in terms of a daily or monthly wage, they are contingent on the execution of a standard daily task or *nirikh*, the payment for which is known as the *hazira*. A labourer who completes the full *nirikh* on each working day of the month would be entitled to receive the monthly wage. The employer fulfils his obligation to the labourer if he affords him the opportunity of earning this minimum daily or monthly wage. In addition to this, however, it is usual for certain work and at certain seasons, to give the coolie the opportunity of supplementing his earnings by the performance of a second task, the payment for which is known as *ticca*. General.

74. There are obvious limitations to the possibilities of *ticca* earnings. The rule of the maximum efficiency at the minimum cost holds good in tea gardens as in other industries. It would be unsound business to do more hoeing or pruning than absolutely necessary. The larger the labour force, the less the opportunity for earning *ticca*. Again, in times of depression, when it is necessary to curtail expenditure and to accept a lower standard of cultivation, *ticca* earnings are restricted. Seasonal variations such as a spell of drought, by checking the growth of the leaf, will restrict a plucker's earnings. As a rule, *ticca* earnings are less in the cold weather. On the other hand, the labourer may not avail himself of the opportunities for earning *ticca*. He may wish to spend his spare time in cultivating his fields, he may be content to earn only sufficient for a bare maintenance, or his state of health may prevent him from doing more than the minimum daily task. *Ticca* work is often paid for at an enhanced rate, on the analogy of overtime earnings in other industries. *Ticca* earnings.

75. In recent years, gardens instead of raising the rate of wages, have frequently afforded the labourers increased facilities for earning *ticca* so as to enable them to meet the increased cost of living. This had to be done where the labour force had been reduced below its normal strength by the ravages of disease or by desertions, if the standard of cultivation on an estate was to be maintained. The coolie, with less leisure for his cultivation or for his private business, naturally did not regard the provision of more work on these conditions, as the equivalent of a rise in the rate of wages. On the other hand when gardens were making heavy losses, the labourer found it difficult to understand the restrictions imposed on his *ticca* earnings.

76. A modification of *hazira* and *ticca* occurs in what is known as the unit system. This system was started some years ago in the Darrang district and has since been introduced on gardens in the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. It is based on the one-anna unit in the case of hoeing and pruning, and on the *pice* unit in plucking. The idea is that a coolie should have unlimited opportunities of earning as much or as little as he chooses, and that he should know beforehand what his earnings will be for an equivalent amount of work done. Under the unit system payments are usually made weekly as it is believed that this practice tends to less indebtedness among the labour force, in so far as a coolie earning ready money weekly is perhaps less likely to require advances from the garden or from money-lenders. It is also said that the unit system makes it easier to reduce tasks when such a course is considered advisable. It may also facilitate the correct maintenance of the wage registers. As regards the disadvantages of the system, there is perhaps a tendency to sacrifice quality to quantity. As the coolie is not bound to complete a minimum day's task, it must be more difficult, especially in the case of hoeing, to make measurements. Though the system undoubtedly gives a chance to the hard-working coolie, it tends to impoverish those who are lazy or improvident. The opinions of Managers who work on this system are somewhat conflicting. Mr. Smiles, the Superintendent of the Moran Tea Company remarks :— Unit system.

"I am convinced that the unit system tends to bad work. The unit system, however, is a fairer system as the hard-working coolie is sufficiently remunerated, while the lazy one is penalised through his own indolence."

The Committee feel some difficulty in criticising the system. They think it is reasonable to expect the completion of a standard daily task. One advantage of the *hazira* system is that it is easier for the employer to estimate the time required to complete a given piece of work. Perhaps it would be correct to say that the unit system is an honest attempt to induce the coolie to increase his earnings by doing more work, while leaving it to him to decide how much he does.

CHAP. IV.
PARAS. 77-82.
Modified unit
system.

77. Another modification of the *hazira* and *ticca* system is to be found in gardens which, after completion of the standard task, offer extra work at so much for an anna, the coolie doing as little or as much as he likes.

Time
earnings.

78. There are cases in which it is impracticable to prescribe a definite task. An example is leaf plucking at the beginning and end of the season. In such cases, payment is made according to the time spent on the work provided, of course, a certain amount of work is done. Chowkidars and sardars are usually paid a monthly wage. Sardars are sometimes paid by commission on the work done by coolies in their gang. These are cases of time-earnings.

Rates of
wages and
total earn-
ings of la-
bourers.

79. The daily or monthly rate of wage is not the measure of the coolies' earnings. Subject to the limitations already referred to, the fixed wage may be supplemented by *ticca* work. In considering the adequacy of the remuneration of labour on tea-gardens, it would be more correct to use the term "earnings" rather than "wages". There are also other extras which fall under this head. The bonus paid to the coolie on execution of an agreement to work on the garden for a definite term may fairly be regarded as a pre-payment of wages. Hospital diet or sick *haziras* are also part of earnings. All those items are included in "Total wages earned" in column 8 of the half-yearly wage returns submitted by tea-garden Managers to Government. To what extent "concessions" form part of wages, has already been discussed in Chapter III.

Joint family
earnings.

80. Two distinctive features of service on tea-gardens have an important bearing on wages. In the first place, the joint earnings of the family must always be taken into consideration. As a rule, a coolie brings his family with him to the garden. In industries, like the jute mills and coal mines, the labourer frequently leaves his family in his native district and remits money to them or returns home after some months with his savings. Managers have been asked whether the earnings of a man are ordinarily sufficient to maintain himself and his family in health and reasonable comfort. The usual reply is that the earnings would not suffice, especially in the case of a large family. It is pointed out, however, that in similar employments and in agricultural operations generally, it is the custom for the wife—and sometimes for the children—to supplement the family earnings by their work. Mr. Melitus, formerly Commissioner of the Assam Valley, calculated that the average coolie family consisted of one working man, one working woman, about three-tenths of a working child, about one non-working child, and about two-tenths of an adult non-working dependant. This may be accepted. An individual family may comprise a stronger or a weaker group of wage-earners, but any exaggerated deviation need not be considered.

Subsidiary
occupations
of the la-
bourer.

81. The second feature is that tea-garden coolies usually belong to the agricultural class. They look forward to the time when they will be in a position to acquire a holding of their own inside or outside the garden. How far they have been able to realise this ambition has been indicated by the statistics given in Chapter III. In this respect, the tea-garden labourer may be contrasted with workers in jute mills or coal mines many of whom leave members of their families to look after their land till they return home.

Percentage
of absentees
from work.

82. It follows, therefore, that the subsidiary occupations of the man, particularly rice cultivation, and the household duties of the woman, are responsible for a considerable percentage of the absentees in the daily muster roll, without taking into consideration cases of absence due to sickness. The returns in the Annual Immigration Reports give two sets of figures for wages; (1) calculated on the total number of labourers on the books, (2) calculated on the average daily working strength. The percentages of the average daily working strength to the total number on the books have been worked out, for the purposes of this Enquiry, for the years ending March 1906, 1908, 1914, and 1918 to 1922. The percentages are based on the returns for September and March—typically busy and slack months—and may be taken as giving a tolerably correct idea of the average throughout the year. Excluding the few gardens in Kamrup, the percentages for other tea districts in the Province are:—

	1906.	1908.	1914.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Men ...	76.5	77	75	76	76	76.5	77.5	77.5
Women ...	71	72	72	73	71	74.5	75	74
Children ...	68	...	73	...	...	...	72	72.5

The average of these 8 years shows that a little over 75 per cent. of the men and a little under 75 per cent. of the women, turn out to work. The percentages are remarkably consistent for each of these years. The efficient working force is thus about 75 per cent. of the total. Detailed figures for those years showing the percentage of men and women turning out to work in the various districts will be found in the Appendix.

CHAP. IV.
PARAS. 82-86.

83. Low earnings are not necessarily an indication of unfavourable conditions. Where the labourer is allowed ample leisure to attend to his cultivation and liberal off-time generally, he is more likely to be contented with comparatively low earnings. The attractiveness of service often depends not on money earnings alone, but on the net advantages derived from it. On the other hand, gardens where discontent has broken out, can frequently point to high earnings, the result of strictness of management and of turning the coolies out to work against their will.

Low earnings and high earnings how far an indication of favourable conditions.

84. An elaborate account of tasks would be unprofitable as they vary so much according to the season of the year and in different gardens. Only those who have a practical working knowledge of the conditions of different gardens, are in a position to criticise the comparative severity or lightness of any particular task. Hoeing furnishes work for the men for the most part of the year. It may be either light—more or less a surface hoe, carried out five to seven times in the year—or deep, a much harder task, which is done once a year. The usual *nirikh* for the former is 25 to 30 square *nals* and for the latter 12 to 16 square *nals*. A *nal* is equal to 12 to 13 feet. Of late years, many gardens have replaced the deep hoeing task by a medium hoe, probably in many cases owing to a reduced labour force. The light hoeing task takes 3 to 5 hours to complete, and deep hoeing somewhat longer. Much depends on the nature of the soil—light or stiff—and also on whether the garden has been kept clean or has been allowed to become jungly. The Special Report on the Working of Act I, published in 1890, gives details of the tasks on various gardens in different districts. A comparison with the answers submitted by Managers shows little alteration in the light hoeing task, but a decrease in deep hoeing. In many gardens, however, where the unit system has been introduced, hoeing tasks have been reduced. Some gardens working on the *hazira* system have also adopted this method of raising wages. In so far as the tasks have been reduced, or a lower standard of work accepted, or better tilth has made tasks easier, the labourer has benefited. Measurements of work are made either by the *nal* rod or by counting the rows of bushes. As planting is not everywhere uniform, the two measurements may not coincide, but the coolie understands the practice on his particular garden, and he knows how much work he has to do for a fixed equivalent.

Hoeing tasks.

85. In plucking, earnings depend on the quantity of leaf brought in, but important considerations are the season, the method of plucking—coarse or fine—and the species of the tea bush. The important point is that the task should be so adjusted as to allow of its completion in a reasonable time and that weighments should be carefully supervised and correctly recorded for each individual coolie. Many gardens in Upper Assam have always plucked fine, producing high grade teas which command good prices. On most gardens in the Surma Valley, up to the last year or so, coarse plucking was the usual practice. The heavy yield partly compensated for the lower prices realised in the market. During the war, when quality became to some extent a secondary consideration, the result was still coarser plucking. The consequence was that after the Armistice there was an accumulation of large stocks of more or less unsaleable tea. Last year, garden Agents realised that in order to equate supply and demand, the remedy lay in resorting to fine plucking. The change was especially marked in the Surma Valley. In coarse plucking, the usual *nirikh* was from 20 to 24 pounds of green leaf for a *hazira*. Fine plucking involved a substantial reduction in the task which required more time and more care. The usual rate for payment for fine plucking was one pice for each pound of leaf which corresponds more or less to the standard rate in Upper Assam. Any quantity plucked above the fixed task is paid for proportionately, and sometimes at an enhanced rate.

Plucking.

86. In weighing leaf, deductions are made for the weight of the basket, for wet leaf and, in some cases, for wastage in manufacture sometimes called "factory charges." The calculation is based on the supposition that 4 maunds of green leaf make one maund of manufactured tea. Experience shows, however, that in the height of the season when leaf is abundant and when, unless the plucker is very careful, there is a tendency to pluck stalk and undesirable leaf, 4 maunds do not make quite so much. There is also a certain amount of wastage in the different processes of manufacture. It is fair that a certain deduction should be made on wet days when

CHAP. IV. the weight of the basket and of the leaf is increased. No hard-and-fast rule is observed in regard to deductions. Deductions for any particular day may be excessive or insufficient. It largely depends on the weather which makes exact calculation impossible. Deductions for the weight of the basket must often be rough and ready. In some gardens, especially in the Surma Valley, deductions varying from 25 to 50 per cent. are made. For example, if a woman brings in 24 pounds of leaf, she would only get credit for 12 pounds in a garden where a 50 per cent. deduction is customary. Managers have been asked to explain the origin of the system of such large deductions and the Committee have failed to elicit any intelligible answer. The real test of the fairness of any task or measurement is that afforded by the wages paid. In framing his annual budget the Manager estimates how much his leaf will cost to pluck per maund. Throughout the year he has to bear this in mind and to adjust the task and the deductions accordingly. Sometimes he may find at the end of a year that he has been able to work cheaper than his estimate. This would particularly be the case when the season was favourable for the growth of leaf. On the other hand, where climatic conditions have been adverse and the coolie has not found it possible to pluck a normal quantity in a given time, the task has to be lowered so as to enable him to earn a living wage. In cases where Managers in 1921 resorted to fine plucking, estimates were exceeded. The task was, of course, reduced, but in many cases the plucker was not able to earn so much in a given time as when coarse plucking was the practice. Only experience can show how the task should be properly adjusted. The cost of fine plucking is much greater; it is true that the tea made fetches better prices, but the total crop manufactured is much less. As a rule, at the beginning of the season there is no fixed plucking task. A woman goes out in the morning and returns in the late afternoon and receives the full day's wage for whatever she brings in unless it is obvious that she has been idling. Owing to the scarcity of leaf, it is often impossible at that season to impose a fixed task and it is necessary to avoid the risk of damage to the bushes which might result from over-plucking when they are being 'formed'. Similarly, frequently, at the end of the season when leaf is again scarce, no fixed task is imposed. In most gardens in the height of the season there is a fixed task; in others, however, it is the practice at the end of the day to weigh the total amount of leaf brought in and to divide the weight by the number of pluckers. The resultant is taken as the daily task and any weight in excess is paid for at a proportionate rate. One objection to this average system is that the good plucker is penalised. Another objection is that the plucker does not know when she goes out in the morning, how much she has to pluck for her daily wage. Still, if coolies in a particular garden are accustomed to this system there might be some hesitation in changing it as the coolie is suspicious of any new *dastur*. The Committee find it difficult to understand the principle on which deductions are made on some estates. They admit that where conditions differ so much, uniformity in the system of deductions is perhaps impossible, but they think it would be desirable to have a system which is not so open to criticism. It might be possible, as a result of experiment, to ascertain the average loss throughout the year due to wet leaf or wastage in manufacture, and on this basis, to make a standard deduction throughout the year. The necessity for the personal attendance of the Manager or his Assistant at weighing time cannot be too strongly emphasised and the Committee are glad to find that in the great majority of cases this is realised. Sometimes, working on the basis that one maund of tea is manufactured for every 4 maunds of leaf paid for, a garden finds at the end of the season, that there is a surplus of tea to its credit in excess of this proportion. In cases where the surplus is considerable, this indicates that there has been a failure to adjust tasks or that excessive deductions have been made. In the case of gardens where there is a fixed task in the height of the season, the Committee would draw attention to the necessity of adjusting the task if, for any reason, such as a spell of drought, it is impossible for the coolie to complete her task in a reasonable time.

Miscellaneous tasks.

87. It is unnecessary to deal in detail with miscellaneous work, such as forking, transplanting and the various kinds of pruning, as there is no fixed standard to render any comparison possible. In opening out new extensions, especially where there is a good deal of jungle cutting, higher rates have often to be paid and sometimes outside labour is employed for particularly heavy work.

Systems of payment.

88. In many gardens in the Surma Valley, it is the practice, at morning muster to pay for the previous day's work with brass tokens of different face values; once a week, the gardens cash the tokens or pay commission to a shop-keeper. These tokens to a large extent take the place of current coin in the neighbouring shops and bazaars. The Committee have heard of cases where the tokens were not honoured at their full face value by shop-keepers. There is this advantage in the system that a coolie

knows exactly what he has earned for a given piece of work, as he gets a cash equivalent at once. If care is taken to check abuses such as discount being charged by shop-keepers, there seems to be no objection to this old-established system. It might be inconvenient for gardens to keep a stock of small coin for daily payments. Under this system, *ticca* is usually paid in a lump sum weekly. A Manager in Sylhet informed Members of the Committee who inspected his garden that the only merit of the ticket system was that it ensured a good muster every morning and in this way conduced to better discipline. Other gardens in the province pay weekly, fortnightly or at the end of the month. It is largely a matter of custom or convenience to the management. Coolies are creatures of habit and dislike and are suspicious of changes. The evidence of Mr. Woodward of the Tingri Tea Company is to the point. On his garden the coolies are given the option of weekly or monthly payments and although weekly payments mean more money to the coolie, the majority prefer monthly payments. It may be that they like to receive a lump sum at the end of the month in preference to small amounts paid at short intervals. One argument in favour of weekly payments is that it tends to make the coolie more provident. It really depends on individual idiosyncrasy. The careful and thrifty coolie doubtless would prefer a lump sum at the end of the month. In the case of gardens where rice advances are given out weekly and where the cost is realised by deductions from pay at the end of the month, the result may be that improvident coolies have practically nothing in hand after paying for the rice. If payments are made weekly and the rice is paid for in cash, it is probable that the ordinary coolie would be more careful how much rice he took, and, if necessary, would do more work in order to have enough money for other necessaries. The Committee have found on some gardens that there is a conflict between the daily rate of wage paid and the monthly rate as entered in the Act XIII contracts. The matter came to notice on inspection of the *hazira* books (payment registers). Section 124 of Act VI provided for this contingency by declaring that the minimum payment for each daily task shall be the quotient resulting from dividing the monthly wage of the labourer concerned by the number of working days in the month. On one of the gardens of the Jorhat Tea Company—Bokahula—the system of writing up the *hazira* register in full annas so as to avoid fractions resulted in women receiving less than the contract monthly wage of Rs. 6 in short months, notably in February when the full monthly wage was Rs. 5-8 on 24 working days. The amount lost, 8 annas, was never recovered in the course of the year. The week's wage for women was Rs. 1-6 and the recurring entries in annas were shown as follows—344 344, so that the wage for 52 weeks is Rs. 71-8 and not Rs. 72. In some gardens where monthly payment is the system, there are a certain number, usually physically unfit or improvident coolies, who are paid weekly. On the whole, the Committee do not feel justified in recommending any particular method of payment, but content themselves with pointing out what seem to be the advantages and disadvantages of the different systems.

89. In question 25, Managers were asked to give some idea of the rise in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920. In most cases, the sub-committees have also replied to the question, and their answers may be summarised :—

Difference
between cost
of living in
1913 and
1920.

- North Sylhet.—50 per cent.
- Lungla—Juri-Doloi Valleys.—33 per cent.
- Longai Valley.—25 per cent. (taking into consideration the concessions given by the garden).
- Laskerpore Valley (Habiganj).—100 per cent.
- Chargola Valley.—30 per cent.
- North Cachar.—55 per cent.
- Happy Valley (Cachar).—50 per cent.
- Golaghat.—60 per cent.
- Jorhat.—44·4 per cent. (based on prices of rice).
- Doom Dooma.—50 per cent.
- Panitola.—25 per cent. (as rice is still supplied to the coolie at the same rate as in 1913).
- Tezpur.—50 per cent. to 75 per cent.
- Nowgong.—50 per cent. to 75 per cent.
- Moran Committee (Lakkimpur).—Whereas a coolie needed Rs. 5-6 a month in 1913, he would require Rs. 6-5 in 1920.
- Luckipore Committee (Cachar).—No comparison can be made as 1920 was a famine year.

The figures submitted by Managers more or less correspond with these percentages. These estimates do not appear to be the result of precise calculations. The

CHAP. IV. Manager of Hoogrijan Tea Estate (Lakhimpur) states that a coolie could live on Rs. 4-13 in 1913, but required Rs. 7-13 in 1920. He assumes that in both years rice was sold to the coolies at Rs. 5 a maund. The European Accountant of the Empire of India Company in Tezpur has calculated the difference in the cost of living in 1913 as compared with 1920 at 100 per cent. taking rice at the current market rates. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang is of opinion that 75 per cent. would be a fairer figure. The Committee admit that 1920 was an exceptional year when the price of rice and other foodstuffs and cloth was abnormal. In 1913 prices were more or less normal. Mr. Coubrough in No. 16 of the Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour, has shown a curve, representing the basis of calculation for the total value of Indian mill-produced piece-goods. It gives the annual average price of piece-goods in annas per yard. The variations are:—

1909-10	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.3
1910-11	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.4
1911-12	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.5
1912-13	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.6
1913-14	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.7
1914-15	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.5
1915-16	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.5
1916-17	...	...	...	...	...	...	3.3
1917-18	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.5
1918-19	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
1919-20	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.7
1920-21	...	...	...	...	...	...	7.7

A comparison of prices in 1913 and in 1920 is useful in so far as it affords an explanation of discontent and unrest among the labour force. It is only fair to state that most gardens endeavoured to help the labourer in every way by giving concessions in the form of cheap rice and clothing. Mr. McMorran has recorded a note on the financial position of the tea industry during the years 1919 to 1921. The note will be found in the Appendix. It deals with the question of unfavourable exchange and the fall in the market price of tea which were the main causes of the financial difficulties in which the tea industry became involved in those years. When exchange was most unfavourable in the cold weather of 1919-20, good prices were being realised in the tea market. After March 1920, however, a serious fall in prices occurred while the rate of exchange still remained unfavourable till towards the end of the year 1920. The Committee agree that the period from about the middle of 1920 till the spring of 1921 was one of acute financial difficulty in the case of most gardens, especially in the Surma Valley. The majority of the Committee, however, think that in 1918 and 1919, many gardens which were making good profits could have done more to assist the labourer. A striking fact is that gardens in 1918-19 and also in 1919-20 spent large sums in recruiting labour which seems to indicate that money was available. Details will be given in the last Chapter in which recruiting is dealt with. In 1918 rice was abnormally cheap, so that it was easier for the labourer to meet the cost of other necessaries—cloth, salt, kerosene oil, etc.—which had risen in price. In 1919 rice was not only dear but the price of other commodities continued to rise. The coolie must have felt it increasingly difficult in that year to adjust his expenditure, even allowing for the help he received in the shape of concession rice and clothing. The fact that in many gardens in the Assam Valley wages were raised at or before this time on the ground of the increased cost of living disposes of the contention that there was no necessity for a rise before 1919 or 1920. In some important Companies in the Assam Valley, *e.g.*, the Doom-Dooma Company, the necessity of increasing wages was realised by Managers in 1918. The majority of the Committee admit that the depletion of the labour force by death and disease during the prevalence of the influenza epidemic, necessitated a certain amount of recruiting. They believe, however, that it would have been better policy on many estates, especially in the Surma Valley, to have spent money in raising wages rather than in extensive recruiting operations. It might also have been a sounder policy to declare smaller dividends and to spend more on the existing labour force. It has frequently been said that in the years 1919 and 1920 the coolie was not singular in feeling the stress of adverse economic conditions but that this was an experience common to all classes. Some line of distinction must, however, in fairness, be drawn between those who had a large margin of saving as compared with the tea garden labourer whose margin for saving or for petty luxuries was insignificant

and in many cases non-existent. On the other hand, the villager who had surplus crops to sell appreciably benefited by the high prices of grain and foodstuffs.

90. The Committee have endeavoured to arrive at some idea of what the average coolie spends. Coolies differ so much in their habits and tastes that it is difficult to generalise. There is the coolie from the United Provinces, the so-called North-wester, who often practically starves himself in order to save money. At the other extreme, there is the aboriginal coolie, such as the Munda, who looks after his personal comforts and not infrequently spends a considerable sum on liquor; he is an excellent worker, but as a rule, not inclined to save. It was impossible for the Committee to arrange for the collection of hundreds of budgets which would have been a necessary preliminary to the framing of an average budget. Besides the cost of living varies considerably in the different tea districts. It would have been useful if the Committee had had at its disposal typical domestic budgets for tea-garden labourers on the lines of the budgets framed for the cultivators in Faridpur by the late Major J. C. Jack, D.S.O., M.C., in his 'Economic Life of a Bengal District.' The Committee are under a debt of obligation to that work. They think that a budget similar to the one on page 59 "for a family living in comfort" gives a fair idea of what a coolie can reasonably be expected to spend though there are some items, e.g., local taxation and medical treatment, which would have to be excluded from the coolie's budget. The budgets framed by Major Jack for "a family in comfort," and for "a family in extreme indigence," will be found in the Appendix. They are useful as showing that the proportion of the total family budget spent on food by a family living in "comfort" is about 68 per cent. and by a family in indigence about 69 per cent. These budgets were compiled on the basis of figures collected between 1906 and 1910, so that the cost of the various items would be very much higher now. The price of unhusked rice was taken at Rs. 2 a maund which would be equivalent to about Rs. 3 a maund for husked rice. One maund of paddy or unhusked rice, i.e., about $27\frac{1}{2}$ seers of rice, was allowed to an adult per month, which is about 20 per cent. more than the standard adopted by the Famine Commission. The late Major Jack states (page 61):—

Cost of living at the present time.

"Very careful enquiries go to show that while adult males will eat one seer of husked rice a day adult females will eat less than half a seer and small children about half a seer. A prosperous family of five (i.e., two adult males, one adult female, one male and one female child) would therefore, in all probability, eat considerably less than five maunds (of unhusked rice) per month which is adopted in the scale."

It should be noted that luxuries were not included in these budgets so that jewellery was entirely eliminated. It is not unreasonable to hold that a certain amount of jewellery is more or less a necessity among certain classes of coolie women, but as savings are often invested in coin necklaces and other jewellery, it would perhaps be fairer to consider jewellery less as an item on the expenditure side of the budget than as an indication of the extent of the coolie's savings. Major Jack admitted that the money spent on certain ceremonies and entertainments should properly form a part of the budget, but individual caprice made it difficult to strike a reasonable average. In the instructions issued to the officers who collected the figures it was laid down that "comfort" implies a condition in which the material necessities of life can be fully satisfied. They were also asked to remember that luxuries were no part of a standard of comfort "which is attained when the body is sufficiently sheltered from the weather, the stomach sufficiently filled with food, and the limbs decently clothed with garments."

91. In the course of the economic enquiries made at the time of the census of 1921, district officers compiled or collected some budgets of tea-garden labourers which are given in the Appendix. They are few in number, and some are obviously incorrect. It would be misleading to base any general conclusions on them. More accurate estimates have been framed by one or two Managers in the course of the present enquiry. There are two budgets from gardens in Sylhet; two from Lakhimpur and one framed by Mr. S. P. Borua, M.L.C., a planter member of the present Committee. Khan Sahib Wali Mohamed, another Member of the Committee, has also prepared a budget with explanatory notes. These budgets will perhaps give some idea of what a coolie spends or might be expected to spend, and the differences in the budgets indicate how difficult it is to generalise. After discussing the wages paid in different districts, the Committee will endeavour to frame a budget with reference to present conditions.

92. Rice is the chief item in the labourer's budget. The following table gives the average annual retail prices of common rice in seers per rupee at the district and subdivisional headquarters stations of tea districts in Assam from 1912 to 1921. The

figures have been compiled by striking the average of the prices published in the *Assam Gazette* for corresponding fortnights in January, April, July and October in each year :

Average annual prices of common rice in seers per rupee at district and subdivision headquarter stations of tea districts in Assam, calculated on the average prices in the last fortnight of January, April, July and October of each year as given in the Assam Gazette.

Headquarters station.	1912.	1913.	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	Average price in seers per rupee, 1912-21.	Average price in rupees and decimal of rupee per maund.	Last week of April 1922—seers per rupee.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Sylhet Sadr	10½	9½	7½	7½	7½	8½	13	6½	5½	6½	8.2	4.87	6
Karimganj	9½	8½	8½	8½	7½	9	12½	6½	6½	6½	8.8	4.97	7
Habiganj	9½	8½	7½	7½	7½	8½	11½	6½	5½	6½	8	5	7
South Sylhet	9½	8½	7½	7½	7½	8½	11½	6½	5½	6½	7.8	5.18	7
Cachar Sadr	11½	9½	9	8½	7½	8½	12½	7½	6½	7½	6.8	4.55	7½
Hailakandi	11½	9½	8½	8	7½	8½	12½	6½	5½	7½	8.5	4.70	8½
Tezpur Sadr	11	8½	8½	7½	7½	8½	11½	7½	5½	5½	8.2	4.87	8
Mangaldai	13	10½	7½	7½	8	9½	13½	7½	5½	6½	8.9	4.40	7
Kamrup	10	8½	8	8½	8	8½	10	6½	5½	6	7.9	5.06	6½
Nowgong	11½	9½	7½	7½	8	8½	11½	7	5½	5½	8.3	4.81	7
Dibrugarh	9½	8	7½	6½	7	7½	8½	5½	5	5	7.1	5.69	6
North Lakhimpur	10½	10½	9½	7½	8½	8½	11½	9	6	6½	8.9	4.40	8
Sibsagar	11½	10	8½	7	8	9½	11½	7½	5½	6½	8.6	4.70	8½
Jorhat	11½	9½	7½	6½	7	8	8½	7	5½	5½	7.6	5.27	7
Golaghat	11½	8½	7½	6½	7½	7½	8½	7	5½	5½	7.6	5.27	7½

In many cases, however, on tea-gardens at a distance from headquarters, especially when they are in the centre of a rice-producing area, rice is cheaper than at headquarters. A Calcutta Agency house has supplied the Committee with figures showing the local bazaar rates for rice since 1914 in respect of certain gardens in South Sylhet, Habiganj, Cachar, Hailakandi and Mangaldai. As a rule, these rates are lower than at headquarters, particularly in the case of gardens near the Hill Tippera border in South Sylhet, where the area under rice is considerable and communications are not of the best. On the other hand, there are cases where prices are higher in a compact block of tea-gardens where there is little rice cultivation. On the whole, the figures in the preceding table may be taken as roughly indicating fluctuations in prices. The average price of rice from 1912 to 1921 may be taken at Rs. 5 a maund. In 1918, rice was abnormally cheap and in 1920 very dear. The following table gives the average annual retail prices of rice for the year 1873 and also for the period 1895 to 1921 at the headquarters stations of Sylhet, Cachar, Nowgong and Lakhimpur. The figures have been taken from "Prices and Wages in India" (Thirty-sixth issue), except in the case of the year 1921 for which the prices given in the preceding table have been taken.

Average annual retail prices of rice (common) in rupees and decimals of a rupee per maund of 82.286 pounds.

	1873	1885	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1903	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1909	1909
1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	17
Sylhet	3.613	3.403	3.745	4.200	3.625	3.089	2.692	3.05	2.861	2.88	2.237	2.672	4.373	5.135	4.7	3.288
Cachar	1.560	2.656	3.933	4.734	3.546	2.333	2.067	3.410	2.853	2.714	2.323	2.511	4.357	4.933	4.449	3.534
Nowgong	2.143	3.428	3.763	5.464	4.343	3.627	2.074	3.253	2.839	3.351	2.743	3.056	4.302	5.205	4.695	4.055
Lakhimpur	3.223	3.17	3.831	4.734	3.903	3.086	2.503	4.171	3.707	3.817	3.157	3.371	4.873	5.263	4.728	4.391
	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	Average price, 1902-1911.	Average price 1912-21.		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32		
Sylhet	3.43	3.925	3.831	4.464	5.141	5.07	5.031	4.386	3.115	6.07	7.505	6.06	3.612	5.067		
Cachar	3.733	3.6	3.807	4.263	4.614	4.936	5.125	4.348	3.137	3.874	7.209	5.41	3.5	4.864		
Nowgong	4.108	3.934	3.433	4.233	5.457	5.391	5.109	4.31	3.537	5.636	7.905	6.73	4.003	5.202		
Lakhimpur	3.639	3.646	4.009	5.143	5.391	6.279	5.922	3.153	4.459	6.745	7.903	8.00	4.089	5.685		

It will be observed that the average prices for the period 1912-21 are higher in the second table than in the first. The reason probably is that the average prices of each fortnight throughout the year have been taken in "Prices and Wages in India" whereas the first table is only a rough approximation based on a typical fortnight in each of the four quarters of the year. In any case, the striking feature is the great rise in the price of rice in the decade 1912-21 as compared with the previous decade; for example, in the case of Sylhet, Rs. 5.067 per maund as against Rs. 3.612.

93. Mr. K. L. Datta in his "Report on the Enquiry into the Rise of Prices in India," published in 1914, arrived at the conclusion that the history of Indian price since 1890 may be divided into two well-marked periods, dominated on the whole by widely different conditions. From 1890 to 1904 internal factors were the chief factors in the determination of the price level, depending on the changes of agricultural conditions from year to year. The Resolution of the Government of India of October 1914, in reviewing Mr. Datta's Report, observes (page ix):—

"With the year 1905, Indian prices entered upon a new phase. Prices rose rapidly to unprecedented heights and so far (1914) there is nothing to suggest the probability of a reversion to the levels of former years. The explanation of this remarkable phenomenon cannot be found in changes of an internal nature; and examination of the statistics of prices in other countries indicates clearly that the increase in Indian prices has been broadly synchronous with a general upward movement in price levels throughout the world and that its origin must accordingly be sought in causes more or less common to the whole civilised world."

In dealing with the future course of prices, the same Resolution states (page xiii):—

"It has been shown that the prolonged rise in Indian prices dates from the year 1905, and that its ultimate origin must be sought in causes which have been operative throughout the civilised world. As the growth of communications within India has tended to equalise prices throughout the country, so the parallel development of communications with foreign countries has tended more and more to bring Indian prices into line with those of the world in general. The prices of Indian exports are governed by those prevailing in the world's markets, and through the growing influence of foreign trade, Indian prices apart from temporary fluctuations resulting from the character of the seasons, tend to follow the same course as world prices. The problem of the future course of prices in India is one therefore to which no solution can be found in the analysis of Indian conditions only. It is essentially bound up with the question of the movement of prices throughout the world. Prices have so far shown no sign of reverting to former levels. As regards the future, the factors involved even under normal conditions of evolution, are too numerous, too complex, and too incalculable in their operation to warrant any definite and confident prediction: and the normal course has now been interrupted by the catastrophe of general war, the total effect of which upon the highly organised western systems of production, trade and finance it is quite impossible to forecast."

Mr. Datta's own opinion is that "an analysis of the factors affecting prices, whether confined to India or pervading the whole world, shows that leaving out of

account exceptional movements, both up and down, in exceptional times of famine and commercial crisis, the present general price level will be maintained, if not raised" (page 135).

94. Since Mr. Datta wrote this the Great War has resulted in a marked rise of world prices which Assam has felt in common with other parts of India. How far the present tendency of prices to fall will continue, it is impossible to say, but it would probably be safe to predict that, not for many years, if ever, will the level which ruled before the war be regained; and the Committee think a rate of wages which may have been sufficient in pre-war days, is obviously insufficient now. Mr. Datta selected the period from 1890 to 1894 as his basic or standard period for the purpose of estimating the fluctuations in price levels. In reviewing rises in wages in subsequent years, he observes that in rural areas in India, wages of agricultural labourers and village artisans have risen enormously as measured by their purchasing power. About 1912 they were about 38 per cent. above the level of the standard period. The rise in the wages of industrial labour had not been so large. Nominal wages had increased in every case, but the rise was not, in all cases, as great as the rise in prices.

95. Speaking of wages in tea-gardens in Assam, he remarks that "the coolies in tea-gardens appear to be in the worst position, as their *real* wages have fallen 5 per cent. below those in the basic period." (page 171).

In a footnote he adds:—

"It should, however, be noted that tea-garden coolies get some special concessions in addition to wages, e.g., they get rice at a fixed rate, generally lower than the market rate."

This is certainly true of gardens in the Doom-Dooma district and in the Brahmaputra Company, but the concession elsewhere, at least before the war, was of a limited character. Perhaps mention might also have been made of other concessions such as land for cultivation. It may be of interest to give from the Report (pages 169-70) a comparative statement showing nominal and real wages of rural agricultural labourers and tea-garden labourers. The index numbers are given, relative to an index number of 100 for the period from 1890 to 1894:—

	Nominal wages.					Real wages.				
	1895	1900	1905	1910	1912	1895 to 1899	1900 to 1904	1905 to 1909	1910	1912
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Agricultural labourers	105	125	147	170	189	103	120	123	134	138
Tea-garden ditto	106	103	106	117	120	101	96	90	93	96

By 'nominal' or money wages is meant the actual cash which a man earns for a period of time. By 'real' wages is meant the amount of commodities which a man can buy with his money wages. In making comparisons between the economic conditions of different districts, trades, or periods, 'real' wages must be taken.

Whether the remuneration of tea-garden coolies at the present time is sufficient.

96. The Committee have been asked to enquire "whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort." The expression "health and reasonable comfort" is elastic enough to admit of various interpretations. The Committee think that they are placing a fair construction on the term if they take it to mean a decent living wage, that is, not a mere subsistence allowance, but a wage that would suffice to keep a coolie in health and reasonable comfort with the possibility of saving a little. The Committee believe that the term "reasonable comfort" connotes the possibility of saving a little. Much depends on the individual coolie as to whether he will save or spend whatever margin may remain after providing for food and clothing. He may prefer to spend it on petty luxuries, but the Committee think that the coolie should in any case have a small margin to be utilised as he chooses. Dr. Forsyth of Tezpur may be quoted:—

"By the expression 'reasonable comfort from the coolie point of view,' I mean that he ought to have enough to fill his stomach with good, wholesome, food. He should have enough to buy clothes for himself and also have a little left over for luxuries. It is certainly desirable that a coolie should have some savings, but that depends on whether he is extravagant or not."

The Committee agree with this view.

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In reply to question 24, Managers have stated the figure which, in their opinion, constitutes a decent monthly living wage. The Committee propose to apply this figure as a test in coming to a decision as regards the adequacy of the remuneration of the tea-garden labourer. The Committee know the rate of wages paid in most gardens in the Province and the wage returns for a series of years are available from the Immigration Reports. Consequently, the Committee think it possible to arrive at certain conclusions based on these data.

97. It is true that the value of the wage returns is open to some criticism. Members of the Committee have found on more than one garden that the returns were not quite accurate. It was difficult to ascertain the exact *ticca* earnings; in some cases the wages of outside labour were wrongly entered in the return; and in others loss on rice had been included. There were also items which should have been added but were omitted. Still, it is not unfair to assume that errors in these returns, on the whole, cancel each other. Taking a series of years, the figures in column 10 which show the average earnings per head (including wages proper, extras such as *ticca* and a proportion of the agreement bonus) calculated on the average daily working strength, indicate the extent of the rise in cash earnings. These wage returns give the average earnings in March and September which are typical slack and busy months. The Commissioner of the Surma Valley Division was asked whether the wage returns were a reasonable indication of wages on a garden. He stated in reply:—

“I believe so. I imagine that under the usual law of averages these mistakes cancel each other by the time one gets to the figures of the whole Province.”

The wage returns published in the last Resolution on Immigrant Labour are those for the year ending 30th June 1921. These are based on the averages of September 1920 and March 1921 and relate to a period when many gardens had to curtail expenditure. The wage returns for September 1921 and March 1922 have recently been received by the Committee from most gardens in the Province. The averages for these months for each tea district, as well as the averages for the year 1921-22, based on the earnings of these two typical months, have been calculated. As *all* gardens have not submitted their wage returns, some difference may be expected in the figures which will be published in the Immigration Report of 1921-22, but for the purpose of the present Enquiry, the averages which have now been worked out, may be accepted as tolerably accurate.

98. Many of the returns of wages for March 1922 were not received until towards the end of May. The collection and compilation of these statistics for September 1921 and March 1922 involved a considerable amount of time and trouble, and some delay in the submission of the Report has been inevitable, but it is only fair to the tea industry that an effort should have been made to obtain and include them in the Report. The industry has recently come through a period of depression and has survived the crisis, and with the dawn of rosier prospects many estates have taken advantage of the return of better days to improve the conditions and increase the emoluments of the labour force on whose well-being the prosperity of the industry so largely depends. In September 1920 meetings of representatives of the tea industry and members of the Government were held in Shillong to devise ways and means for the employment of tea-garden labourers especially in Sylhet and Cachar on public works, so great was the apprehension that gardens would be unable to provide funds for the payment of the labour force during the crisis. Statistics of wages collected during a period of depression are calculated to convey a wrong impression and the Committee have welcomed the opportunity of placing these wage figures before the public. In any case the statistics have the advantage and possess the merit of being up to date.

PART II.—WAGES IN DIFFERENT TEA DISTRICTS.

99. *Assam Valley—Lakhimpur Sadr.*—The 79 answers received from Managers as well as oral evidence indicate that there has been a general increase in the monthly rate of wages. In some gardens where wages have not been raised, tasks have been reduced. In practically all cases where wages have been raised tasks have remained unaltered. Wages are highest in the Doom-Dooma district where living is more expensive than in other tea districts in the Province. As most of the land is under tea the opportunities for supplementing earnings by cultivation or by work in the villages are restricted. The locality is also not particularly healthy. For these reasons it is necessary to pay higher wages to attract and retain labour. As most of the Companies make large profits they are in a position to do so.

100. In the Assam Frontier Company, with its 10 estates, there have been, for many years, two different rates of wages, viz., one rate for coolies who take factory rice at Rs. 3 a maund, and another for those who do not. In 1913 the rates were: non-rice takers, men Rs. 7 a month, women Rs. 6 a month; rice takers, men Rs. 6 and women Rs. 5. Early in 1919 the rates for non-rice takers were raised to Rs. 8 and Rs. 7; the pay of rice takers was not raised. In November 1920 the non-rice takers received another increase to Rs. 9 and Rs. 8. Simultaneously the rates of the rice takers in Sookerating were raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6, as living in that garden was more expensive. Rice takers in the other gardens are still paid Rs. 6 and Rs. 5, though the rice ration was raised in November 1920 from 6 to 7 seers for men, and from 5 to 6 seers for women. Early in 1919 new coolies who used to be paid monthly at Rs. 6 for men and Rs. 5 for women were put on a weekly pay of 5 annas a day for men and 4 annas for women. A new coolie can purchase rice for cash on pay-day, receiving 6 seers for 10 annas (i.e., at the rate of Rs. 4-2-8 a maund). The Superintendent states that the policy of the Company is to try and induce the labour force to give up taking factory rice, in order to make them independent of the estates as regards the supply of rice. In a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, with reference to the wages paid in his Company, he remarks that this policy has been fairly successful in the past, but in the last two years the number of non-rice takers has not risen owing to the high cost of rice. He also notes that a satisfactory feature of the system is that once coolies become non-rice takers they seldom come back for factory rice. His evidence before the Committee shows that 45 per cent. of the labour force prefer the higher rate of wage. The coolie has the option of accepting the lower wage with concession rice or of taking the higher rate of pay. The total labour force is 13,934. The workers are more fortunate than those on most gardens in the Doom-Dooma district, in having over 10,000 *bighas* for cultivation, the major portion of which lies within the estate grants. The gardens are healthy. There can be no doubt that this Company pays a decent living wage and that the coolies are contented. It is worthy of note that there has been no unrest on these estates.

101. In the Doom-Dooma Company wages were not raised until the end of 1920, after the riots at Hansara and other gardens, when wages of rice takers were raised from Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women, respectively. Non-rice takers were paid at the rate of Rs. 9 and Rs. 8. There are very few coolies who do not take rice. The Superintendent does not think that coolies had any economic grievances till 1918 when there was a general rise of prices, especially in the case of clothing. In August 1918 he realised the necessity for an increase in wages. He has sent the Committee an extract from the proceedings of a meeting of the Doom-Dooma sub-committee, held on 2nd August 1918, from which it appears that a resolution, with one dissentient, was carried to the effect that the monthly pay of adults should be raised by Rs. 2, with a proportionate increase to children. At a subsequent meeting on the 28th of August 1918, this resolution was rescinded in favour of an amendment to the effect that the existing monthly wage should be converted into a daily wage ranging from 2 annas to 5 annas. The rates for rice takers were at that time, men Rs. 6, women Rs. 5 and children Rs. 3 and Rs. 2-8. Under the new scheme, men would receive 5 annas a day; women 4 annas, children 3 annas and 2 annas. It was thought that a daily wage as expressed in annas would be better understood by the labourer and would facilitate the maintenance of the pay registers. Women would have benefited less under this scheme than by a Rs. 2 monthly rise, but men and children would receive more. The Company, however, was losing heavily on concession rice and the prospects of the tea industry were gloomy; accordingly, no increase was granted till November 1920 when a rise of Rs. 1 all round was given after the riots. It is important to note that the cost of living by August 1918 had, in the opinion of the local planters, risen to such an extent as to necessitate a rise in wages. As rice was always available at Rs. 3 a maund, the increase which affected the coolie was in the price of other necessaries. The wage returns of the gardens of the Doom-Dooma and other Companies in this locality which pay the same rates indicate that the labourer is adequately remunerated. The Deputy Commissioner has criticised the action of the Agents of the Jokai Company who refused to come into line with other gardens in the Doom-Dooma district in respect of Kachujan and Tippuk estates. In the case of the latter garden, the rise was ultimately granted. On Hukanpukri, the out-garden of Kachujan, the old rates of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 seem still to be in force, but the Manager states that he has suggested an increase.

102. On the gardens in the Dibrugarh and Panitola Circles, there has been a general rise from Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6. In April 1921 there were strikes on many of these gardens. On the 27th of April 1921 at a meeting of the

Since 1914 there has been a considerable rise in earnings; women especially have benefited, which seems to point to the conclusion that they shared in the prosperity of good seasons. The Deputy Commissioner has referred to Naharkatia and Tinkong as instances of gardens where wages appear to be low. The monthly rates of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 have not been altered since 1913. The Manager of Naharkatia gives the average earnings in 1913 and 1920 as Rs. 6-2-1 and Rs. 7-1-7, respectively; these are certainly below the district average. The cheapness of rice, however, in that locality is a factor in the situation. The Committee have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that in gardens in Lakhimpur Sadr, though there may be one or two exceptions, labour is adequately remunerated.

North La-
khimpur.

105. Members of the Committee visited two gardens in this subdivision, and answers have been received from the majority of the Managers. Living is appreciably cheaper than in the Dibrugarh subdivision of the district. The coolies on most gardens are well off for land. In some cases there has been a rise of Re. 1 in the monthly wage in 1920 or 1921; in other cases the unit system has been adopted. In Dejee Tea Estate the wages were Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women in 1913 and it has not been found necessary to raise them. On this estate, the agreement advance which used to be recovered has been treated as a bonus with effect from December 1921. The wage returns below show a very appreciable rise since 1914 both in the case of men and women. It is clear that the labourer is getting a decent living wage, which the Managers estimate at Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman.

NORTH LAKHIMPUR.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including licea, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 8 1	3 10 3	2 2 5	...	...	...
1906	5 12 1	3 13 11	2 2 11	7 7 0	5 5 8	3 3 11
1907	5 9 6	4 0 0	2 4 3	7 10 2	5 13 7	3 6 2
1908	5 2 11	4 1 5	2 6 10	6 12 5	5 4 9	3 9 3
1909	5 3 1	3 15 6	2 2 4	6 13 5	5 7 6	3 4 3
1910	5 14 11	4 7 1	2 6 11	7 10 1	6 2 4	3 10 3
1911	5 7 4	4 9 6	2 6 5	7 5 0	6 6 9	3 8 1
1912	5 9 1	4 7 2	2 7 2	7 6 6	6 3 11	3 5 1
1913	5 9 10	4 10 2	2 8 7	7 8 8	6 6 9	3 6 9
1914	5 11 9	4 12 4	2 9 3	7 14 6	6 13 9	3 10 9
1915	5 10 2	5 1 7	2 9 1	8 9 11	7 14 0	3 14 2
1916	6 1 8	5 8 7	2 15 10	8 12 0	7 15 7	4 4 6
1917	6 7 0	5 9 5	3 1 8	8 14 8	8 0 1	4 4 6
1918	6 5 2	5 10 7	3 1 6	8 4 4	7 1 8	3 14 1
1919	6 7 4	5 15 3	3 4 10	8 11 6	8 8 9	4 6 9
1920	6 11 1	5 15 11	3 7 2	9 2 2	8 6 8	4 8 1
1921	6 7 7	5 4 1	3 5 11	8 13 8	7 6 7	4 8 2
1922	7 5 9	6 7 4	3 11 2	10 0 4	8 13 0	4 15 8
September 1921	7 10 0	7 2 11	3 15 4	9 14 1	9 6 2	5 4 2
March 1922	7 1 5	5 11 8	3 7 0	10 2 6	8 5 9	4 11 2

Family earnings (on average daily working strength).	}	1914	Rs. a. p.	15 13 10
		1922		20 4 3
Percentage of rise in family earnings ...	...	...	...	28 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

106. The answers received from 45 Managers show that in many gardens wages have been raised in recent years. Up to about 1916-17, the monthly rates of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 which were the *minimum* rates under Act VI of 1901 in the first year of contract were by no means uncommon in this district. It is true that the agreement bonus has to be taken into consideration, but this was generally a nominal sum in the case of new coolies placed under 3-year agreements under Act XIII. And, of course, the benefit of cheap rice at Rs. 3 per maund, which had to be supplied in the case of Act VI coolies when the market price exceeded that figure, was discontinued. With the rise in the cost of living, it would have been remarkable if the rate of wages had remained stationary.

On the gardens of the Empire of India Company, the rates of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 continued up to 1916. There was a rise in 1916 and 1917 to 3 annas 6 pies or 4 annas a day for men and 3 annas for women, and a further increase in 1920 to 5 annas and 4 annas 6 pies a day for men and 4 annas for women. The Manager of Namgaon, one of the Empire of India Company's gardens, states that from 1916 onwards there was unrest due to economic conditions and that coolies had grievances of which the agitators made capital. The Manager of the Dikorai Division of the Bishnath Tea Company recommended a rise in 1920 which was given effect to in 1921. The evidence of the Manager of the Majulighur Tea Company indicates that the cost of living was felt by the coolie as early as 1918 :—

".....When the cost of living went up in 1918 I suggested to the Agents that it was necessary to enable our labour force to earn more pay in order to meet the same."

The result was an appreciable reduction in the tasks to enable a man, woman or child to earn a daily wage of 6 annas, 5 annas and 3 annas. This garden is worked on the unit system.

Throughout the district there has been a tendency to raise daily rates to 5 annas for men and 4 annas for women. The general opinion of Managers is that a decent living wage is Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman. There are several gardens where the daily rates are 4 annas and 3 annas which seem to fall short of this estimate of a decent living wage. In most of these gardens, coolies are able to supplement their earnings by cultivation, but this is also true of gardens which pay the higher rates. To quote the Deputy Commissioner :—

"There has been a slight reduction in food prices, but there is no guarantee that this will continue. There are still a number of gardens where I think wages should be raised."

The Committee are prepared to say that on the whole the average coolie in Darrang Sadr receives a decent living wage. The wage returns show a steady advance since 1914 :—

DARRANG SADR.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including tiffin, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 3 3	3 13 0	2 4 8	...	...	...
1906	5 6 6	4 2 7	2 9 5	6 15 0	5 13 8	3 5 2
1907	5 4 0	4 0 11	2 9 2	6 11 8	5 9 6	3 10 7
1908	4 15 4	4 2 11	2 9 6	6 7 2	5 8 7	3 10 10
1909	5 0 10	4 2 8	2 10 4	6 13 6	5 8 8	3 15 6
1910	5 0 6	4 6 9	2 12 8	6 3 11	5 12 8	3 12 7
1911	5 6 0	4 12 3	2 9 11	6 14 0	6 6 6	3 4 10
1912	5 10 7	5 0 3	2 12 10	7 0 10	6 8 6	3 7 7
1913	6 13 4	4 15 8	2 12 2	7 7 11	6 9 0	3 9 9
1914	6 12 11	4 15 9	2 13 11	7 4 9	6 7 11	3 12 6
1915	5 15 4	5 6 0	3 0 2	7 13 8	7 3 10	4 2 5
1916	5 11 3	7 5 10	3 3 3	7 10 8	7 7 5	4 4 7
1917	7 11 10	5 13 0	3 2 8	10 1 7	7 9 1	4 2 7
1918	6 0 10	5 15 3	3 3 8	7 8 1	7 10 4	4 1 6
1919	6 13 10	5 11 4	3 3 9	7 14 5	7 13 8	4 4 5
1920	6 12 6	6 13 7	3 12 2	8 4 2	8 6 9	4 6 5
1921	7 6 2	6 12 7	3 13 5	9 0 3	7 12 8	4 15 7
1922	7 3 10	6 7 7	3 13 2	9 0 3	8 6 11	5 1 6
September 1921	7 1 1	7 2 9	3 15 5	8 10 11	9 4 1	5 4 10
March 1922	7 6 6	5 12 4	3 10 10	9 5 4	7 9 9	4 14 2

Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	{ 1914	Rs. a. p.	14 14 10
Percentage of rise in family earnings	{ 1922	18 15 8	
...	...	27 per cent.	

Note.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

107. Fourteen gardens have submitted answers. Mangaldai is a comparatively cheap district for rice. In the gardens of the Mangaldai Tea Company in the south of the subdivision near Mangaldai town, rice is probably cheaper than in the north where most of the gardens are situated. In the northern group the tendency has been to raise daily rates to 4 annas and 3 annas for men and women, respectively. In 1913 the rates on some gardens were very low—Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 a month,—and on one garden the daily rates were only 3 annas for men and 2 annas 6 pies for women. Four gardens work on the unit system. On Orangajuli rates in 1918 were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month; now they are 4 annas and 3 annas daily. If the Manager's answers are correct, a woman, even in a month of 26 working days, seems to be a loser. On this garden there has been little alteration in tasks; light hoeing has been reduced from 35 to 34 *nals* and deep hoeing from 15 to 12. *Ticca* light hoeing remains the same at 25 *nals*. The labour force being under strength, coolies are now allowed to earn *ticca* where formerly they were restricted to a single *hazira*. The Manager states a decent living wage to be Rs. 8 and Rs. 6; most other Managers say Rs. 8 and Rs. 6-8. Low rates obtain in the Mangaldai Tea Company—3 annas 3 pies for men, and 2 annas 3 pies for women. The Manager has suggested increased rates of pay and *ticca* all round to which effect has been given from the current year, 1922. A decent living wage, in his opinion, is Rs. 6 to Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 for a woman. The Superintendent of the Company has supplied figures showing the cheapness of rice in South Mangaldai which probably accounts for the low wages. He states that in December 1921 rice was as cheap as in 1913. There seems to have been no reduction in the *hazira* task for light or deep hoeing but for *ticca* light, hoe 4 annas is now paid for 25 *nals* as against 3 annas previously. Inside the grant the coolies have 10 acres of land, and 30 per cent. of the male adults have cultivation inside or outside. The Committee think that a Manager in such circumstances has reasonable grounds for suggesting an increase in wages. The wage returns for Mangaldai show a steady rise in the earnings of both men and women since 1914:—

MANGALDAI

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including *ticca*, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 5 10	3 5 9	2 2 8	...	...	...
1906	5 4 6	3 1 8	2 1 3	6 14 10	4 5 6	2 15 8
1907	5 7 0	3 10 4	2 1 11	7 2 4	5 1 2	3 3 3
1908	5 13 3	4 2 5	2 6 7	7 4 1	5 5 5	3 3 7
1909	5 2 7	4 3 9	2 5 10	6 14 3	5 13 6	3 2 3
1910	5 11 10	3 15 11	2 6 0	7 3 6	5 5 6	3 3 6
1911	6 3 5	4 9 11	2 3 10	7 9 5	6 1 2	3 4 3
1912	6 1 9	4 9 7	2 6 6	7 9 6	6 2 8	3 5 1
1913	6 1 8	4 7 4	2 7 2	7 11 8	5 12 1	3 6 9
1914	6 9 6	4 7 5	2 6 7	8 10 4	6 0 8	3 6 8
1915	6 0 9	4 6 6	2 8 0	8 0 0	6 4 8	3 12 0
1916	6 4 11	5 0 8	2 8 11	8 4 1	6 13 2	3 12 4
1917	6 3 5	4 13 4	2 4 8	8 1 11	6 8 9	3 9 7
1918	6 1 9	4 14 10	2 6 0	8 1 7	6 14 7	3 11 4
1919	6 8 10	2 15 11	2 7 0	8 13 8	7 4 10	3 13 3
1920	7 5 4	5 9 5	2 10 10	9 11 4	7 7 7	4 0 9
1921	6 5 9	5 4 5	2 6 10	9 14 4	7 15 4	4 0 8
1922	7 10 11	6 5 11	3 2 2	9 11 6	7 14 10	4 6 0
September 1921	7 15 3	7 2 4	3 8 5	9 15 10	8 11 3	4 11 8
March 1922	7 6 7	5 9 6	2 11 10	9 7 1	7 2 5	4 0 8

		Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	1914	15 11 5
	1922	18 15 4
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	21 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

The Committee think it reasonable to hold that where gardens have realised the increased cost of living and have taken steps to enable the labourers to meet it, a decent living wage is paid.

108. The 28 answers received indicate that in over 50 per cent. of the gardens the rate of wages has been increased in recent years and that in several others tasks have been reduced. It will be convenient to examine the action taken by some of the leading Companies. In several of the gardens of the Assam Company, which owns the largest acreage of tea in the Assam Valley, wages of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 a month were not uncommon in 1913 and subsequent years, but in 1918 and 1919 when the cost of living rose, wages were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5; in others, wages in 1913 were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. About the end of 1920 or the beginning of 1921, the unit system was introduced in the gardens of the Company. The result is said to be a further increase of about 20 per cent. in the coolies' earnings. Under the unit system as worked in this Company, a man's daily wage varies from 4 annas 6 pies to 5 annas, and a woman's from 3 annas 9 pies to 4 annas. Most gardens of this Company have large areas of land for cultivation. Mr. Ronald, one of the leading Managers of the Company, states that the rise of Re. 1 in 1918 was given on account of the increased cost of foodstuffs and cloth.

Sibsagar
Subdivision.

In the Amguri Tea Company wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 up to 1917 when they were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. In 1920 a further rise to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 was given. In addition to this, there has been a considerable reduction in tasks. The evidence and answers of the General Manager are interesting. He states:—

"I wanted to raise the rate still further to Rs. 8 and Rs. 7 and my Directors agreed. The Directors left it to me, but I was not supported by the Tea Association, the majority of whom were against it. I did not raise the wages as I thought it might give rise to friction between my neighbours and myself."

He adds that the majority of the Members of the Nazira Circle Sub-Committee agreed with his proposal to raise wages in January 1921, but the Assam Valley Branch of the Indian Tea Association disagreed and the proposal was thrown out. According to the General Manager, the successive increments of pay given from time to time were necessitated by the increased cost of living.

In the gardens of the Jhanzie Tea Association, the unit system was adopted in 1920 in place of the old daily rates of 4 annas and 3 annas. This meant a rise of about one anna daily. On the other hand, there are several gardens in this subdivision where the rate of wages has not been raised. In the four divisions of the Singlo Company, in normal years a prosperous concern, the rates of Rs. 6 for men and Rs. 5 for women have not been altered. According to the answers, tasks have been reduced 20 per cent. and coolies' earnings increased by 33½ per cent. The details given as to reduction of tasks are rather vague. The wage returns of the gardens for 1920 and 1921 show high earnings. Labourers in this Company are under 3 year Act XIII agreements with bonuses of Rs. 33 for men and Rs. 30 for women. The coolies have a considerable area of land for cultivation inside and outside the estate grants. During the past cold weather there was trouble on some of the gardens of this Company including a riot at Suffry in February 1922. On the Teok Estate of the Jorhat Tea Company, rates remain at Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Heing tasks are said to be much the same as before, but an inferior standard of work is said to be accepted. The rate for *tico* plucking is the same as before the war. About 89 per cent. of the coolies are in debt to the garden. There is no cultivation within the grant but 67 acres of land outside are held by 25 per cent. of the adult male population. Some of the gardens where rates have not been raised have a good deal of land for cultivation. In some the light hoeing task remains unaltered; in others there has been a reduction in the deep hoeing task. In this subdivision, a decent living wage is said to be Rs. 8 or Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 or Rs. 5 for a woman. The estimates given vary

according to the locality. The wage returns especially from 1920 show a steady rise and point to the conclusion that the labourer is receiving an adequate wage:—

SIBSAGAR SUBDIVISION.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 8 10	4 1 4	2 8 3	...	...	...
1906	5 12 5	3 14 6	2 6 9	8 1 1	5 11 2	3 3 2
1907	5 10 8	4 2 4	2 8 5	7 4 5	5 8 10	3 6 1
1908	5 8 6	4 4 5	2 8 2	6 14 3	5 14 0	3 5 8
1909	5 8 5	4 5 2	2 8 4	6 15 0	5 14 9	3 5 10
1910	5 14 6	4 12 3	2 9 11	7 6 4	6 7 11	3 6 11
1911	5 12 8	4 9 2	2 12 7	7 1 0	4 5 5	2 12 4
1912	5 11 11	4 10 2	2 14 0	7 4 7	6 3 2	3 12 5
1913	6 0 10	4 12 0	2 15 2	7 2 9	6 7 5	4 1 7
1914	5 15 10	4 15 11	2 13 3	8 2 9	6 12 4	3 10 8
1915	6 3 6	5 1 3	2 14 10	7 13 9	6 10 3	3 14 4
1916	6 2 3	5 3 2	2 15 11	7 9 3	6 11 9	3 13 11
1917	6 1 2	5 5 5	2 13 6	7 13 11	6 15 3	3 12 10
1918	6 3 10	5 1 4	3 0 10	7 10 11	6 3 4	3 12 11
1919	6 2 6	5 5 0	3 2 9	8 0 7	7 6 9	4 6 10
1920	6 14 3	6 0 14	3 8 5	8 12 5	8 2 4	4 9 6
1921	7 0 5	5 14 10	3 12 3	8 12 3	7 13 0	4 12 2
1922	7 10 9	6 9 11	4 1 0	9 11 5	8 12 4	5 4 1
September 1921	7 14 2	7 8 0	4 6 10	9 11 11	9 13 8	5 10 5
March 1922	7 7 4	5 11 0	3 11 1	9 10 11	7 11 0	4 13 8

Family earnings (on average daily working strength). { 1914 15 15 11
1922 20 1 0
Percentage of rise in family earnings 26 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

Jorhat Sadr.

109. The replies indicate that in 14 out of 16 gardens of which 5 belong to the Jorhat Tea Company, wages have been raised in recent years. In the remaining 2 gardens, the unit system with reduced tasks has been introduced. In the Jorhat Company gardens situated in this subdivision, the wages in 1913 were Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women. These were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 in 1916. In 1920 and again in the end of 1921 or in January 1922, further increases were granted until the wages stand now at Rs. 7 and Rs. 6. The figures of average wages given by the Superintendent in his written answer bear out this rise of Rs. 2 since 1913:—

1	Men.	Women.	Children.
	2	3	4
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1913	6 9 10	5 7 2	3 12 11
1920	8 7 9	7 4 11	4 6 5
1921	8 13 10	7 6 9	5 0 11

The Kanan Devan Hills Produce Company raised wages from Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 in 1917 by giving a bonus of Re. 1 a month for 24 days' work completed; wages were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 in October 1920, and to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 in December 1921. CHAP. IV.

On the Kathalguri garden of the Salonah Tea Company wages used to be Rs. 5 and Rs. 4, but the unit system has been introduced, under which "the daily rate for an average *lazira* is men 4 annas 3 pies, and women 3 annas 9 pies." The coolies owe Rs. 10,440 to the garden which, considering the adult working population of 552 men and 546 women, is an excessive amount. Most gardens in the subdivision have large areas of land for rice cultivation. A decent living wage has been generally estimated at Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman. The wage returns show a satisfactory increase and the Committee, on the information at their disposal, think that the coolies on the gardens in the Jorhat subdivision are receiving a decent living wage:—

JORHAT SUBDIVISION.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 2 2	3 7 8	2 7 1	...	...	...
1906	5 4 8	3 9 11	2 6 1	6 15 6	4 10 10	3 1 4
1907	5 5 5	3 11 8	2 7 5	6 12 0	4 14 6	3 2 8
1908	5 4 2	3 12 11	2 8 10	6 9 6	5 1 9	3 6 2
1909	4 12 6	3 5 4	2 7 1	6 4 10	4 9 10	3 6 0
1910	5 4 2	3 11 2	2 6 6	6 9 2	5 1 2	3 6 0
1911	5 4 1	3 14 2	2 10 1	6 11 9	5 4 6	3 10 8
1912	5 6 0	3 13 3	2 10 11	6 13 8	5 2 9	3 10 10
1913	5 7 7	4 0 10	2 11 6	6 13 6	5 7 4	3 10 4
1914	5 8 8	4 6 10	2 15 9	8 7 7	5 14 2	3 11 7
1915	5 12 10	4 5 7	2 14 2	6 11 7	4 13 4	3 7 6
1916	6 1 0	5 0 1	3 1 9	7 5 2	6 1 4	3 15 10
1917	6 7 3	5 1 4	3 1 2	7 14 0	6 7 4	4 1 0
1918	6 7 6	5 1 2	3 10 1	7 12 7	6 6 4	4 11 11
1919	6 3 11	5 1 10	3 3 2	8 4 6	6 10 5	4 2 9
1920	6 10 1	6 13 1	3 6 6	8 15 4	9 2 2	4 7 2
1921	6 12 0	5 12 1	3 11 3	8 10 9	7 2 9	4 9 3
1922	7 8 4	5 12 2	4 0 4	9 3 8	7 6 3	4 12 8
September 1921	7 7 6	6 4 8	4 3 7	9 3 3	8 0 9	5 4 10
March 1922	7 9 1	5 3 8	3 13 1	9 4 0	6 11 9	4 4 6

		Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	...	1914 ... 15 7 7
	...	1922 ... 18 0 11
Percentage of rise in family earnings	..	... 17 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

Golaghat.

110. Twenty-one gardens in Golaghat have sent replies. In 14 at least the rates of wages have been increased since 1913, the usual wage now paid being Rs. 6 for men and Rs. 5 for women. In many cases the old rates were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4, but from 1915 onwards there was a general movement to raise wages to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Some gardens pay Rs. 6-8-0 to men. Two new gardens pay higher rates. The Dooria estate adopted the unit system in 1916 in supersession of a monthly wage of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4. The Manager has given figures for the average wages under the two systems :—

	Hosira system.			Unit system.					
	1913.	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men ...	7 4 0	7 10 0	7 15 8	8 0 0	8 5 0	9 6 0	10 2 9	9 4 0	9 5 5
W men ...	5 12 0	6 2 0	6 8 0	6 15 0	7 11 0	7 14 0	9 1 0	8 15 0	7 15 0
Children ...	4 5 6	4 6 8	4 13 0	4 11 0	5 1 8	6 9 3	5 5 0	6 13 0	6 1 0

Another garden working on the unit system is Barkatonee (Kingsley Golaghat Tea Company). The date of the introduction of this system is not given. The average earnings in March and September from 1916 to 1921 are :—

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men ...	8 6 6	8 13 4	8 9 4	8 8 5	6 12 2	6 10 0
Women ...	6 15 0	6 11 6	6 11 5	6 0 0	5 1 6	5 12 0
Children ...	3 13 5	4 3 6	3 13 1	4 5 5	3 7 0	3 14 0

This Company in normal times is a prosperous one. Previous to 1922 pregnant women get no sick pay ; they now receive half *haziras*. In both Borkatonee and Dooria the coolies have large areas for cultivation. The Brahmaputra Company raised the rates from 3 annas for men and 2 annas 6 pies for women, to 4 annas for men in 1920 and to 3 annas for women in 1921, and still continues to give paddy at Rs. 2 a maund.

In one garden of the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company—Hathikhuli—the rates remain unaltered at 3 annas 9 pies for men and 3 annas for women. The Manager in his answers states that there has been a slight *increase* in the light hoeing task of 30 *nals* since 1913 but a reduction in deep hoeing. He also adds that there is hardly “ so much money to be made by the coolie in fine plucking, and the *ticca* plucking rate remains the same as before the war ”. There is, however, a good deal of land for cultivation. The garden is very isolated. In the opinion of most Managers a decent living wage is Rs. 7 or Rs. 6 for a man and Rs. 6 or Rs. 5 for a woman, although the Manager of Borkatonee reckons it at Rs. 4 for a man and Rs. 3 for a woman which is absurdly low. The wage returns show an upward tendency and indicate that the coolies receive a decent living wage. There are gardens where

the rates seem low, but the Committee are satisfied that, on the whole, the coolies are adequately remunerated :—

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GOLAGHAT.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 11 3	3 9 1	2 0 11	...	...	...
1906	5 2 8	3 12 6	2 9 6	6 11 4	5 1 9	3 6 4
1907	5 6 8	3 14 11	2 11 9	6 8 10	5 5 8	3 9 8
1908	5 5 6	4 0 0	2 14 6	6 11 11	5 8 8	3 14 6
1909	5 2 1	3 12 0	2 9 3	6 12 2	5 7 3	3 10 4
1910	5 8 4	3 10 7	2 10 3	6 5 11	4 10 10	3 9 9
1911	5 9 6	4 5 4	3 2 4	7 9 2	5 14 5	4 6 3
1912	5 6 6	3 14 5	2 9 1	7 0 10	5 0 3	3 12 3
1913	5 9 2	4 5 7	2 14 11	6 14 7	5 14 8	3 13 1
1914	5 9 6	4 7 1	2 15 7	7 0 3	5 14 3	3-13 6
1915	6 4 5	4 6 7	3 10 1	7 6 1	5 8 5	4 13 6
1916	6 0 7	5 0 6	3 5 7	7 6 1	6 5 10	4 1 7
1917	6 4 5	5 14 1	3 8 9	8 6 2	8 2 9	4 10 1
1918	6 4 3	5 3 1	3 7 3	7 15 3	6 12 9	4 4 5
1919	6 0 4	5 1 3	3 8 5	7 13 3	6 13 2	4 6 0
1920	6 13 6	5 5 6	4 5 9	8 14 4	6 9 6	5 2 9
1921	7 3 11	5 3 11	4 2 7	8 7 10	6 4 11	4 14 10
1922	7 5 4	5 11 4	3 10 8	8 13 6	7 3 6	4 10 6
September 1921	7 7 8	6 3 6	4 0 6	8 14 3	7 15 1	5 2 0
March 1922	7 3 0	5 3 1	3 4 9	8 12 8	6 4 11	4 2 11

		Es. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	{	1914 ... 14 0 11
		1922 ... 17 7 4
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	... 25 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

111. Replies have been received from most of the gardens. The rates of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 seem to have disappeared at a fairly early stage—probably before 1906—and to have given place to rates generally of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month or 3 annas 6 pies for men and 3 annas for women as a daily wage. In 1911 Siconee garden raised the rates to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6. Amluckie gave an increase from 1919, Kellyden from 1920 and other gardens more recently. The general monthly wage varies from Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 7 for men and from Rs. 5-11 to Rs. 6 for women. The Manager of Amluckie states that there was a meeting of the Nowgong Sub-Committee which recommended that when prices of food-stuffs were high an average daily rate of 4 annas 6 pies for men and 4 annas for women should be paid. He has been paying these rates himself. The wage returns show that the percentage of increase since 1914 is less than in other districts in the Assam Valley. But in 1914 the wages

Nowgong-

earned were higher than in other districts except Lakhimpur Sadr. This is probably due to the fact that the rates of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 had been raised previous to 1906 :—

NOWGONG.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 3 1	3 15 3	2 7 7	.....	.....	.....
1906	5 4 9	4 1 4	2 9 2	7 6 8	6 4 6	3 10 3
1907	5 12 10	4 5 10	2 12 0	7 11 6	6 6 6	3 15 5
1908	5 12 6	4 14 10	2 13 1	7 9 7	6 10 10	3 12 10
1909	5 3 7	4 5 6	2 11 1	7 2 1	6 7 10	3 15 8
1910	5 11 7	4 11 1	2 12 10	7 7 1	6 12 9	4 1 9
1911	5 12 8	4 12 3	2 13 3	7 12 4	6 13 0	3 11 11
1912	6 0 5	5 2 10	2 14 7	8 0 9	7 8 9	4 1 10
1913	5 11 8	5 0 6	3 0 3	7 10 1	7 6 11	4 5 1
1914	5 15 1	5 0 0	3 0 3	8 1 8	7 5 11	4 3 4
1916	5 10 8	4 14 11	2 15 3	7 15 3	7 5 3	4 5 10
1916	5 8 11	4 15 9	2 14 8	7 9 9	7 5 9	4 1 3
1917	5 12 4	5 6 11	3 1 8	7 13 8	7 14 9	4 4 6
1918	6 1 9	5 3 9	2 15 1	8 3 3	7 9 2	4 3 0
1919	6 1 3	4 15 9	3 1 11	8 7 5	7 9 9	4 11 12
1920	6 4 3	5 7 0	2 14 3	8 6 11	7 8 5	4 6 5
1921	6 7 3	5 8 8	3 3 2	8 7 7	7 9 7	4 11 7
1922	6 12 3	5 14 10	4 0 0	8 13 6	8 2 9	5 2 1
September 1921	7 8 5	6 10 5	4 0 9	9 9 0	9 2 5	5 10 6
March 1922	6 0 0	5 3 3	3 15 3	8 2 0	7 3 0	4 9 7

	Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength) { 1914 ...	16 11 9
{ 1922 ...	18 8 10
Percentage of rise in family earnings ...	11 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

On most of the gardens the coolies are well provided with land for cultivation. Managers have been alive to the rise in prices and have done their best to make it easier for the labourer. The fact that practically the only trouble on any garden was a 24-hour strike at Kondoli in May 1921, in spite of the existence of a considerable amount of political agitation in the district during the past year, speaks well for the garden management generally. The Committee are satisfied that the coolies earn a decent living wage which, in the opinion of the Nowgong Sub-Committee, is Rs. 7 and Rs. 6.

112. *Surma Valley.—Cachar Sadr.*—The answers sent by the Managers of 56 gardens in the Cachar Sadr subdivision show that the usual *hazira* now paid is 4 annas a day for men and 3 annas for women. The rates vary from 5 annas for men down to 2 annas 8 pies for women. The number of gardens paying these varying

rates for the standard daily task is given below :—

	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
	0 5 0	0 4 9	0 4 3	0 4 0	0 3 6	0 3 2	0 3 0	0 2 8
Men ...	3	1	2 ..	42	4	...	4	...
Women ...	...	...	...	8	3	1	43	1

In 22 gardens wages have been raised in the case of men or women, and occasionally for both. In the majority of cases an increase was given in 1920 and 1921 and also in January 1922. On a few gardens a rise was given at an earlier date. On Ruttonpore men's *haziras* were increased from 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies in 1915 because prices showed a tendency to rise and also because some of the neighbouring gardens had raised their rates. At Polarbund, where the rates of 4 annas for men and 3 annas for women have remained unchanged since 1913, the Manager states that his predecessor in 1918 suggested to the Agents the advisability of raising the rates in the near future. The tasks have since been reduced. The Manager of Vernerpur Tea Estate raised the wages for men and women in 1913 from 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies, the rate prevailing on neighbouring gardens, and increased the wage again to 4 annas 6 pies and 4 annas in 1921 owing to the high cost of living. In the Burtoll Division of the Tarapore Tea Company in 1913-14 the rate for men was raised from 3 annas 6 pies to 4 annas and for women from 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies. There was a further rise to 4 annas for women in May 1921. On the Labac Tea Estate of the same Company, on the other hand, the wages of men and women were 3 annas 6 pies and 3 annas respectively until 1st January 1922 when wages were raised to 4 annas and 3 annas 6 pies. There was a strike on this garden in December 1921. Till then, apparently the Manager had been able to hold out against a rise in wages. The garden has a large area of rice cultivation. Borakai affords an example of low wages; the rate is 3 annas for men and women. There are 409 men on the garden books. Four hundred and sixty acres of paddy land in the grant are held by 440 men, workers and non-workers, at the rate of Re. 1 to 8 annas a *bigha*. The hoeing task has not been altered. The Manager stated in January 1922 that it is proposed to give men 4 annas and women 3 annas 6 pies because tea prospects are improving. In this garden, women do not receive the agreement bonus as they are not placed under Act XIII contracts. In some other gardens the agreements bonus is small, e.g., Rs. 3. In 24 gardens, rates of 4 annas and 3 annas were paid in 1913 to men and women and have remained unaltered. In these cases, the task was reduced for fine plucking, but there seems to have been little reduction in the hoeing task. Rates of 3 annas are paid to men and women in Boro Jalinga where a *bigha* of land is given free to all working coolies, men and women. Many gardens have reduced tasks instead of raising wages. Mr. Cresswell, a leading Cachar planter, has stated that, in his opinion, it would be more satisfactory to raise wages instead of reducing tasks. The Committee agree and do not consider reduction of tasks a satisfactory solution of the wage question. Many Managers, in answering question No. 23 as to whether cash earnings have increased since 1913, have replied in the negative. On Doodputlee garden, the average monthly earnings in 1913 of men, women and children were Rs. 5-11-5 and in 1920 Rs. 5-15-3. This excludes agreement bonus and sick allowances. 1,546 coolies owe Rs. 12,765 to the estate for rice, cloth and miscellaneous advances. The labour force consists of 882 men and 838 women. The *haziras* are 4 annas and 3 annas. In Doyapore garden with the same *hazira* rates the average earnings are :—

	Men.	Women.	Children.
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1913 ...	6 4 1	5 6 6	3 10 3
1921 ...	7 8 8	5 4 11	3 11 9

The labour force comprises 202 men and 186 women, and the coolies owe Rs. 4,302 to the garden. In Monierkhal garden with a labour force of 461 men and 487 women, the coolies are indebted to the garden to the extent of Rs. 16,632. The *hazira* rates were increased in 1915 to 4 annas and 3 annas from 3 annas and 2 annas 6 pies for men and women. One characteristic feature of gardens in Cachar is the large area of land available in the grants for rice cultivation by the coolies. In several cases, an economic rent is charged, but ordinarily the land is given rent-free or at a nominal rate.

113. The wage returns of Cachar Sadr, on the whole, up to 1921, show little rise since 1914 and even as compared with previous years. The averages of September 1921 and March 1922 indicate an improvement, probably the result of raising the rates of wages :—

CACHAR SADR.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 4 0	3 9 1	2 12 5	...	...	...
1906	2 15 8	2 6 3	1 1 9	6 7 8	5 10 11	3 5, 6
1907	3 0 7	2 6 9	1 1 1	6 14 0	6 0 1	3 5 4
1908	2 13 5	2 10 9	1 0 10	6 8 9	6 7 7	3 3 2
1909	4 7 1	3 12 9	2 2 9	6 3 11	6 15 3	3 2 4
1910	5 3 1	4 2 1	2 2 10	6 12 1	5 13 8	3 5 10
1911	4 15 0	3 10 10	2 2 4	6 12 3	6 6 9	3 6 10
1912	5 4 5	3 14 6	2 4 6	6 13 6	5 10 10	3 7 8
1913	5 6 0	3 14 7	2 5 0	6 15 10	5 11 2	3 7 8
1914	5 7 11	4 1 2	2 6 10	7 0 4	5 12 4	3 8 2
1915	5 6 3	3 14 7	2 4 6	6 15 2	5 8 0	3 5 6
1916	5 9 10	4 3 6	2 8 4	7 1 4	5 13 1	3 8 8
1917	5 11 1	4 6 10	2 10 10	7 3 1	5 15 8	3 9 8
1918	5 11 5	4 3 2	2 8 8	7 1 9	5 11 0	3 8 7
1919	5 8 10	4 1 11	2 8 8	7 2 3	5 12 7	3 8 10
1920	6 4 7	4 13 9	2 12 9	7 15 4	6 9 9	3 13 7
1921	5 14 10	4 4 8	2 10 6	7 8 10	5 14 6	3 10 7
1922	6 3 4	4 7 9	2 10 4	7 11 6	6 2 10	3 12 0
September 1921	5 12 9	4 8 3	2 9 4	7 3 8	6 9 6	3 13 6
March 1922	6 9 11	4 7 2	2 11 4	8 3 5	5 12 1	3 10 6

Family earnings (on average daily working strength).	1914	...	...	...	Rs. a. p.	13 13 6
	1922	...	...	...	...	15 0 4
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	...	...	...	...	9 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

The earnings for women in particular show little advance. According to the replies of the Sub-Committees, a decent living wages is Rs. 8 or Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 7 or Rs. 6 for a woman. On the whole, the average earnings as given in the wage returns hardly attain this standard. The Commissioner of the Surma Valley Division states that at present to live in comfort, a man would require to earn Rs. 10, a woman Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 and a child Rs. 4 a month. Concessions might be given which would enable the wages to be decreased by a corresponding amount. In the opinion of this witness, a family consisting of a man, his wife and 3 or 4 non-working children, would be quite well off on these earnings if they had a little land, but not otherwise. He was asked whether a rise of wages was necessary in other parts of his division apart from the Chãrgola Valley. His reply may be quoted :—

“On a good many other gardens it would be desirable, but I find it very difficult to generalise. It depends on a great many things. On some gardens even with low rates coolies could earn quite good pay owing to the facilities for ticcã. There are some coolies who would only do a minimum

amount of work and earn merely the *hazira*; other coolies make as much money as they can. I think, however, that a great many gardens ought to have increased the wages on the ground that the rise in wages has not been proportional to the rise in the cost of living. I find from the reports that as long ago as in 1889 a coolie family consisting of a man, his wife and one or two children, earned on an average about Rs. 10. The cost of living for a coolie was then estimated to be Rs. 9 or Rs. 10 a month for the family, so that income and expenditure about balanced. Now I find that a coolie family, as far as I am able to judge from statistics, makes about Rs. 13 to Rs. 18 and the cost of living has gone up to about Rs. 20 on the same scale as that of 1889, so that relatively the labourer is worse off and that is perhaps due partly to the fact that he does less work I think foodstuffs have gone up about 50 per cent. and cloth twice to three times the former price

After careful consideration, the Committee are not prepared to give an unqualified answer to the effect that coolies in Cachar gardens are earning a decent living wage. The Committee, however, recognise that, of late, there has been a tendency to raise wages, and it is hoped that steps will be taken to give an increase in all cases where this is necessary.

114. *Hailakandi*.—Replies have been received from 18 gardens in Hailakandi. The *hazira* rates vary. The number of gardens paying the different rates are given below:—

	Rs. a. p. 0 6 0	Rs. a. p. 0 4 6	Rs. a. p. 0 4 0	Rs. a. p. 0 3 6	Rs. a. p. 0 3 0	Rs. a. p. 0 2 6
Men	1	1	13	2	1	...
Women ... ..	...	...	3	6	8	1

Between 1916 and January 1922, there was a rise in the rate of wages in 10 of these gardens. In two cases where the *hazira* is 4 annas for men and 3 annas 6 pies for women, a weekly bonus of 3 annas is paid for a six days' full work. Most gardens where rates have remained unchanged since 1913, pay 4 annas and 3 annas. Sultancherra garden, which was opened in 1913, has all along paid 6 annas to men and 4 annas to women in addition to an agreement bonus of Rs. 12 and 10; tasks for this wage do not seem to be higher than on other gardens. The average earnings on this garden in September 1921 and March 1922 are:—

	September 1921. Rs. a. p.	March 1922. Rs. a. p.
Men	9 1 4	10 9 2
Women	9 6 10	9 10 0
Children	4 12 10	3 12 10

This is distinctly above the average earnings on the gardens in the Subdivision for the same months. These were:—

	September 1921. Rs. a. p.	March 1922. Rs. a. p.
Men	7 2 5	8 6 11
Women	6 10 4	6 7 11
Children	3 14 8	4 0 8

The Manager of Kalacherra garden, who pays 3 annas to men and women, states in reply to question 26(a) that the earnings of the coolie "do not leave him much to come and go on; also he has to work more regularly than in 1913." On this garden, hoeing tasks do not seem to have been altered; 90 per cent. of the adult male coolies have land. The Manager of Dholai who pays 4 annas to men and 3 annas to women, gives the average earnings per head monthly from 1914 to 1920 as follows:—

	Rs. a. p.
1914	6 2 0
1915	6 4 7
1916	6 9 10
1917	7 5 2
1918	6 0 0
1919	6 6 0
1920	6 5 0

About 75 per cent. of the men on this estate have land for cultivation. Most of the gardens in the subdivision are well off in this respect, as is the case with gardens in the Sadr subdivision of Cachar. This fact should be taken into account in criticising the wage returns which are given below :—

HAILAKANDI.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticea, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	4 11 3	3 11 3	2 4 8	...	...	...
1906	4 11 10	3 9 11	2 4 9	6 1 5	5 3 4	3 12 10
1907	4 10 1	3 11 3	2 5 1	6 0 3	5 3 1	3 13 4
1908	5 0 1	3 14 4	2 8 3	6 15 10	5 13 6	4 12 0
1909	4 10 1	3 10 7	2 3 7	6 8 4	5 9 5	3 8 2
1910	4 14 2	3 13 7	2 2 2	6 9 0	5 15 1	3 8 4
1911	5 0 9	3 13 11	2 3 8	6 14 10	5 15 6	3 9 10
1912	4 12 4	3 15 4	2 4 10	6 10 9	6 2 5	3 10 9
1913	4 15 4	3 14 7	2 5 0	6 15 6	6 3 9	3 8 0
1914	5 0 11	3 12 5	2 1 8	6 13 11	5 12 1	3 10 7
1915	4 11 5	3 9 2	2 0 6	6 7 4	5 8 2	3 7 2
1916	4 14 9	3 15 6	2 2 5	6 11 7	5 13 6	3 8 5
1917	5 3 5	4 3 6	2 3 0	6 7 10	5 14 3	3 6 11
1918	5 0 8	3 13 8	2 1 4	6 12 5	5 11 8	3 6 5
1919	5 0 3	3 12 9	2 1 7	6 10 6	5 11 1	3 5 9
1920	5 8 7	4 3 8	2 6 8	7 5 1	6 5 6	3 9 11
1921	5 3 2	4 2 4	2 1 4	6 7 4	5 15 10	3 2 3
1922	5 11 10	4 2 7	2 3 4	7 12 8	6 9 1	3 15 8
September 1921	5 4 3	4 1 1	1 15 10	7 2 5	6 10 4	3 14 8
March 1922	6 3 5	4 4 2	2 6 10	8 6 11	6 7 11	4 0 8

					Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength).	1914	...	...	...	13 11 7
					1922
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	...	...	...	14 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

There is an actual fall in the joint family earnings in 1921 as compared with 1914. Earnings in 1920 were distinctly better. The returns for September 1921 and March 1922 show an appreciable rise. Managers state that a decent living wage in the case of a man and his wife living together varies from Rs. 12 to Rs. 14. Some think concessions in the way of cheap rice necessary in addition to these cash wages. Generally speaking, the conclusion arrived at by the Committee as regards Cachar Sadr would apply to Hailakandi.

North Sylhet 115. The tea-gardens in North Sylhet are not of much importance. Answers have been received from 7 gardens. Jafflong Tea Estate, which is situated at the foot of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, is more or less isolated. The rates of 4 annas and 3 annas have remained unchanged but tasks are said to have been reduced though no details are given. About 25 per cent. of the men have land inside or outside the grant. In the last five years, a sum of Rs. 69,281 has been spent in

recruiting, but owing to the influenza epidemic and coolies leaving the garden to take up land in the villages, there is no increase in the labour force which is said to be insufficient. On Malnicherra Tea Estate wages are 3 annas 9 pies for men and 3 annas for women; these rates have not been changed in recent years, but from the 1st of January 1922, men are getting 4 annas. The agreement advances of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 are not recovered. Mr. Steward has submitted a useful note which is reproduced below :—

“ ... Early in October 1921 Managers in this district met and discussed wages, rates, etc., suitable in their opinion for this district. A copy of their opinions is enclosed* herewith. In the middle of October, when commencing deep hoeing, I revised the task and rates as follows: 30 *nals* instead of 24 *nals*, offering 6 annas for completed task of 30 *nals*, 3 annas 9 pies for 24 *nals* (the old rates). As ground becomes harder, the rate for 24 *nals* was raised to 5 annas and the old rate given for less than 24 *nals*. Thus making it worth a coolie's while to complete tasks. The result has been most successful from both the garden and the coolie's point of view. I am strongly in favour of carrying out the same principle in light hoeing, pruning, etc. Coolies can easily complete the tasks set, in 4 hours, and get the chance of earning, a man 6 annas, and a woman 5 annas per day, which is I consider a really good wage, taking into consideration the short working hour, and the time of year when foodstuff is cheapest. From 15th March onwards, coolies can largely increase these earnings, when works are of a lighter nature. From the 1st January 1922, the 3 annas 9 pies rate of pay will be done away with and 4 annas rate instituted.....”

* “ At a meeting of the North Sylhet District Committee, the following resolutions were passed :—

1. Gardens in this district are so situated, being close to the town of Sylhet, where there is an unlimited demand for milk, fuel and grass thereby offering great opportunities to garden labour of largely increasing their incomes, that great difficulty is experienced in obtaining full time service.

2. To remedy this and to guard the interests of employers, we consider it most necessary to pay coolies on a sliding scale giving a lower rate of wage for uncompleted tasks.

3. In fixing tasks, we have carefully considered the extremely light and sandy nature of the soil and though the tasks may appear high in comparison to other districts we consider them to be absolutely fair and reasonable.

4. That field labourers are to be especially encouraged by offering improved scale of wages and that odd job coolies cannot be included.

5. *Tasks*.—Deep hoe—completed 30 *nals* at 6 annas—Rs. 3-12-0 an acre. Light hoe—completed 48 *nals* at 6 annas—Rs. 2-8-0 an acre. Forking—Rs. 3 an acre. Pruning averaging Rs. 3-8-0 to Rs. 4 an acre. Factory hands at 6 annas, 5 annas and 4 annas, according to the nature of the work. These rates, reckoning on 26 working days to the month, fix the wages at men Rs. 9-12-0 per month, women at Rs. 6-8-0 per month for field and factory workers. For all other works pay will not be less than Rs. 6-8-0 per month of completed tasks. Agreement bonus men Rs. 12; women Rs. 10; thus making the lowest pay not less than Rs. 7-5-0 per month.

					Rs.	a.	p.
Men doing 26 days' full work ...	...	...	...	...	10	12	0
Women " " " ...	...	...	...	...	7	5	0"

Mr. Steward's note is interesting as showing that where the task for *ticca* is considerably reduced the coolie will do more work. On Lackatoorah, wages are Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 to non-agreement men and women. Those who take agreements get one rupee less. Agreement advances used to be recovered, but from 1922 they will be treated as bonus. The Manager has now altered *ticca* tasks so that a coolie can earn more as described in the note above by the Manager of Malnicherra. The case of these two gardens is hardly typical in that the coolies add considerably to their earnings by selling milk, fuel, grass, to the people of Sylhet town: they have also got a good deal of cultivation. The North Sylhet Sub-Committee estimates a decent living wage at Rs. 8-6-0 for men and Rs. 6-8-0 for women in addition to the

agreement bonus. The wage returns for September 1921 and March 1922 show only a slight advance on the earnings of 1914 :—

NORTH SYLHET.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, ration, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 0 4	3 0 9	2 1 0	...	...	...
1906	4 12 6	3 3 1	2 1 11	6 1 0	4 12 0	3 1 8
1907	4 14 5	3 6 1	2 0 0	6 2 5	4 9 10	2 14 11
1908	5 2 4	3 8 7	2 6 5	6 9 7	4 14 1	3 3 5
1909	5 1 9	3 7 8	2 4 5	6 10 1	5 2 4	3 0 6
1910	4 14 6	3 4 9	2 7 4	6 0 11	4 14 11	3 6 8
1911	5 4 2	3 10 8	2 9 2	6 1 8	5 6 0	3 6 1
1912	5 2 2	3 7 2	2 7 9	6 9 9	4 13 10	3 3 1
1913	5 2 11	3 8 2	2 9 9	6 13 1	5 0 6	3 5 1
1914	5 6 8	3 8 4	2 9 2	7 0 0	5 0 7	3 4 6
1915	5 2 4	3 8 2	2 6 5	6 11 10	4 14 2	3 2 4
1916	5 11 2	4 1 0	2 12 9	7 2 1	5 3 11	3 11 7
1917	5 8 11	4 1 5	2 7 0	6 15 3	5 7 0	3 5 7
1918	5 8 1	3 14 3	2 4 1	6 14 11	5 3 7	3 0 7
1919	5 13 4	3 14 3	2 5 4	7 3 10	5 4 4	3 3 10
1920	6 5 4	4 8 5	2 8 9	7 14 7	5 10 9	3 13 2
1921	5 12 11	4 3 7	2 1 4	7 8 10	5 14 6	3 10 7
1923	5 11 0	3 15 6	2 4 6	7 9 0	5 9 0	3 8 0
September 1921	5 2 6	3 15 6	2 1 1	7 0 1	5 10 7	3 5 11
March 1922	6 3 7	3 15 7	2 7 11	8 2 0	5 7 4	3 10 3

Family earnings (on average daily working strength).	{ 1914	...	...	Rs. a. p.	13 0 4
	{ 1922	...	...	...	14 2 10
Percentage of rise in family earnings ...	...	...	...	...	9 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

With the opportunities recently afforded for earning higher wages, the position will doubtless be further improved. On gardens like Lackatoorah and Maincherrah, where the coolie can supplement his income so largely by ancillary earnings, the Committee have no hesitation in saying that a decent living wage is given.

116. *Habiganj*.—Most of the Habiganj gardens are situated in the Laskerpore Valley. Sixteen replies have been received. The *hazira* rates vary. The number of gardens paying the different rates are as follows :—

	Rs. a. p. 0 5 0	Rs. a. p. 0 4 6	Rs. a. p. 0 4 0	Rs. a. p. 0 3 9	Rs. a. p. 0 3 6	Rs. a. p. 0 3 0
Men ...	8	3	6	3	...	1
Women ...	...	...	3	1	2	10

On two gardens the rate of wages has been raised since 1913. In 1919 Amoo increased men's wages from 3 annas to 3 annas 9 pies. On Teliapara agreement bonuses have been increased from Rs. 8 and Rs. 6 to Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 for men and women, respectively. Some gardens have reduced hoeing tasks and also lowered tasks for fine plucking. The Manager of Daragaon states:—

"The only real grievance the coolies have is that the cost of living has increased and that their pay has not gone up with the increased prices; cash earnings of the coolies have remained practically the same since 1913;

and again,

"The coolies get enough to keep them in health and reasonable comfort, but cannot save to any large extent."

His rates are 3 annas 9 pies and 3 annas. On Deundi which pays 5 annas and 4 annas, the average wages are:—

—				Men.	Women.	dhan.
1				2	3	4
				Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
September 1912	...	...	...	10 12 2	10 1 4	6 15 10
" 1920	...	...	...	11 6 9	10 1 6	8 2 7

Though the rise is small, the earnings are relatively high. As September is a typically busy month, the annual averages would be lower. On Teliapara which pays 4 annas and 3 annas; the average earnings in 1913 were Rs. 7-6-3 and Rs. 5-3-11 for men and women respectively, and in 1921 Rs. 8-0-5 and Rs. 6-5-8. The Manager of Satchuri, who pays men 4 annas 6 pies and women 3 annas 6 pies, gives figures for 1915 and 1921 as follows:—

—				March 1915.	September 1915.	March 1921.	September 1921.
1				2	3	4	5
				Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men	...	...	...	7 5 11	8 13 7	8 1 9	8 5 1
Women	...	...	...	5 0 4	7 6 10	6 14 5	8 4 9
Children	...	...	...	2 12 10	3 12 5	2 13 3	3 13 2

The Manager of Amoo in his answer to question No. 13 states that the remuneration is "not proportionate with the cost of living, but rice, *dhan* and clothes were sold to the labour force under bazaar rates, and they were allowed to do unlimited *ticca*."

The Manager of Nayapara who pays 5 annas to men and 4 annas to women admits that the high price of cloth and foodstuffs has been the cause of discontent. On Surma, which pays 4 annas and 3 annas to agreement coolies, there has been no increase in cash earnings since 1913. Certain gardens near the border of Hill Tipperah have had their labour forces depleted by coolies absconding into that State. Coolies were attracted by promises of land for cultivation and of higher wages on new Indian tea-gardens. One result of this reduction in the labour force by desertion is that the employers have been able to provide more *ticca* work for the coolies left on the garden. In the opinion of the local Sub-Committee, Rs 8 with no concessions is a decent living wage. Most of the gardens have considerable areas available for rice cultivation. Concessions in the way of cheap rice and cloth and blanket

to a smaller extent, were granted, especially in 1919 and 1920. The wage returns show a tendency to rise:—

HABIGANJ.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	5 4 0	3 15 4	2 13 1	...	...	...
1906	5 4 5	3 13 4	2 12 9	6 8 10	5 1 8	3 15 3
1907	5 5 7	4 2 8	2 10 4	6 9 2	5 8 5	3 7 10
1908	5 1 3	3 14 8	2 5 10	6 11 1	5 10 11	3 7 5
1909	5 3 1	3 11 7	2 5 3	6 11 11	4 15 7	3 8 3
1910	5 4 11	3 12 11	2 4 2	6 14 0	5 15 4	3 10 10
1911	5 5 10	3 15 11	2 8 3	6 10 8	5 12 0	3 11 10
1912	5 11 4	4 3 11	2 8 7	7 3 1	6 3 9	3 14 9
1913	5 7 5	4 1 1	2 9 1	7 4 5	5 14 3	3 12 10
1914	5 8 6	4 3 8	2 10 8	7 6 11	6 1 7	4 1 3
1915	5 7 3	4 0 7	2 6 4	7 1 7	5 9 5	3 13 9
1916	5 11 4	4 7 6	2 14 0	7 7 3	6 3 7	4 6 5
1917	5 12 6	4 5 11	2 10 3	7 8 10	6 0 9	3 15 1
1918	3 6 8	2 5 11	1 13 10	5 13 3	4 2 11	2 8 10
1919	5 7 8	4 1 6	2 10 2	7 6 3	5 15 4	3 14 0
1920	6 10 2	4 14 9	3 0 0	8 6 6	6 9 5	4 4 10
1921	6 4 8	4 9 10	2 12 5	8 2 2	6 4 5	4 4 1
1922	6 10 10	4 14 3	2 13 11	9 2 9	6 1 4	4 4 11
September 1921	6 10 0	4 12 3	2 13 1	8 14 4	5 11 2	4 6 7
March 1922	6 11 8	5 0 3	2 14 8	9 7 2	6 7 6	4 3 3

Rs. a. p.

Family earnings (on average daily working strength) { 1914 14 12 1
1922 16 8 9

Percentage of rise in family earnings 12 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

The Committee are of opinion that although there may be one or two gardens where some increase of wages is necessary, coolies, on the whole, are getting a decent living wage. There has been no trouble on the gardens in this subdivision.

117. *South Sylhet*.—Replies have been received from 37 Managers. The *hazira* rates are not uniform. The number of gardens paying the different rates are given below:—

	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
	0 5 0	0 4 0	0 3 9	0 3 0	0 2 3
Men	1	13	10	13	...
Women	...	4	2	29	2

Since 1913, only 8 gardens have increased their rate of wages. From the 1st of January 1922, the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company raised rates for men from 3 annas 9 pies to 4 annas in two or three of their gardens so as to make the rates

uniform on their various gardens in South Sylhet. Including out-gardens, this Company owns some 20 gardens in this subdivision. As regards other Companies, Phultola Tea Estate increased men's wages from 3 annas to 3 annas 9 pies in 1920. The Manager states :—

" We raised our pay and I do not consider we have had less work in consequence. "

The Rajnagar Tea Company, in recent years, raised women's wages from 2 annas 8 pies to 3 annas. Hingajia (Chargola Tea Association) in 1919 increased men's wages from 3 annas 6 pies to 4 annas. On Gobindpur, an Indian garden, an advance of 1 anna has been given to men and women bringing the *hazira* up to 4 annas. Shamshernagar (Lungla Tea Company) raised women's rates from 2 annas 3 pies to 3 annas in the present year, 1922. The majority of the gardens in this subdivision belong to the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, the Patrakhola Tea Company, the Alinagar Tea Company, and the Lungla Tea Company. There are also a few other gardens of minor importance belonging to other concerns. Most of the estates of the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company are situated in the Bališera Valley. The rates since the 1st of January 1922 are 4 annas and 3 annas for men and women. Previous to that date some of the gardens paid 3 annas 9 pies to men. This rate seems to be still in force in the Sagurnal Tea Estate of this Company which lies in an isolated corner of the subdivision. In all gardens of this Company, the rate for women is 3 annas. An additional rupee is given as a bonus if the full daily task has been completed on 24 or 25 days in the month. Coolies also receive an agreement bonus of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 on contracts for 313 working days. The task has been reduced for fine plucking; on two gardens the *ticca* plucking rate is the pre-war rate. The plucking task is said to take from 4 to 5 hours. The light hoeing task on three gardens is the same as before the war; in *ticca* hoeing, there is also no alteration on two gardens. The hoeing task can be completed in 4 to 5 hours. Some of the estates possess a considerable extent of land for rice cultivation. In three of the four gardens of the Patrakhola Tea Company, the rates for men and women are 3 annas; but on Champarai, a comparatively new garden, which is rather isolated, the rates are 4 annas. The only case of alteration in hoeing rates seems to be at Madhubpur where the rate for deep hoeing has been slightly reduced. Tasks were reduced for fine plucking. One of the Managers of this Company admits that, notwithstanding this reduction, women could not earn as much as in coarse plucking. Most of the gardens have a considerable amount of rice land cultivated by the coolies. The percentage of labourers holding land ranges from 30 to 75 per cent. In recent years rice was sold to the coolies, at Rs. 5 per maund when the market price exceeded that figure. Clothes and blankets were sold at reduced rates to a very limited extent, and in some cases, were given free. The Manager of Madhubpur Tea Estate which belongs to the Patrakhola Company, has stated that coolies are largely indebted to the garden, and, save to a very small extent, that many loans are irrecoverable, and that all land suitable for paddy and sugarcane has already been allotted. On the two gardens of the Alinagar Tea Company, rates are 3 annas for men and women. There has been a reduction in the light and deep hoeing tasks on Alinagar and in the deep hoeing task at Chatlapur. Rates were reduced for fine plucking. On both gardens most of the coolies have land. The plucking task is said to take from 4 to 6 hours to complete and the hoeing task from 4 to 5 hours. From 1919 to 1921 rice concessions were given. The proximity of some of the gardens of these two Companies to Hill Tipperah, where rice is cheap, may partly account for the low rate of wages. On the gardens of the Lungla Company, the rates are :—

	Men.	Women.
1	2	3
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Kaibatti	0 3 0	0 2 8
Shamshernagar	0 3 0	0 3 0
Bhagicherra	0 4 0	0 3 0
Lungla	0 3 0	0 2 3
Etah	0 3 0	0 3 0

The Manager of Kanihatti explains that these rates "are really a recognised minimum wage for various classes," and that coolies can earn more if they wish to and are encouraged to do so. There has been a reduction in plucking tasks due to the introduction of fine plucking. Except at Etah, hoeing tasks have also been reduced. The coolies on most of these gardens, especially on Lungla, are well off as regards land for cultivation. On Etah this is also the case to a smaller extent. Rice was sold, especially in 1920, at a concession rate of Rs. 4 a maund and the gain to the labour force per head was considerable; in some divisions, it meant an addition of over Re. 1 per month to their pay. On some of the gardens, the advances outstanding against the coolies are considerable. At Shamshernagar, 460 coolies owe the garden Rs. 6,592. On Shamshernagar and Bhagicherra up to the present year, the *haziras* for women were 2 annas 3 pies. On Dolo Tea Estate near Patrakhola, the rates are 3 annas 9 pies and 3 annas which have remained unaltered since 1913. *Hazira* and *ticca* light and deep hoeing tasks are the same as in 1913 but the Manager states that the standard of work is inferior.

118. The most striking fact as regards the gardens in this subdivision is the conservative adherence to the old rates which appear to be low. It is true that a coolie can add to his earnings by doing *ticca*, but the opportunities for this on some gardens up to recent years were restricted. The rate of wages also appears to be low taking into consideration the time taken to complete the task. The Patrakhola, Alinagar, and Lungla Tea Companies are in normal times prosperous concerns, and make large profits per acre, but little has been done in the way of raising the *hazira* rates and there has been no appreciable reduction in hoeing tasks except in a few cases. On some of the gardens the average earnings are not unduly low. The wage returns for Patrakhola and Lungla estates, showing the average earnings calculated on the daily working strength, are given :—

Patrakhola.

	1920.				1921.				1922.
	March.		September.		March.		September.		March.
	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men	8	1 11	8	0 2	6	15 7	8	11 6	5 10 10
Women	5	2* 7	7	2 11	5	3 3	7	13 0	4 13 5
Children	2	11 8	3	15 0	2	10 1	4	5 8	2 5 10

Lungla.

Men	8	8 1	8	5 2	8	4 1	6	7 10	7 4 2
Women	5	1 6	6	6 11	4	5 6	5	6 7	5 2 2
Children	3	8 11	3	7 4	3	2 3	2	15 9	3 4 7

In April 1921 there was a three weeks' strike on Lungla. In May 1921 and on two subsequent occasions, there has been trouble at Patrakhola. In spite of heavy recruiting, the labour force on some of the gardens in this sub-division has been greatly reduced as the result of the influenza epidemic and by desertions into Hill Tipperah. The Committee are inclined to think that while there may have been no undue pressure on the labourer to do extra work, he had no alternative if he wished to earn a decent living wage. When prices rose, the daily rate of wage which works out at less than Rs. 5 a month, could hardly be called sufficient even with the agreement bonus. Extra work, while it meant increased earnings, would not conduce to the contentment of the labour force. The coolie does not welcome curtailment of his leisure. This may partially explain why many gardens, in spite of large sums spent in recruiting, have been unable to keep their labour force up to strength. Possibly desertions into Hill Tipperah would have been fewer had the rate of daily wage been raised. The Committee are far from suggesting that the labourer should not be expected to do extra work; but, when the cost of living rose, it would have been reasonable to follow the example of other tea districts and to raise the rate for the standard task. These Companies, when large profits per acre were being made and when the cost of living was rising, could, by declaring smaller dividends, have

afforded to pay an enhanced rate of wages. The wage returns of South Sylhet show that the average earnings remained more or less steady from 1914 up to 1920 :—

SOUTH SYLHET.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including ticca, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	4 15 9	3 5 9	1 15 4	.....	.....	.....
1906	5 0 6	3 9 5	2 2 4	6 6 6	4 15 10	3 5 5
1907	4 15 9	3 9 5	2 1 6	6 5 8	4 14 2	3 3 11
1908	5 5 1	3 11 8	2 4 7	6 10 4	5 5 11	3 9 3
1909	4 9 9	3 15 3	2 3 0	6 8 6	5 7 2	3 7 4
1910	5 0 9	3 10 0	2 1 8	6 6 10	4 14 11	3 5 5
1911	5 6 6	4 2 6	2 6 6	7 0 3	5 7 11	3 11 3
1912	5 7 3	4 4 4	2 4 10	7 0 10	5 11 9	3 9 8
1913	5 10 0	4 2 0	2 6 3	7 2 11	5 9 9	3 7 8
1914	5 10 5	4 3 3	2 6 2	7 4 2	5 9 10	3 8 7
1915	5 10 7	4 2 2	2 5 10	7 5 2	5 9 7	3 9 5
1916	5 10 7	4 3 2	2 6 2	7 5 4	5 10 10	3 8 10
1917	5 10 6	4 2 8	2 6 4	7 5 3	5 10 6	3 9 5
1918	5 10 9	4 3 2	2 6 1	7 5 4	5 11 0	3 9 8
1919	5 10 10	4 1 7	2 6 8	7 5 6	5 11 0	3 9 10
1920	5 11 11	4 5 0	2 8 8	7 6 5	5 13 3	3 11 10
1921	6 3 11	4 12 2	2 13 1	7 15 10	6 9 1	4 1 11
1922	6 5 1	5 0 1	2 5 7	7 15 7	6 13 7	3 8 1
September 1921	6 5 10	5 7 0	2 6 8	8 2 3	7 10 5	3 7 4
March 1922	6 4 4	4 9 2	2 4 6	7 12 11	6 0 9	3 8 11

		Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	{ 1914	13 15 0
	{ 1922	15 13 8
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	13 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures of any particular year are the averages of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

The figures for 1921 show a distinct rise which is mainly due to the fact that the coolie did more work at the old rates. The rise is maintained in 1922 though there is a slight falling off in family earnings as compared with 1921. During the war, women's earnings in the Assam Valley Districts, with few exceptions, showed a gradual advance, indicating that they shared in the prosperity of the gardens by receiving a more generous payment for leaf plucking. The figures show that this does not apply to the South Sylhet gardens. Managers differ in their estimates of what constitutes a decent living wage. There seems to be a general agreement, however, that Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 6 or Rs. 7 for a woman is a reasonable figure. Some would add the bonus to this. If the wage returns are to be taken as a test, coolies were hardly earning a decent living wage prior to 1921. To judge from the latest returns, many coolies are probably earning a decent living wage now. But this is only to a very small extent the result of an increase in the rate of wages.

Now that the tea industry is in a more flourishing condition, the Committee would recommend that an increase of wages should be given on gardens where low rates still prevail.

113. *Karimganj*.—Thirty Managers of gardens in the Karimganj sub-division have sent in replies. The *haziras* paid are tabulated below and give the number of gardens paying the various rates :—

			Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
			0 6 0	0 5 0	0 4 6	0 4 0	0 3 9	0 3 6	0 3 0
Men	...	...	8	3	3	12	2	1	1
Women	...	...	...	1	...	10	...	4	15

In the Chargola Valley, gardens at the time of the exodus in May 1921, raised the rates for men and women from 4 and 3 annas to 6 and 4 annas a day with the exception of Kalinagar, an Indian garden which raised its rates to 5 annas and 4 annas. Tasks were not increased. Agreement bonuses are no longer given. Excluding the Chargola Valley, there has been a rise on only four other gardens in the sub-division. In 1914 Bhubrighat Tea Estate raised *haziras* from 3 annas 6 pies and 2 annas 6 pies to 4 annas and 3 annas. In addition, this garden gives a weekly bonus of one day's pay for six days' work, and has considerably reduced hoeing tasks. In 1913 men's *haziras* in the Longai Division of the Longai Company were advanced from 3 annas to 4 annas. On Sonarupa since 1913 *haziras* have been increased to 4 annas and 3 annas from 3 annas and 2 annas 6 pies. Sabazpur, an Indian garden, raised the *haziras* of men and women from 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies. Outside the Chargola Valley the usual rates are 4 annas for men and 3 annas for women. *Haziras* of 3 annas for men and women are paid only on Samanbagh in the Juri Valley. On this garden the task for light hoeing is 25 *nals* and for deep hoeing 12 *nals*. The task for *ticca* light hoeing is 20 *nals* for 4 annas. There has been no alteration in these tasks since 1913. The Manager states :—

"The necessity for doing more *ticca* work and thus earning more pay to counterbalance higher prices was continually instilled into them (the coolies)."

His reply to question No. 17 is :—

"The unrest, if any, amongst coolies was, I think, mainly due to the cutting down of expenditure. In our own case it meant that coolies were not given the usual agreement bonuses, and a smaller amount of *ticca*, and were also encouraged, and in some cases, forced to take more leave than they wanted and could not, of course, understand the reason. This fact combined with 'Gandhi talk' that was openly being instilled into them by Bengalis in the *bustee* and bazaar, had the effect of unsettling them and making them think there was something wrong."

There is a large area of about 1,200 bighas for rice cultivation on rent-free terms. The labour force consists of 552 men and 573 women. No clothing or blankets are supplied free or at reduced rates. No figures are given as to the loss in rice, but the Manager states that when rice is scarce, it is supplied at 15 per cent. below market rates. The Company is in normal times a prosperous one though a considerable loss was incurred in 1920.

120. Some particulars with regard to gardens in the Longai Valley which have not raised rates may be of interest.

Pathini Tea Company.—The monthly wages of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 remain unchanged since 1913. The Manager, in his replies, has stated that earnings have not increased since 1913, but in his evidence, he explains that he has not actually examined the question. The *hazira* tasks for hoeing—light hoe 30 *nals*, deep hoe 12 to 18 *nals*—have not been altered. The *ticca* light hoeing task seems to be unaltered, but the *ticca* deep hoeing task has been slightly reduced. The *ticca* plucking task is 3 pounds for 2 pice as against 3 pounds for one pice before the war. A plucking or hoeing task is said to take about six hours. There are about 680 acres rent-free land held by 83 per cent. of the labourers out of a labour force of 833 men and 1,123 women; clothing and blankets were issued at reduced rates in deserving cases. No pregnant leave allowance or bonus on the birth of a child is given. A sum of Rs. 20,703 is outstanding against coolies for advances, partly on account of rice issued. The loss on rice for the three years, 1919-21 was Rs. 21,872. It was sold at 7 seers to the rupee. In ordinary circumstances, this is a very prosperous Company.

Sephinjuri.—The rates for men and women are 4 annas with no alteration since 1913. In this Company, earnings are high. Taking two children as equal to one adult, the Manager gives the average pay earned on the average working strength as follows :—

1919.	1921.
Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
6 11 6	8 14 11

There has been a reduction of about one *nal* per *anna* for light and deep hoeing. 1,068 coolies hold 350 acres of rice land at 9 annas an acre. The loss in rice in the last four years was Rs. 32,816-4. The present labour force is: 589 men, 925 women; 384 children.

In the *Longai Tea Company*, the rates are:—

	Men.		Women.	
	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.
Chandkhira	0	3 9	and	0 3 0
Lalkhira	0	4 0	„	0 4 0
Longai Division	0	4 0	„	0 3 0

Since 1918, men's *hasiras* in the Longai Division have been raised from 3 to 4 annas: otherwise there seems to have been no advance.

In all cases, hoeing tasks are practically the same as before the war. An average coolie takes 5 to 6 hours to complete the plucking or hoeing tasks. On Chandkhira and Lalkhira about 85 per cent. of the labourers hold land inside or outside the grant. The rent for garden land is Re. 1 a *heer* and for Government land the ordinary land revenue rates. On Longai about 95 per cent. of the coolies hold land on rent-free terms. For Chandkhira the loss on rice has not been given, but at Longai it amounted to Rs. 13,113 for the years 1916 to 1920.

Hattikhira.—The *hasiras* are 4 annas and 3 annas and have not been altered since 1913. Hoeing tasks remain practically the same. The labour force is inadequate and shows no increase although 1½ lakhs were spent in recruiting in the last five years. There have been many desertions to the villages. An average coolie takes about 5 hours to complete his plucking or hoeing task. There are about 486 acres of rice land in the garden held free or at a nominal rent and 200 acres of paddy and sugar-cane land outside. The loss on rice in the last five years was Rs. 34,378.

Isabheel.—The rates are 4 annas and 3 annas for men and women. The light hoeing task has been reduced from 40 to $\frac{32}{24}$ *nals*, and in the case of deep hoeing from 20 to $\frac{16}{12}$ *nals*. There are 265 *bighas* of land held rent-free by 20 per cent. of the coolies. Women get pregnant leave for three months on full pay. The loss on rice was Rs. 3,000 for 1919 and 1920. In 1920, Dr. McLaughlin, one of the Directors, proposed an increase in pay in the form of a bonus to coolies who did 2½ days' work in a month, but the proposal was not carried out.

121. For the Juri Valley, a decent living wage is said to be Rs. 7 for an adult. In the Longai Valley Rs. 7 and Rs. 6, and in the Chargola Valley Rs. 8 and Rs. 6 are the estimates for men and women respectively. The wage returns of Karimganj sub-division show no appreciable increase between 1914 and 1920 and 1921:—

KARIMGANJ.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including *ticca*, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905	4 10 6	3 5 11	2 9 11	...	...	...
1906	4 10 10	3 5 9	2 8 8	6 6 8	5 3 9	3 12 2
1907	4 11 0	3 6 10	2 6 1	6 8 9	5 1 6	3 8 7
1908	4 12 1	3 7 1	2 7 8	6 11 7	5 3 5	4 4 11
1909	4 10 11	3 7 8	2 6 5	6 7 2	5 3 4	3 11 3
1910	4 14 5	3 11 11	2 7 0	6 7 11	5 1 3	3 9 2
1911	4 11 5	3 12 4	2 8 2	6 7 7	5 6 6	3 11 3
1912	4 13 1	3 11 1	2 7 7	7 2 2	5 10 10	3 4 10
1913	4 5 11	3 5 8	2 6 7	7 2 1	5 10 2	3 14 1
1914	4 14 2	3 12 4	2 10 5	6 14 4	5 6 7	3 14 4
1915	3 15 11	3 4 4	2 5 1	6 15 7	5 3 6	3 10 9
1916	4 0 8	3 5 10	2 7 7	6 10 2	5 8 6	3 11 10
1917	5 1 4	4 0 1	2 11 9	6 7 6	5 5 10	3 10 8
1918	4 14 6	3 13 3	2 9 8	6 10 8	5 7 6	3 9 1
1919	5 6 1	4 2 4	2 11 9	6 15 11	5 10 2	3 18 0
1920	5 10 7	4 11 3	3 9 4	5 13 0	6 5 6	3 15 6
1921	5 14 0	4 1 4	2 15 10	7 10 0	5 11 10	4 1 11
1922	5 13 1	4 1 9	2 13 1	8 3 4	6 5 4	4 7 4
September 1921	6 0 3	4 4 5	2 12 5	8 4 1	6 12 11	4 9 5
March 1922	5 9 11	3 15 0	2 13 8	8 2 7	5 13 5	4 5 3

	1914	Rs. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	...	13 7 7
Percentage of rise in family earnings	...	15 14 1
	...	18 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the average of March of that year and of September of the previous year.

Men's wages for 1920 show a severe drop though women's wages rose appreciably. In 1921 there was a considerable increase in men's wages as compared with 1914, but women's earnings only show a few annas increase. As regards gardens in the Chargola Valley, where wages have been raised, there can be no doubt that the coolies receive a decent living wage. This is corroborated by the wage returns for these estates for September 1921 and March 1922. The average earnings for the whole sub-division for these months show an appreciable advance, but this is largely due to the increased earnings in the Chargola Valley. Outside the Chargola Valley, there seems to be an unfortunate reluctance to raise the rate of wages to meet the increased cost of living. In making this statement, the large area of rice land under cultivation on many of the gardens has been taken into consideration. All coolies, however, have not got cultivation. There has been little appreciable reduction in hoeing tasks. Speaking generally, it is doubtful if the earnings outside the Chargola Valley correspond to the estimates of what constitutes a decent living wage. It is only fair to state that the earnings of coolies on some gardens, for instance, Sephinjuri and Bhubrighat, are adequate. The following are the wage returns for Bhubrighat :—

—	1920.		1921.		1922.
	March.	September.	March.	September.	March.
1	2	3	4	5	6
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Men	10 7 10	10 2 11	9 3 8	8 10 0	8 8 9
Women	7 10 0	7 3 2	6 5 7	6 5 8	7 10 2
Children	4 7 1	5 1 5	3 15 8	3 15 1	4 9 0

This garden in 1920-21 sold concession rice at Rs. 5 a maund. On other estates in the Longai Valley the rate was 7 seers to the rupee, which is equivalent to Rs. 5-12-0 a maund. From the coolie's point of view, this was dear rice. The Committee consider that there is room for an increase in wages on gardens where low rates prevail.

PART III.—GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Cost of working relative to rise in wages.

122. An increase in the rate of wages or a reduction in tasks would naturally result in an increase in the cost of working a garden. In the case of leaf plucking, the effect of a rise of wages is obscured by the tendency in recent years to resort to fine plucking. On a garden in the Nowgong district, where the rate of wages has remained unaltered since 1913, the cost per maund of manufactured tea was :—

1913.	1920.	1921.	Estimate for 1922.
1	2	3	4
Rs. a. p. 5 1 10	Rs. a. p. 4 12 3	Rs. a. p. 6 6 2	Rs. a. p. 5 11 2

The increase in cost in 1921 is due to the adoption of fine plucking. On Bokahula garden of the Jorhat Tea Company the wages are Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 since January 1922. Previous to 1916 when they were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5, wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4. The cost of plucking per seer of green leaf was as follows :—

1913.	1916.	1919.	1920.	1921.	Estimate for 1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Pies. 4.554	Pies. 4.42	Pies. 4.44	Pies. 4.53	Pies. 5.52	Pies. 5.10

Though the cost has risen in 1921 and 1922, it is impossible to say how far this is due to a rise in wages and how far to the introduction of fine plucking.

Generally speaking, there has not been much increase in the cost of light hoeing. In the case of deep hoeing, the difference is more appreciable. The figures of cost are, however, not always easy to understand. For example, on Bokahula garden, the cost was :—

	1913.	1921.	Estimate for 1922.
1	2	3	4
Light hoeing	Rs. a. p. 2 7 0	Rs. a. p. 2 8 7 (<i>hazira</i>) 2 9 3 (<i>ticca</i>).	Rs. a. p. 2 8 0 (including <i>ticca</i>).
Deep ,,	4 9 0	4 10 8	4 4 0

The hoeing tasks are said to have remained unaltered. As men's wages have been increased by two rupees a month since 1913, a wider difference between the actual cost of light hoeing in 1913 and the estimated cost in 1922 might have been expected. It was suggested by the Superintendent of the Jorhat Tea Company that the cost in 1913 was high, on account of employment of village labour which was paid at higher rates than ordinary garden labour. On a garden in the Nowgong district, where wages have not been raised and tasks have not been reduced, the cost per acre was :—

	1913.	1920.	1921.
1	2	3	4
Deep hoeing	Rs. a. p. 6 6 6	Rs. a. p. 6 1 9	Rs. a. p. 6 6 0
Light ,,	3 7 6	3 6 6	3 1 0

The Committee recognise that the factors which enter into the cost of working are complex and that Managers are in the best position to explain variations.

123. Stress has rightly been laid on the necessity of taking into consideration joint family earnings in the case of tea-garden labourers. It may be convenient to adopt Mr. Melitus' standard of an average working family as consisting of one working man, one working woman, and three-tenths of a working child. The figures tabulated below show the family earnings calculated on the average daily working strength. For 1914 the figures are based on the average earnings of September 1913 and March 1914, and for 1922 on the average earnings of September 1921 and March 1922. The last column in the table indicates the percentage of increase in 1922 as compared with 1914 :—

District.	1914.	1922.	Percentage of rise.
1	2	3	4
Lakhimpur Sadr	Rs. a. p. 18 2 4	Rs. a. p. 21 15 2	21
North Lakhimpur	15 13 10	20 4 3	28
Darrang	14 14 10	18 15 8	27
Mangaldai	15 11 5	18 15 4	21
Sibsagar	15 15 11	20 1 0	26
Jorhat	15 7 7	18 0 11	17
Tolaghat	14 0 11	17 7 4	25
Nowgong	16 11 9	18 8 10	11
Lachar	13 13 6	15 0 4	9
Hailakandi	13 11 7	15 8 10	14
North Sylhet	13 0 4	14 2 10	9
Taibaganj	14 12 1	16 8 9	12
South Sylhet	13 15 0	15 13 8	13
Karimganj	13 7 7	15 14 1	18

Comparison of family earnings in 1914 and at the present time.

For each of those years, the average earnings calculated on the total number of labourers on the books would be approximately 25 per cent. less than these figures. Earnings are highest in Lakhimpur Sadr, and lowest in North Sylhet. Several gardens in the latter subdivision are, however, hardly typical. Excluding North Sylhet, Cachar shows the lowest earnings. In Cachar, a family earns approximately 7 rupees less than in Lakhimpur Sadr. In both North Sylhet and in Cachar earnings have increased only 9 per cent. since 1914 as compared with a rise of 21 per cent. in Lakhimpur Sadr. The largest increase is in North Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sibsagar and Golaghat. The rise in Nowgong is much the lowest in the Assam Valley. But in 1914 the average earnings in that district exceeded those of all other districts in that Valley except Lakhimpur Sadr. Generally speaking, the cost of living in the Surma Valley is less than in any district of the Assam Valley. This would partly account for the average earnings being less. Many Companies in Upper Assam are also in a better position to pay higher wages than gardens in the Surma Valley. The low percentage of rise in the Surma Valley since 1914 is, however, noteworthy. Habiganj, though it shows a smaller rise than some other subdivisions in the Valley, heads the list for average earnings. The explanation given in the analogous case of Nowgong applies equally to Habiganj. Calculated on the basis of the adult labour force in the different tea districts, excluding Kamrup, on the 30th of June 1921, the percentage of the rise in family earnings for the whole Province is 19.2. On a similar basis, the percentage for the Assam Valley is 22.3 and for the Surma Valley 12.3.

Cost of living in March 1914 and in March 1922.

124. The absence of any index number for Assam, coupled with the wide variations in the budgets of coolie families which are available, makes it difficult to frame any reliable estimate of the relative cost of living in tea-gardens at the present time. Schedule B, appended to the rules under Act VI of 1901, lays down the daily allowance of food to be provided for an adult emigrant *en route* to Assam. The quantities fixed in *chattaks* are: rice 12, *dal* 2, vegetables 3, salt $\frac{1}{2}$, mustard oil $\frac{3}{8}$ and condiments of various kinds $\frac{3}{8}$. The monthly quantities, in seers, are approximately:—rice 23, *dal* 3 $\frac{1}{2}$, vegetables 6, salt 1, mustard oil 1, and condiments about $\frac{1}{2}$. Managers ordinarily estimate 25 seers of rice as the monthly requirement for a working coolie, which is somewhat in excess of the scheduled scale given above. The *Assam Gazette* quotes the market rates of the chief foodstuffs and also of kerosene oil at the headquarters of districts and subdivisions. The average of these, in the tea districts, has been taken as the basis of calculation. The periods selected for comparison are the last fortnight of March in 1914 and 1922. For spices, vegetables, fish, household utensils and furniture, tobacco and molasses, price statistics are not published. With the information derived from Major Jack's "Economic Life of a Bengal District" and from such coolie budgets as are available, it is possible to ascertain the approximate expenditure on these items in 1914 in relation to the total budget expenditure. In his budget of "a family in comfort," Major Jack has assumed that the amount spent in clothing is one-tenth of the total expenditure. Managers generally would agree with this estimate. According to information kindly furnished by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the wholesale price in March 1914, of a pair of coolie *dhotis* was Re. 1-2-3 and in March 1922 Rs. 2-12-0. In April 1914 the wholesale price of a pair of coolie *saris* was Re. 1-6-4 and in March 1922 Rs. 2-14-0. Owing to the high cost of clothing at the present time, a coolie probably spends less on extra clothes such as cold weather coats, but he would probably still purchase the minimum amount of necessary clothing.

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125. Budgets for 1914 and 1922, for an adult male labourer have been framed on these lines :

Name of commodity.	Budget of an adult male labourer in March 1914.	Percentage weight assigned to each commodity in proportion to the aggregate expenditure in March 1914.	Index number of the price of each item in March 1922, taking March 1914 as the basic period.	Index number multiplied by the weight, the total giving the index number of the cost of living in March 1922, compared with March 1914.	Budget of an adult male labourer in March 1922, on the standard of March 1914.
1	2	3	4	5	6
	Rs. a. p.				Rs. a. p.
Rice	3 0 0 (at Rs. 4-13 per maund).	58	108	62.64	3 4 0 (at Rs. 5-3 per maund).
Dal	0 7 6 (at Rs. 5 per maund).	9	200	18.00	0 15 0 (at Rs. 10 per maund).
Salt	0 1 0 (at Rs. 2-9 per maund).	1½	183	2.20	0 1 9 (at Rs. 4-11 per maund).
Mustard oil	0 7 0 (at Rs. 17-10 per maund).	8	146	11.68	0 10 3 (at Rs. 25-12 per maund).
Spices	0 1 0 ...	1½	150	1.80	0 1 6.
Vegetables and fish	0 5 0 ...	6	150	9.00	0 7 6.
Clothes	0 8 6 ...	10	241	24.10	1 4 5.
Kerosene oil	0 1 0 (at Rs. 5-3 per maund).	1½	203	2.43	0 2 0 (at Rs. 10-7 per maund).
Utensils and furniture	0 2 6 ...	3	150	4.50	0 3 9.
Tobacco and molasses	0 2 0 ...	2½	150	3.60	0 3 0.
Total	5 8 6 ...	100	...	139.95	7 5 2.

No allowance has been made for milk, betel-nut, ceremonies, entertainments and liquor. Many coolies have their own cattle, and gardens often supply milk free of cost to mothers and children. Betelnut is a negligible item. Expenditure on religious ceremonies and on occasional feasts to fellow caste-men forms part of a coolie's budget. It is difficult, however, to strike an average. Probably since the cost of living rose less is spent in this way. It may perhaps be assumed that where liquor is consumed, the cost is met from the balance which remains after the purchase of food, clothing and other necessaries. Owing to the present high price of *dal* probably less of this commodity is used. Cheaper pulses are consumed just as margarine was freely substituted for butter in Britain during the war. Expenditure on mustard oil, vegetables and fish is likely to be more restricted at the present time. Rice is subject to seasonal fluctuations of price. Owing to the high proportion which this article of diet bears to the total expenditure, any large variation in its market price would cause an appreciable effect on the index number. It is interesting to note that in the second fortnight of April 1914, the average price of rice in the tea districts was Rs. 4-13-7 a maund; for the same period in 1922 the price was Rs. 5-7-6 as against Rs. 5-3-0 in the previous month. In the second fortnight of May 1922, the average price had risen to Rs. 5-9-9 a maund. The budgets (*vide* appendix) framed by Mr. Powell of the Dekhari Tea Company (Lakhimpur) show a difference of about 37 or 38 per cent. between the cost of living in 1914 and the latter part of 1921. The price of rice has been assumed to be Rs. 5 per maund in both these years. The rise was therefore in respect of articles other than rice.

126. The index number—139.95—makes no pretence to accuracy. It represents a diffident attempt to arrive at the approximate difference in the cost of living in 1914 as compared with the present time. Any conclusions based on this index number must be accepted with caution. If all-India or preferably provincial mass units of consumption of the various articles in the budget were available for weighing purposes, a more accurate result might perhaps be obtained. This, however, is doubtful. The personal equation enters largely into the budgets of tea-garden coolies; the proportionate expenditure on different items may present wide variations. How far

this would affect the index number, now calculated, would depend on whether an article to which too large or too small a weight had been assigned varied in price much more or less than other commodities. Though the cost of living in the case of an adult male labourer has been estimated at Rs. 7-5-2 in March 1922, variations will be found in different districts and in gardens of the same district. Thus, outside the area where rice is sold by the gardens at Rs. 3 a maund, living is cheaper in Sylhet than in Dibrugarh. In so far as a coolie purchases concession rice from the garden or grows a portion of his own foodstuffs, the cost of living would be reduced. A woman, and to a greater degree a child, would live cheaper than a man and if all live in a family, there would be a considerable reduction in expenditure. The estimate takes no account of savings or expenditure on petty luxuries, and hence a decent living wage would exceed the figure given for the bare cost of living.

127. The joint earnings in different districts have been tabulated in a previous paragraph. It will be seen that they have not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living as represented by the index number for March 1922. In other words, the rise in *real* wages is appreciably less than the rise in *nominal* wages. The purchasing power of the present level of wages is less than in 1914. This is more especially the case in the Surma Valley. Reference is invited to Mr. Dutta's statement in the "Enquiry into the rise of prices in India", that in 1912 the *real* wages of tea-garden coolies in Assam had fallen 5 per cent. *below* while those of agricultural labourers in India had risen 38 per cent. *above* the level of the standard period (1890-94). The Report of the Board of Revenue on the Revenue administration of the United Provinces for the year ending 30th September 1921 states (paragraph 60) :—

"The demand for labour was again in excess of the supply, and wages rose in consequence proportionately to the increase in the cost of living, so that labourers did not suffer."

It can hardly be a matter of surprise if, under these favourable conditions, labourers from the United Provinces should regard the attractions offered on many estates in Assam as insufficient and should hesitate to leave their home districts.

Finding of
the Com-
mittee on the
first term of
reference.

128. Managers have expressed the opinion that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. The Committee find it difficult to give a definite answer to the question. In a matter of this kind the evidence of the eye is often more valuable than verbal testimony, but as it has been a physical impossibility to visit more than a small proportion of the numerous gardens in the Province, it has not been easy to come to any definite conclusion. The attractiveness to the coolie of a particular garden often depends on the net advantages and not on money earnings alone. Other important factors are the possibility of obtaining land for cultivation, the opportunities of other subsidiary means of livelihood, proximity to a bazaar, ample leisure, the healthiness of the locality, and last but by no means least, the personality of the Manager. It would be a mistake to adopt, in the case of any individual garden, the general conclusion arrived at as regards the adequacy or inadequacy of wages in any particular tea district without taking into consideration the conditions prevailing on the estate. The Committee believe that the analysis which has been made of the wages earned, district by district, is of more practical utility than any attempt to sum up the position as regards the whole Province. They are satisfied, however, that, speaking generally, the remuneration is adequate on gardens in the Assam Valley. In the case of the Surma Valley, they can only endorse that finding subject to the reservations made in the detailed analysis.

It seems reasonable to infer that the coolie's standard of living must have been lowered of late years. If earnings have not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living, this is inevitable. There is no reason, however, to believe that, speaking generally, the labourer has not had sufficient food to maintain him in health which is the primary consideration, but obviously he must have had less money to spend on clothing and petty luxuries, while the possibilities of saving must have been very limited in most cases. At the same time, it is difficult to believe that a lower standard of living has been voluntarily adopted by the labourer. Only force of circumstances has compelled him to accept the lower standard of living. The Committee would express the hope that the Tea Industry will, before long, be in a position to enable him to regain, if not to raise, the standard which he had attained when the cost of living was less.

Tea District
Sub-Commi-
tees should
recommend
rates of wa-
ges.

129. The Committee suggest that the present district Sub-Committees should recommend what they consider to be a decent monthly or daily rate of wage, not a mere subsistence allowance, but a wage that would suffice to keep the labourer in health and reasonable comfort with the possibility of saving a little. This should be

a wage which the average coolie can earn in a reasonable time. It may be supplemented by *ticca* earnings. It has been suggested that the task for this wage should not occupy more than six hours and that an anna for an hour's work is a fair rate. The Committee refrain from passing any definite opinion on this point as they believe that Managers are a reasonable and fair-minded body of men and that the district Sub-Committees are in the best position to say what is a fair task for a decent living wage. It is possible that certain tasks might have to be altered; for example, a task of deep hoeing takes longer than one of light hoeing. Managers in the Assam Valley, in reply to question 24—as to what constitutes a decent living monthly wage—have, with few exceptions, given a figure which corresponds to the monthly or daily rate of wage for the ordinary daily task which is at present in force on the gardens. In the Surma Valley, however, the daily rate of wage paid for the fixed task is, in many cases, considerably below the figure given by Managers in estimating a decent living wage. The rate of wages should be fixed on the assumption that a coolie has no cultivation or other subsidiary means of livelihood. It does not seem fair to pay a low rate of wages on the ground that a garden is well off for land for rice cultivation. It may be that all the land available has already been distributed. The new coolie is not likely, as a rule, to be in a position to take to cultivation till he has been some years on the garden.

130. It is true that district Sub-Committees have no executive power and that the ultimate decision must rest with the Agents or Directors. At the same time, due consideration should be given to the recommendations of those who are on the spot and know best what is required. The Committee are glad to note the tendency to attach greater weight to the deliberations of the Sub-Committees. Mr. Crawford of Messrs. James Finlay and Company, at the annual meeting of the Indian Tea Association in Calcutta in March 1922, stated that it was imperative that each sub-district should carefully consider its own particular problems and work together in harmony while it was essential that Managers should freely discuss wage problems. Where a neighbouring estate had decided to increase wages or had altered tasks, the Sub-Committee should record their opinion in the minutes which should be communicated to the Directors and Agents, as well as to the estates interested. He further remarked :

"My visits up-country and conversations with representatives of the Branches in Calcutta, confirm the opinion I have held that sufficient importance is not being attached to the District Sub-Committees."

131. The general opinion of Managers is that earnings in the cold weather are less than at other seasons. In the last two or three years, many gardens, by introducing the unit system or by allowing more opportunities for *ticca* earnings in the cold weather, have endeavoured to equalise earnings throughout the year. The fixing of a decent living wage as suggested in the preceding paragraph would have a similar effect. Coolies who have got their own crops to reap or who can find profitable employment as harvesters in the villages are not likely to work full time in the garden. Others again, who have done well in the busy season, can also afford to have an easy time in the off season.

The comparative cheapness of paddy in the cold weather when the crops are being reaped is a partial explanation of the smaller musters at this time of year.

132. Question 41 reads :—

"How far do you think it true that any appreciable rise in the rate of wages would result in the coolie not earning more from the garden, but in his doing less work for the same pay?"

The effect of a rise in the rate of wages on coolies' earnings.

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A few answers may be quoted :—

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Manager of Saphinjuri :—"It can safely be said that this would occur in 90 per cent. of cases."

Manager of Bhubrighat :—"I believe that improvident and intemperate coolies would do less work in response to an appreciable rise in the rate of wages. Probably the thrifty worker would not do less."

Manager of Samanbagh :—"Up to a certain point 'Yes'; beyond that 'No.'"

Manager of Malnicherra :—"About 50 per cent. of the coolies would, I believe, do less work unless the system is adopted of giving a high wage for full work and a considerably lower wage for part work."

Manager of Laskarpur :—"The good class coolie would no doubt earn more from the garden. Coolies who have no idea of saving money would very likely do less work for the same money."

Manager of Chatlapore :—"In the majority of cases the coolie will limit his earnings to the amount necessary for his requirements."

- Manager of Deanston* :—"The higher the wages the less work."
- Manager of Shamsbernagar* :—"A good coolie will earn more, but a poor one I do not think would."
- Manager of Burtoll* :—"They would work less and earn much about the same."
- Manager of Pallorbund* :—"Any large increase in the rate of wages would result in the coolie doing less work and earning little more pay."
- Manager of Koomber* :—"In all probability as is common at home and abroad so with the coolie, more pay would result in less work."
- Manager of Doodputlee* :—"I am convinced that a large number of coolies only do enough work to cover their actual food requirements and trust to chance for their clothes, and if they get this amount of pay for less work, they will do less."
- Manager of Hattigarh* :—"He will do less work for the same pay or alternative periods of hard work with periods of doing nothing."
- Manager of Rupajuli* :—"Experience is that the lowering of tasks almost invariably results in the coolie doing less work."
- Manager of Halem* :—"My experience here has proved that the average coolie will not work more than he needs to. Increased wages mean less work given."
- Manager of Majulighur* :—"To a very considerable extent."
- Manager of Nahorani* :—"Many coolies aim at a certain amount weekly and only do enough work to bring them in that amount."
- Manager of Ambuckie* :—"I have had practical experience that it is the case."
- Manager of Jiajuri* :—"This is well known and proved not only among such people in India but also at home."
- Manager of Rungajau* :—"Generally less work."
- Superintendent of Jorhat Tea Company* :—"Yes this is shown from a decrease in musters that the coolies' desire is to have as easy a time as possible and earn sufficient to keep themselves in comfort according to their standard of living."
- Manager of Kanu* :—"There is not in my mind the slightest doubt that an appreciable rise in the rate of wages will most certainly result in the coolie not earning more from the garden but in his doing less work for the same pay."
- Manager of Dooria* :—"Certain classes of *lettra* (lazy) labour will not earn more money than is sufficient to keep them in existence and *lettra* labour would do less work for the same pay."
- Manager of Amguri* :—"Perhaps in the case of coolies who have saved money."
- Manager of Maijan* :—"From experience acquired from the working of the present increase of pay given to the coolies in this district, the average coolie only cares to earn sufficient for his necessary wants."
- Manager of Panitola* :—"It is my opinion that any further rise in the rate of pay in the garden would only result in less work for the same pay."
- Manager of Pabhojan* :—"To a very considerable extent."
- Manager of Tingri Tea Company* :—"I consider it absolutely true without any qualification."
- Manager of Dekhari* :—"Coolies work a less number of days since the rates have been increased."
- Superintendent of Assam Frontier Company* :—"He would do less work."

133. There is thus a practical consensus of opinion that any appreciable rise in the rate of wages would result in the labourer doing just sufficient work to enable him to earn the same amount as before. The Committee are not disposed to accept this view without some qualification. If the increase in the rate of wages corresponds more or less to the rise in the cost of living, they think it probable, unless the standard of living has fallen, that the average coolie will be inclined to do as much work while some may even be encouraged by the higher wage to do more. If the rise in wages is in excess of the increased cost of living, many would probably do less work. There are of course lazy individuals who will be content to earn just enough to keep themselves alive whatever the wage may be. The correctness of the view expressed by the Committee is corroborated by the wage returns of the various districts which show an appreciable increase in earnings of late years. In some measure, this is the result of increased *ticca* earnings, but the successive rises granted in the rate of wages have contributed largely to the result. Two concrete examples may be cited. In the Jorhat Company, the wages in 1913, were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4. In 1921, they were raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6. The Superintendent has stated the average earnings to be as follows:—

	Men.			Women.			Children.		
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
1913	6	9	10	5	7	2	3	12	11
1921	8	13	10	7	6	9	5	0	11

The wage returns of typical gardens in the Chargola Valley, where the rates were raised in May 1921, illustrate the rise in earnings due to the increase in the rate of wages :—

	March. 1920.	Septem.ber. 1920.	March. 1921.	September. 1921.	March. 1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
<i>Maguracherra.—</i>					
Men	7 8 3	6 11 0	8 4 4	8 14 0	8 15 0
Women	5 7 1	5 10 2	4 7 9	7 6 4	6 2 1
Children	4 2 8	4 2 11	2 11 7	4 13 9	4 7 6
<i>Bidyannagar.—</i>					
Men	7 11 9	9 0 4	9 6 2	11 1 6	9 14 5
Women	4 12 2	5 2 1	5 11 7	7 10 10	5 15 2
Children	3 6 1	3 9 2	4 14 1	5 5 4	4 5 6
<i>Kalinagar.—</i>					
Men	6 12 5	7 13 1	6 4 11	8 12 8	8 13 10
Women	5 10 3	6 14 7	4 15 9	9 14 0	6 8 0
Children	4 3 10	4 13 6	2 15 9	6 10 6	5 1 6
<i>Goombhira.—</i>					
Men	5 15 3	6 1 6	5 10 1	10 0 5	9 10 4
Women	5 6 4	6 0 7	5 5 7	7 14 8	7 1 4
Children	3 9 6	3 7 3	4 7 1	4 15 0	5 12 3
<i>Mukamcherra.—</i>					
Men	5 5 10	6 3 3	5 5 1	10 9 2	9 4 0
Women	4 4 2	5 1 0	3 11 7	9 9 0	5 9 6
Children	3 6 11	4 8 6	3 2 0	6 4 2	4 13 3
<i>Anipur.—</i>					
Men	6 4 5	7 15 7	6 1 1	9 13 2	9 8 8
Women	4 14 10	5 14 7	4 5 9	7 2 5	5 12 9
Children	3 12 4	4 10 4	3 4 5	5 8 11	5 13 5

134. In February 1921, in the course of a discussion with representatives of the tea industry, the late Governor of Assam, Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell, raised the question whether coolies in the past had ever received a bonus on profits corresponding to the commission which is given to Managers and the staff. The answer was in the negative. Managers pointed out that in bad years coolies would not understand why it was impossible to give a bonus. The late Governor was, however, of opinion that the question merited further consideration.

Question 34 (b) reads :—

"Do you favour the idea of giving coolies a bonus proportionate to the prosperity of the garden, year by year? If so, what form should it take?"

The general reply given by Managers is that coolies would not understand why no bonus or a reduced bonus was given in bad years. It would be unfair to criticise the industry for not spending money in prosperous years for the benefit of the labourer in the shape of hospitals, water-supply, improved housing and sanitation, including a system of conservancy. In Britain, where the standard of education and general intelligence among the working classes, is infinitely higher than in India, schemes of profit-sharing have not made much progress. The Committee are of opinion that a distribution of a cash bonus is impracticable and undesirable. The Bombay Industrial Disputes Committee, in their Report, which was recently issued, have remarked that bonuses are wasteful. They state that it is an almost universal experience that a bonus has no permanent effect on the standard of living, and that it is immediately dissipated in increased absenteeism

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or else in the grog shop. The present Committee agree with this view. In their opinion the first essential of Indian labour is a higher standard of living. Any spare money which employers have would be better spent on education, superannuation benefits, and welfare work generally.

Indebtedness
of coolies to
estates.

135. One result of issuing rations of concession rice weekly on credit and of realising the cost at the end of the month by deductions from the coolies' earnings is that the labourer not infrequently finds himself left with little or nothing in hand for the purchase of other necessaries. Moreover, rice advances are sometimes kept outstanding against the labourer over a series of years. From time to time, when his earnings permit, deductions are made with a view to reduce the debt. A system of this kind is bound to create discontent and misunderstanding. When rice is issued on credit, there is perhaps a tendency for a labourer to take more than he actually requires. If cash payment had to be made at the time of issue, he might be more careful. The necessity of doing more work to pay for other necessaries might be more obvious. The Committee have no hesitation in condemning the system of rice advances on credit as pernicious. They are entirely in favour of cash payments. The economic position of the labourer is undoubtedly unsatisfactory, when he is heavily in debt to the garden on account of rice advances. In Chapter V, cases have been cited where coolies who were not under Act XIII agreements were refused discharge certificates on the ground that they owed money to the estate. It would not, therefore, be unfair to hold that the indebtedness of the labourer affects his freedom.

CHAPTER V.

ACT XIII.

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136. Act XIII of 1859 had to a large extent replaced Act VI of 1901 before the final repeal of Act VI in 1915. In Chapter X of the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 a brief account is given of the reasons for the enactment of Act XIII and of the previous history of the working of the Act in the labour districts up to 1906. As far back as 1890, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr. Quinton, expressed the opinion that Act XIII was serving the purpose of a transitional stage from a strict penal contract to one enforceable only in the Civil Court, a result which, in his opinion, all were anxious to reach. But, after the lapse of over 30 years, the tea industry still profess their inability to dispense with the particular form of penal contract embodied in the Act. By Act XII of 1920 which came into force on the 12th March of 1920 the original Act of 1859 has been considerably modified.

137. From the Statement of Objects and Reasons it appears that the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, XIII of 1859, is recognised to be in its present form unsuited in many respects to modern conditions, and has also been found capable of abuse by employers. In the first place the amending Act fixes a period of limitation for a complaint at three months, and confines the utilization by employers of the provisions of the Act to cases where the advance does not exceed Rs. 300, and the time for performance of the contract, where a time is fixed, does not exceed one year. In all cases whether a time is fixed or not, the Magistrate may in his discretion refuse to put the Act in operation if he considers the terms of the contract are substantially unfair to the workman. Similarly, the Act empowers the Magistrate to throw out a complaint after examining the complainant on oath and without compelling the appearance of the workman if he thinks there is no ground for proceeding; and, by a provision analogous to that of section 250 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, to award the workman compensation if the complaint is false or frivolous or vexatious. Further where a breach of contract has been proved, the Magistrate has discretion to order either repayment of the advance, or performance of the contract and is no longer bound by the option of the complainant. He also has power to allow time for repayment and to order payment by instalments, and if the order is for performance of the contract, to fix a time not exceeding one year therefor. Any such order may be varied at the discretion of the Magistrate but not so as to extend the period fixed for performance of a contract beyond one year. Finally the Act enables imprisonment of either description to be ordered as a punishment for a breach of contract. Under the old law (Act XIII of 1859) imprisonment, if ordered, had to be rigorous.

138. It will be seen that the alterations in the amended Act were all in favour of the labourer. In the Legislative Assembly on the 10th of September 1921, Mr. Joshi brought forward a Resolution that Act XIII should be repealed. The Honourable Sir William Vincent admitted that the repeal of an Act which included a penalty of imprisonment for breach of contract was in accordance with modern feeling. He pointed out that, so far as his information went, the Act was at present worked very fairly and no complaints to the contrary had been made; further that it was important to consider what the practical effect of the repeal would be on industry and that, in case of repeal, employers of labour should be given a reasonable opportunity to adjust themselves to new conditions. In summing up, the Honourable Home Member said that the Government were prepared to adopt the view that the repeal of this law was desirable on general grounds of principle and that if after consulting local Governments and public opinion it was found that there was a fairly general consensus of opinion in favour of repeal a Bill would be introduced to give effect to the principle. Meantime, enquiries would be made as to how the Act as amended had worked, whether it was unfair, whether its retention was necessary, and whether its repeal would materially affect the industrial progress of this country. In letter No. 553F. of the 18th January 1922, the Government of Assam informed the Committee that Government would be glad to receive their views on the subject of Act XIII, whether the Committee recorded a definite finding or not in their Report. Quite apart from this letter, the Committee from the first have felt that the question of Act XIII contracts had an intimate concern with wages. It was for this reason that all Managers were asked in the questionnaire to furnish information about the working of the Act (Questions 74 to 78). Most witnesses have been asked to state their views and Members of the Committee have usually made enquiries on the subject of contracts and agreements on the occasion of visits to gardens.

139. It may be useful to sum up the findings of the 1906 Committee on the working of Act XIII. They found that it had "continued to gain in popularity with employers as a stepping stone towards free labour." Abuses were said to be few. Owing to the association of Act XIII with Act VI, there was a tendency to exercise the powers of private arrest in the case of Act XIII absconders and even of free labourers. The benefits enjoyed by labourers under Act VI were, however, generally extended to those under Act XIII. Statistics were quoted to show that owing to the small number of punishments the Act was not harshly administered. There was no reason to suppose that agreements were obtained by force or fraud. Frequently agreements were for a number of days or completed tasks and were open to abuse. The Committee disapproved of contracts for a longer term than 313 days. They were of opinion that "if Act XIII were abolished to-morrow, probably most gardens would have to continue the same procedure as at present of giving advances or bonuses and taking agreements in return, for coolies are accustomed to the system and would most likely resent its stoppage." The Committee considered that Act XIII worked fairly well in practice, notwithstanding that there was some uncertainty in its administration. They were inclined to endorse the opinions expressed by Sir W. Ward and Mr. Quinton which were accepted by the Government of India in their despatch of 5th October 1891 to the Secretary of State, who agreed to the retention of the Act. The Secretary of State, however, directed that the working of Act XIII should be watched as carefully as that of the Labour Act I of 1882 as he considered "its continued retention is not without serious prospective dangers." The Committee were averse to the amendment of an Act which applied to the whole of India simply to suit the needs of a particular industry. They did not recommend its replacement by a special local Act, as they were inclined to believe that penal labour legislation in the past had not been in the best interests of the tea industry. The planter, in their opinion, would not welcome a new Act unless it gave him a hold over his labour almost as strong as he had under Act VI. The significant summary was that "although it is clearly right that in flagrant cases of dishonesty the labourer should be liable to imprisonment, still the less the planter relies on the criminal law to secure work from his labour force the better." The Committee were under the impression that Act XIII contracts were generally limited to a period of 313 days but occasionally extended to long terms of 939 days.

140. The Committee propose to examine the working of the Act in the Criminal Courts since 1st July 1920. Records of cases from that date have been called for and examined by the Secretary of the Committee. In addition to complaints by Managers against coolies, for absconding, or neglect of work, there are what is known as discharge certificate cases, that is to say, a coolie frequently comes to Court and applies for a discharge certificate on the ground that he has finished his agreement. There is no provision in the Act which entitles the applicant to such a certificate, but it is a well established practice, when such an application is made, to enquire from the employer if he has any claim on the coolie, and, if he has none, to grant a certificate upon which the coolie places considerable value. The procedure is indicated in section 155 of Act VI whereby when a labour contract was completed the employer was bound to endorse on the labourer's copy of the contract the fact of determination, and, in case of his failure to do so, the Inspector could make the endorsement, or grant a certificate.

SURMA VALLEY DIVISION.

SYLHET DISTRICT.

141. *North Sylhet.*—There are very few gardens in the Sadr subdivision, and from 1st July 1920 to March 1922 there was no case against absconders.

South Sylhet subdivision.—In South Sylhet, from 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921, there were 241 cases mostly against coolies who had absconded or had been enticed into Hill Tipperah. In some instances there seems to have been considerable disproportion in the sentences awarded; for example, a coolie, who worked 229 days out of 313, was sentenced to 3 months' hard labour; another who completed 225 days out of 313 received a sentence of one month. From 1st July 1921 up to March 1922 there have only been 29 cases.

142. *Karimganj subdivision.*—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 62 cases, of which about half were for discharge certificates. In one case a Manager reported that the coolie was not under agreement but that he owed money to the garden. The Subdivisional Officer rightly gave him a discharge certificate and informed

the Manager that his remedy lay in the Civil Court. In the case of a garden in the Chargola Valley, the Manager reported that the applicant for a discharge certificate was not under agreement but he would be glad if the Subdivisional Officer returned the coolie to him for discharge. Since the exodus of May 1921 the Chargola gardens have ceased to give advances and contracts under Act XIII but have raised wages.

143. *Habiganj subdivision*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 216 cases, practically all against absconders into Hill Tipperah. Most of the cases were struck off because the accused could not be traced. There are 4 cases pending where agreements were given for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 25; in one case of an agreement executed on 11th February 1919, 778 days had been worked off. In 5 cases of another garden the complainant, a garden clerk, stated in his deposition that a chowkidar had been sent to bring back the coolies but had returned unsuccessful.

CACHAR DISTRICT.

144. *Sadr subdivision*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were only 10 cases, of which 9 were for discharge certificates. From 1st July 1921 up to date there have been 54 cases, 50 being against absconders. In one or two cases although the coolies had no agreement, the Magistrate ordered that they should refund certain advances before he granted discharge certificates.

145. *Hailakandi subdivision*.—From 1st July 1921 up to date there have been 14 cases. On 30th July 1921 the Manager of New Kanchanpur Tea Estate filed 5 cases against absconders. In all these cases the coolies had taken an advance of Rs. 4 only to work for 939 days and had worked for about two years. All the accused were arrested. On the day of the trial the complainant was absent and the accused persons were acquitted, having returned to the garden. On the 10th of January 1922 the same Manager obtained warrants against three coolies under Act XIII, and against three coolies under Section 208 of Act VI for enticing labour. In one case the coolie on the 5th of May 1920 had taken an agreement on an advance of Rs. 4 to work for 939 days and had completed 310 days; another coolie on the 24th of May 1920 had taken an agreement for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 4 and had worked 405 days; in a third case a woman on 2nd July 1919 had taken an agreement for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 4 and had completed 463 days. In two out of the three cases under Section 208 of Act VI of 1901, the coolies do not seem to have entered into any agreement under Act XIII. On the date fixed for the trial the Manager wrote to the Magistrate that as the six accused were working satisfactorily and giving no trouble, he withdrew the cases and did not produce the accused. The order of the Subdivisional Officer is that as the contracts were for three years the cases could not proceed under the amended Act XII of 1920. He also discovered that Section 208 of Act VI was not in force in the district and the accused were all acquitted. On the record of one of these cases (No. 12 of 1922) there is a letter from the Manager to the Inspector of Police asking that a Sub-Inspector and a few constables should be sent at 9 A.M. on 7th January as it was apprehended that the new Madras coolies would strike work. The note of the Sub-Inspector who went records :

"On enquiry I came to know that on account of insufficient pay there are about 150 new Madras coolies who did not work on the morning of 7th January 1922."

The answers submitted by the Manager of New Kanchanpur show that wages have been raised from 3 annas for men and women to 4 annas and 3½ annas only from 1st January 1922. The Hailakandi cases are not a creditable episode but as regards the Surma Valley generally, the Committee are of opinion that the Act is not unduly strained, except in so far as the practice obtains in some gardens of placing children under agreements. Contracts are usually for a period not exceeding 313 days. On many gardens, new coolies are put under agreement very shortly after arrival.

ASSAM VALLEY DIVISION.

NOWGONG DISTRICT.

146. *Nowgong*.—In 1921 there were 101 cases. In fifteen cases the maximum sentence of three months' rigorous imprisonment was awarded. In November 1921, 12 cases were instituted against absconders from Kuturi garden, and in each case the agreement was for 313 days. Sentences of three months' hard labour were passed

in 2 of the 12 cases, the number of days worked being 173, 157, 168, 163, 171, 164, 174 and 169. In two cases the Magistrate held that the coolies were obviously under age. In a third case a girl was certified by the Civil Surgeon to be only 14 years old. The girl had been in jail awaiting trial for 17 days. All the minors were acquitted. There are also cases of 939-day agreements most of them entered into before the Act was amended. In several cases the advances were nominal. In one case (No. 1797 of 1921, Chapanalla Tea Estate, Chubwa Tea Company) the agreement for 939 days was dated 31st August 1918. The man who had taken an advance of Rs. 30 had worked off 834 days, but was directed by order dated the 28th July 1921 to return to the garden and complete the balance of 105 days and on refusal was sentenced to three months' hard labour in default. In another garden, Kellyden (Chubwa Company), in five cases, Nos. 1596, 1597, 1616, 1617 and 1620 of 1921, the coolies, on refusal to return to work, were sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment on July 7th, 1921, but were released from jail on 12th August on agreeing to return to the garden and work off 271, 279, 275, 313 and 313 days. Two women had received an advance of Rs. 3 only. There is also the case of another garden (Amluckie) where in similar circumstances a coolie after serving part of his sentence was released to finish his contract. This procedure is possibly a survival of the provisions contained in section 202 of Act VI under which the employer of a labourer sentenced to imprisonment for any offence under Act VI could apply to the Magistrate to have the labourer made over to him for the purpose of completing his contract. In case No. 1618 of Kellyden Tea Estate (Chubwa Tea Company) a woman who had been given an agreement on 10th June 1919 for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 9 absconded on 28th June 1921, having worked only 42 days. The *hazira* book was not produced but the Deputy Commissioner, taking the calendar period into consideration, assumed that she had completed 652 days and ordered her to return to the garden to work off the balance of 287 days. She refused to do so and was sentenced to three months' hard labour on 8th July 1921. On the 12th August 1921 she was released from jail as she is said to have expressed her willingness to return to the garden. In case No. 2321 of Messa garden (Chubwa Tea Company) a woman, aged 18, executed an agreement on 23rd August 1917 with an advance of Rs. 10 for 939 days. The wage entered in the contract was Rs 3 a month. She absconded on 1st September 1919, having worked 214 days. No complaint was preferred till the 15th October 1920. The Deputy Commissioner held that the wage was unreasonably low and acquitted the woman on repayment of the advance of Rs.10. In case No. 2322 of the same garden, a woman, aged 18, executed an agreement on 16th June 1918 for 939 days on an advance of Rs. 12 with a monthly wage of Rs. 4. She worked 134 days and absconded on 1st September 1919. The complaint was brought on 15th October 1920. The woman admitted the agreement but refused to return to complete the balance of 805 days and was sentenced to three months' hard labour. The sentence was carried out. In case No. 2326 of 15th October 1920, Chubwa Tea Company (Kellyden Division) *versus* Matia Uraon, the accused was ordered to return and work off 830 days. The Deputy Commissioner states that minors are concerned in possibly about 5 per cent. of the cases. The Act appears to be administered with considerable rigour in this district. Details as regards some recent cases of illegal arrest in which a man, a woman, and a girl were seized and taken back to the garden and forced to enter into agreements are given in another place. These cases came to light at the inspection of Rangamati garden of the Chubwa Tea Company. In two of these cases, the agreements were for 623 days and the dates 12th December 1921 and 20th February 1922.

SIBSAGAR DISTRICT.

147. *Jorhat*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 59 cases of which 39 are for discharge certificates. In one case an *ex-sepoy* executed, on the 25th November 1920, a 3-year agreement on an advance of Rs. 30. On the 26th May 1921 he complained to the Magistrate that he could not work like a common garden coolie and wanted either a discharge certificate or to be given congenial work. The Manager reported that he had worked for six months and still owed Rs. 25. The agreement was of course illegal under the amending Act, but the Deputy Commissioner directed him to return to complete his contract although the Manager was willing to accept a refund of the money. From 1st July 1921 up to date there have been 22 cases.

148. *Sibsagar*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 34 cases. There is no instance of any accused person having been sent to jail. This subdivision and Jorhat afford an instance of the unreliability of conclusions based on statistics of cases and convictions. From case records it would appear as if the

Act is worked without friction and that it does not involve any hardship to the labourer or any restrictions on his freedom. As a matter of fact two of the most important Companies in the subdivision, the Assam Company and the Singlo Tea Company, continue to give 939-day agreements, and several other gardens follow the same practice. The Assam Company give a commission to clerks and sardars on the execution of these illegal agreements.

149. *Golaghat*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 180 cases, about half of which are for discharge certificates. From 1st July 1921 up to date there have been 84 cases. In only 8 cases was sentence of imprisonment awarded varying from two weeks' simple to six weeks' rigorous imprisonment. In several cases the Manager reported that the coolie had no agreement but owed some money to the garden. The Subdivisional Officer refused certificates until the advances were paid up. The Extra Assistant Commissioner, however, in two similar cases, granted certificates and referred the Manager to the Civil Court. One curious order reads:

"Accused took Rs. 8 and did five weeks' work. As the agreement was against her will and she was not in good health she is ordered to repay Rs. 6 to the garden, failing which she will undergo simple imprisonment."

The Rs. 6 was paid up.

LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT.

150. *Sadr subdivision*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 117 cases, of which about half are for discharge certificates. There is nothing calling for particular comment. For the most part gardens of minor importance were concerned and a large number of the cases against absconders were brought by Managers of Indian gardens. It is noticeable that large Companies, such as the Doom-Dooma Company, do not institute cases. In three cases sentences of imprisonment ranging from two to three months were imposed. From 1st July 1921 up to date, 22 cases have been instituted with only one case of imprisonment—for six weeks. In two cases where the Manager stated that the coolies had not worked off their long-term agreements, the Deputy Commissioner granted discharge certificates on the ground that agreements for over one year would not be enforced. In another case the Manager reported that the applicant for a discharge certificate was not under contract, but that there had been an understanding that he should work out the agreement of another coolie. The Deputy Commissioner granted a discharge certificate. In another case where a woman had taken an advance of Rs. 16 on 14th October 1919 for 626 days and had worked for one year, nine and a half months, the Deputy Commissioner refused to send her back to the garden.

151. *North Lakhimpur subdivision*.—From 1st July 1920 to 30th June 1921 there were 25 cases; from 1st July 1921 up to date, 22 cases. On the whole, these were dealt with correctly. One case, however, may be noted. The Manager of Dejuo Tea Estate on 31st August 1921 applied for process against a woman aged 18. The record contains an agreement executed on the 18th of June 1920 for 626 days on an advance of Rs. 10. It appears that the woman got an advance of Rs. 10 on 18th June 1920 and a second advance of a similar amount on the 17th of June 1921 though only Rs. 9 is endorsed on the back of the agreement. She absconded on 21st August 1921. She was convicted and ordered either to repay Rs. 10 or work out the remaining 313 days. This is a clear attempt to evade the provisions of the amended Act. The complainant stated in evidence that this was the practice on the garden in taking 626-day agreements.

DARRANG DISTRICT.

152. *Mangaldai*.—From 1st July 1920 to the 30th June 1921, 92 cases were instituted. Sixty-five of these refer to discharge certificates, of which 30 relate to the Bhutiachang Tea Estate. In most of the Bhutiachang cases, the Manager sent no reply to the Magistrate's enquiries as to whether the garden had any claim on the coolies. Discharge certificates were accordingly granted. In one or two cases where coolies were not under contract, the Subdivisional Officer granted a certificate only after some miscellaneous dues had been paid to the garden. From 1st July 1921 up to date there have been 97 cases. These include 66 applications for discharge certificates, of which no less than 52 are from the Bhutiachang Tea Estate. A discharge certificate was refused in the following circumstances to a coolie of Dharmjuli Tea Estate (Petition No. 66 of 1921-22). An agreement was given on the 23rd April 1920 for 313 days, of which 277 days had been worked off up to February 1922, leaving a balance of 36 days. In another case (No. 74 of 1922, Manager, Khoirabari Tea Estate *versus* Musst. Jhilia), the Subdivisional Officer records:

"The girl appears. She is obviously under age and no agreement will hold. Discharged."

153. *Darrang Sadr*.—From the 1st July 1920 to the 30th June 1921 there were 446 cases; and from the 1st July 1921 to the 28th March 1922, 205 cases. The case records show that up to the time when Act XII of 1920 came into force the general practice on gardens in the Tezpur and Bishnath Circles was to put labourers under long-term contracts, almost invariably expressed in terms of working days, usually 939 or 626. When the amending Act was under consideration, the Deputy Commissioner reported in a letter dated 31st October 1919 that the usual practice was to give agreements for three years to new coolies. In the case of new coolies, the advance given was often nominal. In the case of coolies who had been settled on the estate for some time, advances were usually Rs. 30 for men and Rs. 24 for women. So far as can be gathered from records of cases instituted, the usual period now is 313 days. There are, however, a few cases in which long-term contracts have been executed after the new Act came into force.

Having regard to the tea-garden population, the number of cases instituted in Tezpur (Darrang Sadr Subdivision) indicates that the assistance of the courts is invoked to a far greater extent than in other tea districts. It is notorious that garden discipline in this district has always been fairly strict. Many of the case-records since 1st July 1920 show that Managers insist on their pound of flesh. The Committee have frequently been told in other districts that though a contract may be expressed in terms of working days, it does not in practice run beyond a calendar year in the case of a 313-day contract, or three years in the case of a 939-day contract. In Darrang Sadr there are many cases which show that Managers insist on a strict performance of the terms of contract.

A few cases of special interest may be quoted.

Cases of strict enforcement of the terms of the contract.

Case 985 of 1920.—Mijikijan Tea Estate.—On 29th July 1920 a woman applied to the Deputy Commissioner for a discharge certificate on the ground that she had finished her agreement. The Manager was asked to report by 9th August 1920 if the garden had any claim on her. On that date the Manager filed a complaint against her for absconding and she was arrested in Court. On 24th July 1919 she had been given an agreement for 313 days with a Rs. 10 advance. She left the garden on 26th July 1920, having a balance of 27 days to work. The Deputy Commissioner ordered her to return to the garden, and, as she refused to do so, sentenced her to six weeks' hard labour.

This case may be contrasted with case 1487 of 1920 where a coolie had taken an agreement on 1st September 1920 to work for 313 days and absconded on 11th October 1920, having still 279 days to work. On refusal to return to the garden, she was sentenced on 29th November 1920 to six weeks' hard labour.

1056 of 1920.—*Dhulli Tea Estate*.—A woman entered into a contract for 626 days on 11th December 1916, receiving an advance of Rs. 20. She absconded on 13th July 1917, having still 473 days to work. Complaint was not lodged till the 23rd August 1920. She was arrested on a warrant but discharged as the Manager failed to produce evidence.

Case 1317 of 1920.—Sonajuli Tea Estate.—On 9th February 1917 a coolie executed an agreement for 939 days, receiving an advance of Rs. 45. He absconded on 20th September 1920 with 20 days still to be worked off. The Deputy Commissioner refused to issue process as the balance of days was trifling and the agreement had been entered into more than 3½ years before.

Case 438 of 1920.—Dhulli Tea Estate.—An agreement was taken on 13th April 1918 for 626 days with an advance of Rs. 24. Up to the end of June 1921 only 345 days had been worked off. Process was refused.

Discharge certificate case 315 of 1920-21.—Majuligarh Tea Estate.—A woman applied for a discharge certificate. The Manager reported that on 4th April 1919 she had given an agreement for 313 days and had absconded on 10th February 1921, having worked for 245 days only. Certificate was refused.

Case 565 of 1920.—Singri Tea Estate.—An agreement was taken on 21st March 1918 for 861 days with an advance of Rs. 24. The coolie absconded on 16th April 1921, with 23 days remaining. Process was refused on 19th May 1921, as the agreement, according to the calendar period, had already expired.

Case 612.—Bindukuri Tea Estate.—Agreement is dated 26th June 1920 for 313 days with advance Rs. 12. The coolie absconded on the 27th June 1921, leaving 50 days to be completed. Warrant was issued but accused was not found.

Case 597.—Monabari Tea Estate.—Agreement is dated 4th May 1919 for 626 days with an advance of Rs. 24. The coolie absconded on 6th May 1921, with 128 days to be worked off. Accused could not be found, so the warrant was returned unexecuted.

Case 556.—Singri Tea Estate.—Agreement is dated 12th July 1918 for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 9. The coolie absconded on 15th May 1921 with 757 days still to be worked off. Warrant issued. Accused could not be found.

Case 557.—Singri Tea Estate.—Agreement dated 15th March 1919 for 626 days with advance Rs. 20. The coolie absconded on 11th March 1921, with 83 days to be worked out. Warrant issued. Accused could not be found.

Case 559.—Singri Tea Estate.—Agreement dated 28th March 1918 for 939 days with advance Rs. 36; the coolie absconded on 18th April 1921, with 637 days remaining. Warrant issued. Accused could not be found.

Case 682.—Singri Tea Estate.—Agreement dated 4th July 1920 for 313 days with advance Rs. 10; the coolie absconded on 3rd August 1921, with 14 days remaining. Warrant issued. Accused was not found.

Case 941.—Modopee Tea Estate.—Agreement dated 28th July 1920 for 313 days with advance Rs. 9. The woman absconded on 16th August 1921 with 41 days to be worked off. The Deputy Commissioner ordered her to return to the garden; she refused and was sentenced to three weeks' simple imprisonment on 29th August 1921.

Case 495.—Thakurbari.—Agreement dated 9th December 1919 for 939 days with advance Rs. 30-8; the coolie absconded on 14th November 1921, leaving a balance of 831 days. The case was withdrawn by the Manager.

Case 1623.—Majuligarh.—Agreement dated 13th May 1918 for 626 days with advance Rs. 24; the coolie absconded on 13th May 1920, leaving 133 days to be worked off; the complaint was lodged on 20th December; the coolie was arrested and committed to jail from 10th to 25th January 1921, pending trial, and then ordered to complete the agreement.

Case 86 of 1921.—Bangapara Tea Estate.—On the 31st May 1919 a coolie entered into an agreement for 939 days on a Rs. 9 advance and absconded on 29th December 1919. Complaint was lodged on 22nd January 1921. Warrant was issued in this as well as in 18 similar cases of the same garden but the accused were not found. Cases of long-term agreements with nominal advances.

Case 395 of 1921.—Kathalguri Tea Estate.—A woman took an agreement on the 6th July 1918 for 1,252 days with an advance of Rs. 10 and absconded on 15th March 1921, having still 518 days to work. On 1st April 1921, process was refused as the advance was considered altogether disproportionate. It is interesting to contrast this case with case 252 of 1921, relating to an out-garden of the same Company. A coolie was placed under contract for 1,252 days on the 11th April 1919 with a Rs. 10 advance and absconded on the 16th February 1921, leaving 696 days still to be worked. In this case warrant of arrest was issued, but the accused was not found.

Case 655 of 1920.—Ghoivalli Tea Estate.—On 20th April 1919 a coolie entered into an agreement for 313 days with an advance of Rs. 15 and absconded on 26th March 1920, leaving 46 days to be worked off. He refused to return to the garden and was sentenced to two months' hard labour. Cases of disproportionate sentences.

Case 656 of 1920.—Ghoivalli Tea Estate.—On 20th May 1919 a coolie entered into an agreement for 313 days with an advance of Rs. 10 and absconded on 18th May 1920, with a balance of 164 days to be completed. The order was the same as in case 655, two months' hard labour.

Case 1342.—Dhulli Tea Estate.—Agreement dated 12th October 1920 for 939 days with Rs. 9 advance; the coolie absconded on 5th September 1921, leaving 776 days to be worked off. As the agreement for 939 days was entered into after Act XII of 1920 came into force, process was refused. Cases of illegal agreements.

Case 810.—Dhulli.—Agreement dated 17th August 1920 for 939 days with Rs. 9 advance; the coolie absconded on 18th July 1921 with 712 days to be completed. In this as in two other cases of the same garden (811 and 813) process was refused as the long-term agreement was entered into after Act XII of 1920 came into force.

Monabari Tea Estate.—On the 4th February 1921, the Manager brought 45 cases against absconders. In 18 cases agreements were for 939 days with advances of Rs. 9. There were also agreements for 313 days and also long-term agreements with larger advances. Most of the coolies had absconded in November and December 1920 after the riot of October 1920. In Chapter II of the Report the causes of the riot have been fully discussed. In most of the cases, the accused were not found and the warrants were returned unexecuted; in some cases, the coolies, after arrest, elected to return to the garden, but in two cases they refused to go back and were sentenced to one month's hard labour. Cases of Monabari Tea Estate.

Case against a minor.

Case 1611.—Pertabgarh.—Agreement for 313 days, dated 29th May 1920, with advance Rs. 10; the coolie absconded on 13th December 1920, was arrested and sent to *hajat*. The Civil Surgeon as Superintendent of the Jail asked for the early disposal of the case as the girl was only 15 years of age. The Deputy Commissioner acquitted her on the ground that she was obviously a minor.

Cases of refusal to issue warrants against absconders in their home district.

In April 1921, the Manager, *Thakubari Tea Estate*, lodged three complaints; in one case the contract was for 626 days, and in two cases for 939 days. The accused had gone to Singbhum, their home district. The Deputy Commissioner refused to issue process as there is an executive order against issuing warrants to the recruiting districts.

In 1920, the Manager *Rangapara Tea Estate*, applied for warrants against 11 coolies (cases 780 to 790) who had taken agreements for 939 days and returned to their own districts. Process was refused for a similar reason.

There are a few cases in which the Deputy Commissioner refused to issue warrants on the ground that the complaint had not been brought within three months of the date of absconding (Section 2 of Act XIII as amended by Act XII of 1920). There are also a few applications for discharge certificates where the Manager reported that the applicant was not under agreement, but owed some petty sums to the garden. In these cases, discharge certificates were granted only after these sums had been paid into Court.

In several cases in which the contract was for 313 working days and the coolie absconded after the elapse of one calendar year from the date of contract without having completed 313 standard tasks, it seems doubtful if process should have been issued. Section 4 of the Act, as amended, states that nothing in the Act shall apply to contracts where, a period having been specified for performance, such period exceeds one year. There is nothing to show that this means anything except one calendar year. If the labourer neglects or refuses, without reasonable cause, to perform the task on any date *within* the calendar period, the Manager has his remedy by complaint in Court.

Statistics of cases against Act XIII coolies and of applications for discharge certificates since 1900.

154. The following table gives the number of cases brought for non-fulfilment of contract against Act XIII coolies, the number decided in favour of the complainant, the number of persons imprisoned and also the number of applications made by coolies for discharge certificates from 1900 to 1920-21. The Committee have not been able to trace any cases in which compensation has been awarded to the labourer under Section 2(B) of the amended Act in false, frivolous or vexatious complaints. Action might have been suitably taken in cases of illegal contracts, particularly when minors were concerned.

Year.	Total number of cases against coolies.	Decided in favour of complainant.	Number of persons imprisoned.	Applications by coolies for discharge certificates.
1	2	3	4	5
1900	430	139	38	.....
1901	336	102	36	.....
1902-3	492	228	64	.....
1903-4	568	274	68	.....
1904-5	599	209	45	7
1905-6	686	273	70	10
1906-7	808	390	66	32
1907-8	1,158	523	74	57
1908-9	974	474	52	72
1909-10	813	352	49	77
1910-11	823	402	49	85
1911-12	928	391	103	74
1912-13	983	441	45	114
1913-14	1,192	370	111	187
1914-15	1,228	324	90	170
1915-16	780	289	39	200
1916-17	668	187	40	253
1917-18	701	188	19	198
1918-19	532	168	19	196
1919-20	912	222	22	216
1920-21	1,604	278	63	195

155. There were at the end of June 1921, 270,443 contracts under Act XIII in the tea districts and the proportion of cases instituted in 1920-21 is about 59% of the total number of contracts. By the year 1913-14 Act VI had fallen into disuse though the Act was not finally withdrawn from the four labour districts of Upper Assam until 1915. The Immigration Reports give the number of Act VI contracts and the number of cases against coolies. It has been found that between 1904-5 and 1913-14, the percentage of Act VI cases to the total number of contracts in force in these years varies from about 6% to 1.3%. There is, therefore, no very marked difference in the proportion of cases to contracts under the respective Acts. But under Act VI the number of cases in which a sentence of imprisonment was imposed is very much higher. It should be stated, however, that under Section 198 of Act VI, the maximum punishment for desertion for a first offence was one month's imprisonment or a fine or both. Cases instituted in 1920-21 and sentences of imprisonment show an appreciable increase over the figures of recent years. Another fact is that in recent years a much larger proportion of cases have been decided against the complainant. The Committee content themselves with pointing out the cases of mal-administration of the law, in particular the recognition of illegal contracts and the disproportionate sentences awarded, in the belief that Government will take such steps as may be necessary to prevent a recurrence. It is understood that in May 1920 the attention of district officers was specially invited to the changes effected by the Amending Act XII of 1920.

156. From enquiries made on the occasion of visits to gardens it appears that contracts for a period exceeding one year are still not uncommon in some districts in spite of the amended Act. Agreements are frequently given to minors and new coolies are often put under contract immediately on arrival on the garden. The following notes indicate how the Act is worked on some gardens.

Results of
enquiries on
gardens as to
the working
of Act XIII
contracts.

157. *Nahorani (Darrang)*.—New coolies are put under agreement at once for 313 days with Rs. 10 bonus and Rs. 3 *ad interim* settling advance.

Anipur (Chargola Valley, Sylhet).—The *haziras* have been raised to 6 annas for men and 4 annas for women since May 1921, and no agreements are now given. Many children of 7 years of age and upwards were entered in the agreement book for 1918 and 1919 as having taken agreements for three years with advances ranging from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 5. The parents got the money.

Labac Tea Estate, Cachar.—Agreements are for one year with a bonus of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 for men and women. Girls and boys get Rs. 8 and Rs. 9. Recoveries for other advances are deducted from this money as shown in the register so that the actual amount is not always paid.

Sessa and Mankatta Tea Estate (British India Tea Company), Dibrugarh.—A contract bonus of Rs. 10 is given to men and women. This advance is not recovered. New coolies are not put under agreement until they have been one year on the garden. Coolies are given contracts if they desire them. The contracts are written but not on stamped paper. The Manager considers agreements necessary for the moral effect but would give advances and take agreements if Act XIII were repealed and only the civil remedy left. The gardens are close to Dibrugarh.

Bokel (Jokai Company, Lakhimpur).—New coolies are not put under contract until they have been about 4 years on the garden.

Nahartoli (Lakhimpur).—A new coolie gets a settling advance of Rs. 3 with an umbrella and a blanket: on the expiry of the first six months he gets Rs. 6 bonus and at the end of the second six months, another Rs. 6. At the end of the first year he is given his first agreement with an advance of Rs. 12 which is not recovered.

Bokpara (Budla Beta Company, Lakhimpur).—The form of agreement which is for one year of 313 working days provides that when the coolie is absent on leave, or on account of sickness, days of absence due to these causes shall be added on to the term of contract. This is also a common proviso in the agreements of other Companies.

Kanu (Sibsagar).—This garden still gives agreements for three years with advances of Rs. 36 and Rs. 24 which are not recovered. There are no agreement forms but the coolie's thumb impression is taken in the agreement book when the advance is paid.

Suntok (Assam Company, Sibsagar).—Agreements are for 939 days with advance of Rs. 36. There is a proviso that days of absence on account of leave or sickness shall be added to the term of contract. In the agreement book the contracts are shown as being for three calendar years. Minors are not put under direct agreement.

There is a special printed form for parents who covenant with the Company that their children will work at a certain rate of monthly pay, varying according to age, the parents receiving a cash bonus as consideration. It is further stipulated that if the child is absent without reasonable cause, the parent shall pay compensation to the Company. In this Company, the sardar of each gang of coolies gets a commission of Rs. 2 for each agreement executed, and the head clerk receives a smaller sum on the total number of agreements.

Bihubar (Sibsagar).—Coolies are put under agreement for three years. The Manager states that the coolie understands that he has to work for the garden for three years. Children of the age of 8 years and upwards receive agreements for three years with an advance of Rs. 6. The Manager states that they regard the contract as binding. Boys of 12 years and upwards get a larger advance. About 450 children are under agreement.

Kharikatia (Jorhat Company, Jorhat subdivision).—The majority of the coolies are under contract for one year and some for two years. New coolies are put under agreement for 939 days. Two agreements of new coolies for 939 days executed on the 14th February 1922 were produced. No sum whatever was entered as bonus or advance paid. The Manager explained that it was the custom to put new coolies under three years' agreement. He has stated that a small cash advance is given according to the number of dependents, also some household furniture such as a *charpoy*, *karai*, *kalsi*, etc. Children are put under agreement for 313 days on an advance of Rs. 4. This is entered in a separate book which contains the thumb impressions of the children.

Hunuwal (Jorhat subdivision).—Agreements are for one year only since the amendment of the Act.

Dahingeapar (Jorhat subdivision).—Most of the agreements are for 313 days: children from 9 or 10 years upwards are put under agreement with a bonus of Rs. 9. In the stamped printed agreement for adults there is a clause to the effect that if a coolie before the expiry of his agreement absents himself from work or disobeys any lawful order, he will be liable to punishment under Act XIII and will also have to refund his advance together with Rs. 25 as compensation for loss.

Gotonga (Moabund Company, Jorhat subdivision).—Agreements for one year only are given. Previously 3-year agreements were taken from new coolies immediately on arrival with an advance of Rs. 9 instead of the usual Rs. 36 given to old coolies. According to the Manager, the intention was that the new coolie should bear part of the recruiting expenses. At present a new coolie receives Rs. 4 or Rs. 5 on executing an agreement for 313 days, and the balance is given afterwards.

Bokahula (Jorhat Company, Jorhat subdivision).—Agreements for three years are not given now; occasionally they are for two years. Children sometimes are put under agreement.

Meleng (Jorhat).—Agreements are given for one year. Two-year agreements are very exceptional and not encouraged. The advance is Rs. 12 to men and Rs. 6 to women which is refunded monthly at the rate of 8 annas and one rupee in the case of women and men, respectively. The wages are shown as Rs. 8 and Rs. 6-8-0, but the amount actually paid after deduction of advance is Rs. 7 and Rs. 6, the usual district rate. The daily wage is calculated, however, on a monthly wage of Rs. 8 and Rs. 6-8-0. There is no agreement book, but entries are made in the cash book. One year is taken to mean 313 working days. Agreements are not given to children and new coolies are not put under agreement until about a year after arrival. The proportion of coolies under agreement is:—

	Total.	Under agreement.	Not under agreement.
Men	982	911=92·75	71=7·25
Women	851	717=84·25	134=15·25

The Manager is of opinion that Act XIII is not of much use and that he could do without it.

Dooria (Golaghat).—Agreements are for 625 days with advances of Rs. 12 a year for men and Rs. 6 for women and boys and girls. Previously, agreements for three years were given but for the last two years this has not been done owing to financial stringency. Present agreements show the monthly wage of men as Rs. 5 and of women as Rs. 4 though the garden works on the unit system.

Khumtai (Badlipur Company), Golaghat.—All agreements are for 313 days with advances of Rs. 10 for men and Rs. 5 for women and boys and Rs. 4 for girls. New coolies are not put under agreement till one year after their arrival. Sometimes children of nine or ten years of age get a bonus of Rs. 3 and are put down in the agreement book as having to work for 313 days. Up to the middle of 1917, most agreements were for 939 days on advances of Rs. 30 to men and Rs. 15 to women. Up to April 1920, agreements were taken for 623 days and since then for 313 days.

Rungajan Division, Rungajan Tea Company (Golaghat).—930-day agreements were given up to the end of 1920. The advance given to new coolies put under agreement varied from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 and Rs. 7 according to sex and age. Men and women, old coolies, got advances of Rs. 30 and Rs. 20. From 1921 agreements are given for 313 days—the rates being Rs. 12, Rs. 10, Rs. 8 and down to Rs. 5 in the case of children.

Borjan Tea Company (Golaghat).—Agreements are for 313 days : advances Rs. 12, Rs. 10, and Rs. 8. This advance or bonus is not recovered, but pencil entries in the agreement book show sums of Rs. 4, Rs. 3, and Rs. 2 recovered on account of other advances, e.g., in February 1922, Rs. 388 was advanced in bonuses and deductions of Rs. 49-6-0 were made on account of other outstanding advances. The manager does not think it necessary to retain Act XIII.

Jiajuri Tea Estate (Nowgong).—Coolies are now given 313-day agreements with a bonus of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 for men and women. This advance is not recovered. 939-day agreements were common till 1920 when the Act was amended. The last 939-day agreement was apparently given in July 1920. Agreements are rarely given to children. The register has a column for each month to show the number of days worked off and brought over from the previous month. There are still some coolies under 939-day agreements with entries against them of 645, 671, 759, 562, etc., days brought over at the end of 1921 to January 1922.

Salonah (Nowgong).—New coolies are put under agreement, Rs. 3 being paid at first, and the rest kept in deposit and given out during the year when required. Act XIII agreements are sometimes given for two years in the case of old coolies who require money. The yearly bonus or advance is Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 for men and women and is entered in the agreement book. There are no written contracts. Minors, boys and girls, get Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 if they ask for agreements.

Siconee (Nowgong).—Agreements are for 313 days with advances of Rs. 12 and 10. For some time after the Act was amended agreements were given for 626 days mainly during the absence of the manager on leave, but this has ceased. Children from 10 years of age upwards sometimes are given agreements.

Rangamat (Nowgong).—The practice was to give 939-day agreements, and cases filed in Court show that the practice was continued after the amending Act was passed. (Cases Nos. 553, 554, 1717 of 1921). The agreements were executed on 24th, 25th and 30th May 1920. Warrants were issued but were returned unexecuted. At present agreements are usually for 313 days with advances of Rs. 10 and Rs. 8 to men and women, but instructions have recently been received from the Board to increase advances to Rs. 12 and Rs. 10. An agreement executed on 20th February 1922 for 626 days with an advance of Rs. 20 was entered in the agreement book. Enquiry from the Manager elicited the fact that in this case the coolie who was a free labourer had got leave to cut paddy in the village. As he overstayed his leave, a garden clerk and chowkidars were sent to search for him : he was brought back to the garden and forced to give an agreement for 626 days ; " as a matter of discipline," according to the Manager. It appeared that the coolie only received a small proportion of the Rs. 20, the balance being deducted for expenses incurred in effecting his capture. His wife at the same time was put under contract for one year. The sum of Rs. 8 was entered on the agreement form, as an advance, but the woman actually received nothing. She had also absconded but had been illegally arrested and brought back to the garden. The Manager stated she would probably get something at "*Fagua*." The third case is that of a girl aged 15 who on 6th January, 1921 was given a one year agreement, but absconded before getting the advance. She was brought back by a babu of the garden from Messa village and put under a 626-day agreement on 12th December 1921 with an advance of Rs. 12 which she seems to have received. In this garden an agreement for 1,252 days executed on 21st July 1919 with an advance of Rs. 40 came to light.

On 7th July 1919 a coolie entered into an agreement for 939 days with an advance of Rs. 30 and on 2nd August 1921 a case was instituted and the court

ordered him to return to work for 484 days or in default to undergo two months' rigorous imprisonment. The coolie went to jail.

158. There is a considerable amount of oral evidence to the effect that three-year agreements are not uncommon particularly in Sibsagar. The answers sent by Managers corroborate this, and also indicate that the practice of putting new coolies under agreement immediately on arrival on the garden is not unusual.

159. The Committee desire to record their strong disapproval of the irregularities which have come to their notice, especially the practice of placing coolies, particularly new immigrants, under illegal long-term agreements, the illegal arrest of absconders, and the practice of taking contracts from minors. They cannot believe that large concerns, at any rate, were unaware of the amending Act XII of 1920. It is contended by some that long-term agreements are only given because the coolie asks for them as he requires a substantial sum of money, and that cases are never taken to court. The Committee are prepared to believe that in many cases coolies voluntarily come up and ask for agreements, as they require the money, and that cases of coolies being compelled to execute agreements by force or fraud are exceptional. At the same time, the payment of commission on agreements, a practice followed by one important Company, rather conflicts with this view. There is also some force in the argument that if the coolie was not given a lump sum when money is required for the purchase of cattle or for some ceremony, he might fall into the clutches of the shop-keeper or money lender. There can be little doubt, however, that a coolie who executes a long-term agreement believes that he is bound to the garden for a term of years, and that these long-term agreements defeat the intention of the amending Act.

In 1906 in discussing the abolition of local labour contracts under Act VI in connection with the renewal of agreements the practice of giving the labourer three or four years' bonus in a lump sum as an inducement to stay on was condemned, especially in the case of unhealthy and unpopular gardens, and the Committee were of opinion that these heavy advances and long agreements were to be discouraged. The present Committee are of opinion that these strictures have equal, if not greater force, in respect of long-term contracts under Act XIII, which, as expressed in days, may be made to extend over an indefinite period. The advocates of large bonuses under Act XIII appear to have forgotten that the practice of giving advances on renewal of contracts was quite common under Act VI.

160. There is also reason to believe that in some districts obstacles are placed in the way of the coolie obtaining work on one garden after he has finished his agreement on another. Mr. G. Bridge of Mangaldai stated before the Committee of 1906 "the local Tezpur rule by which a coolie cannot go to a new garden until he has been two years in a *bustee* is I consider a most unfair rule to the coolie." Tezpur is perhaps the most conservative tea district in Assam and some enquiries were made as to how far this rule was still observed. Members were informed that the period had been reduced to one year. As regards marriages, Mr. Nicholls of Bishnath, states the custom in his district :—

"If a man in one garden wishes to marry a girl in another an exchange is generally made or we pay Rs. 150 which covers the expenses of recruiting her—even though the girl may not be under agreement. I do not consider it a restriction on the coolie's freedom."

161. As regards the illegal arrest of absconding coolies, admitted instances have been given in the case of a Nowgong garden. Mr. Nicholls of Bishnath states :—

"I do not know the rule in other gardens, but speaking personally, if a coolie absconds, his whereabouts are ascertained, and he is generally brought back, and the cause of his absconding enquired into and grievance, if any, remedied....." "There is no chowkidari system on our gardens to ensure that coolies do not run away."

At Monabari in Bishnath, one of the first gardens visited, Members of the Committee found a chowkidar's hut at the junction of the garden road with the public road leading to Tezpur and Bishnath Steamer Ghat, and were informed by the chowkidar that he and two others were employed to watch for and arrest runaway coolies. The Manager of Bidyanagar Tea Estate in the Chargola Valley, brought to notice a case in which the Manager of a neighbouring garden sent chowkidars to bring back a woman whose husband had left in the Chargola exodus: he declined to allow the woman to be taken away. The Committee are unable to say how far the practice of private arrest prevails, but that it is exercised they have no doubt, and they regret that this practice which was commented on in the Report of the 1906 Committee has not yet disappeared.

162. As regards the practice of placing minors under contract the Committee have already expressed their disapproval. Nowgong and Tezpur records show that

children have been arrested and sent to jail pending trial. The Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, states that possibly in about 5 per cent. of the cases brought into Court, the coolies would be under-age. It may be stated that the Tea Districts Labour Association classify children of 12 as adults for the purpose of charging for commission and outfit. A working coolie is defined by the Association as one of the age of 12 years and over who, in the opinion of the local agent or agency medical officer, is physically fit to complete his garden task. The ageing and classification of coolies by the agency medical officer is to be considered as final. The Assam Labour Board cess was fixed at the rate of 4 annas by the Government of India for 1921-22 and is charged on emigrants, i.e., working coolies of the age of 16 and over *challaned* by the local agencies. Under Act VI of 1901 it was illegal to place minors under the age of 16 under contract.

163. Another point is that the agreements often seem to be one-sided and in favour of the employer. It is true that in consideration of so many days' work the Manager undertakes to pay a certain wage, but nothing is said as to whether any compensation will be given, if the labourer's services have to be dispensed with for any reason other than his own fault. When certain gardens had to reduce their labour force in 1919 and 1920 during the financial crisis, the question of compensation to labourers brought hundreds of miles away from their homes might not unreasonably have been considered.

164. Under Act VI of 1901 men received in the first year Rs. 5 monthly and women Rs. 4; Rs. 5-8 and Rs. 4-8 in the second and third years, and Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 in the fourth year. In addition, when rice was dear, the garden was bound to supply it at a price not exceeding Rs. 3 a maund. At page 103 of the Special Report published in 1890 reasons are given for the extensive use of Act XIII in the Surma Valley in preference to Act I of 1882 which was afterwards replaced by Act VI of 1901. It is stated that Act XIII was in use before Act I of 1882 was enacted and that it was continued, partly because it had been established, and partly to avoid the expenses and the supervision connected with Act I contracts. Under Act XIII there was a saving in stamp duties and in capitation fees; agreements had not to be registered and need not be in writing; registers and returns were simpler; coolies had not to be produced before the Inspector for verification of their contracts, nor had the expiry of contracts to be reported. There was also an idea that Government had less concern with Act XIII than with Act I coolies, and that accordingly Act XIII coolies regarded the Managers rather than Government as their masters and thus authority over the coolies was strengthened. Act I contracts were chiefly used in the case of new immigrants and of coolies who were likely to desert or give trouble. In paragraph 119 of the same Report, it is pointed out that Act XIII coolies earned higher wages than Act I coolies, not because of any special virtue in Act XIII, but because of the application of the Act to old coolies, who had become acclimatised, and who had learned the conditions of garden life and garden work, and so were better able to earn higher wages.

Effect of
Act XIII
Contracts on
wages.

165. It is a striking fact that in many gardens in the Sibsagar and Darrang districts up to quite a recent date, coolies, whether free or under Act XIII contracts, received a monthly wage of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4, the initial rate for newly imported coolies in the first year under the old Act. It is true that they got a bonus, though in the case of new coolies the bonus was often quite a trivial sum in consideration of long agreements for two and three years. But at the same time, so far as the Committee are aware, rice at Rs. 3 a maund was never provided though sometimes in the case of new coolies or when rice was unusually dear, it was available at concession rates. A coolie, in addition to the daily task work, usually had an opportunity of earning *tscca* under the old labour Acts.

166. The majority of the Committee are inclined to believe that the effect of Act XIII is to make the coolie accept a lower wage than he would if labour was entirely free. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the abolition of the Act will have an effect on wages, in that it will be more difficult under a free labour system to retain discontented labourers on estates where the attractions offered are insufficient, or conditions otherwise unfavourable. Gardens which pay wages below the market rate would have to raise them or suffer the consequences. Unhealthy and unpopular gardens would be forced by competition to raise their rates of pay. Much prominence has been given to the question of enticement of labourers from gardens in Sylhet into Hill Tipperah. In recent years a number of gardens owned by Indians have been opened. In some cases, gardens in Hill Tipperah held out promises of higher wages than were being paid in Sylhet. New gardens which are being opened, as a rule, pay higher rates. Land for cultivation free of rent for a term of two or three years

was another inducement offered. In many cases the coolies found that these promises were not substantiated, especially when the proprietors or companies concerned found it difficult to get money to continue operations. A few coolies have returned to their old gardens many of which had their labour force seriously depleted by these desertions. On some of these gardens in Sylhet, the daily rate of wages was low. It is highly probable that if higher wages had been paid there would have been fewer absconders.

Effect of Act
XIII on re-
cruiting.

167. In 1908 the Government of India requested the Governments of Bengal, Madras, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces to issue a notification under Section 91(b) of Act VI of 1901, to give effect to the recommendations contained in paragraph 283 of the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 in regard to recruitment by garden sardars. At the same time the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam were instructed to issue a notification under Section 221 of the Act withdrawing from the Assam Labour districts Sections 118-121 and Sections 195-196 which provided for local labour contracts and conferred upon employers the right of arrest without warrant. It was hoped that the withdrawal of the power of arrest and the abolition of local contracts would facilitate recruiting and decrease the expenses. But there is no doubt that the result has been disappointing. Recruiting is as difficult and as expensive as ever except when scarcity or famine conditions prevail in the recruiting districts. The question is 'Can this be remedied?' Reports from the recruiting districts indicate that the old objections persist, the uncertainty of return and the fact that the attractions offered to emigrants are insufficient. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the class of coolie recruited is often far from satisfactory. As is well known, under section 118 of Act VI, contracts for one year had to be verified by the Inspector of Labourers when he visited the estate, and contracts under Section 121, the maximum period being four years, had to be executed before the Inspector or Magistrate.

168. The effect of the withdrawal of these sections appears to have been nullified to a great extent, by the practice of entering into long-term local labour contracts under Act XIII of 1859 for periods of 626 and 939 days on the garden without any of the restrictions or safeguards imposed under Act VI. The coolie was, therefore, in this respect, in a worse position than he was under Act VI and unfortunately this practice has continued up to date though more than two years have elapsed since the amendment of Act XIII by Act XII of 1920. It is puerile to suppose that large and wealthy Companies were ignorant of the change in the law. They simply elected to ignore it. In any case, when Act VI fell into disuse the labourer was placed at any rate in some districts, in a worse position. Advantage was taken to lower the wage to an all-round rate of Rs. 5 and Rs. 4—the initial wages of new coolies under Act VI—while the supply of rice at Rs. 3 per maund was discontinued. It is true that an advance or bonus was given on Act XIII contracts but it was often only Rs. 6 in the case of women and a nominal sum in the case of newly imported coolies. The most unfortunate result, however, has been the effect in the recruiting districts not only on emigration but on the attitude of the local Governments. In accordance with the orders of the Government of India, the Bengal Government, in their Notification No. 2486, dated 5th July 1909, exempted garden sardars under the control of the Tea Districts Labour Association and certain other associations from some of the provisions of Act VI, one of the conditions being that no persons engaged by such sardars should be required to enter into a labour contract under the Act. The Bengal Government has held that one of the objects of the concessions granted to these associations was the fostering of *bona fide*, free recruitment and that the placing of unindentured labourers recruited through approved associations under a penal contract under Act XIII of 1859 immediately on arrival in the garden was an evasion of the spirit of the agreement between the associations and the Government. The Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, in his evidence, has referred confidently to the exploitation of fresh fields, especially for the recruitment of aboriginal labour, in Chota Nagpur and presumably the Feudatory States in Bihar and Orissa and the Central Provinces, but in view of the facts which have now come to light as regards the working of Act XIII, it does not seem probable that greater facilities will be afforded if indeed existing concessions are not imperilled.

Absence of
riots and col-
lisions under
a free labour
system.

169. The Doars Committee in their report (paragraph 46) state that one of the chief merits of the Doars' system of free labour is that a coolie is able to leave a garden when he finds that it does not suit his health or wishes to leave it for any other reason such as a marriage, or the desire to join relatives or friends on another garden and that they have no doubt that this freedom of movement makes for the happiness of the labourer. And it is noteworthy that the recorded evidence

of tea planters in the Dooars many of whom had experience of Assam is unanimously in favour of a free labour system.

170. The attention of the Government of India was attracted in 1899 and again in 1903 to the prevalence of riots and collisions between employers and labourers on the Assam tea-gardens and statistics were collected for the years 1890-1903 by the Assam Government who admitted in their reply to the Government of India in August 1904 that the figures showed that though cases of collisions between employers and labourers were not numerous, they had shown a steady increase and that conditions in Assam were less satisfactory than those which obtained in the neighbouring tea districts of Bengal. Leaving out of account the occurrences of the last 18 months when political agitation was a complicating factor, there does not appear to have been much improvement in this respect. Statistics of cases of rioting, unlawful assembly and assault or intimidation are given in the Annual Immigration Reports from 1904 onwards.

In the 17 years 1904-05 to 1920-21, 210 cases have been recorded, of which 141 are cases of rioting and unlawful assembly. Act VI of 1901 was withdrawn from Sylhet and Cachar, Kamrup and Goalpara in 1908 and finally from the four upper districts of the Assam Valley in 1915. On the other hand, in the Dooars under a free labour system disturbances of the kind have been conspicuous by their absence. In a period of more than thirty years (1889-1921) there appear to have been only two cases of rioting by coolies directed against their employers or of serious collision between employers and labourers. With free labour an occurrence such as the Monabari riot of October 1920 is inconceivable. It will be remembered that on this garden the coolies had been practically reduced to a condition of servitude, their wages being swallowed up in the repayment of rice advances, which, in the aggregate, amounted to Rs. 28,300. Comparing the Dooars with any Assam tea district of the same size and importance, for instance, the Darrang district, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the Assam labour system is to a large extent responsible for the frequent occurrence of these regrettable incidents on Assam tea-gardens.

171. There are 136 gardens in the Dooars and the Deputy Commissioner, Jalpaiguri, gives the garden population as 190,263, of whom 126,825 are adult labourers. The adult labour force in the Dooars is about 22 per cent. of the total adult labour population on the tea-gardens in the Province of Assam which on 30th June 1921 was 571,526. In the Darrang district there are 132 gardens with a population of 142,688 including 82,101 adults. As has been observed, conditions in the Darrang district are various. It is divided into the three local tea districts of Bishnath, Tezpur and Mangaldai. Conditions in Mangaldai are favourable. In the north the physical aspects of the country resemble the Dooars. Living is cheap and the district usually not unhealthy. Excluding Mangaldai, there is a still greater disparity between the adult labour population of the gardens in the Tezpur subdivision which includes Bishnath, as compared with the Dooars or Jalpaiguri district of Bengal. On the 30th June 1921, the adult labour force on the gardens in the Tezpur subdivision was 61,526. When the question of repealing Act XIII came under consideration in 1917, figures for the previous triennium were called for. The Darrang district returned 1,231 cases in which 105 labourers were convicted and sent to jail. The figures exceeded those for all the other tea districts in the Province and showed that the gardens in the Tezpur or Sadr subdivision were almost entirely responsible for the result. Figures for the year ending 30th June 1921 indicate that more advantage is taken of the Act in Tezpur than in any other district in the Province. In October 1921 the riots on the Tezpur tea-gardens finally induced the decision to appoint the present Committee of enquiry. The opinion has been expressed that the comparative prevalence of rioting on Assam gardens is the result of Act VI—a sort of aftermath of that well-intentioned but stringent piece of labour legislation.

172. Most planters are opposed to the withdrawal of the Act. In the first place, it is urged that the tea industry which imports labour at considerable cost should have some guarantee against labourers deserting or being enticed away by other gardens, and next that the coolie is more content with an agreement because it affords the opportunity of an annual bonus for any special item of expenditure. There is a marked distinction between the attitude of planters in the Surma Valley as compared with the Assam Valley. There is a considerable body of evidence to the effect that the Act could be dispensed with in the Surma Valley, and that it is probable the bonus would be continued though the privilege might be restricted to hardworking, settled coolies. It is well known that labour in the Surma Valley has always enjoyed a larger measure of freedom than in the sister Valley, and the fact has been commented on in the Special Report on the Working of Act I of 1882 which covered the years

Opinion of
the tea in-
dustry as
to whether
Act XIII
should be
repealed.

1886-1889. The planters in the Surma Valley at the same time point out that Act XIII has worked satisfactorily from the point of view of employer and labourer as evidenced by the small number of cases brought into Court. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the bonus given under the Act is much appreciated by tea-garden coolies. If the Act is repealed they suggest the withdrawal of the restrictions still imposed by certain sections of Act VI and the introduction of a free recruiting system.

173. Planters in the Assam Valley point to the negligible number of cases taken into Court. They also lay stress on the moral effect of the Act, in so far as the coolie generally understands that he is bound to carry out the terms of the contract in consideration of the bonus advanced and as a rule does so willingly. There is the further argument that coolies by getting the bonus or advance are saved from the professional money-lender. They apprehend that the discontinuance of the old established custom of giving substantial advances would result in trouble with labour.

174. The Committee have been informed that the honest, respectable labourer is unlikely to abscond if the agreement is discontinued. Managers have also stated that if the Act is withdrawn they will continue to give the bonus. In the Chargola Valley since the increase of wages was given, agreement bonuses have ceased and coolies are no longer placed under contract. Some Managers state their willingness to give a bonus on the completion of a year's work. The Committee do not believe that where labour is well treated the absence of a contract will have any effect on desertions. Quite a number of witnesses have stated that they do not put new coolies under contract. On the gardens of the Jokai Company in Lakhimpur, it is not the custom to give an agreement to new coolies till they have been three or four years on the estate. In the same district, the Superintendent, Assam Frontier Tea Company, states that new coolies are not put under agreement for the first three years and that they do not abscond. The Doom-Dooma Tea Company follows the same practice. The Manager of the Sessa Division, British India Tea Company, does not put new coolies under agreement until they have been one year on the garden. In view of the fact that leading Companies in Lakhimpur consider it unnecessary to place new coolies under contract the Committee cannot attach much weight to the argument that the Act is necessary in order to retain newly imported labour on the estate. About 95 per cent. of the gardens in Assam are signatories to the "Memorandum of agreement in connection with the enticement of labour from tea-gardens and other concerns in the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys". A copy of the rules will be found in the Appendix. It is perhaps unfortunate that Act XIII was not discarded at the same time as Act VI, when legislation to deal with the enticement of labour by providing a summary remedy for the recovery of actual importation expenses in certain circumstances and subject to a fixed maximum was under consideration. The Secretary of State, however, refused in August 1914 to accept the principle of the Assam Labour Enticement Act, one of the reasons being that Act XIII contracts are tolerated on account of their weakness and that to supplement them in the manner proposed must raise the question of allowing them to continue.

Opinion of
officials as to
whether Act
XIII should
be repealed.

175. Speaking generally, official witnesses are in favour of the retention of Act XIII. The Commissioner of the Surma Valley would continue the system of agreements with a modification in the Act. He considers it is an advantage to the coolie to receive a small lump sum once a year in the shape of a bonus. But he would transfer to the labourer the option of repaying the advance as an alternative to completing the contract. At present the decision rests with the Magistrate. In his letter No. 32, dated the 16th January 1922, to the Government of Assam, the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Division reported that the Act is worked in a humane and lenient manner, and that in the course of his inspections he called for and examined the proceedings of all cases tried under it, and that he was unable to recall any case to which exception could be taken. The Committee, after a careful examination of records, venture to think that there is some room for a difference of opinion.

Conclusions
of the Com-
mittee.

176. The Committee are divided on the question as to whether Act XIII should be retained, modified or repealed. Two members connected with the tea industry, are in favour of the retention of the Act as it stands at present. They agree with the rest of the Committee in condemning the abuses which have come to light. In so far as the Act is not properly administered by Magistrates, they think it the duty of Government to rectify this and they also consider that it is incumbent on the tea industry in its own interests to see that the provisions of the Act are strictly adhered to. It is argued that the Act was amended as recently as 1920 and that some Managers may not yet have realised the changes which have taken place in the old Act. They think that it would be a mistake to disregard the considered opinion of the majority of planters who wish to retain the Act and they believe that the coolie himself favours

the retention of an Act under which he receives a bonus once a year. The small number of cases taken into Court is quoted as proof that the Act does not bear heavily on the labourer. Another factor which cannot be ignored is that the planter has to incur heavy expenditure in recruiting labour—a coolie nowadays may cost anything from Rs. 100 to Rs. 150. Another member connected with the tea industry, who is in favour of retaining the Act, thinks that if all restrictions on recruiting were removed and if Assam was free to adopt the system prevailing in the Dooars, all need of the Act would disappear after the few years necessary to meet the altered conditions.

177. The majority of the Committee are in favour of the abolition of Act XIII. One Member of the Committee, a practical planter, is of opinion that the tea industry could dispense with the Act. The irregularities which have been brought to light have convinced him that the Act should be repealed. Important Companies which have disregarded the provisions of the Act cannot reasonably be supposed to have acted in ignorance. His belief is that if agreements are abolished Managers would be obliged to take more interest in the welfare of their labour force. The repeal of the Act would lead to greater contentment among labour with the result that recruiting would also benefit. His view is that to place a new coolie under a long-term agreement with or without a money bonus, does infinite harm. The fact that the placing of new coolies under long-term agreements immediately on arrival in the labour districts must exercise a prejudicial effect on recruitment has been lost sight of in the anxiety to retain labour which has been recruited at considerable expense.

178. The majority of the Committee consider it an anachronism that there should be any penal contract at all. They believe that the freedom of the coolie is considerably restricted under the present system and that the repeal of the Act, so far from being detrimental to the tea industry, would result in stimulating recruitment and the attraction of a better class of labour. On this point, the opinion of the Committee of 1906 is worth quoting :—

“ If Assam desires to attract labour, it will ask for no contracts of any kind from emigrants who are engaged by garden sardars. The one hope for emigration lies in sardari recruitment. In this way alone can a satisfactory class of emigrants be obtained and if their lot in Assam is made agreeable to them, the Committee do not believe that difficulty will be experienced in keeping them on the garden, free of contract of any kind.”

179. For decades not only the Government of Assam but Commissions appointed from time to time have advocated the abolition of all contracts and the introduction of an entirely free labour system as the goal to be aimed at. It may be doubted if the Labour Committee of 1906 would have expressed even a qualified approval of the working of Act XIII of 1859 if they had known that their proposals to abolish local contracts under Act VI would have been defeated by the practice which grew up in the Assam Valley Districts—notably Darrang and Sibsagar—of replacing long-term local contracts under Act VI by similar agreements under Act XIII. The Committee, in their Report, referred to the inadvisability of demanding contracts under Act XIII from intending emigrants in the recruiting districts, but they could hardly have contemplated that free labourers would be placed immediately on arrival on the garden under contract for a term of years expressed in days. As regards the theory that the labourer is in a better position to contract after he has been on the garden for a few days the Committee were most emphatic “ that experience has shown that the further the emigrant gets from his home the more helpless he becomes.”

180. The remark has often been made that Act XIII has suffered from its association with Act VI in the Assam Valley and though seven years have elapsed since the repeal of that Act, the extraordinary permanence of its effects is still in evidence. The Committee of 1906 observed that the powers of private arrest conferred by Act VI have not infrequently been illegally exercised in the case of Act XIII absconders and even of free labourers. On the question of “ moral effect ” of which the present Committee have heard so much in connection with Act XIII, their predecessors in recommending the withdrawal of the right of private arrest which was strenuously opposed by planters and the Commissioner and most of the district officers in the Assam Valley made the following observations (paragraph 214) :—

“ But it is urged that the sections (195 and 196) authorising private arrest have a moral effect on the labour force which enables the planter to keep his labour on the garden. This, which employers consider the sovereign virtue of the sections, appears to the Committee to carry their condemnation with it. It is not the fact that the precise nature of these sections is understood in the recruiting districts and that they in themselves deter intending emigrants. But the ‘ moral effect’

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which seems so valuable to employers is understood in the recruiting districts. It is known that Assam is a country where labour is not free, and where the employer is more powerful than elsewhere and this knowledge is one of the factors of the dislike of the country which is so marked. The more importance employers attach to the 'moral effect' of these sections, the more important it is that the sections should be withdrawn, because it is evidence that they are really effective; and their effect is to perpetuate a state of affairs which so long as it lasts will render a free flow of labour to Assam impossible."

The present Committee have found that the illegal arrest of absconders continues, that long-term agreements under Act XIII have replaced local agreements under Act VI and are common in some districts and approved by leading Companies, the alteration in the law notwithstanding. Minors are placed under contract and in some instances, as must be inevitable as long as the practice is so common, are arrested and sent to jail. The Act does not even secure finality as in one district coolies are illegally returned from jail to complete their contracts on the garden. In these circumstances, the majority of the Committee are unable to agree to the suggestion that the Act as amended should be given a further trial or that further amendments should be considered.

CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

181. In this Chapter the Committee propose to deal with subjects affecting the health of the labour force, with special reference to medical and sanitary arrangements. Some tentative suggestions are also made for the promotion of the general welfare and contentment of the labourer. Introductory.

The Committee of 1906 in Chapter VIII of their Report dealt exhaustively with the question of the birth and death-rate on tea-gardens and though in their opinion it was useless to attempt to arrive at figures that could pretend to any accuracy, they endeavoured to assign reasons for the low birth-rate and the high death-rate. The Committee laid stress on the "superior efficiency of the machinery for collecting vital statistics which exists on tea-gardens," and were of opinion that as regards births the figures were more accurate and reliable than for the general population. The present Committee do not propose to travel over the same ground or to repeat the reasons given for the low birth-rate, such as for instance the practice of abortion and the prevalence of malaria, syphilis and *anchylostomiasis* with regard to which medical evidence was recorded. They have, however, referred to the question of leave to pregnant women and agree that where greater liberality is shown it is reflected in an improved birth-rate. As regards the death-rate the opinion was expressed that the reported figures were not of much value. "Deaths of infants are admittedly incorrectly reported and probably the same is the case with the deaths of older people who are no longer actual workers." The conclusion was that though the figures are "not absolutely correct, the percentage of error is probably fairly constant, and if this is so, there has been a decline in the death-rate and a rise in the birth-rate in the last 15 years which is eminently satisfactory." The decline in the death-rate was attributed to the fact that new immigrants in recent years constituted a smaller percentage of the total tea-garden population, but apart from statistics the Committee formed the opinion that "lighter work and the opening up of the country had led to a general improvement in the health of the labour force which is showing itself in a lower death-rate and higher birth-rate." The present Committee are inclined to agree generally with these conclusions. In 1906 the Committee commented on the high death-rate among Act VI labourers which is "usually attributed to the constant importation of anæmic and poverty-stricken coolies," and they accepted the explanation as regards part of the period under review, especially in respect of importations of coolies from the Central Provinces in the years 1895-98 from districts affected by scarcity. History has a habit of repeating itself and the influx of enormous numbers of famine-stricken and enfeebled labourers in 1918-19 imported under similar conditions led to serious mortality on the tea-gardens of Assam during the prevalence of the influenza epidemic.

An interesting expression of opinion is contained in paragraphs 190-192 of the Report as regards the effect of penal contracts for long terms on sickness and mortality in the case of new immigrants. After quoting the opinions of authorities in the Federated Malay States as regards the unfavourable effect of a system of indenture on the death-rate, the Committee concluded by observing that "it is only too probable that the disillusionment following upon the immigrant's arrival on the garden, aggravated by the feeling that he is bound to remain there, should, in many cases, have had a prejudicial effect on his health, and the circumstances cannot be left out of account in considering the mortality of the past."

These remarks might well have been written with reference to the free immigrant who, on arrival on a tea-garden in Assam, up to a recent date, and even now in certain districts, is being placed under long-term contracts expressed in terms of days, in consideration of trivial advances and in direct contravention of the law. The unfairness of placing new immigrants who come up to Assam as free labourers under contract immediately on arrival on the garden was commented on and condemned in the Report of the 1906 Committee. It is significant that the highest adult death-rate recorded in the Resolution on Immigrant Labour for 1920-21 is reported from the Tezpur district where full advantage is taken of the provisions of Act XIII especially in the case of new immigrants. The birth-rate is also the lowest with the exception of Nowgong, another district in which the penal contract system is worked with considerable rigour and where allowances to pregnant women do not err on the side of liberality.

Vital Statistics.

182. The following table compiled from the Immigration Reports gives the mortality among the estate population including children from 1904-05 to 1920-21 :—

Year.	Mean annual strength.	Cholera.	Diarhoea.	Dysentery.	Malaria fever.	Anæmia of cooler or anohyletomiasis.	Respiratory diseases.	Kala-azar.	Infu enza.	Other causes.	Total deaths.	Ratio per mille.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1904-05	660-700	813	1,661	2,386	2,130	1,855	2,395	...	...	4,095	15,145	22·9
1905-06	670-963	2,057	1,607	2,843	2,429	1,499	1,933	...	...	3,735	16,103	24·0
1906-07	680-772	1,164	1,628	2,769	2,204	1,668	1,805	...	...	3,769	15,007	22·0
1907-08	712-002	3,603	1,936	3,558	2,740	1,926	2,296	...	...	4,713	20,772	29·2
1908-09	747-812	2,906	2,130	5,628	3,149	2,674	2,743	...	...	6,901	25,630	34·3
1909-10	757-076	1,638	1,614	4,794	2,491	2,424	3,281	...	...	5,234	21,476	28·4
1910-11	760-776	1,554	1,845	4,580	2,365	2,496	2,686	...	...	5,608	21,132	27·8
1911-12	777-347	1,733	1,863	4,186	2,015	2,642	2,802	...	...	5,332	20,573	26·5
1912-13	806-595	1,625	1,748	4,060	2,241	2,414	2,682	...	...	5,777	19,947	24·7
1913-14	834-148	1,579	1,753	3,917	2,174	2,696	2,928	...	...	5,530	20,577	24·7
1914-15	862-945	1,212	2,046	3,651	2,169	2,266	2,333	...	...	7,199	20,876	24·2
1915-16	916-268	2,566	2,411	4,612	2,613	2,212	2,436	...	...	8,302	25,151	27·4
1916-17	954-920	993	2,254	4,680	2,833	2,610	3,864	...	...	7,656	24,890	26·0
1917-18	948-598	748	1,882	3,284	3,062	2,540	3,189	...	...	7,256	21,961	23·2
1918-19	1,012-716	5,268	2,647	4,145	3,380	2,361	6,310	47	28,852	9,146	62,176	61·4
1919-20	1,097-600	993	2,375	6,784	4,627	4,028	5,221	15	9,604	11,217	44,866	48·8
1920-21	1,060-948	1,180	1,912	4,024	3,114	2,818	5,009	8	2,024	8,838	28,927	27·3

The period covered in each year is from the 1st July to the 30th June of the following year. The statistics do not agree with those in the Annual Sanitary Reports which are for *calendar* years. The percentages *per mille* from 1912 to 1920 for births and deaths in tea-gardens and in the province, as given in those reports, are :—

Year.	Tea-gardens.		Provincial.	
	Birth-rate.	Death-rate.	Birth-rate.	Death-rate.
1	2	3	4	5
1912	27·22	23·64	32·16	25·04
1913	26·66	25·47	33·06	27·36
1914	24·54	21·93	32·94	24·66
1915	26·27	26·47	30·86	33·60
1916	25·15	30·96	30·52	28·59
1917	31·10	30·41	31·35	27·09
1918	35·41	55·23	34·98	46·10
1919	31·58	33·82	30·52	50·09
1920	25·89	31·54	31·53	28·93

The figures for tea-gardens and for the province as a whole, must be accepted with considerable reserve. The reporting agency for rural areas outside Municipalities is still undoubtedly defective and unreliable. In 1916 the attention of garden authorities was invited to the desirability, in their own interests, of furnishing more accurate statistics as regards births. Deaths among adult labourers and working children are likely to be accurately recorded as continued absence from work and muster would lead to enquiries being made. In recent years efforts to obtain more reliable statistics regarding vital occurrences on tea-gardens appear to have resulted in some improvement. But there are instances in which the figures reported are still incredibly low, notably in the case of deaths of children. In Nowgong and Sylhet for the year 1920-21 the rate *per mille* is given as 14.4 and 15.8.

183. Cholera and influenza are largely responsible for the abnormal death-rate in 1913 and 1919. The population in the lines on an ordinary tea-garden is more congested than in the villages and the risk of the propagation and spread of disease proportionately greater, especially in the case of epidemics. The high mortality, however, was primarily due to the importation of hordes of famine-stricken and diseased coolies who were sent up to the Assam tea-gardens in the expectation that the artificial war-time prosperity of the industry justified large extensions of tea cultivation on old estates and the opening of new gardens. As might have been anticipated, disease broke out among these new recruits on the way up and on the tea-gardens to which they were consigned. The districts from which the immigrants came were affected by scarcity and the universal epidemic of influenza. The fact that the best medical attention on the gardens could often do little to save life in such circumstances conduced to a feeling of despair, and even to a belief among the more ignorant and superstitious that the garden was haunted by some evil spirit. It is not, therefore, a matter for surprise that some of these unfortunate immigrants lost faith in European medicines and methods of treatment and that when ill-health began to prey on body and mind and the earning capacity was diminished, they became discontented with the conditions of tea-garden life.

High mortality in 1918-19.

184. The large proportion of deaths from dysentery, diarrhoea and anæmia has from time to time attracted the attention of the Sanitary Commissioner who states in his Report for 1917 :—

Deaths from dysentery, diarrhoea and anæmia.

"...A pamphlet was drawn up by the Sanitary Commissioner and issued by the local Administration to persons and firms connected with the tea industry in Assam calling attention to the substantial improvement which may be expected in the health of the labour force by introducing a system of conservancy to reduce the mortality and inefficiency caused by bowel complaints and hookworm, quoting facts and figures in support of this contention. It appears from opinions gathered in the course of the cold weather tour that few, if any, of those connected with the tea industry now seriously contest the soundness of this view, and only a fear that the innate conservatism of the garden coolie may prevent the use of suitable conveniences, coupled with an unwillingness at the present juncture to undertake new expenditure, is delaying the realisation of this improvement. Signs are not lacking that when the first one or two septic tank latrines or other suitable installations have been proved to be useful, workable, and popular with the labour force, this reform will be widely adopted, and unless all previous experience in this connection is belied, a substantial reduction in these mortality figures may be expected to follow..."

Now that the prospects of the tea industry are brighter, it is to be hoped that these suggestions will be acted upon. It seems superfluous to point out that a coolie's capacity for work must be lessened by these diseases and by malaria. The layman perhaps is too prone to attribute the failure to do a fair day's work to inherent indolence on the part of the labourer. Doubtless there are coolies who, so to speak, are born lazy, and the tendency of the normal man to do no more than he is obliged to has to be reckoned with. At the same time, it is often the case that anæmia is the real cause of so-called laziness. It is significant that the name "lazy disease" is applied to *anchylostomiasis* in Porto Rico and the Southern States of America, as stated by Captain Christophers, F.M.S., in the Dooms Report of 1910.

185. "Speaking generally, a high birth-rate is a better index that conditions on a garden are satisfactory than anything else." On the other hand, the number of still-born children on some gardens indicates the prevalence of unfavourable conditions. In the five divisions of the Doom-Dooma Company, the number of children born alive in 1918 and 1919 was 674 and 569 respectively, but in the same years the figures were 86 and 113 still-born. In some gardens the mortality among infants under two years of age seemed to be abnormally low and this is reflected in the reported death-rate of children in at least two districts in the Province—Nowgong and Sylhet..

Births.

186. The Committee have recorded the evidence of 15 European Medical Officers of tea-gardens. The chief points on which the Committee desired to elicit an expression of opinion were as regards the treatment of anæmia and hookworm disease, the

Medical and Sanitary arrangements.

practicability of introducing a system of conservancy, the alleged aversion of coolies to undergo in-door treatment in hospitals, and the assistance given to pregnant women. In formulating their conclusions, the Committee have derived much assistance from the evidence not only of Medical Officers, but also of Managers.

Anæmia and
hookworm.

187. In recent years appreciable progress has been made in the treatment of anæmia and hookworm on tea-gardens. These diseases seem to be more prevalent in certain parts of the Assam Valley than in the Surma Valley and treatment is certainly more systematic in the Assam Valley. There is a consensus of opinion among Medical Officers and Managers that the prevalence of anæmia or hookworm disease in a garden very considerably diminishes the efficiency of the labour force. Dr. Ramsay states that hookworm reduces the efficiency of the coolie by 50 per cent. Anæmia is mainly the result of malaria or dysentery or hookworm infection. The type of anæmia which has its origin in hookworm causes most anxiety because of the difficulty in getting rid of the initial infection. There are two methods of checking anæmia, (a) by direct treatment, (b) by prevention of hookworm infection. The ordinary method of treatment where the disease is prevalent on an estate has been described by a medical witness. The European Medical Officer, once a year, or oftener, has the whole labour force mustered before him. He then picks out coolies who seem to be affected and, after further examination, a list is made of those who are to undergo treatment which usually takes the form of dosing with anthelmintic. It is generally the practice at regular intervals to apply the Hæmoglobin test. Those under treatment are not discharged until the European Medical Officer is satisfied that they have recovered. Dr. Joly has stated that his practice is to grade the sick coolies into three different classes—A, B and T. The coolies suffering from anæmia are placed in A *chalan*, are given a dose of anthelmintic once a month and every morning receive a free meal and get full pay for doing one-third work. As they improve in health, they are transferred to B *chalan* and are given a light meal together with a dose of medicine and receive full pay for two-thirds work. Coolies in A or B *chalans* can only be discharged by the Medical Officer, who expects to find on the occasion of his weekly visits fresh coolies in A and B *chalans*, selected on the initiative of the Manager or Assistant Manager. T *chalan* coolies are simply placed under treatment without interference with their ordinary work. All coolies on being discharged from hospital, whether suffering from anæmia or not, automatically go into A or B *chalans* for light work for, at least, one fortnight before they return to their ordinary tasks. All coolies who have had malaria automatically go into B *chalan* as the coolies in that *chalan* get quinine every morning. Dr. Joly states that the health of the labour force on all gardens in his charge is improving under this routine treatment.

Dr. Abraham of the Lungla Valley in Sylhet, states that hookworm is very prevalent in the gardens in his practice and that he has met with considerable success in treating coolies suffering from it with medicine. These gardens are not as yet provided with latrines. Dr. Smith of the Balisera Valley in Sylhet, who has also had experience in Assam, says that hookworm disease is not so bad in the Surma Valley. Members of the Committee who visited two hospitals in Tezpur under the charge of Dr. Forsyth were much impressed by the methodical treatment of anæmic patients. Dr. Dodds-Price of Nowgong, states that hookworm in his district is now negligible and he attributes this to the result of regular musters and systematic treatment in the past.

System of
conservancy.

188. The installation of a conservancy system on tea-gardens in Assam has not advanced beyond the experimental stage though in the last year or two considerable progress has been effected. Medical Officers advocate the desirability of conducting an intensive campaign against hookworm infection by this method. The Committee note with satisfaction that many Managers are in favour of some system of conservancy. Several witnesses, however, have stated that the coolie will not use latrines, but in most cases it was found that latrines had never been given a trial. On the other hand, there is the positive testimony of Medical Officers and Managers who have actually introduced latrines that they are a success in so far that coolies do use them with the result that in many cases there is an appreciable fall in the incidence of anæmia. The Committee have seen latrines of different kinds in use. On Tara garden in Lakhimpur, the bucket system of latrines is in vogue. This necessitates the maintenance of a staff of sweepers. Dr. Joly has pronounced this system satisfactory. At Panitola there is a system of *aqua privy*. The Manager said it was regularly used and that the health of the adjoining coolie lines had much improved. At Gotonga, Members of the Committee were much impressed by a septic tank

erected by Messrs. Bird and Company, which had cost about Rs. 8,000. The Manager expressed his satisfaction with it, and avowed his intention of installing a similar septic tank in another of his gardens. He was further of opinion that he could build one for about half the cost of the Gotonga tank. In places where latrines exist, the Committee have been assured that, with few exceptions, the coolies do not object to using them. There is, of course, always a difficulty about children. It is not, however, to be expected that latrines will be regularly used unless they are kept clean. Sometimes there may be a difficulty in enlisting a staff of sweepers. Dr. Joly made the pertinent remark that unless Managers themselves are interested in such schemes and have a reasonable belief in their success, there is little hope of progress. In some gardens trench latrines have been tried. In such cases supervision is difficult and there is the risk of fly infection which may lead to other dangers, but it is a step in the right direction. The ideal is the septic tank, but there are two difficulties: (a) the question of initial expense, and (b) the difficulty in getting an adequate water supply. It has been stated that four to five gallons of water a day are required for each person using the latrine. As regards the question of cost which some gardens might consider prohibitive, Dr. Joly has observed that, in his opinion, the septic tank would decrease the cost of production of tea by saving garden labour. Without putting the figure of diminished efficiency as high as Dr. Ramsay, the Committee have no doubt that the average coolie suffering from anæmia cannot be expected to do a full day's work and where such cases are numerous, either the cultivation of the garden must suffer or an additional labour force must be imported. An anæmic coolie is obviously a financial burden to the garden. Prevention is better than cure, and practical efforts to improve sanitation with this object are to be welcomed. The Committee do not think that where the labour population lives in scattered hamlets, latrines are either so necessary or indeed practicable, but they have no hesitation in saying that where congested barrack lines, with a large population living under artificial conditions, are concerned, the introduction of some system of conservancy is essential. The Empire of India Tea Company in Tezpur, since 1919, have made considerable progress in the erection of latrines and the Medical Officer, Dr. Jameson, regards a latrine system as a sound business proposition. Latrines are sometimes attached to hospitals, especially in the Assam Valley. No system of conservancy will eradicate hookworm disease, but the Committee are satisfied from the medical evidence, that the chance of infection will be appreciably diminished. Most medical witnesses state that coolies are infected with hookworm when they come up from their country. Dr. Jameson is of opinion that hookworm is mostly contracted on the garden. It was suggested to a medical witness that as the question of the introduction of a conservancy system on tea-gardens was in a more or less experimental stage, it might be advisable for Medical Officers to confer together and discuss the matter, and the Committee think that action on these lines might have useful and practical results.

189. Medical Officers and Managers have expressed various opinions on the attitude of coolies with regard to in-door treatment in hospitals. In the Surma Valley, it is generally stated that the coolie, if he enters hospital at all, only does so in the last resort. after he has tried to treat himself after his own fashion in the lines. Where a hospital is attractive, where good and careful treatment is provided and where the garden doctor babu is competent and sympathetic, there seems to be no reason why in-door accommodation in the Surma Valley should not be more popular than appears to be the case. Dr. Dunlop of the Chargola Valley has mentioned that part of the Gandhi propaganda was to induce people to have nothing to do with hospitals and Western medicines. It was observed about the time of the Chargola exodus that coolies declined to go to hospital and in particular complained that in hospital they were "cut up", the reference being to the intravenous treatment for cholera. Members of the Committee who visited Dr. Forsyth's hospitals, were shown pictorial representations of certain diseases. These pictures are periodically explained by way of lectures to the coolies. As regards in-door treatment, much depends on the inducements held out to the coolie to remain in hospital.

190. The Committee regret to learn that *kala-azar*, which, about a generation ago, played havoc in the tea-gardens and villages in the Nowgong district has re-appeared. Dr. Dodds-Price who, for about 30 years, has had a unique experience in dealing with the disease in that district, states that the present method of treatment by injection of *antimony tartrate* is proving very successful. He says that whereas formerly the death-rate from *kala-azar* was 95 per cent. of those infected, that figure now represents the percentage of recoveries. Two Members of the Committee visited Dooria garden in Golaghat where between 1916 and December 1921, 270 coolies out

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of about 500 attacked died of *kala-azar*. At the time of the visit there were 7 cases. The Directors of the Company have spared no expense and have made every effort to eradicate the disease. The hypothecated losses on the *kala-azar* account stand at between £ 40,000 and £ 50,000 sterling, i.e., £ 40 to £ 50 per acre. Hundreds of infected houses were burned down, new lines erected, and hospitals with a special staff established. The treatment of *kala-azar* patients in hospital is on a generous scale, men being paid 4 annas a day, and women 3 annas, with a double *hazira* on the day when the European Medical Officer inspects. If a man is ill, his wife is also paid to look after him. In this garden a coolie suffering from any disease which, in the opinion of the Manager, requires in-door treatment, is paid a full *hazira* while in hospital. There is a danger of encouraging shirking, but, on the whole, the Manager believes that it is in the interest of the garden to give full pay during stay in hospital. There is, thus, a chance of rapid recovery. The alternative is to allow the coolie to treat himself in his own way in his own house with the probable result that the garden will lose his services for a considerable time. Needless to say, there is very little trouble in getting patients to remain in hospital until they are cured. The Committee hope that Hautley garden in Gdaghath, where *kala-azar* is prevalent, will be equally successful in getting rid of the disease.

Pregnant
 leave.

191. The question of the help that should be extended to pregnant women, particularly of the labouring classes, is one which has attained international importance, as is evidenced by the proceedings of the Washington Labour Conference. Nowadays when it is so difficult to obtain labour from the recruiting districts, it is, apart from humanitarian motives, a matter of enlightened self-interest to be generous in the treatment of women during and after confinement. The Committee have noted with satisfaction the tendency towards increased liberality in the granting of pregnant leave and allowances. They have been told that, as a rule, a pregnant woman can get as much leave as she likes. While there is no reason to criticise the amount of leave given, it may be pointed out that unless the woman receives considerable help in the shape of pay as well as food, she may return to work too soon in order to avoid the loss of wages entailed by absence on leave. The health of the child in this case is particularly liable to be affected and even its prospect of survival endangered. There are concerns which in normal times are prosperous but which are illiberal and shortsighted in this respect; penny-wise and pound-foolish. The Committee have been told that in some gardens the woman can get free meals if she comes to hospital, but it is hardly to be expected that the average woman will do so. In other cases, pregnant allowances are only given when absolutely necessary, for instance, when there is no other working member in the family. When the family is well off sometimes no assistance is given. On the other hand some gardens are very generous in their treatment of pregnant women. The Budla Beta Company give leave for three months before and three months after birth with full pay for the whole period. Pay may be given for a still longer period according to the advice of the doctor. The Doom-Dooma Company allow a similar period of leave with five seers of rice a week free of cost and Re. 1-8 a month in cash. The Pabhajan Company is equally liberal. In the Jorhat Company, pregnant women get three months full pay, and a bonus Rs. 2 when the child is born, Rs. 2 when the woman goes out to work, Rs. 2 when the child is six months old, and Rs. 4 when it is one year old. The Consolidated Tea and Lands Company in Sylhet, grant three months' leave on half pay, with a bonus of Rs. 3 at birth and of Rs. 2 after 12 months. The Empire of India Tea Company in Tezpur give leave for three months before and three months after childbirth, and the cash allowance is one rupee a week in addition to free milk supplied from the hospital. Dr. Dodds-Price of Nowgong is of opinion that light work during pregnancy is not prejudicial, but he advocates liberal leave after childbirth up to 5 or 6 months. The practice of deducting rice advances from the half-pay allowance prevails on some estates in this district, with the result that the balance paid in cash at the end of the month is insignificant. On some gardens it is the rule in addition to giving rice, to give a minimum of one rupee over and above the food provided. This is not an extravagant allowance for a woman and her infant child, but it was explained that gardens were hard hit during the depression, and that, after all, a tea-garden is not a philanthropic institution. This seems to miss the point and in any case represents a narrow view. Economy on these lines is the worst kind of parsimony. The Committee endorse the opinion expressed by their predecessors that "if children are to be born, and to live, six months' leave on half pay after childbirth would seem to be advisable."

192. With few exceptions, gardens are equipped with a qualified medical staff. On some outgardens—and to a large extent on small gardens owned by Indians—a compounder is often in charge. The Committee, however, found a compounder in charge of two hospitals at the headquarter garden of a leading Tea Company at Doom-Dooma, and a proposal of the Medical Officer to have a qualified doctor babu placed in charge of each hospital had been disallowed on the score of expense. This seems to be a poor kind of economy.

The efficiency of the subordinate Indian medical staff, of course, depends to a great extent on adequate and competent European medical supervision. Dr. Joly has stated that there is a difficulty in getting good doctor babus. There is a percentage of registered men who apply, but far more unregistered men apply who are not qualified. Dr. Ramsay has urged the necessity of opening a medical school at Silchar to train Indian doctors for tea-garden work on the ground that the Berry-White School at Dibrugarh and the Calcutta Colleges do not provide sufficient candidates of that class. The men trained in these institutions are of the Sub-Assistant Surgeon type, who are limited in number, and naturally demand high rates of pay. Dr. Ramsay is of opinion that the men trained by him at the Labac Central Hospital in Cachar are as efficient as the medical students passed out from those Colleges, and, in present circumstances, he considers it advisable to train his own men for the various garden hospitals in his extensive practice. He further is of opinion that it was a mistake to abolish the Government Local Board examination which doctor babus were required to pass and he has suggested that the men trained by him at his Central Hospital should be allowed to appear at the Dibrugarh and Dacca examinations. The Committee desire to bring to the notice of the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, the question of the establishment of a medical school at Silchar, and the revival of the Board examination. It is understood, however, that the proposal to establish a medical school for the Surma Valley at Sylhet is under the consideration of Government.

193. In the Doom-Dooma district, *anchylostomiasis* combined with malaria is said to be responsible for 90 per cent. of the deaths, and the higher death-rate in the rains is attributed to the increased incidence of malaria. Dr. Ramsay has stated that he does not know of a coolie who has not had malaria. Medical witnesses have called attention to the high spleen index in Tezpur and also in the Balisera Valley, particularly among children. Prophylactic doses of quinine, especially during the rainy season, are commonly administered to check malaria. Many witnesses have alluded to the great mortality due to influenza, in 1918 and 1919, and it was found that in some gardens in the Doom-Dooma district, the malady was still prevalent. Every care and attention is shown to influenza patients. Two medical witnesses have spoken of the increase in the number of cases of tuberculosis. Statistics show that pneumonia cases are prevalent especially in Upper Assam, and this indicates the necessity of the provision of proper clothing and blankets where variations of temperature are sudden and extreme. Dr. Forsyth has expressed his preference for thatched houses. Dr. Joly thinks that it is desirable that barrack lines should contain fewer houses as supervision is facilitated. Dr. Ramsay has referred to the numerous operations for cataract in his Central Hospital. Many coolies must be indebted to his skill for the recovery of their sight. In most gardens, no expense is spared to provide a pure water-supply and the pipe system from closed wells or fenced tanks which is common on many gardens is admirable. In many cases cholera is said to be traceable to the villages, or, to streams which bring the infection from a source outside the garden. Dr. Ramsay speaks of a type of dysentery which is due to infection carried by pigs which are kept by certain classes of coolies. In connection with the mortality from dysentery and diarrhoea the Sanitary Report for 1920 gives the ratio in gardens in Assam as 6.95 *per mille* which considerably exceeds the average of the province—1.84. "This indicates the necessity for improving the sanitary conditions where there are large aggregations of labour." Sibagar, Lakhimpur and Darrang are the tea districts where mortality from these diseases is highest.

Miscellaneous
medical
matters.

194. In reply to question 70, Managers have stated the practice as regards Sick *haziras*. giving free meals or sick *haziras* to children or weakly coolies who are unable to work. Information as regards the treatment of men or women who are unable to earn a sufficient wage on account of ill-health has also been supplied. The Committee are satisfied that in most gardens adequate assistance is given. As a rule, sick coolies receive half pay or hospital diet. The Committee have no definite information as to how far the total number of days due to absence through sickness is added on to Act XIII contracts when they are expressed in terms of working days

Under Section 130 of Act VI this was permissible only when the total exceeded 30 days in any one year and the sanction of the Inspector of Labourers was essential. In the case of weakly coolies, it is usual in many gardens to give them light work on full pay until they recover strength.

Treatment
of new
coolies.

195. Owing to the change in climate, in diet, and in work, a new coolie takes some time to get acclimatised. Speaking generally, the Committee are satisfied that Managers, as a rule, recognise that it is good policy to make conditions as easy as possible for the new immigrant; on some estates full pay for the first month or two is given irrespective of the amount of work done, and special rice concessions are often allowed. It may be recalled that Section 5 of Act VI specifically laid down that, during the first six months, a labourer shall be entitled to full pay on completion of half the daily task unless the Inspector certified that he was physically fit to perform the whole task. Some witnesses have stated that coolies of inferior physique are often recruited and that they are not of the same agricultural class as formerly. This seems to indicate the necessity for greater care and attention in the case of new immigrants. Dr. Ramsay has stated in evidence that coolies recruited in recent years are unsatisfactory and that more than 25 per cent. die and another 25 per cent. live on the hospitality of the Company.

Leisure of
the coolie.

196. To the question whether the coolie has more time to devote to his own pursuits and more leisure generally than he used to enjoy, the answer is unanimously in the affirmative. Managers realise that coolies are impatient of the severe discipline which used to prevail on some estates. Where reasonable leave for domestic needs or for cultivation is withheld, discontent is the inevitable result. The Committee are prepared to admit that there must be a certain measure of discipline and that excessive leave may tend to idleness, if not to the physical deterioration of the labourer. At the same time they are convinced that there are gardens where the liberty of the coolie is unduly restricted by refusal of leave when reasonably required, for instance, to cut his crops, or by compulsory work on days when he is entitled to a holiday. This point is brought out in the Deputy Commissioner's report on the causes of the riots in the Tezpur district in October last. The Committee, however, believe that such cases are the exception.

Recreation.

197. The Committee in the course of their tour noted with satisfaction that efforts have been made on some gardens to make the coolie's life more interesting. Many estates are fortunate in having large grants of land attached where the coolie can vary the monotony of his daily work by some form of recreation. In the remoter districts there are opportunities for hunting and fishing which appeal to the aboriginal races. Other gardens in more populated centres are not so happily situated and in such cases football, cinematograph entertainments and sports would be suitable amusements on a holiday and would form a counter-attraction to the liquor shop. Football is becoming increasingly popular and an itinerating bioscope show is a regular event in the cold weather in some districts. Most estates contribute towards the Durga Pujah festivities. The suggestion of a Saturday half-holiday has been put forward by Captain Mackie, President of the Darjeeling Planters' Association, in a recent address :—

“What I think we could do now is to encourage healthy recreation among them I would go further and close down on Saturday afternoons, at any rate during the non-manufacturing season, so as to give coolies an opportunity for inter-garden matches. In all countries the working man has a half-holiday on Saturday and there seems no reason to deprive the tea-garden coolies of this privilege. I commend the suggestion for the consideration of Sub-District Committees.”

Garden
schools.

198. Some years ago, the Assam Government deputed an officer on special duty to enquire into the question of education among garden coolies, and the possibility of establishing schools on tea-gardens. As a result, a certain number of schools were started on various estates. These have not been a success, not for want of encouragement on the part of Managers, but for other reasons. In the first place, children are a valuable asset to the garden. Their earnings are a welcome addition to the family income, and schools are naturally not popular with parents. The children themselves probably prefer an out-door life with light work. It is possible that the custom which prevails in some gardens, of parents giving an undertaking that in consideration of a bonus paid, their children will work for the estate, militates against the success of these schools, and there is also the question of placing minors themselves under Act XIII Contracts. It is, however, problematical how far, if at all, an increase in the day of adult labourers would result in a better response to the efforts which have been made to establish garden schools.

199. Most Managers are of opinion that co-operative societies on tea-gardens hold out little hope of success and are not a promising proposition. Mr. Ballantine, Superintendent of Police, Sylhet, has propounded a scheme that garden agents should combine and get up goods cheap for their coolies. His point is that at present the garden shop-keeper waxes fat on the coolies' earnings. He has been successful in organising a co-operative store for police officers and constables and the suggestion seems worthy of further consideration by those interested.

200. Some gardens give small pensions in cash to deserving coolies who have earned them by long and faithful service on the estate, but the practice can hardly be described as common, though it is admitted that there is scope for an extension of the system. Old coolies are often given light work, and sometimes an allotment is made of garden land for cultivation. This form of pension is much appreciated. But as a rule under the family system on old-established tea-gardens with plenty of land available, the old people and dependents generally, who are unable to work, are not badly off. At the same time, the provision of superannuation benefits is a matter which might well receive more attention. Pensions.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

201. The Committee have already expressed their opinion on the main questions of adequacy of wages, and the possibility and desirability of converting the indirect remuneration represented by concessions into an increase of money wages. The Committee were also asked to make any recommendations which seemed desirable for improving the conditions of labour on tea-gardens. Chapters V and VI contain certain suggestions which come under this head and others are put forward in the present Chapter.

Labour
legislation
from 1906
onwards.

202. Orders issued by the Government of India in February 1908, on the recommendation of the Committee which was appointed in 1906 to enquire into certain matters affecting the supply of labour for the tea gardens of Assam substantially altered the conditions regulating recruitment. In January 1908 a notification was published by the Local Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, declaring that the labour districts had ceased to be subject to the provisions of sections 118 to 121, and 195 and 196 of Act VI of 1901. The effect of this order was that a labourer could only be put under an Act VI contract in the recruiting district. If he was brought up to Assam as a free immigrant, he could no longer be placed under an Act VI contract on arrival. Further, a time-expired labourer could not be re-engaged under Act VI on the expiry of his contract. The right of private arrest was abolished by the withdrawal of sections 195 and 196. At the same time control over contractors was tightened, recruitment by unlicensed contractors abolished and increased facilities given to recruitment by garden sardars working under the local agents of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association and similar associations. It was understood that coolies recruited by these sardars could not be placed under labour contracts in the recruiting district. Previous to the appointment of the Committee of 1906, the Government of India had announced their intention of withdrawing Act VI from the Surma Valley Districts, and from Kamrup and Goalpara, but as complete withdrawal might lead to abuses in recruitment a notification was issued by the Local Government that from 1st November 1908, Cachar, Sylhet, Kamrup and Goalpara would cease to be subject to the provisions of certain sections of Chapters VII and IX of Act VI of 1901 and that these districts would be exempt from the restrictions imposed by Chapter VII except in respect of the maintenance of registers and returns, inspection of gardens, and the liability to repatriation of labourers physically incapacitated or wrongfully recruited. The Government anticipated that as a result of the increased facilities accorded to sardari recruitment a great impetus would be given to the free movement of labour. Contracts under Act VI could now only be taken in the recruiting districts for immigrants to Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sibsagar and Nowgong in the Assam Valley, but labourers destined for these districts who were recruited by sardars working under the Associations to which special privileges had been conceded could not be placed under contract. In August 1908, Mr. J. F. Gruning, I.C.S., was placed on special duty to visit the recruiting districts with a view to removing existing prejudices against emigration to Assam. He reported that these prejudices would not disappear until the Act was withdrawn from all labour districts and recruiting through contractors abolished. The Government of India in October 1913 decided to withdraw the labour district provisions of Act VI from the remaining districts of the Assam Valley with effect from 1st July 1914. To meet the changed conditions due to the abolition of contracts under Act VI and to provide employers with some remedy against the enticement of labour a Bill was administratively approved by the Government of India which enabled the employer to recover by a summary procedure the cost of importation of the labourer from any one who unlawfully employed him within three years of his arrival on the estate. Pending consideration of this Bill, the withdrawal of the labour districts provisions of the Act was deferred. The Secretary of State for India was, however, unable to accept the principles of the Bill. In 1915 was passed the Assam Labour and Emigration (Amendment) Act (VIII of 1915), under which the system of recruitment by contractors was abolished, and a Labour Board for the supervision of local agents and of the recruitment, engagement and emigration to labour districts of natives of India under the Assam Labour and Emigration Act VI of 1901 was constituted. The labour districts provisions of Act VI were withdrawn from Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sibsagar and Nowgong with effect from 1st July 1915.

203. Managers were asked to state the expenditure incurred on recruiting during the last five years and, if possible, to explain the reasons if the increase in expenditure was incommensurate with the results obtained. An expression of opinion was also invited as regards the type of coolie recruited in recent years as compared with the previous decade. There is a consensus of opinion that the results of recruitment have been most unsatisfactory and that the class of immigrant now recruited is of an inferior type.

The following statement gives statistics of emigration to tea-gardens in Assam since 1900 :—

	Adults.	Children.	Total.
1	2	3	4
1900	45,014	17,689	62,733
1901	19,887	6,836	26,223
1902-08	20,199	6,485	26,684
1903-04	17,769	4,398	22,162
1904-05	19,050	5,159	24,209
1905-06	24,595	7,135	31,830
1906-07	20,043	5,574	25,617
1907-08	58,934	25,890	84,824
1908-09	42,524	18,249	60,773
1909-10	29,397	9,935	39,332
1910-11	24,292	9,365	43,657
1911-12	45,905	12,741	58,646
1912-13	46,239	13,634	59,873
1913-14	45,849	13,020	58,646
1914-15	46,212	17,426	63,638
1915-16	72,608	37,768	110,376
1916-17	33,998	14,132	48,130
1917-18	15,084	4,323	19,107
1918-19	135,028	87,143	222,171
1919-20	65,463	36,626	102,089
1920-21	16,850	8,622	25,472

The following notes are taken from the Annual Immigration Reports :—

1907-08.—The marked increase was due to the existence of famine or scarcity in some of the recruiting areas.

1915-16.—The increase is attributed partly to the prosperity of the tea industry and the extension of the area under tea, and partly to conditions favouring emigration in the recruiting districts; the influence of the Assam Labour Board was probably a contributory cause during the latter part of the year.

1916-17.—The decrease is ascribed to good harvests in the recruiting districts; to the increased demand in those districts for labour for industries connected with the war; to the heavy importations of the preceding year; and, in part, to the curtailment of tea-garden expenditure owing to the difficulty of disposing of the crop.

1917-18.—The great decrease is said to be due to good crops in the recruiting districts and to the increased demand for labour in those districts for industries connected with the war. Other factors were the raising of labour corps in some of the recruiting districts for military service, a larger supply

the time of the Chargola exodus was that Calcutta Agents had placed the Managers in a difficult position by withholding consent to the increase of pay proposed. He admitted that gardens were not making a profit but he pointed out that the Managers believed that an increase in wages would conduce to greater efficiency and that the cost of production would not be materially increased especially if the concessions of cheap rice and agreement bonus were withdrawn. The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur has given four instances in which he believed sanction to an increase had been refused. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, has stated that letters from Calcutta Agents sometimes betray ignorance of local conditions. The Committee admit that it is difficult to give any increase of wages when no profits are being made. In many cases, Calcutta Agents have only limited powers and have to refer to the Home Boards. Sometimes Agents may be wrongly criticised for not granting an increase in cases where managers had not suggested it. The Committee realise that though it may be difficult at times to decide between the claims of the shareholders on the one hand and of the workers on the other, it is recognised that one of the main considerations is the contentment of the labour force. Most, if not all, Agency houses have visiting agents who periodically visit the estates and have opportunities of acquiring first-hand knowledge of the condition of the labour force. All that the Committee would urge is that sympathetic consideration should be shown by Agents and Directors to any proposals for improving the lot of the labourer.

210. The tea-garden labourer is often swayed by gusts of unreasoning passion and, in the last year or so, has not infrequently been the tool of the self-seeking political agitator. He has no Trade Union to back his case. He has to look to the Manager as his best advocate and adviser and the comparative steadiness of tea-garden labour in recent disturbed times must be attributed largely to the sympathetic attitude of the Manager towards the ignorant coolie. The tea industry in Assam lives in a world of competition. It has to compete with other rival industries to obtain its labour and, in selling the finished product, it has to face keen competition with other tea-producing countries and other districts in India and Ceylon. There is a limit to the wage the industry can afford to pay. At the same time there is an awakening among the working classes in India as elsewhere in the world. The tea-garden labourer is not likely to lag behind in his desire to attain a higher standard of living and this factor will have to be reckoned with in the future.

J. C. ARBUHNOFF.

D. S. WITHERS.

O. O. WILLIAMS.

S. P. BARUA.

R. M. DAS.

WALI MUHAMMAD.

J. A. DAWSON.

19th August 1922.

NOTE BY SRIJUT S. P. BARUA, M. L. C.

Page 4, paragraph 8.—“The Committee by its presence had encouraged labour unrest and strikes,” hardly conveys a true impression. “The presence of the Committee was utilized by the agitators to encourage and foment labour unrest and strikes” is a truer rendering of opinion.

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

MINORITY REPORT BY MAJOR H. B. FOX AND MR. T. McMORRAN.

1. We regret that we are unable to sign the Report, and we explain in the following paragraphs the reasons for our inability to do so.

2. The Committee was appointed "to enquire whether in view of the great rise in prices which has occurred during recent years the remuneration paid to the labour force on the tea gardens of the Province is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and a reasonable degree of comfort" and in particular :—

- (1) to enquire whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice and clothing, garden-land, and the like, is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort ; and
- (2) to enquire whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the abovementioned concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages ; or, if not, whether it is possible for the value of such indirect remuneration to be so expressed in terms of money wages that the actual total remuneration received by the coolies can be readily exhibited ; and
- (3) to make any recommendation which seems desirable for improving the conditions of labour on the tea gardens.

3. We reply to the two questions (1) and (2) as follows :—

- (1) At the present time the remuneration in money payments, together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice and clothing, garden-land, and the like, is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort.
- (2) It is, broadly speaking, impossible, and in the interest of the labour force, it is undesirable, to attempt to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the abovementioned concessions into an increase of money wages ; and it is difficult to express, in terms of money wages, the value of such indirect remuneration so as readily to exhibit the actual total remuneration received by the coolies.

4. We will try to set forth as shortly as possible the reasons which have led us to these conclusions, and we will begin with question (1). It was not until 1919 that the cost of living in Assam increased to any great extent. It is true that in 1918 the price of cloth rose sharply. But it has to be remembered that the coolie does not spend more than a moderate percentage of his income on cloth. And, moreover, the rise coincided with a heavy fall—approximately 45 per cent. in the Surma Valley—in the price of rice. In 1919 and in 1920, scarcity conditions enhanced the price of food-stuffs ; and the tea garden coolie was affected by the increase, as were of course other sections of the community. There is no automatic way of ensuring that the relation of income to outlay shall always remain stable. But the difficulties of the tea garden coolie were tided over, during the period of scarcity, in some cases by an advance in wages and in others by his being supplied with rice at concession rates.

5. Exchange began to rise in 1918, and it reached its highest point in 1920. The rise necessarily put up the cost of producing and manufacturing tea ; and it was accompanied by a disastrous fall in tea prices. The two causes brought about such a shrinkage in the income of almost all tea companies as not only to exhaust their reserves, but also to make borrowing unvoidable. Economies in the cost of production were imperative. But they took the form of the starvation of equipment, rather than the reduction of wages. Indeed, we are convinced that in almost every estate the last thing to be touched was the wages bill ; and that in only a small percentage of cases was this impinged on by a reduction of the labour force.

6. It was at this time, and in these circumstances, that certain political agitators set about deliberately to organise the destruction of the tea industry. That such was their object was made clear at a meeting of the Surma Valley Conference, which was held at Sylhet in September 1920, and at which it was resolved ; (a) to refuse to take service under European planters and merchants ; and (b) to secure the gradual withdrawal of those who were already in such service. It has since transpired that a widespread secret campaign, which culminated in the Chargola exodus, was carried on among the coolies. That it should have met with such comparatively limited success is, we consider, a testimony to the fact that the relations, both personal and otherwise, between tea garden labourers and managers were, on the whole, satisfactory.

7. At the time of our enquiry the prices of foodstuffs and cloth had fallen, and, in consequence of the improved position of the tea industry, extra work, which enabled the labourer to increase his earnings, was available. In some cases advances of pay had also been conceded. And, as we have already indicated, we are clearly of the opinion, after most carefully weighing and considering the evidence submitted to us, that the first question may be unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative. That is to say, the remuneration in money payments, taken together with the concessions received in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden-land; etc., is, at the present time, sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

8. Before leaving the first question we would also like to point out that resources which might have been applied to improving the position of labour, when short crops made food dear in 1919 and 1920, were being absorbed by taxation. For, even at the time when most estates were working at a loss, the export duty of Rs. 1-8 per 100 lbs. of tea exported was still maintained. This duty was introduced, as a war measure, on the 1st March 1916. In the years 1919-20 and 1920-21 it yielded in the aggregate not less than Rs. 96,56,000 or, in other words, rather more than Rs. 11 per head of the daily average working force employed on the tea estates in India in those two years. In the absence of profits such a duty is practically a tax on wages. Indeed we are in a position to assert that agency houses were prepared, if the tax were abrogated, to apply the amount of it to the supplementing of the labour budget. It follows that, if there was any foundation for the assertion that the labourers had an economic grievance it must be acknowledged that the Government of India by thus depleting the wages fund, were in part responsible.

9. We now turn to the second question, namely, whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the concessions should be converted into an increase in money wages, or if not whether it is possible for the value of such indirect remuneration to be so expressed in terms of money wages that the actual total remuneration received by the coolies can be readily exhibited. Without exception the witnesses who came before us considered that it would not be advantageous to the labour force to convert these concessions into cash even if, which would be difficult, it were possible to do so. We agree with this conclusion which expresses our own opinion on the subject. There are certain gardens in which the coolies are offered a 50 per cent. increase of wages in lieu of rice at Rs. 3 per maund. In this connection we would point out that it is in evidence that a majority of the labourers on these gardens prefer to be allowed to buy rice at the concession rate rather than to be given the higher cash wage. It follows that if the coolie, in the exercise of his free choice, takes this course his freedom of action ought not to be limited.

10. The terms of reference suggest that, in addition to replying to the two questions with which we have already dealt, the Committee should make any recommendation which may seem desirable for improving the conditions of labour on the tea gardens. Under this head we would urge that measures for the eradication of the disease known as *hookworm* should be steadily pursued. We do not propose to enter at length into the subject, but during the course of our enquiry we have been impressed by the urgent necessity for a well-organised campaign against this disease. In connection with paragraph 188 of the Majority Report we desire to call attention to the following statement which appears in the Report of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine on the work done during 1921 in the Hookworm Laboratory of the School, namely, "The septic tank has up till now been regarded as a destructor of Hookworm ova. So no doubt it would be if the contents of the liquefying Chamber were at rest. This however is not the case * * * . In this laboratory we examined samples of effluent from 56 septic tanks, and found living ankylostome larvae or eggs in 19 of them."

11. In addition to the questions raised in the terms of reference another matter was brought before the Committee at a later stage by the Government of Assam. The Government asked, in a letter dated 18th January 1922, for the views of the Committee on the subject of Act XIII of 1859—The Workman's Breach of Contract Act. Judging by the information which we obtained on tour we have come to the conclusion that the Act, as amended in 1920, is of value to employers and employed. To the former because it promises to them a year's service; and to the latter because, in consideration of such service, they receive a substantial bonus over and above their wages, so that, contrary to what is said in paragraph 166 of the Majority Report, those coolies who are under agreement receive remuneration in excess of those who are not under agreement. The evidence showed that there are still a few

cases in which a contract for a term longer than one year is given. But even when these contracts are asked for by coolies we consider that the amended law should be respected. There are said to be about 270,000 adults who executed agreements under the Act during the year ending 30th June 1921 out of a total adult population of about 571,000. The number of complaints of non-fulfilment of contracts was 1,604 or '6 of 1 per cent., and 63 persons were sentenced to imprisonment—'024 per cent. This record shows that the Act rests very lightly on those who take service under it. We, therefore, favour its retention in its amended form. But we would transfer to the coolie the option of repaying the advance if he wishes to cancel the agreement, as proposed by Mr. Webster, Commissioner of the Surma Valley and Hill Division.

12. We have now briefly stated our conclusions on the questions which were submitted to the Committee for investigation. It may be, we quite realise, objected that—except as regards Act XIII of 1859—these conclusions do not differ so materially from those arrived at by the majority of our colleagues as to justify us in framing a minority report. And, in view of the possibility of this objection, it may be desirable for us to explain our position. Our touring ended on the 8th March 1922; and, on the understanding that the report would be completed in the latter half of April, we postponed our departure for England until the beginning of May. Drafts of Chapters I and III were given to us on the 18th April. But the remaining chapters were not produced until we again met, as arranged, at Shillong on the 29th April. These chapters had not been duplicated, only the Secretary's copy being available. They were revised after we, and other members of the Committee, had left Shillong; but no detailed discussion of the report by the Committee as a whole has taken place except in respect of Chapters I and III. And, when the report reached us in England it had been signed by the other members; and we were informed, by cable, that modifications could not then be made in it.

13. We cannot accept the Report because of the manner in which it presents the conclusions stated in it; and because it does not, as we think, fairly reflect the evidence recorded. It is indeed so framed as to suggest that the conclusions on the two main issues have been grudgingly arrived at. And then again it enters into what we consider to be an unnecessary academic discussion of the various concessions, the object being to diminish the advantages of these concessions to the labourer. Indeed Chapter III consistently seeks throughout to minimise the benefits which are conferred on the labour force by outlay under this head. We consider it to be ill-advised and wrong, for the Committee to endeavour to belittle these items of expenditure. And the statement which is made in paragraph 57 in support of this attitude namely, that "it would be as reasonable to expect the policeman or the sepoy to regard money spent on hospitals, medicines and doctors as part of his pay" requires explanation. Surely if these public servants are "reasonable" they must regard such concessions as advantages, and as being in fact equivalent to pay. For our part we favour outlay on coolie welfare, and we would encourage the industry to persevere in the provision of such aids to efficiency.

14. In Chapter V (paragraph 177) of the Majority Report it is stated that the majority of the Committee favour the abolition of Act XIII of 1859. We, on the contrary, favour the retention of the Act in its amended form: and in paragraph 11 above we have explained our reasons for holding this view. We wish to add here that we entirely disagree with most of what is said in Chapter V. It should be, we think, remembered that an enquiry into the working of the Act formed no part of the terms of reference as defined in the Government of Assam's Resolution, dated 26th November 1921, by which the Committee was appointed. As we have mentioned above it was in a supplementary letter dated 15th January 1922 that the Government asked the Committee to express their views on the Act. But the supplementary letter was not put before the members of the Committee—at least it did not come before us—until after we arrived at Shillong on the 21st March 1922, when our touring had ended. Moreover the Questionnaire, which is referred to in paragraph 138, and which was issued in the name of the Committee, was actually drawn up and sent out before the members assembled. And the inclusion in it of questions 74 to 78 respecting the Act, means no more, therefore, than that those who compiled these questions gave a certain direction to the enquiry without reference—so far as we know—to their colleagues, and certainly without reference to us.

15. We regard the whole of Chapter V as a prejudiced denunciation of the Act and its working and administration, and we regret that we cannot associate ourselves with it. The review of the administration of the Act (paragraphs 140-153) with which the Chapter is weighted was not called for by the Committee, nor it was ever discussed by them. We were even unaware until after we had left Shillong that it

was the work of the Secretary. The statement in paragraph 161 was controverted by the Manager of Monabbarie, who explained that the purpose of the Chaukidars was to prevent undesirable people coming into the garden—a quite reasonable precaution when agitators were endeavouring to stir up trouble everywhere.

16. There are certain particular references which we desire to make because the Report has gone beyond the stage when it can be corrected. In various paragraphs *e.g.*, 16, 20 and 105 it is suggested that agreement bonuses were recovered from coolies. We are unaware of any cases where this was done, but it may be that such bonuses were entered as an advance and were written off monthly, as the contract was fulfilled, by charging the amount to Expenditure Account. But the amounts were not in such cases recovered from the coolies.

In paragraph 68 it is erroneous to speak of Mr. Rhodes as "the representative of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce." That Chamber has no representative in the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Rhodes represents the European Community in Bengal by whom he was elected.

In paragraph 70 the expression "without working overtime" is misleading unless the words "working overtime" are defined. A single task, as the evidence shows may be completed in 3 to 4 hours.

In paragraph 89 2nd line of italics should read Lungla Juri-Doloi Valley and not as printed.

In paragraph 95 the information unless brought up to date seems to us irrelevant.

In paragraph 109 the question of indebtedness is one on which we hesitate to express a dogmatic opinion. One Indian witness in Tezpur gave it in evidence that he paid up a debt of Rs. 800 due to a Marwari by a coolie family residing in a *busti*, and that the family came to his Estate to work giving him an acknowledgment in writing of the debt. Such indebtedness is much in excess of that commented on in the paragraph (which averaged Rs. 10 per head) but no special mention is made of it. Perhaps it has a bearing on the application of the last sentence in paragraph 135.

In paragraph 117 the rates quoted for Lungla Company are a recognised minimum for "coolies below average efficiency" and do not represent the earnings of the average coolie.

In paragraph 118 which quotes the average wages at Patrakhola Estate for March 1922 there is no mention of the fact that the coolies were on strike for ten days during that month as the result of the activities of agitators, four of whom were subsequently arrested and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment.

In paragraph 127 the conclusions drawn from one year's experience of recruiting seem to us fallacious. Labourers, as a rule, only leave their home districts when they are subject to economic pressure. There is unfortunately no assurance that years of scarcity or years of famine will not recur. The figures of recruitment on page 103 do not lend support to the opinion expressed in this paragraph.

In paragraph 131 the third paragraph dealing with F. M. S. conditions does not apply, for the Medical evidence given before us indicated that the coolies improved physically after arrival in the Tea Districts.

17. Then again there are certain points of procedure to which we also take exception. For instance, the questionnaire to which we have already referred, and which contained no fewer than eighty-five enquiries was issued "on behalf of the Committee" to all the Estates:—876 in number—in the province. But although we were members of the Committee we were not consulted before the issue of this document, which, we are disposed to think, gave a direction to the enquiry other than that which might have been decided upon by a majority of the Committee. Furthermore, although the Committee were on tour for three months no meetings were convened to enable us to compare impressions of the typical Estates visited, and to record these impressions while we were actually in the district. It was not until we reached Shillong that personal impressions were discussed. But it was then obviously impossible for those, who like ourselves may have seen little amiss, to verify the impressions of other members who may have found occasion for adverse comment. And it must also be noted that some of the members of the Committee did not visit certain districts at all, and their acceptance of the Report must be clearly subject to this qualification.

18. In conclusion we feel bound to add that, in our opinion, it would have been advantageous if the functions of Secretary and member of Committee had not been united. For their union had the effect, as we think, of keeping the direction of the enquiry too exclusively in one hand; and of causing information, which was really intended for the Committee, to be regarded as a personal possession.

H. B. FOX,
T. McMORRAN.

London, 7th September 1922.

APPENDIX I.

Dated Shillong, the 30th November 1921.

From—J. A. DAWSON, Esq., I.C.S., Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee,
To—The Managers of Tea Gardens in Assam Valley and Surma Valley.

On behalf of the Committee appointed to enquire into the conditions of tea-garden labour in Assam, I have the honour to append a list of questions, and should be glad if you would answer them as far as they relate to gardens under your control. Should you not be in a position to supply all the information asked for, the Committee would still be glad to be favoured with replies on those points on which you may be able to enlighten them. They would welcome any other facts or statistics illustrative of the economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies in Assam live and opinions as to whether any, and if so, what, remedial measures are required.

2. The terms of reference are :—

To enquire into conditions of coolie labour on tea gardens in Assam and in particular—

- (i) to enquire whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort ;
- (ii) to enquire whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the abovementioned concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages ; and to make any recommendation which seems desirable for improving the conditions of labour.

3. The Committee regret that there has been some delay in framing the questions, but feel sure that you will, in the interests of the tea industry, treat the matter as urgent and will send the answers—it will suffice to quote the numbers of the questions—as soon as possible to the Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, Shillong. I may say that the Committee intend to examine witnesses at convenient centres, and also to visit typical tea gardens. If you would like to give evidence before the Committee, this fact may be communicated to the Secretary. The tour programme will be sent out as soon as it is finally settled. Provisionally, it is intended to visit Darrang in December, Sylhet and Cachar in January, and Sibsagar, Nowgong and Lakhimpur in February.

QUESTIONS.

I.—Labour Force.

1. What is the working population living on the garden—men, women and children? Can you give the approximate percentage of the different classes of coolies in your garden—Oriyas, Santals, etc.?

2. How many coolies, not residing on the garden, do you usually employ—men, women, and children? Are they employed throughout the year or usually at a particular season?

3. What is the acreage of tea under cultivation and the average yield per acre? Is your labour force sufficient? If all your coolies worked 8 hours a day, how many approximately would you require to work your garden?

4. If you employ outside labour, would it be possible to have all the work done by your coolies residing in the garden? If so, can you give any reason why this is not done?

5. (a) What is the explanation of the difference between the total labour force on the books and the average daily working strength, which is in some cases considerable?

(b) How many hours' work is done per week on the average in a normal year by (1) your best coolies, (2) your average coolies, in (a) busy season and (b) slack season?

6. (a) How much have you spent in recruiting during the last five years? Trace the increase in your labour force as a result of recruiting.

(b) If the increase appears to be incommensurate with the expenditure, how do you explain the unsatisfactory net results?

(c) In the circumstances stated in (b), would it, in your opinion, have been more profitable to spend the bulk of the money devoted to recruiting on the coolies you already hold? If so, in what directions?

(d) If little or no recruiting has been done, can you explain how you have managed to maintain an adequate labour force with so little recruiting?

(e) Is it a fact that some gardens are more popular with labour than others? If so, please state what you consider to be the most important factors of such popularity?

7. Leaving out of consideration times of cholera and influenza epidemics, how does the birth-rate in your garden compare with the death-rate?

8. Is the type of coolie recruited at the present day as good as ten years ago? If inferior, in what respect?

II.—Organisation and Discipline.

9. State briefly but as fully as possible the customary duties of manager, assistants, and Indian staff on your garden.

10. What are the duties, powers and privileges of sardars and line chaukidars on your garden? On what principle are they selected? Are they popular in general with the labour force?

11. Have there been cases of abuse of power on the part of your staff (all grades) in your experience? Have these been common? What is the best way to avoid such abuses?

12. Do you consider it essential that the European staff on a garden should be thoroughly conversant with some vernacular understood by the coolies? In your experience is this always the case?

13. Do you have a system of fines? If so, what is it, *i.e.*, who have the power to fine and on what principles are they allowed to do so?

14. It is said that in some gardens everything is done for the old settled coolie and that in other gardens everything is done for the new coolie. Is it possible so to arrange matters as to keep the old coolies contented while in no way discouraging the new? If so, how is it done?

15. Is it a fact that there has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour during the past few years? If so, to what do you attribute it? State your own experience. Were you aware of a feeling of unrest apart from any caused by the efforts of political agitators and do you think that without these efforts the unrest would have manifested itself?

16. To what extent do you attribute recent disturbances among tea-garden labour to the incitement of agitators? If possible, give your own experience.

17. Have coolies had any real grievances—economic or personal of which agitators could make capital? If not, how do you account for the sporadic nature of the troubles that have occurred?

18. During the past few years of enhanced cost of living (1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920) has the remuneration of the staff, European and Indian, and of the labour force increased? If so, please give details. If not, were any other steps taken to mitigate the hardship of the increased cost of living?

19. What dividends did your garden or Company pay during the abovementioned five years?

20. Have you on any occasion during the past five years suggested to your agents or directors any measures for ameliorating the lot of your labour force? If so, with what results?

III.—Wages.

21. What is your system of payment, daily or monthly? What is the daily rate of wages (*hazira*) paid to men, women, and children living in the garden for a full task? If payment is according to a monthly rate, what is it for men, women, and children? If the daily or monthly rates have changed since 1913, please give details.

22. If different rates from above are given in the case of labour living outside the lines, please state them.

23. Have the cash earnings of coolies for work done on the garden increased since 1913? Can you give any figures to show the difference? The figures should include regular *haziras* and also *ticca* earnings (*i.e.*, additional pay for work over and above the standard task).

24. What do you consider a decent living monthly wage for a working coolie—man and woman—not a mere subsistence allowance, but a wage that would suffice to keep them in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little?

25. Can you give any idea of the extent of difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920?

26. (a) Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, would you say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities?

(b) Please state the total sanctioned provision for remuneration of labour in your garden budget year by year for 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920 and 1921 and side by side with these figures please give the strength of your labour force in the same years.

(c) Please give in tabular form the actual earnings of a number of your best working coolies—men, women, and children—month by month for a year showing number of days' work done,—total *hazira* earned and total *ticca* earned—for the years abovementioned.

(d) Please state the average daily number turning out to work on your garden (1) during the period July to September inclusive and (2) during the period December to February inclusive. Also the average number of coolies who earned *ticca* during these periods. The figures should be for the years 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920 and 1921.

27. Can you give any idea of the indebtedness of coolies in your garden either to the garden or to outside *mahajans*? Can you give any idea of how many of your coolies are free of debt either to the garden or to the *mahajans*?

28. Can you say to what extent coolies in your garden remit money to their home districts?

29. To what extent do your coolies save money to buy cattle, buffaloes, land and the like? Do any of them lend money to other coolies?

30. Are payments made daily, weekly, fortnightly, or monthly for regular task work? What would the coolies prefer? When are *ticca* payments made?

31. Are payments made in cash or in tickets? If the latter, does the garden cash the tickets or the shopkeeper? Is there any reason to believe that the latter does not pay the coolie the full value of the tickets?

32. If rice or *dhas* is issued, is the cost or any part of it recovered? Please describe your system in detail.

33. Do you think the fixing of a standard wage is feasible for the district, for the sub-district, or for a group of gardens?

34. (a) Do you favour the idea of a provident fund for your Indian staff?

(b) Do you favour the idea of giving coolies a bonus proportionate to the prosperity of the garden year by year? If so, what form should it take?

35. Does the unit system exist in your garden, *i.e.*, a system of remuneration based on small units of work, the coolies being paid in terms of multiples of such unit. If you have such a unit system, describe it. Is the coolie allowed to earn as much or as little as he chooses, both in busy and slack

season, or is there a limit? Under the unit system does the coolie tend to sacrifice quality to quantity? If the unit system is not in force in your garden, would you be in favour of its introduction?

36. Is it the case that earnings are inadequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year? Can this be remedied?

37. Are wages paid into the hands of the coolies by the Manager or Assistant Manager? Is this an invariable rule in your garden?

38. In the case of your garden to what extent do coolies supplement their regular and *ticca* earnings by cultivation of paddy or other crops, sale of firewood, milk, fodder or vegetables, by rearing cattle, by hiring carts, or in other ways such as working on Government or Local Board roads?

39. In the case of a coolie living with his wife and children would you say, as a general rule, that his own total earnings are sufficient to maintain himself and his family in health and reasonable comfort?

40. Is it your experience that increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours?

41. How far do you think it true that any appreciable rise in the rate of wages would result in the coolie not earning more from the garden but in his doing less work for the same pay?

IV.—Tasks.

42. What is the task for plucking? Does it differ at different times of the year? Has it altered in recent years, say from 1913? If so, how? How many hours does it take the average woman to do the task?

43. Has fine plucking altered the task? With a reduced task for fine plucking is it possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice?

44. What is the *ticca* rate for plucking and how does it compare with the rate before the war? Granted that there is leaf to pluck, can a coolie earn as much *ticca* as he or she chooses or is there a limit? Can a coolie earn as much by *ticca* plucking now as during the war boom in tea?

45. In weighing leaf what deduction is made for the basket? Is the deduction always the same? What other deductions are made, e.g., for wet or stinky leaf or for factory charges? Suppose a plucker brings in 25 pounds of *actual* leaf in a basket weighing 5 pounds, the leaf being perfectly dry, for what weight of leaf will she get credit in your garden?

46. Is leaf weighing made in presence of the Manager or Assistant Manager? Is this the invariable rule?

47. What is the task for (a) light hoeing, (b) deep hoeing? Has it altered in recent years, say from 1913? If so, how?

48. Does the hoeing task differ at various times of the year or for different soils in the garden? How many hours does it take the average man to do the work?

49. What is the *ticca* rate for hoeing and how does it compare with the rate before the war? Can a coolie earn as much *ticca* in hoeing as he chooses, or is there a limit? Can he earn as much now by *ticca* hoeing as he could before the war?

50. How are hoeing measurements made? By a *nal* rod or by so many *galis* (rows) of bushes? Are the results identical? How many feet in your garden *nal*?

51. To what extent and in what circumstances are fractional *huciras* given in your garden?

V.—Concessions.

52. (a) To what extent have coolies in your garden got land for cultivation of paddy or other crops (1) Within the garden grant, (2) outside? In the case of (1) can you say what amount of land is so held and by how many adult coolies? On what conditions do the coolies hold land inside the grant; if not on rent-free terms, what is the rate of rent? Are they liable to be turned out of their land, and for what reasons?

(b) What percentage of the adult male coolies in the garden have got land for cultivation either inside or outside the grant?

53. Is it your experience that coolies living in the garden who hold land inside or outside the estate do a reasonable amount of garden work, either by themselves or by other family members?

54. Have you still got land within the estate which the coolies could take up for cultivation? If so, is there any desire to take it up? If not, why not?

55. Is it your experience that new coolies are keen on taking up land for cultivation or only coolies who have been settled in the garden for some time?

56. Do you give facilities to new coolies to cultivate, or do you prefer to give this privilege only to those who have been for some time on the garden?

57. Is there much Government waste land in the neighbourhood of your garden suitable for cultivation which your coolies could take up?

58. Can you give any idea as to what extent coolies in your garden hold land outside the estate and whether as direct tenants of Government or as sub-tenants of others?

59. Does the coolie as a rule sell the produce of his land in the open market or to other coolies, or does he keep it chiefly for his own consumption?

60. Is the coolie in your garden allowed leave freely to cultivate his land or are restrictions placed?

61. Are the coolies housed in lines or houses built at garden expense? Or are they allowed to build their own houses? In the latter case, does the garden supply materials and pay the coolies for a reasonable time while building them? Can you give any idea of the money value of free housing? Do they prefer to build their own houses or to live in the houses built by the garden? Have they a plot for growing vegetables, etc.?
62. Is there free grazing land available in the garden? If so, does the garden provide cowherds?
63. Apart from agreement advances, does the garden lend money to the coolies for miscellaneous purposes? Is interest charged? How are the loans recovered? Does the borrower mortgage his cattle or anything? If he takes the money to buy cattle, do you consider the cattle garden property until the advance is repaid?
64. Are many of these loans irrecoverable? On an average how much do you write-off annually as irrecoverable?
65. Do the coolies have any difficulty in finding fuel within the estate? If so, is any help given to them?
66. On the occasion of festive days like the *Durga Pujas*, is anything given to the coolies?
67. Have you accommodation for in-door patients in your hospital and is it much used?
68. Do you supply clothing or blankets free or at a reduced rates, and in what cases?
69. What pregnant sick leave is given before and after birth? What sick pay, if any is given during that time? Is any bonus given on the birth of a child? Are any arrangements made for nursing?
70. In the case of children or weakly coolies unable to work, are free meals or sick *laziras* given? In the case of the latter, what amounts? If men or women fall below par and are unable to earn sufficient to keep them in good health, do you do anything to assist them such as by feeding them till they are fit for work?
71. Have you a garden school and would you call it a success? If, in the past, you have had such a school which has now ceased to exist, can you give the reason for its abolition?
72. (a) When rice is dear, is it your practice to sell it to the coolies at concession rates? Taking the last 5 years or any other suitable period, what has been your loss by making this concession? What is your guiding principle in fixing the rate at which you sell rice to the coolie or have you a fixed rate? If you have a fixed rate, what is it?
- (b) Is this concession of cheap rice granted over and above the full rates of pay, or do those who avail themselves of the cheap rice concession get less pay than those who do not? How much concession rice may a working coolie—man, woman, or child—purchase per week?
73. Is it possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., should be converted into an increase of money wages? The question may be considered from the points of view both of the garden and the coolie?

V I.—Contract.

74. (a) Do you put coolies in your garden under Act XIII agreement? If so, what advance is given to men and women? Do you recover the advances? Do you put newly-recruited coolies under agreement as soon as they come up from their country?
- (b) Has the amending Act XII of 1920 which restricts the term of agreement to one year, altered the amount you give as advance? How has your garden practice been altered as the result of this Act?
75. Do you think it necessary to put the coolie under contract at all? Probably many coolies put themselves under contract in order to get the advances. Would you be willing to make the present advances if the coolie was not put under contract? Would you be willing to give the coolie the money as a bonus at the expiry of a year's work?
76. Do you think the coolie would be more content if he was not under contract?
77. Do you file many cases under Act XIII against absconding coolies? If so, do they usually go back to the garden, refund the advance, or go to jail?
78. If it is the practice in your garden not to put coolies under contract, do you find that this is satisfactory? And do many coolies abscond?

V II.—General.

79. Is there a shop in the garden from which coolies can get supplies and are prices controlled by the management? Have the coolies any complaints against the shops?
80. Is it the custom to hold muster parade before the coolies go out to work in the morning? Is this necessary?
81. Do the coolies in your garden spend much money on liquor or on opium? In recent years the price of these commodities has increased, do you think that this has led to a decrease in consumption among your coolies? Where there has been an increase of wages, is there any reason to believe that much of this has gone in liquor or in opium? In the case of the heavy drinker or confirmed opium-eater, have these habits caused diminished earnings among these classes?
82. Is there any co-operative society in your garden where coolies can get goods at reasonable prices? Do you think there is any prospect of success if this is tried?

83. Do you think the coolie has more time to devote to his own pursuits at the present day than he used to have? Can you explain why?

84. In the case of disputes in your garden among the coolies themselves, do they prefer settlement by the Manager to going to court?

85. What is your opinion about giving pensions to coolies who have done long and faithful service?

APPENDIX II.

COMMUNIQUE OF 5TH JUNE 1921.

On May 2nd, 1921, the coolies on a number of tea-gardens in the Chargola Valley in the Karimganj subdivision struck work and demanded largely increased rates of pay. On being told that the demand was impossible they left the gardens and proceeded to Karimganj. The movement spread rapidly throughout the Chargola Valley and affected also certain gardens in the neighbouring Longai Valley.

On May 6th, it was decided at a meeting of Managers of the Chargola Valley, which the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner attended, to offer new rates of wages, which though less than what the strikers demanded amounted to an increase of from thirty to fifty per cent. This offer was made at once on several gardens but did not produce the effect anticipated. By about the middle of the month between six and seven thousand coolies had left the gardens. Two gardens in the Chargola Valley had lost practically their entire labour force, and all gardens but one in the Valley had lost from 30 to 60 per cent. In the Longai Valley three gardens only were affected and the proportion of losses was smaller.

This influx of coolies into the little town of Karimganj caused great trouble to the municipal authorities and no little suffering to the coolies themselves. Food was provided by Government for those in need of it and one issue of rice was accepted. Then the coolies were led to believe that the acceptance of food from Government would entail their being sent back to the gardens. Gradually the great majority of the coolies made their way as far as Chandpur in the Tippera district of Bengal, some by train from Karimganj and others from stations further down the line which they had reached on foot. In the first instance many forced their way on to the trains without tickets while others took tickets for short distances and then refused to leave the trains. There are still some five or six hundred coolies in the town of Karimganj.

2. It is unquestioned that great suffering and hardship have been caused by these events, and the allegation has been repeatedly and publicly made that the exodus was spontaneous and was due to the inadequate pay and brutal treatment received by the coolies on the gardens. On the other hand the employers are convinced that the coolies would not have left the gardens but for the efforts of unscrupulous persons who have been filling their minds with wild suggestions. It is a fact that the first batches to leave the gardens invoked the name of "*Maharaj Gandhi*" and declared that they were obeying his orders. It is also beyond dispute that many of them sold their cattle and household belongings, in some cases at ridiculously low prices, in order to be unencumbered on their travels.

As between the two extreme views it has been suggested that, whatever campaign of misrepresentation may have been undertaken, it would have met with no success had not real grievances existed; and that the Government have failed to redress such grievances and have identified themselves with Europeans and capital as against Indians and labour.

3. It is therefore desirable to review the general conditions of the tea industry in this part of Assam. Most gardens in this part of the Surma Valley produce a comparatively coarse quality of tea and depend for their profits on the heaviness of their outturn rather than on its quality. These gardens have therefore been particularly hard hit by the low prices which have prevailed during the past year for the inferior grades of tea. While tea was controlled by Government during the war and fixed prices were obtained with little regard to quality, it was easy even for unskilled labourers, owing to the coarse plucking which was allowed, to add materially to their daily earnings by doing what is known as "*ticca*" or extra work in addition to the standard task. It is a well known fact that this standard task can be completed by the average labourer by midday. When war conditions ceased to stimulate production in the Surma Valley, it is probable that, apart from any economies in working necessitated by the fall in prices, the coolie's opportunities of supplementing his daily wage in this manner were restricted. Previous to 1908 the law itself fixed minimum wages for contract labour on the Surma Valley gardens: and the Government have never ceased to acknowledge and to discharge definite responsibilities in connection with earnings. Periodical returns of wages are received and in the inspections which are made at regular intervals by the officers of Government particular attention is paid to the wages earned. If as has been alleged there had actually been in force the preposterously inadequate rate of two or three pice for a day's work a grave responsibility would have rested with Government. It would have been their duty to intervene, and in the last resort to assist the labourers who were refused a living wage to return to their homes. As a matter of fact the information in the possession of Government shows that on the affected gardens in the Chargola and Longai Valleys immediately before the strike the rate for the daily task (which is frequently supplemented by *ticca* earnings) was from four to five annas for men and from three to four annas for women. This is corroborated by statements made by the deserting coolies at a late stage of their homeward journey, which leave no doubt that the stories of wage rates of a few pice a day are false.

As regards the allegations of habitual ill-treatment the Government are perfectly prepared to investigate any case of which specific details are placed before them by responsible people, but they have no hesitation in describing many of the stories to which currency has been given as deliberate and

malicious inventions calculated to arouse racial feeling. The gardens are regularly inspected by Government officers, they are connected by good roads with the subdivisional headquarters at Karimganj and as experience has shown nothing would have been easier than for any aggrieved labourers to go in and lay complaints.

4. It has also been stated that the coolies assembled at Chandpur are in a state of emaciation which could not have been caused by the hardships of a few days of uncomfortable travel and under-feeding, but affords clear proof of long-drawn-out starvation on the gardens. This view derives some support from the report of the Travelling Inspector of Emigrants who accompanied one batch from Chandpur to Goalundo three weeks after the exodus began. He gives it as his opinion that they "had not had sufficient nourishment for some time" referring evidently to a longer period than that of their journey. The evidence of those who saw the coolies nearer to their start is to the opposite effect. The Subdivisional Officer of Karimganj reports that the majority of the coolies were in good condition when they first arrived there. A medical officer who knows the home district of a large number of the coolies states definitely that the condition of the coolies at Karimganj compared most favourably with that of people of their class in their own district. The Hon'ble Mr. Reid, the Member in charge, who has just returned from a visit to Karimganj saw large numbers of the coolies still collected there and found no signs of emaciation among them though some had been there for a fortnight. An intelligent observer who saw batches of coolies at a late stage of their homeward journey noted that their bodies were well nourished and muscular although their faces had the strained hungry look that is brought about by short rations for a few days.

A factor which cannot be ignored in considering the condition of the migrating coolies is that most of them were comparatively recent arrivals in the district. It is common knowledge that new coolies are less well off than old ones. For one thing they do not at first have land to cultivate. For another they have not the dexterity of the older coolies and find it a harder matter to perform the allotted tasks. It is unquestionable that the coolies suffered great privation and hardship on their way from the gardens to their homes. It is certain that they were insufficiently fed both at Karimganj and on the journey while some of them performed largely on foot and without shelter at night a large part of the journey. It must be remembered also that the prevalence of scarcity in some of the recruiting districts had led of recent years to the immigration of labourers of impaired physique and that the after effects of the influenza epidemic were severely felt by them. In view of these facts the Government are unable to accept accounts of observers of the condition of the coolies *en route* to their homes as establishing the conclusion that they had been starved upon the gardens.

5. It remains to deal with the statement that efforts have been made by persons unconnected with the industry to promote discontent among the coolies. The Government know for a fact that such efforts have for some time been actively made, apparently with the intention of arousing ill-will against Europeans and the Government, although those concerned have for the most part been careful to keep outside the reach of the ordinary criminal law. An indication of this policy is to be seen in one of the resolutions passed at the Surma Valley Conference which was held at Sylhet in September 1920. This referred to the oppressions of European merchants and planters and called on people not to serve under them and those in such service gradually to withdraw. Again at a non-co-operation meeting at Ratabari in the Chargola Valley on 1st May tea-garden coolies were addressed in Hindustani and urged to demand a rate of pay which it was certain that the gardens could not afford to give. This rate was demanded next day by the strikers. As has been stated earlier the coolies left the gardens with shouts of "*Gandhi Maharaj ki Jai*" and asserted that they were acting under the orders of "Maharaj" Gandhi. Many of them believed that arrangements had been made by the same authority for their repatriation.

The statements made by many to officers of Government and to Managers left no doubt that they were obeying an appeal made to them on other than economic grounds.

6. It is the case that the gardens in the area concerned, like other gardens in the Surma Valley, have been specially affected by the depression in the tea industry, and it is recognised that the rates of wages have not been raised as they have in some other parts of the province on account of the general rise in the cost of living. It is moreover not unlikely that there has been some actual reduction in the amounts that could be earned as *ticca*. There is however clearly a vast difference between these conditions and starvation wages, and the Government are forced to the conclusion that these causes alone could not have produced the sudden stampede which occurred, and that the real reason was the activities referred to in the last paragraph. The exodus has led to deplorable sufferings, and those responsible for it have created ill-will which did not exist before.

The situation was a difficult one, and the Government's action or inaction has been criticised. It would have been unwise, even if it had been legally possible, to attempt to compel the coolies to go back to the gardens. Many of them had taken advances from the gardens either as a consideration for the execution of agreements under Act, XIII of 1859, or to enable them to purchase cattle; but the employers forbore to add to the difficulty of the situation by attempting to enforce their rights in the courts. On the other hand Government were not prepared to provide a passage home free to labourers who were voluntarily leaving their employment. Moreover, it was by no means certain that the labourers when they reached their homes would find a living awaiting them. But the most serious objection to repatriation (which would have been by far the easiest way out of the difficulty) was that this step was likely to encourage a similar stampede from other parts of the province, and on a much larger scale. The Government therefore declined to repatriate the coolies at the public cost, but placed no hindrance in the way of their travelling home at their own expense or with the aid of private charity. Also, while disclaiming responsibility for the maintenance of able-bodied labourers who had voluntarily abandoned their means of livelihood, the Government arranged that the sick and the destitute, the women and the children, the aged and the infirm should be fed and cared for. Every precaution was taken to prevent destitution and disease at Karimganj where the situation was ably handled by the Subdivisional Officer and the

Chairman of the Municipality, and elsewhere in the district. In actual fact the amount of cholera and other sickness which occurred was happily in the circumstances extremely small.

7. The Government and the tea industry have for some time past recognised that in view of the rise in prices some re-adjustment of wages is called for throughout the province, and special enquiries which are nearly complete have already been made. The only reason why a commission had not been appointed to go into the matter is the depressed state of the industry which makes it impossible for most gardens to contemplate any increase in expenditure. But the Government repudiate altogether the allegation that the wages given in the case of the striking coolies were starvation wages; and they are fully prepared to examine further the whole question of wages when the present excitement has subsided and they consider the time to be opportune.

Meanwhile, as regards the Chargola Valley increased rates were, as already stated, announced by some of the local managers on their own authority. It will be for the Calcutta Agents who are responsible for the finance of the gardens to say whether working at these rates is or is not a practical proposition. The Government understand that it has been decided in the case of most of the gardens in the Chargola and Longai Valleys to adopt the unit system of wages by which the pay of a coolie will depend directly on the amount of work which he is willing to do.

APPENDIX III.

Conference of Charga Valley Tea Planters and Government Officials, 6th May 1921,

PRESENT :

Officials.	Tea planters.
Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division.	Mr. Bather, Dullabcherra.
Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet.	" Hunter, Bidyanagar.
Superintendent of Police, Sylhet.	" Simpson, Singlacherra.
	" Macleod, Mookhamcherra.
	" Dunlop, Gumbhira.
	" Wray, Maguracherra.

The position presented to the conference was :—

- (1) General unrest among the labour force, the coolies having been instigated to make a united demand for 0-8-0, 0-6-0 and 0-4-0 annas " *haziras* ".
- (2) Already over 1,000 coolies from Anipore, Mookhamcherra and Damcherra have left their gardens and are being fed by Government in Karimganj and the coolies of Balacherra are on strike.
- (3) More strikes are apprehended immediately or after next pay day.
- (4) Unless something is done to satisfy the coolies the gardens throughout the Valley risk losing the greater part of their labour force.
- (5) There is grave fear of strikes ending in rioting.
- (6) There is a consensus of opinion that present wages are too low and that the wage of a man for a fair task should be 0-6-0 annas and of a woman annas 0-4-0 and that unless these rates are conceded a large proportion of the coolies will strike work or desert.
- (7) From the official standpoint it was considered inadvisable to attempt to enforce Act XIII agreements and impracticable to force deserters to return to their gardens.
- (8) While recognising the danger of yielding to pressure and the encouragement that such yielding may give to agitation elsewhere the officials did not consider this a sufficient reason for refusing concessions justly due and absolutely necessary to keep the labour on the gardens. In coming to this conclusion we took into consideration the isolated position of the Valley, which lessens the effect of concessions here on the tea industry elsewhere.
- (9) We therefore advised all present to concede the rates they had unanimously agreed on, and to do this at once and not wait for further trouble.

APPENDIX IV.

Percentage of average daily working strength to total number on the books.

—	1906.	1908.	1914.	1915.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Cachar :—</i>								
Men	46	43	79	80	78	80	77	80
Women	44	41	71	74	71	74	73	72.5

For 1906 and 1908, the wage returns of the total number on the books seem to be incorrect and the percentage figures cannot be accepted. The probable percentages are :—

	1906.	1908.
Men	76	73
Women	74	71

APPENDIX IV—concl'd.

Percentage of average daily working strength to total number on the books—concl'd.

	1906.	1908.	1914.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Hailakandi</i> :—		**	.					
Men	78	71	73	72	75	76	80	74
Women	70	68	65	67	67	67	69	63·5
<i>North Sylhet</i> :—								
Men	78	78	78	79	80	79	77	74·5
Women	67	73	70	74	74	79	72	71
<i>Karimganj</i> :—								
Men	73	70	71	73	77	97*	77	70·5
Women	64	66	69	70	73	74	71	65·5
* The wage averages calculated on the daily working strength for men in 1920 seem to be incorrect, the correct percentage is probably 82.								
<i>South Sylhet</i> :—								
Men	80	80	78	78	77	77	79	79
Women	72	70	74	74	73	74	72	73
<i>Habiganj</i> :—								
Men	80	76	74	60*	75	79	78	73
Women	74	69	70	57	68	75	74	81·5
* The accuracy of the wage returns for men and women in 1918 is doubtful.								
<i>Darrang</i> :—								
Men	77	77	79	80	75	82	81	81
Women	70	75	77	78	72	82	87	76·5
<i>Mangaldai</i> :—								
Men	76	80	76	75	74	75	65	79
Women	71	78	74	71	41*	74	66	79
* The wage returns of the total number of women on the books seem to be incorrect, the correct percentage is probably 62.								
<i>Nowgong</i> :—								
Men	72	75	73	75	72	74	76	76
Women	65	74	68	70	66	72	73	72·5
<i>Jorhat</i> :—								
Men	77	80	65	82	76	74	77	81·5
Women	77	74	76	80	77	75	80	78
<i>Sibsagar</i> :—								
Men	71	80	74	81	77	79	80	79
Women	68	72	74	82	71	74	76	75
<i>Golaghat</i> :—								
Men	77	79	80	79	77	77	85	83
Women	74	72	76	76	75	81	83	79·5
<i>Lakhimpur Sadr</i> :—								
Men	81	80	78	73	74	66	80	78·5
Women	75	75	80	70	71	74	82	73·0
<i>North Lakhimpur</i> :—								
Men	77	77	73	77	74	73	73	73
Women	72	76	69	79	69	71	71	72
<i>Provincial Averages.</i>								
Men	76·5	77	75	76	76	76·5	77·5	77
Women	71	72	72	73	71	74·5	75	74
Children	68	...	73	...	...	...	72	72·5

For these 6 years the provincial average for men is 76·5 per cent. and for women 70 per cent.

APPENDIX V.

Percentage of average daily working strength to total number on the books.

	September 1921.	March 1922.	Average of both.
1	2	3	4
<i>Cachar—</i>			
Men ...	80	80	80
Women	68	77	72.5
Children	67	74	70.5
<i>Hailakandi—</i>			
Men ...	74	74	74
Women	61	66	63.5
Children	50	59	54.5
<i>North Sylhet—</i>			
Men ...	78	76	74.5
Women	70	72	71
Children	62	67	64.5
<i>Karimganj—</i>			
Men ...	73	68	70.5
Women	63	63	65.5
Children	60	65	62.5
<i>South Sylhet—</i>			
Men ...	78	81	79.5
Women	71	76	73.5
Children	69	66	67.5
<i>Habiganj—</i>			
Men ...	75	71	73
Women	83	80	81.5
Children	60	63	61.5
<i>Larrang Sadr—</i>			
Men ...	82	80	81
Women	77	76	76.5
Children	75	74	74.5
<i>Mangaldai—</i>			
Men ...	80	78	79
Women	80	78	79
Children	71	67	69
<i>Nowgong—</i>			
Men ...	78	74	76
Women	73	72	72.5
Children	70	83	76.5
<i>Jorhat—</i>			
Men ...	81	82	81.5
Women	78	78	78
Children	80	90	85
<i>Sibsagar—</i>			
Men ...	81	77	79
Women	76	74	75
Children	77	85	81
<i>Golaghat—</i>			
Men ...	84	82	83
Women	78	81	79.5
Children	79	78	78.5
<i>Lakhimpur Sadr—</i>			
Men ...	79	78	78.5
Women	72	74	73
Children	75	78	76
<i>North Lakhimpur—</i>			
Men ...	77	69	73
Women	76	68	72
Children	75	73	74

APPENDIX VI.

Note on the financial position of the Tea industry in the years 1919-1921.

The financial difficulties in which the tea industry became involved in 1919, 1920 and 1921 were due to two main causes both of which were beyond the control of tea-growers, *viz* :—

- (1) the rise in the rate of Exchange.
- (2) the fall in the market price of tea. **

As to the first cause *Exchange* began to advance in 1917, remained stationary for 4 months in 1918 at about 1/5 13/32 per rupee for 3 months Bills on London, was quoted about 1/6 13/16 for 12 months ending May 1919 and therefore advanced steadily month by month to 2/8½ in December 1919 reaching the high level of 2/11 in February 1920. The average rates for the years 1919 and 1920 were approximately 1s. 9d. and 2s. 1d. per rupee. After February 1920 the rate slowly declined and the level of 1/4 was again reached in February 1921.

In addition to the advance in rates, there was great difficulty in selling bills in India or in sending remittances out from London as Banks were reluctant to operate without cover in a rising market. During August and September 1919 this difficulty was so acute that Tea Companies were paying to Merchants a premium of over 10 % above the official rate of 1s. 10d. in order to get Rupees to meet the wages bills on their Estates.

The effect on the finance of a Tea Company of high Exchange will be apparent from a comparison of the number of rupees received for £ 1,000 at Exchange 1s. 4d. and at the various higher rates which prevailed in 1918, 1919 and 1920 :—

	Rs.
£ 1,000 @ Exchange 1/4 per rupee	15,000
£ 1,000 " 2 "	10,000
£ 1,000 " 2/8 "	7,500

To meet a fixed monthly expenditure of, say, Rs. 15,000 for coolie wages a Sterling Company had to pay when Exchange at was 2s. 8d. say £2,000, when at 2s. say £ 1,500 as compared with £ 1,000 when Exchange was at 1s. 4d.

As the plucking season only begins about April-May and crops are small until July-October a large part of the year's outlay has to be met before cash comes in from the sale of the produce. This delay in sale was increased in 1919 by shortage of shipping space and in 1920 by congestion in the Port of London which made it necessary to regulate shipments from India. Thus the 1919 crop was not completely shipped till June 1920. The great disadvantage of this was that teas had to be kept on the gardens a considerable time after manufacture during the worst part of the monsoon and they arrived at market flat and dull showing the effects of storage. Then unfavourable financial conditions in London rendered necessary a limitation of the quantity of tea offered at the weekly auctions in Mincing Lane as the dealers were unable to finance or pay for larger quantities.

The effect of these causes was to delay by many months the receipt of income so that, even when Companies had reserves for financing their outlay, these were found quite inadequate to meet the increased monthly outlay for remittances to India, attributable to exchange, during the prolonged period in which no sale proceeds, or reduced sale proceeds were coming in.

Prices.—Besides the serious increase in the cost of production due to the rise in exchange there was a cataclysmic fall in the market price of tea. This was partly due to the action of the Food Ministry,—when Government control was abrogated—in putting on the market their large stocks of unsold tea, and partly to the loss of the Russian market which in 1916 took no less than 90 million pounds of Indian and Ceylon Tea.

Owing to a feared shortage of supply in 1919 due to lack of transport the Food Controller arranged with the Ministry of Shipping for the necessary steamers. The result was that while shipments to London from India and Ceylon were 27 million pounds in July 1919 the total quantity shipped in the 3 months October—December 1919 was no less than 188 million pounds. Congestion in London followed and in February 1920 the Ministry of Shipping took the drastic step of diverting to out ports—Greenock, Glasgow Leith and Plymouth—about 8 steamers with full cargoes of tea totalling many million of pounds.

Most of this Tea had to be brought months later to London to face a market which had in the interval fallen by 8d per pound.

The stock of Tea in bond in the United Kingdom at 31st December 1913 was 117 million pounds it was 129 million pounds at 31st December 1918 and 213 million pounds at 31st December 1921.

The fall in the market affected all teas but Common Teas suffered more than did medium to fine teas. Common Pekoe Souchong fell from 1s. 3d. in March 1920 to 4d. per pound in September of the same year. In November 1919 the average price of Cachar and Sylhet Teas sold in public auction was 1s. 7d. per pound, in May 1920 it has fallen to 8d. per pound, in October 1920 the average was less than 6d. per pound, and, it was only in August 1921 that the market again began to recover.

The Accounts of Tea Companies for 1919 and 1920 have shown the practical effects of adverse Exchange and low prices. It is no exaggeration to say that out of the 319 Estates in Cachar and Sylhet only two showed a profit in Season 1920 and that of the 557 Estates in Assam the greater part made losses in 1920 ranging from 1d. to as much as 5d. per pound.

Details of the aggregate losses are not available, but Messrs J. Thomas & Co., the Tea Brokers, publish an analysis of the working of some Calcutta Tea Companies for 1920. In that statement there are included 17 Assam Companies producing 9½ million pounds of Tea, 13 of them show losses totalling Rs. 11,99,676 and 4 show profits amounting to Rs. 1,88,853; 15 of these Companies paid no dividend in 1920 and 12 of them also passed their dividends in 1919.

The same statement gives particulars of 18 Companies operating in Cachar and Sylhet. These Companies produced 8½ million pounds of Tea. Sixteen show losses amounting to Rs. 13,84,257 and 2 show profits of in all Rs. 47,944. None of these companies paid any dividend in 1920 and six of them paid nothing in 1919.

A Sterling Company in South Sylhet producing over 2½ million pounds of tea showed a loss in 1920 of over £73,000 or approximately 6½d. per pound. The cost of production of this Company which was in pre-war years under 5d. per pound rose to 1s. 0½ per pound in 1920. Another Company with Estates in Cachar producing about 1 million pounds of Tea made a loss of £ 34,500 or 9d. per pound. In Tezpur a Company producing 4 million pounds of Tea had a loss of £ 43,000 or rather over 2½d. per pound.

Many Companies have had to borrow money on mortgage at high rates of interest to meet the losses incurred in 1919 and 1920. Such debts must for many years prove a serious burden and preclude the hope of dividends on ordinary shares until the borrowings have been repaid.

In spite of losses Rice concessions were given and when a temporary rise in foodstuffs is due to special circumstances as in 1919 and 1920 the needs of labour are better met by such concessions than by increasing wages. The experience of Britain has shown how disturbing it is to have to reduce wages when under the pressure of economic law this becomes necessary.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that an industry which is working at a loss cannot increase wages. If it is unable to economize in production costs the unfortunate alternative confronting it is to stop operations and disband its labour force.

Fortunately the policy of finer plucking, aided as it has been by unfavourable climatic conditions in 1921, has led to some recovery in prices. This in conjunction with a reduced rate of exchange has improved the outlook and enabled the question of wages to be considered by the Industry. Of this we have had evidence in the course of our Enquiry. A fall in the prices of foodstuffs and of cloth is also affording relief to tea-garden employees as well as to the general public.

Reference has been made to the dividends paid by some Tea Companies and it appeared that some members of the Committee imagined these to be tax free. It is only fair to point out that in so far as the reference is to Sterling Companies or to Rupee Company shares held by shareholders resident in the United Kingdom such dividends are subject to deduction of an income-tax of 6s. in the pound or 30 %. Before the war the rate was 6 %. Besides this a Corporation tax of 5 % has been recently imposed as a first charge on all profits earned.

APPENDIX VII.

Budgets framed by the late Major J. C. Jack in "The Economic Life of a Bengal District."

Item of expenditure.	Amount spent annually by a family in comfort.	Amount spent annually by a family in extreme indigence.
1	2	3
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
<i>Food—</i>		
Rice	8 0 0	4 0 0
Salt	0 2 8	0 2 0
Oil	0 8 0	0 4 0
Spices	0 2 8	0 1 4
Fish	0 6 8	...
Vegetables	0 10 0	0 2 0
Milk and butter (<i>ghee</i>)	0 4 0	0 2 0
<i>Other necessities—</i>		
Kerosene oil	0 2 8	0 1 4
Tobacco and molasses	0 2 8	0 1 0
Betel nut	0 4 0	0 1 4
Clothes	1 13 4	0 12 0
Household utensils	0 1 4	0 1 4
Petty house repairs	0 6 8	0 2 0
Furniture	0 4 0	0 2 0
<i>Miscellaneous—</i>		
Rent	1 13 4	0 6 0
Local taxation	0 2 0	0 1 0
Medical treatment	0 6 8	0 2 0
Purchase of cattle	0 10 8	(hire). 0 2 0
" boat	0 1 4	...
Thorough house repairs	0 10 8	0 5 0
Domestic festivals and entertainments	1 0 0	0 5 0
	16 13 4	6 13 4

APPENDIX VII(a).

NORTH LAKHIMPUR—DOOLAHAT TEA ESTATE.

Family consisting of one working man, two working women, one working child, and one non-working child.

Particular of Income.	Income.	Monthly Income.	Yearly Income. Rs.
1. Pay or wages drawing from garden	...	1 at Rs. 6, 2 at Rs. 5 and 1 at Rs. 3.	228
2. <i>Ticca</i> , etc.	...	say Rs. 2	24
3. Agreement bonus	27
4. Value of crops grown after deducting value of seed Rs. 2 (<i>Dhan</i> , say 40 maunds at Rs. ½ per maund.	158
		Grand total	437

Expenditure.

Name of articles.	Particulars of weekly requirements.	Particulars of monthly requirements.	Particulars of yearly requirements.	Rates.	Cost. Rs. a. p.
1. Rice for 5 souls, 1 at 6 seers, 2 5 seers, 1 at 4 seers and 1 at 2½ seers.	24½ seers ...	2 maunds 18 seers	29 maunds 16 seers	Rs. 7-8-0 per md.	220 8 0
Dall ...	1½ seers ...	6 seers ...	1 maund 32 seers.	at annas 5 seer	22 8 0
Vegetables ...	at 2 annas ...	8 annas ...	Rs. 6 ...	...	6 0 0
Fish and flesh ...	say 2 as. 6 p.	10 annas ...	Rs. 7-8 ...	...	7 8 0
Salt ...	say ½ seer ...	3 seers ...	36 seers ...	at 2 as. 6 p. seer	5 1 0
Mustard oil ...	½ seer ...	1 seer ...	12 seers ...	1 Re. seer ...	12 0 0
Spices ...	at 2 annas ...	8 annas ...	Rs. 6 ...	...	6 0 0
Milk ...	2 annas ...	8 annas ...	Rs. 6 ...	...	6 0 0
Sugar and <i>Gur</i> ...	4 annas ...	Rs. 1 ...	Rs. 12 ...	...	12 0 0
Kerosene oil ...	1 as. 6 p.	5 as. 6 p.	Rs. 4-2 ...	...	4 2 0
B-telnut, Pan ...	1 anna ...	4 annas ...	Rs. 3 ...	...	3 0 0
Tobacco and tobacco leaf	2 annas ...	8 annas ...	Rs. 6 ...	...	6 0 0
Liquor, etc.	...	...	...	...	3 0 0
2. <i>Clothes</i> —Blankets 4 (1 new at Rs. 5), 3 are 2 year old cost Rs. 10-8 present value is Rs. 6-4.	...	...	...	...	10 4 0
<i>Dhotis</i> 4-2 at Rs. 2 and 2 at Re. 1-12).	...	...	...	...	7 8 0
Coats 2 (1 at Rs. 4 and 1 at Rs. 3-4).	...	...	...	...	7 4 0
Shirts 2 (at Rs. 2-8 each) ...	...	...	...	...	5 0 0
Banians or vest 2 at 14 annas each	...	...	...	...	1 12 0
<i>Shawls</i> 2 (1 at Rs. 3-8 and 1 at Rs. 2).	...	...	...	...	5 8 0
Small or <i>sari Khoyashya</i> 1 ...	...	...	...	...	0 12 0
Jackets 2 (1 at Rs. 3 and 1 at Rs. 2-4).	...	...	...	...	5 4 0
Children's clothes	...	...	House hold utensils.	...	3 0 0
<i>Household utensils</i> — <i>Botova</i> 1 (old of last 2½ years...)	value was Rs. 3.	Present value Re. 1-8.	This calculation is much too high. The total should not be more than Rs. 6 (six) yearly according to calculation made by me and Sub-Deputy Collector in the families done by us.	...	1 8 0
<i>Kerati</i> 3 (old of last 2½ years	Rs. 5 ...	Rs. 2-8 ...	S. D. O. ...	...	2 8 0
<i>Batti</i> 5 (" of 4 years ...	" 8-8 ...	" 4-4 ...	...	...	4 4 0
<i>Thala</i> 3 (" of 3 " ...	" 10-8 ...	" 5-4 ...	...	...	5 4 0
<i>Ghati</i> 3 (" of 2 " ...	" 3-12 ...	" 1-14 ...	...	...	1 14 0
<i>Kaloo</i> (Brass) of 2½ " ...	" 9-14 ...	" 4-15 ...	...	...	4 15 0
4. <i>Raw materials and implements</i> — <i>Kudittie</i> 1 (old cost was Re. 1-8	...	cost 12 annas	...	...	0 12 0
<i>Dan</i> 1 (new) cost was Re. 1-6	...	" Re. 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
<i>Kotaries</i> 2 (old cost was Rs. 3	...	" " 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
<i>Kuthar</i> 1 (" Rs. 3)	...	" " 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
Cost of making plough	...	...	...	...	1 8 0
5. <i>Land Revenue</i> — Purchase of cattle Rs. 50 but become old.	Present value say Rs. 30.	...	...	...	30 0 0
Total	...	...	...	...	423 4 0
Savings	...	...	...	...	14 12 0

Calculated by P. C. Sirkar, Head Clerk of the Doolahat Tea Estate the most capable garden clerk in the district. The family was to be a good but not exceptional and an old coolie in the cultivation of his own land besides garden work.

APPENDIX VIII (b).

LAKHIMPUR SADR.

Tingrai Tea Company, Limited (Tinsukia Circle).

Income and expenses of one coolie family consisting of 2 male adults, 1 female adult, 1 male and 1 female child for one complete year.

Items of income.		Rs. a. p.	Items of expenditure.		Rs. a. p.
1. Value of crops grown with fruits and live-stock (less value of seeds); live-stock includes poultry, goats, pigeons, eggs, milch cow and calves—			A.—Food—		
<i>Dhan</i> 11 maunds 20 seers—less seed 18 seers.		44 4 0	Rice from godown, sold by Company at Rs. 3 per maund.		64 0 0
Milk		22 8 0	<i>Dhan</i>		44 4 0
Eggs		2 4 0	Salt		6 0 0
Chickens		3 0 0	Oil		2 13 0
			Spices		1 8 0
			Pulses		4 0 0
			Vegetables		1 2 0
			Milk and <i>ghee</i>		22 8 0
2. Pay or wages... ..		179 3 9	B.—Other Household expenses—		
House, medical attendance, medicines all given free by the Company and not calculated.			Kerosene oil		5 8 9
			Tobacco and molasses		3 4 0
			Clothes		17 4 0
			Opium, <i>ganja</i> , or liquor		14 10 0
			Household utensils		0 6 0
			C.—Miscellaneous—		
			Domestic festivals and entertainment.		7 0 0
			Purchase of raw materials and implements.		1 0 0
			Land revenue or rent		1 14 0
			Other expenses		3 4 0
		<u>251 3 9</u>			<u>200 5 9</u>

APPENDIX VIII (c).

LAKHIMPUR SADR.

Jaipur Tea Company—Tinsukia Circle.

A Domestic budget (for one average month).

Of a typical tea-garden coolie family living in village and commonly known as "*Faltoo*" consisting of husband, wife, brother, mother (old) and 2 non-working children,—3 able-bodied adults and 3 dependents.

Income.		Rs. a. p.	Expenditure.		Rs. a. p.
(<i>Ticca</i>) Work on tea garden ...		10 0 0	Rice 3 mds. 30 srs. at Rs. 7 ...		26 4 0
Cultivation of 4 <i>poorahs</i> of land		42 0 0	Salt 2 srs.		0 4 0
Sale of vegetables		1 0 0	Mustard oil 1½ srs.		1 2 0
Profits on cattle or goats and fowls		1 0 0	Spices ½ sr.		0 8 0
			Fish and meat		1 0 0
			Pulses (<i>dal</i> , etc)		1 8 0
			Milk 4 srs.		0 12 0
			Molasses 2 srs.		0 10 0
			Betel nut, etc.		1 0 6
			Tobacco		0 7 0
			Tobacco leaf		0 8 0
			Kerosene oil		0 10 0
			Clothes, etc.		7 8 0
			Opium, <i>ganja</i> , liquor		2 8 0
		<u>54 0 0</u>	Rent on rice land		3 12 0
					<u>48 8 0</u>
			Possible savings per month ...		5 8 0

Their rice, being grown by themselves, does not really cost Rs. 7 but is taken at market rate.

APPENDIX VIII(d)

LAKHIMPUR SADR—JAIPUR TEA COMPANY, TINSUKIA CIRCLE.

A Domestic budget (for one average month) of a typical family of tea garden coolies living on the Estate, consisting of husband, wife and 2 working children.

Income.		Rs. a. p.	Expenditure.		Rs. a. p.
Average pay ...	...	18 11 0	Rice 2 mds. 16 srs. at Rs. 7 ...	...	16 12 0
One month <i>tierra</i> ...	...	9 11 0	Salt $\frac{1}{2}$ sr. ...	...	0 3 0
Cultivation of $\frac{1}{2}$ acre rice land	...	5 4 0	Oil $\frac{1}{2}$ sr. ...	...	0 9 0
Sale of vegetables, etc. ...	...	0 8 0	Spices ...	...	0 8 0
Sale of milk ...	...	4 3 6	Fish and meat ...	...	1 0 0
Profits on cattle or goats and fowls ...	...	3 0 0	Pulses (<i>dal</i> , etc.) ...	...	0 12 0
			Vegetables ...	...	0 12 0
			Milk ...	...	0 6 0
			Molasses ...	...	1 0 0
			Betel nut, etc. ...	...	1 0 0
			Tobacco ...	...	0 10 0
			Tobacco leaf ...	...	0 4 0
			Kerosene oil ...	...	0 10 0
			Clothes, etc. ...	...	5 8 0
			Opium, <i>ganja</i> , liquor ...	...	6 2 0
			Rent on rice land (one <i>bigha</i>) ..	...	0 4 0
					36 4 0
		41 5 6	Possible savings ...	...	5 0 9

Man is an opium eater, which unfortunately is not uncommon in Assam.

APPENDIX VIII(e).

LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT—DOOM-DOOMA TEA COMPANY, LIMITED, BEESAKOPIE DIVISION.

Family (b) Tea-garden coolie,—1 male adult, 1 female adult, 2 boys, workers, and 1 male and 1 female child.

Items of income.		Rs. a. p.	Items of expenditure.		Rs. a. p.
Value of crops grown with fruits and live-stock (less value of seeds); live-stock includes poultry, goats, pigeons, eggs, milch cow and calves ...	...	15 0 0	A.—Food—		
Pay or wages ...	...	210 13 0	Rice 29 mds. 8 srs. at Rs. 3 per maund ...	...	88 0 0
Any other receipts ...	...	104 3 9	Salt ...	...	6 8 0
Children's earnings, catching insects ...	...	20 0 0	Oil ...	...	12 0 0
			Spices ...	...	3 0 0
			Fish (refers to all classes) ...	...	12 0 0
			Pulses ...	...	12 0 0
			Vegetables ...	...	24 0 0
			Milk and <i>ghce</i> ...	...	4 8 0
			Live-stock, poultry, goats, pigeons eggs milch cow and calves ...	...	12 0 0
			B.—Other household expenses—		
			Kerosene oil ...	...	9 0 0
			Tobacco and molasses ...	...	3 0 0
			Clothes ...	...	42 12 0
			Opium, <i>ganja</i> or liquor ...	...	15 0 0
			Household utensils ...	...	5 0 0
			C.—Miscellaneous—		
			Domestic festival and entertainment ...	...	5 0 0
Total ...	...	350 0 9	Total ...	...	253 12 0

APPENDIX VIII (f).

KAMBUP DISTRICT.—MANDAKATA TEA ESTATE.

A family consisting of 3 members—Father, mother and a son, aged 17 years. All work.

Income.				Expenditure.				
			Rs.			Rs.	a.	p.
Wages—				A.—Food—				
(a) Husband—				Rice 21 maunds	...	105	0	0
Pay	...	...	60	Salt 24 seers	...	3	0	0
Ticca	...	...	48	Oil 12 seers	...	2	4	0
(b) Wife—				Spices	...	8	0	0
Pay	...	...	36	Fish	...	8	0	0
Ticca	...	...	12	Pulses	...	9	0	0
(c) Son	...	...	30	Vegetables	...	1	8	0
Ticca	...	...	Nil					
				B.—Other expenses—				
				Kerosene oil, Re. 0-12-0...	...	2	4	0
				Tobacco	...	3	0	0
				Clothes	...	8	0	0
				Utensils	...	0	8	0
				C.—Miscellaneous—				
				Festival	...	8	0	0
Total	...	...	188	Total	...	148	8	0

The family lives hand-to-mouth. There is no saving.

APPENDIX VIII (g).

KAMBUP DISTRICT.—MANDAKATA TEA ESTATE

A family consisting of 5 members—husband, wife, 1 son aged 6 months, and 2 daughters aged 8 and 5 years, respectively.

Income.				Expenditure.				
			Rs.			Rs.	a.	p.
Wages—				A.—Food—				
(a) Husband—				Rice 3 maunds 24 seers	...	24	0	0
Pay	...	...	48	Dhan 32 maunds	...	80	0	0
Ticca	...	...	60	Salt 1 maund 5 seers	...	6	0	0
(b) Wife—				Oil 12 seers	...	12	0	0
Pay	...	...	36	Spices	...	6	0	0
Ticca	...	...	27	Fish	...	6	0	0
Advance	...	...	8	Flesh	...	3	0	0
				Pulses	...	9	0	0
				Vegetables	...	2	0	0
				Tea, etc.	...	3	0	0
				B.—Other expenses—				
				Betel-nut	...	6	0	0
				Kerosene oil, 12 seers	...	2	4	0
				Tobacco, etc.	...	6	0	0
				Clothes	...	12	0	0
				Opium	...	6	0	0
				C.—Miscellaneous—				
				Nil.	...			
Total	...	...	179	Total	...	188	4	0

The family lives hand-to-mouth and is not in debt.

APPENDIX VIII (h).

CINNAMARA TEA ESTATE.

Jorhat Sadr Subdivision.

Monthly Family Budget.

Family—1 male adult, 1 female adult (working), 1 boy 6 years (non-working), 1 girl 4 years (non-working).

Works in tea-house for part of year, in garden for remainder.

Income.			Expenditure.		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Pay for man ...	9	8 0	Rice ...	8	8 0
Pay for wife ...	8	8 0	Salt ...	0	2 0
Value of paddy grown in his own land for the whole year, <i>i.e.</i> , Re. 1-10 per month.	1	10 0	Oil ...	0	7 0
			Spices and small fish ...	0	10 0
			Pulses ...	0	12 0
			Vegetables ...	0	3 0
			Sugar, etc. ...	0	4 0
			<i>Other household expenses—</i>		
			Betelnut ...	0	5 0
			Tobacco ...	0	12 0
			Kerosene oil ...	0	3 0
			Clothes ...	3	8 0
			Liquor ...	2	0 0
			Household utensils... ..	0	3 0
			<i>C.—Miscellaneous—</i>		
			Domestic festivals ...	0	8 0
			Hire of cattle ...	0	2 0
			Rent ...	0	4 0
Total ...	19	10 0	Total ...	18	11 0

This family is an average good tea-garden family. The family is a little above the average.

I should estimate that 20 per cent. of the families are above this standard, 30 per cent. of this standard and the remainder below.

Sd.

for Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar.

APPENDIX VIII (i).

CINNAMARA TEA ESTATE.

Jorhat Sadr Subdivision.

Monthly Family Budget.

Family—1 male, 1 female adult (non-working), 2 children 5 and 3 years, both girls (non-working)
Tea-garden coolie—works in tea-house for half the year and the rest of the time in the garden.

Income.			Expenditure.		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Pay for man...	10	8 0	Rice ...	8	0 0
Value of paddy grown in own land, Rs. 36 a year, <i>i.e.</i> , Rs. 3 a month ...	3	0 0	Salt ...	0	4 0
Sale of milk (including that used by himself) ...	2	0 0	Oil ...	0	7 0
			Spices and small fish ...	0	8 0
			Pulses ...	0	7 0
			Vegetables ...	0	4 0
			Milk ...	1	0 0
			Sugar (<i>gur</i>) ...	0	10 0
			<i>Other household expenses—</i>		
			Betel-nut ...	1	0 0
			Kerosene oil ...	0	3 0
			Tobacco ...	0	8 0
			Clothes ...	1	4 0
			Liquor ...	1	0 0
			Household utensils ...	0	4 0
			<i>C.—Miscellaneous—</i>		
			Festivals ...	0	3 0
			Purchase of cattle... ..	0	5 0
			Rent ...	0	4 0
Total ...	15	8 0	Total ...	16	7 0

N. B.—I should estimate that 20 per cent. of the families are above this standard of comfort, 30 per cent. of this standard, and the remainder below.

Sd

Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar.

APPENDIX VII (j).

JORHAT SADR SUBDIVISION.

Dukhlangia Tea Estate.

Monthly Family Budget.

One man, woman and child 5 years old. Man and woman earning—

Items of income.	Per month.			Expenditure.	
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Wages—			A.—Dhan (rice) ...	...	11 0 0
Man Rs. 5 and Re. 1 bonus ...	6	0 0	Salt ...	...	0 8 0
Woman at Rs. 4-8 and annas 13 bonus.	5	5 0	Spices ...	...	0 2 0
Average <i>ticca</i> Rs. 3 ...	3	0 0	Mustard oil ...	...	0 4 0
			Cocoanut oil ...	...	0 3 0
Value of crops grown—			Fish or flesh ...	...	0 4 0
From <i>dhan</i> ...	3	4 0	Pulses ...	...	0 8 0
„ millet ...	0	12 0	Vegetables ...	...	0 4 0
„ tobacco ...	0	4 0	Betel-nut ...	...	0 6 0
„ vegetables ...	0	4 0	Kerosene oil ...	...	0 4 0
Interest on money lent out ...	2	8 0	Tobacco ...	...	0 4 0
			Clothes ...	...	1 11 0
			Household utensils ...	...	0 8 0
			Ceremonies ...	...	2 0 0
			Rent ...	...	1 12 0
			Cost of cattle (estimated to cost originally Rs. 70 to last 10 years).	...	0 10 0
Total ...	21	5 0	Total ...	...	20 8 0

This family was from Berhampore, Ganjam, and was well off, being very intelligent. They have been on the garden for some 12 years.

I would roughly estimate 10 per cent. of families in the garden being above this standard of comfort, 30 per cent. as being of this standard, and the remainder below.

APPENDIX VIII (k).

SIBSAGAR SUBDIVISION.

Suntok Tea Estate.

Tea-garden coolie family of 5 members—2 males, 1 female and 2 children, the elder being 12 years old.

Item of income—Annual.

	Rs.	a.	p.
Wages.—Rupees 276-2-0.—Annual earnings as could be found from garden register and given by members—	276	2	0
<i>Vis.</i> —(a) Male—Father ...	61	6	0
(b) „ —Son ...	56	2	0
(c) „ —Boy ...	20	10	0
(d) Female—Mother ...	49	7	0
Total <i>ticca</i> wages—Rs. 88-9-0.			
Loan—Rupees 12—Advance to be retrenched ...	12	0	0
Other receipts—Rupees 6 annual proceeds of <i>bhusi</i> ...	6	0	0
Total income ...	294	2	0

Items of expenditure—Annual.

A.—Food.—

Rice, Rs. 216-0-0; purchased paddy for Rs. 18-0-0 monthly at 3½ <i>dhons</i> a rupee.	216	0	0
Salt, Rs. 3; 2 seers is the monthly consumption ...	3	0	0
Oil, Rs. 3—rough calculation ...	3	0	0
Spices, Rs. 1-8 ditto ...	1	8	0
Fish, Rs. 3 ditto ...	3	0	0
Vegetables, Rs. 1-8 ditto ...	1	8	0
Milk ...	1	2	0

APPENDIX VIII (k)—concl'd.
Items of expenditure—Annual—concl'd.

				Rs.	a.	p.
B.—Other household expenses—						
Betel-nut, Rs. 1-8 rough calculation	...	...	...	1	8	0
Kerosene, Rs. 1-8 ditto	...	...	...	1	8	0
Tobacco, Rs. 1-8 ditto	...	...	...	1	8	0
Clothes, Rs. 21-4 ditto	...	...	...	21	4	0
Annual purchase—						
				Rs.	a.	p.
Three 7 cubit dhotis	...	...	...	5	4	0
One 6 cubit dhoti	...	...	...	1	10	0
Two saris	...	...	...	5	4	0
Two blankets, ordinary	...	...	...	5	0	0
One drill coat	...	...	...	4	2	0
Liquor (a) Rs. 18	...	...	...	21	0	0
Ganja (b) Rs. 3	...	...	...
Household utensils	...	...	...	4	8	0
Two earthen jugs	...	...	...
One brass plate	...	...	...
C.—Miscellaneous—						
Festivals and entertainments, Rs. 6 rough calculation	...	...	...	6	0	0
Other expenses	...	...	...	7	8	0
Purchased flesh	...	...	...
Cigarettes	...	...	...	1	8	0
Total				293	14	0

APPENDIX VIII (l).
SIBSAGAR SUBDIVISION.
Barapukhuri Tea-Estate.

Tea-garden coolie family of five members, one male, two females and two children, one boy and the other girl.

				Rs.	a.	p.
Items of income—Annual—						
Paddy cultivation of 80 dangaris yielding 240 dons at 3 dons a rupee	...	...	...	80	0	0
Sale of five pigs at Rs. 3-4-0 each	...	...	...	16	4	0
Wages Rs. 195-12-0 annual earnings	...	...	...	195	12	0
				Rs.	a.	p.
(1) Male	...	...	...	42	6	0
(2) Female	...	...	...
(3) Mother	...	...	...
(4) Ticca	...	...	...
Loan Rs. 24. Advanced to be retrenched	...	...	...	24	0	0
Total income				316	0	0
Items of expenditure—						
A.—Food—						
1. Rice Rs. 210 value of 60 maunds of unhusked rice at Rs. 3-8-0 per maund. Actual purchase was of 30 maunds only.	...	...	...	210	0	0
2. Salt, rough calculation	...	...	...	3	0	0
3. Oil ditto	...	...	...	3	0	0
4. Spices ditto	...	...	...	1	8	0
5. Fish ditto	...	...	...	1	0	0
6. Pulse ditto	...	...	...	3	0	0
7 Vegetable ditto	...	...	...	2	0	0
8. Milk ditto	...	...	...	0	12	0
B.—Other household expenses—						
1. Betel-nut, rough calculation	...	...	...	1	8	0
2. Kerosene oil ditto	...	...	...	1	2	0
3. Tobacco ditto	...	...	...	1	2	0
4. Clothes ditto	...	...	...	21	2	0
				Rs.	a.	p.
(1) 4 saris	...	...	...	10	0	0
(2) Dhotis	...	...	...	3	8	0
(3) One female kurta	...	...	...	2	2	0
(4) Two blankets	...	...	...	5	3	0
(5) Liquor	...	...	...	24	0	0
(6) Utensils	...	...	...	3	2	0
C.—Miscellaneous—						
1. Festivals and entertainments, rough calculation	...	...	...	3	0	0
2. Hired a buffalo at Rs. 15 for two months	...	...	...	15	0	0
3. Land Revenue	...	...	...	8	0	0
4. Repayment of debt Rs. 9 retrenched	...	...	...	9	0	0
5. Other expenses (a) Rs. 3 purchase of fowl and flesh, rough calculation, (b) Rs. 1 purchase of cigarettes.	4	0	0
Total expenditure Rs.				315	4	0

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APPENDIX VIII (m).

GOLAGHAT SUBDIVISION.

Budget for garden coolies.

Constitution of family	1 man. 1 woman. 1 working boy of 12. 3 non-working boys.
Total	...	...	...	...	6

<i>Income.</i>		<i>Expenditure.</i>	
	Rs. a. p.		Rs. a. p.
Wages including <i>ticca</i>	300 0 0	A.—Rice or <i>dhan</i>	180 0 0
Produce of <i>dhan</i> crop	75 0 0	Potatoes	8 0 0
Produce of vegetable garden	10 0 0	<i>Dal</i>	12 0 0
Hire of cattle	10 0 0	Salt	5 0 0
		Spices	3 0 0
Total	395 0 0	Vegetable	6 0 0
		B.—Oil	12 0 0
		<i>Pan, Tamul</i>	10 0 0
		Clothes	35 0 0
		Utensils	5 0 0
		C.—Rent	6 0 0
		Total	282 0 0

The balance had been saved by this coolie and expended when sufficient on cart and bullock and plough-bullocks.

Coolies of this status	...	...	...	...	60 per cent.
Ditto of lower	„	...	...	...	30 per cent.
Ditto of higher	„	...	...	...	10 per cent.

(Sd.) A. G. PATTON,

Sub-Divisional Officer, Golaghat.

APPENDIX VIII(n).

SOUTH SYLHET.

Caste—Manjhi—(Sonthal).

Man, wife, daughter (adult) and 2 minor children—3½ workers.

<i>Receipts.</i>		<i>Expenditure.</i>	
	Rs. a. p.		Rs. a. p.
Wages	216 2 0	Rice	182 0 0
Advance	32 0 0	Salt	4 14 0
Wood, fuel for sale	8 12 0	Oil	4 14 0
House repairs	3 4 0	Spices	3 4 0
Medical	9 0 0	Fish	9 12 0
		Pulse	14 10 0
		Vegetables	6 8 0
		Milk	5 11 0
		<i>Gur</i>	6 8 0
		Kerosene	6 8 0
		Tobacco	4 14 0
		Liquor	13 4 0
		House repairs	3 4 0
		Medical	9 0 0
		Festivities	6 0 0
		Clothes	24 0 0
		Bed bags	1 8 0
		Utensils	2 8 0
Total	288 8 0	Total	311 15 0

APPENDIX VIII(o).

SOUTH SYLHET.

Caste—Gond.

Man, mother, wife and 2 children—3 workers :—

Yearly Budget.

Receipts.			Expenditure.		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Rice	6	0 0	Rice	156	0 0
Wages	221	13 0	Salt	6	8 0
Wood, fuel	39	0 0	Oil	16	4 0
Milk	9	12 0	Spices	3	4 0
Vegetables	13	0 0	Fish	16	4 0
House repairs	2	0 0	Pulse	24	6 0
Medical attendance	6	0 0	Vegetable	26	0 0
Blankets	5	0 0	Milk	9	12 0
Bed bag	1	0 0	Gur	9	12 0
Agreement advance	32	0 0	Kerosine	9	12 0
Bonus, monthly	18	0 0	Tobacco	6	8 0
House	9	0 0	Liquor	52	0 0
			Interest	29	4 0
			House repairs	2	0 0
			Medical	6	0 0
			Festivities	2	0 0
			Clothes	24	0 0
			Bed bag	1	0 0
			Utensils	1	0 0
			Blankets	5	0 0
Total	362	9 0	Total	406	10 0

APPENDIX VIII (p).

SOUTH SYLHET.

Caste—Oorea.

Man, wife, sister (aged) old mother, child—2½ workers.

Yearly Budget.

Receipts.			Expenditure.		
	Rs.	a. p.		Rs.	a. p.
Wages	204	12 0	Rice	104	0 0
Advance agreement	22	0 0	Salt	3	4 0
Bonus, monthly	9	0 0	Oil	3	4 0
House repairs	2	0 0	Spices	1	10 0
Medical	6	0 0	Fish	1	10 0
Bed bags	1	0 0	Pulse	3	4 0
			Vegetables	3	4 0
			Milk	5	11 0
			Gur	5	11 0
			Kerosene	3	4 0
			Tobacco	7	5 0
			Liquor	52	0 0
			House repairs	2	0 0
			Medical	6	0 0
			Festivities	2	0 0
			Clothes	16	7 0
			Bed bags	1	0 0
			Utensils	2	0 0
Total	244	12 0	Total	228	10 0

APPENDIX VIII (q).

SOUTH SYLHET.

Caste—Yuria (Hazaribagh).

Man, mother, 2 sisters ; father—basket maker—4 workers.

Yearly Budget.

Receipts.				Expenditure.				
		Rs.	a.	p.		Rs.	a.	p.
Rice	...	30	0	0	Rice	260	0	0
Wages	...	286	0	0	Salt	8	2	0
Advance	...	42	0	0	Oil	26	0	0
Bonus	...	20	0	0	Spices	4	14	0
Baskets	...	48	0	0	Fish	9	12	0
House repairs	...	2	8	0	Pulses	26	0	0
Medical	...	5	0	0	Vegetables	13	0	0
Bad bags	...	0	12	0	Milk	22	12	0
House	...	8	0	0	Gur	26	0	0
					Kerosene	3	4	0
					Tobacco	8	2	0
					Liquor			Nil
					Interest	12	0	0
					House repairs	2	8	0
					Medical	5	0	0
					Festivities	10	0	0
					Clothes	52	0	0
					Bed bags	0	12	0
					Utensils	2	0	0
					Blanket			Nil
Total		472	4	0	Total	492	4	0

APPENDIX VIII (r).

SOUTH SYLHET.

Caste—Dom (Purulia).

Man, wife, son (adult), boy (minor), 2 children—3½ workers.

Receipts.				Expenditure.				
		Rs.	a.	p.		Rs.	a.	p.
Wages	...	307	7	0	Rice	156	0	0
Advance	...	32	0	0	Salt	9	12	0
Bonus	...	12	0	0	Oil	26	0	0
Fish caught for sale	...	16	4	0	Spices	13	0	0
House repairs	...	2	8	0	Fish	19	8	0
Medical	...	6	0	0	Pulse	26	0	0
Bed bags	...	1	0	0	Vegetables	19	8	0
House	...	16	0	0	Milk	13	0	0
					Gur	26	0	0
					Kerosene	6	8	0
					Tobacco	13	0	0
					Liquor	19	8	0
					Interest	24	0	0
					House repairs	2	8	0
					Medical	6	0	0
					Festivities	21	0	0
					Clothes	34	0	0
					Bed bags	1	0	0
					Utensils	2	0	0
Total	...	387	3	0	Total	462	10	0

APPENDIX IX (a).

SHAMSHERNAGAR TEA ESTATE (SYLHET).

(Man, Woman and 3 Children).

					Rs. a. p.
Food, weekly—					
Rice (17 seers at Rs. 4 a maund)	...	...	...	...	1 11 2
Dal (1½ seers at annas 4)	...	...	...	...	0 6 0
Mustard oil	...	...	...	...	0 4 9
Salt—½ seer	...	...	...	...	0 1 6
Vegetables and fish	...	...	...	...	0 1 6
Gur and <i>chira</i>	...	...	...	...	0 10 0
Milk	...	...	...	...	0 1 9
Tobacco	...	...	...	...	0 1 6
Sundries	...	...	...	...	0 4 3
				<hr/>	
Total	...	...	...	...	3 10 5
					<hr/>
Clothes, annually—					
28 yards Markin cloth	...	...	...	...	14 0 0
3 blankets	...	...	...	...	6 0 0
4 vests	...	...	...	...	5 0 0
1 coat	...	...	...	...	3 8 0
4 <i>Saris</i>	...	...	...	...	9 0 0
2 <i>Jhulas</i>	...	...	...	...	2 0 0
6 <i>Dhotis</i> for children	...	...	...	...	6 12 0
					<hr/>
Total	...	...	...	...	46 4 0
					<hr/>

APPENDIX IX (b).

ALINAGAR TEA ESTATE (SYLHET).

(Man, wife and 2 children).

					Rs. a. p.
Food, weekly—					
Rice (16 seers at Rs. 4 a maund)	...	...	...	...	1 9 9
Dal (one seer at annas 4)	...	...	...	...	0 4 0
Mustard oil	...	...	...	...	0 5 6
Salt—half seer	...	...	...	...	0 0 9
Vegetables and fish	...	...	...	...	0 4 0
Gur and <i>chira</i>	...	...	...	...	0 10 6
Milk	...	...	...	...	0 2 0
Tobacco	...	...	...	...	0 1 3
Sundries	...	...	...	...	0 6 0
					<hr/>
Total	...	...	...	...	3 11 9
					<hr/>
Clothes, annually—					
3 <i>Dhotis</i>	...	...	...	...	7 8 0
3 <i>Gamchas</i>	...	...	...	...	2 10 0
1 Coat	...	...	...	...	2 4 0
3 <i>Saris</i>	...	...	...	...	9 0 0
3 <i>Jhulas</i>	...	...	...	...	1 8 0
Blankets	...	...	...	...	4 0 9
<i>Dhotis</i> and coat for children	...	...	...	...	4 0 0
					<hr/>
Total	...	...	...	...	30 14 9
					<hr/>

APPENDIX IX (c).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE (LAKHIMPUR).

What it costs a coolie family consisting of 3 people—man, woman, working boy or girl.
Foodstuffs:—

Rice—Man—12 ch. }
Woman—10 ch. } daily = 13 seers weekly.
Boy or girl—8 ch. }

	Rs.	a.	p.
This is 17 maunds for a year at Rs. 5 a maund	85	0	0
Mustard oil, 4 chattack (weekly) 12 seers at Rs. 30 a maund	9	0	0
Salt, 4 chattack " " Rs. 4-10	1	7	6
Dal, 1 chattack (daily), 23 seers at Rs. 10 a maund	5	12	0
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc., at annas 2-3 a week	7	5	0
Sundries	5	0	0
	<u>118</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
2 <i>dhotis</i>	4	0	0
3 <i>saris</i>	7	8	0
3 "	4	8	0
1 coat	3	0	0
2 jackets	3	0	0
2 "	2	0	0
			<u>24 0 0</u>

Total Rs. ... 137 8 6

Rupees 137-8-6 ÷ 12 = Rs. 11-7-4, roughly worked out for month for the family.

Earnings of the family—man, woman, boy or girl.

	Rs.	a.	p.
Man	7	0	0
Woman	6	0	0
Boy or girl	5	0	0

18-0-0 × 12 = Rs. 216-0-0

Less expenditure for a year ... 137-8-6

Net saving* ... Rs. 78-7-6

*Besides this they have got their *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX (d).

What it costs a coolie man for a year.

	Rs.	a.	p.
Rice—12 ch. a day = 6 mds. 25 srs. at Rs. 5 per maund	33	2	0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	3	10	0
Salt—1½ ch. " = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	0	11	6
Dal—2½ ch. " = 8 srs. 2 ch. at annas 4 a seer	2	0	6
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc. = 9 pies a week	2	7	0
Tobacco	2	0	0
	<u>43</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
2 <i>dhotis</i>	4	0	0
1 coat	3	0	0
			<u>7 0 0</u>

* Total ... 50 15 0

Earnings of a man for a year.

Rs. 7 a month (only wages)

Rs. 7 × Rs. 12 = ... 84 0 0

Less expenditure ... 50 15 0 Rs. 50-15-0 ÷ 12 = Rs. 4-3-11.

* Net saving ... 34 15 0

* Besides this the man has his *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX(e).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE.

What it costs a coolie woman for a year.

		Rs. a. p.
Foodstuffs—		
Rice—10 ch. a day=5 mds. 30 srs. at Rs. 5 per maund	...	28 12 0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly =4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	...	3 10 0
Salt—1½ ch. " =4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 2 "	...	0 11 6
Dal—2½ ch. " =8 srs. 2 ch. at annas 4 "	...	2 0 6
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc.=9 pies a week	...	2 7 0
Tobacco	...	2 0 0
		39 9 0
		Rs. a. p.
Clothes—		
3 <i>saris</i>	...	7 8 0
2 jackets	...	3 0 0
		10 8 0
Total	...	50 1 0

Rs. 50-1-0 + 12 = Rs. 4-2-9 roughly, worked for a month.

Earnings of a woman for a year.

Rs. 6 a month (only wages).

		Rs. a. p.
Rs. 6 × 12 =	...	72 0 0
Less expenditure	...	50 1 0
		21 15 0
* Net saving	...	21 15 0

* Besides this a woman has got *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX(f).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE.

What it costs a coolie girl or boy for a year.

		Rs. a. p.
Foodstuffs—		
Rice— 8 ch. a day = 4 mds. 25 srs. at Rs.5 per maund	...	23 2 0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly = 4 srs. 1 ch. at annas 12 a seer	...	3 0 9
Salt— 1½ ch. " = 4 srs. 1 ch. at annas 2 "	...	0 8 3
Dal— 2½ ch. " = 7 srs. 5 ch. at annas 4 "	...	1 13 3
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc = 9 pies a week	...	2 7 0
Tobacco	...	1 0 0
		31 15 3
		Rs. a. p.
Clothes—		
3 <i>saris</i>	...	4 8 0
2 jackets	...	2 0 0
		6 8 0
Total	...	38 7 3

Rupees 38-7-3 + 12 = Rs. 3-3-3 roughly, worked out for a month.

Earnings of a boy or girl for a year.

Rs. 5 a month (only wages).

		Rs. a. p.
Rs. 5 × 12 =	...	60 0 0
Less expenditure	...	38 7 3
		21 8 9
* Net saving	...	21 8 9

* Besides this a boy or girl has got *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX (c).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE (LAKHIMPUR).

What it costs a coolie family consisting of 3 people—man, woman, working boy or girl.
Foodstuffs:—

Rice—Man—12 ch. }
Woman—10 ch. } daily = 13 seers weekly.
Boy or girl—8 ch. }

	Rs.	a.	p.
This is 17 maunds for a year at Rs. 5 a maund	85	0	0
Mustard oil, 4 chattack (weekly) 12 seers at Rs. 30 a maund	9	0	0
Salt, 4 chattack " " Rs. 4-10 "	1	7	6
Dal, 1 chattack (daily), 23 seers at Rs. 10 a maund	5	12	0
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc., at annas 2-3 a week	7	5	0
Sundries	5	0	0
	<u>118</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
2 <i>dhotis</i>	4	0	0
3 <i>saris</i>	7	8	0
3 "	4	8	0
1 coat	3	0	0
2 jackets	3	0	0
2 "	2	0	0
		<u>24</u>	<u>0</u>

Total Rs. ... 137 8 6

Rupees 137-8-6 + 12 = Rs. 11-7-4, roughly worked out for month for the family.

Earnings of the family—man, woman, boy or girl.

	Rs.	a.	p.
Man	7	0	0
Woman	6	0	0
Boy or girl	5	0	0
	<u>18-0-0</u>		
Less expenditure for a year	...	187-8-6	
Net saving*	...	Rs. 78-7-6	

* Besides this they have got their *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX (d).

What it costs a coolie man for a year.

	Rs.	a.	p.
Rice—12 ch. a day = 3 mds. 25 srs. at Rs. 5 per maund	33	2	0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	3	10	0
Salt—1½ ch. " = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	0	11	6
Dal—2½ ch. " = 8 srs. 2 ch. at annas 4 a seer	2	0	6
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc. = 9 pies a week	2	7	0
Tobacco	2	0	0
	<u>43</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
2 <i>dhotis</i>	4	0	0
1 coat	3	0	0
		<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>

* Total ... 50 15 0

Earnings of a man for a year.

Rs. 7 a month (only wages)

	Rs.	a.	p.
Rs. 7 × Rs. 12 =	84	0	0
Less expenditure	50	15	0
* Net saving	34	15	0

Rs. 50-15-0 + 12 = Rs. 4-3-11.

* Besides this the man has his *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX(c).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE.

What it costs a coolie woman for a year.

		Rs. a. p.
Foodstuffs—		
Rice—10 ch. a day = 5 mds. 30 srs. at Rs. 5 per maund	...	28 12 0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 12 a seer	...	3 10 0
Salt—1½ ch. " = 4 srs. 14 ch. at annas 2 "	...	0 11 6
Dal—2½ ch. " = 8 srs. 2 ch. at annas 4 "	...	2 0 6
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc. = 9 pies a week	...	2 7 0
Tobacco	...	2 0 0
		39 9 0
		Rs. a. p.
Clothes—		
3 saris	...	7 8 0
2 jackets	...	3 0 0
		10 8 0
Total	...	50 1 0

Rs. 50-1-0 + 12 = Rs. 4-2-9 roughly, worked for a month.

Earnings of a woman for a year.

Rs. 6 a month (only wages).

		Rs. a. p.
Rs. 6 × 12 =	...	72 0 0
Less expenditure	...	50 1 0
		21 15 0

* Besides this a woman has got *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX(f).

ITAKHULI TEA ESTATE.

What it costs a coolie girl or boy for a year.

		Rs. a. p.
Foodstuffs—		
Rice— 8 ch. a day = 4 mds. 25 srs. at Rs.5 per maund	...	23 2 0
Mustard oil—1½ ch. weekly = 4 srs. 1 ch. at annas 12 a seer	...	3 0 9
Salt— 1½ ch. " = 4 srs. 1 ch. at annas 2 "	...	0 8 3
Dal— 2½ ch. " = 7 srs. 5 ch. at annas 4 "	...	1 13 3
Spices, <i>haldi</i> , onions, etc = 9 pies a week	...	2 7 0
Tobacco	...	1 0 0
		31 15 3
		Rs. a. p.
Clothes—		
3 saris	...	4 8 0
2 jackets	...	2 0 0
		6 8 0
Total	...	38 7 3

Rupees 38-7-3 + 12 = Rs. 3-3-3 roughly, worked out for a month.

Earnings of a boy or girl for a year.

Rs. 5 a month (only wages).

		Rs. a. p.
Rs. 5 × 12 =	...	60 0 0
Less expenditure	...	38 7 3
		21 8 9

* Besides this a boy or girl has got *ticca* earnings.

APPENDIX IX (g)

DEKHARI TEA COMPANY, LAKHIMPUR.

Male adult's monthly budget by Mr. Powell, Dekhari Tea Company (Lakhimpur).

		1921.	1913.
		Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Rice—25 seers at Rs. 5 a maund	... ..	8 2 0	3 2 0
Dal—3 seers at annas 4 a seer	... ..	0 12 0	0 7 6
Salt—1½ seers at annas 2 a seer	... ..	0 3 0	0 1 6
Mustard oil—1 seer at annas 12 a seer	... ..	0 12 0	0 6 0
Spices—anna 1 a week	... ..	0 4 0	0 1 0
Vegetables and fish—annas 4 a week	... ..	1 0 0	0 8 0
Tolacco	... ..	0 4 0	0 2 0
Clothing per year—			
1 coat	... ..	3 0 0	} ... 1 1 3 0 9, 0
2 pairs dhotis	... ..	6 0 0	
1 blanket	... ..	2 0 0	
1 umbrella	... ..	2 0 0	
Total	... ..	18 0 0	7 6 3 5 5 0

APPENDIX IX (h).

Mr. S. P. Barua's budget for a family consisting of a man, wife, 2 non-working children.

Monthly—

		Rs. a. p.
Paddy—2 maunds, 10 seers at Rs. 3 a maund (i.e., rice at about Rs. 4-8).		6 12 0
Mixed dal—4 seers	... ..	0 14 0
Salt—2 seers	... ..	0 4 0
Mustard oil—¾ seer	... ..	0 9 0
Vegetables	... ..	0 6 0
Fish	... ..	0 6 0
Spices	... ..	0 4 0
Tobacco	... ..	0 2 0
Betel nut	... ..	0 4 0
Molasses	... ..	0 4 0
Kerosene oil	... ..	0 4 0
Cocconut oil	... ..	0 2 0
Vermilion	... ..	0 0 6
Soap	... ..	0 2 0
Lime	... ..	0 0 6
Paddy for rice beer	... ..	0 8 0
Chilies	... ..	0 1 0

Clothes, yearly—

		Rs. a. p.
1 coat	... ..	2 8 0
3 dhotis	... ..	3 12 0
1 blanket	... ..	2 8 0
3 kurtas	... ..	2 4 0
3 saris	... ..	5 4 0
1 blanket	... ..	2 8 0
4 kurtas for children	... ..	2 0 0
		20 12 0
Clothes	... ..	1 13 0
For entertainments and ceremonies	... ..	0 12 0
Total	... ..	13 12 0

APPENDIX IX(2).

Budget estimate of a coolie's expenses framed by Khan Sahib Wali Mohamed.

Serial No.	Name of article required.	Daily allowance to each coolie or his dependent.			Monthly (30 days) allowance to each coolie or his dependent.			Average retail.	Monthly price of each article.			
		Adults over 18 years.	Adolescents (12-18).	Children (4-11).	Adults over 18 years.	Adolescents (12-18).	Children (4-11).		Prices of articles.	Adults over 18 years.	Adolescents (12-18).	Children (4-11).
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
		S. ch.	S. ch.	S. ch.	S. ch.	S. ch.	S. ch.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	
1	Rice ...	0 12	0 9	0 6	22 8	16 14	11 4	5 0 0 per md.	2 13 0	2 1 9	1 6 6	
2	Dal (arhar) ...	0 2	0 1½	0 1	3 12	2 13	1 12	10 0 0 "	0 15 0	0 11 3	0 7 6	
3	Vegetables ...	0 8	0 2½	0 1½	5 10	4 3½	2 18	0 2 0 per sr.	0 5 6	0 4 0	0 2 9	
4	Salt ...	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 15	0 11½	0 7½	0 1 6 "	0 1 6	0 1 0	0 0 9	
5	Mustard oil (average).	0 ½	0 ¾	0 ½	1 ½	12 ½	8 ½	0 12 0 "	1 0 9	0 12 0	0 8 0	
6	Onions and garlic	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 2½	0 1½	0 1½	0 8 0 "	0 7 6	0 5 9	0 3 9	
7	Turmeric ...	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 1½	0 ½	0 ½	0 8 0 "	0 0 6	0 0 3	0 0 3	
8	Tamarind ...	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	not sold.	...	...	...
9	Chillies ...	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 7½	0 4½	0 3½	1 8 0 per sr.	0 10 9	0 8 0	0 5 3	
10	Tobacco for smoking.	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 7½	...	...	0 8 0 "	0 4 0	...	...
11	Firewood ...	1 8	1 2	0 12	45 0	37 8	22 8	0 8 0 per md.	0 9 0	0 6 9	0 4 6	
12	Kerosene oil ...	to be given in cash only)							Lump sum ...	0 4 0	0 3 0	0 2 0
	Total ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.....	7 6 6	5 5 9	3 9 3

Articles required yearly—

Adults	{ Males—3 dhotis worth Rs. 5, 3 kurtas Rs. 3, 2 safas Rs. 2—Rs. 10 ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 13 6	...	...
	{ Females—3 saris worth Rs. 7, 3 kurtas or photoi worth Rs. 3 = Rs. 10 ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Adolescents	{ Males—3 dhotis Rs. 4, 3 kurtas Rs. 2—total Rs. 6 ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 8 0	...
	{ Females—3 saris Rs. 4-8, 3 kurtas Rs. 1-8—total Rs. 6 ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Children	—2 small dhotis worth Rs. 1-8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 2 0
Articles required once in 2 years—											
Adults	—2 blankets and a gudhri (poor quality)—Rs. 6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 4 0	...	...
Adolescents	—2 blankets smaller dimensions (poor quality)—Rs. 4-8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 3 0	...
Children	—Not provided for specially.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Miscellaneous—											
	Household utensils for cooking, drinking and other purposes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 2 0	0 1 0	...
	Festivals, deaths, marriages, births, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0 8 0	0 4 0	...
	Grand total	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9 2 0	6 5 9	3 11 3
	As in living together some economy is effected. I would put these in round figures as	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9 0 0	6 4 0	3 8 0

Note—1. In the articles for daily expenses, with the exception of kerosene oil, the articles and their weight exactly as given in Schedule B of the rules under the Assam Labour and Emigration Act VI of 1901, are strictly followed though in his work called "The Economic Life of a Bengal District," Mr. Jack admits of adult males eating a seer a day. A coolie is supposed to eat more than an agriculturist who gets milk, ghee and other rich articles to enjoy. Kerosene oil seems required in the case of coolie to a small extent and that too is provided for. Prices charged are somewhat cheaper than prevailing at present in most localities.

2. In providing for clothes, if the standard prescribed by Schedule A of the said rules were followed, the budget would have run up very high. It is an admitted fact that the present prices of cloth are very high. On page 7 of Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour, No. 16, Mr. C. A. Coubrough says:—"Prices have at times reached three times their pre-war value." The rise in price of Indian mill-produced piece-goods rose in the following proportions:—

1900-11.	1910-11.	1911-12.	1912-13.	1913-14.	1914-15.	1915-16.	1916-17.	1917-18.	1918-19.	1919-20.	1920-21.
2-3	2-4	3-5	2-8	2-7	2-5	2-5	3-3	4-5	6-0	6-7	7-7

A coolie does require some clothes to protect himself against Assam weather. No provision is made for umbrellas, etc., budgeted for by some Managers of the gardens.

3. In Schedule B referred to above emigrants are divided into two classes only, i.e., "of and above 10 years of age" and "Between 2 and 10 years of age" and to the second class persons half the rations allowed to first class are allowed. If that division were followed here the budget would have gone up much. But three classes of coolies as made herein would give little better estimate of coolies' requirements, hence this is done.

APPENDIX X.

Act XIII.

Articles of Agreement made and entered into this 14th day of February 1922. Between Morakhan whose description is given below of the one part and A. B. Esq. of Jorehaut Tea Company, Limited (hereinafter called the employer) of the other part. Whereby it is mutually covenanted and agreed as follows :—

1. In consideration of the sum of Rs. paid by the said employer to the said Morakhan as an advance on account of the work hereinafter agreed to be performed and the receipt whereof the said Morakhan hereby acknowledges he the said hereby agrees to labour as a garden coolie on the Kharikutia tea-garden belonging to the employer for three years of 939 working days from the date of this agreement and during that period, unless prevented by sickness, to perform such daily tasks as may be assigned to him and the said Morakhan hereby further covenants that unless prevented as aforesaid he will not absent himself from work or refuse or neglect to perform the daily tasks which may be assigned him or such other duties as he may reasonably be called on to perform and that any such neglect or refusal as aforesaid shall render him liable to the provisions of Act XIII of 1859 and that for every day he shall be absent either from sickness or on leave he will work another day so as to complete the full nine hundred and thirty-nine days and that the said advance of Rs. shall be worked out by him and deducted from his pay during the last thirty-six months of the said term by equal monthly instalments of Rs. each.

2. In consideration of the Covenants on the part of the said A. B. Esq., hereinafore contained the said employer hereby covenants that if the said shall labour on the employer's said estate for the period and in manner aforesaid the employer shall and will pay to him from the date on which he joins work on such estate monthly wages at the rate of Rs. 7. As witness the hands of the parties hereto the day and year first above written.

A. B.

Description of Labourer.

Name.	Father's name.	Age.	Sex.	Caste.	Zillah.	Village.	Thana.	Descriptive mark.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Morakhan ...	Bhagela ...	36	Male.	Gour ...	Raipur...	Mohena ..	Nanaghat.	

APPENDIX XI.

(WITH ONE ANNA STAMP).

Articles of Agreement made and entered into this _____ day of _____ 192 between _____ (whose description is given below hereinafter called the labourer of the one part, and the Manager of _____ for & on behalf of the Assam Company, hereinafter called the employer of the other part whereby it is mutually covenanted and agreed as follows:—

1. That in consideration of Rs. _____ paid to-day by the said employer to the said labourer as an advance on account of the work herein after contracted to be performed by the said labourer, and the receipt where of the said labourer hereby acknowledges ^{he} _{sbe} the said labourer agrees to labour as a coolie on the _____ Tea garden of the Assam Company, and to do ⁸¹² and perform ⁶²⁴ full and complete *haziras*, Sundays not being counted as working days, according ⁹³⁶ to the usual and customary mode comportation of daily *haziras* in the said garden from the date of the agreement the labourer undertaking to perform such work as is provided by the employer on six out of seven consecutive days. And the said labourer hereby further covenants that ^{he} _{she} will not absent ^{himself} _{herself} from work without permission of the employer or refuse or neglect to perform the daily *haziras* till ⁸¹² ⁶²⁴ full and complete *haziras* are worked off, and that such neglect or refusal to perform or non-per- ⁹³⁶ formance of the said number of full and complete *haziras* shall render the labourer liable to the provisions of Act XIII of 1859, and the labourer hereby further covenants that this contract will continue until the said number of full and complete *haziras* hereby agreed to be performed are worked

off unless the labourer is declared to be permanently unfit to labour by a competent Medical Officer. And the labourer hereby further covenants that the said advance of Rs _____ received to-day ^{him} will be worked off by ^{him} _{her} at the rate of Rs _____ for each full and complete 26 *haziras* or proportionately.

2. That in consideration of the covenants on the part of the labourer herein before set forth, the said employer hereby covenants that if the said labourer shall labour on the employer's said garden in the manner aforesaid, the employer shall and will pay wages to ^{him} _{her} at the rate of Rs. _____ for each full and complete 26 *haziras*.

In witness whereof the parties hereto set their hands the day and year first abovementioned.

DESCRIPTION OF LABOURER.

Name.	Father's Name.	Age.	Sex.	Caste.	RESIDENCE.			Descriptive marks.
					Zilla.	Thanna.	Village.	

Signed, sealed and delivered
in the presence of

WITNESS.

EMPLOYER.
for the Assam Company.

LABOURER.

APPENDIX XII.

THE MANAGER, ASSAM COMPANY.

FACTORY,

I _____ Son of _____ Caste _____
do hereby enter into an Agreement with the Assam Company that my _____
will work as a coolie on the Factories of the Assam Company for _____ years on
a salary of Rs. _____ per month. To make this Agreement binding, I this
day received an advance of Rs. _____ to be deducted from my said
_____ monthly wages at annas _____ per month I agree that if my said
_____ absent _____ from work without reason I will pay to
the Company at the rate of Annas _____ per day on account of loss of _____
services, and I will be liable for any other loss that may be caused in case this contract is not
fulfilled. Dated _____ day of _____ 19 _____

Signature {
of Father }

Witnesses _____

APPENDIX XIII.



CONTRACT under Act XIII of 1859, between the undersigned Laborer of the first part and the Manager of the Dahingepar Estate of the second part, WHEREAS I _____ the said Laborer _____ do now hereby bind myself to serve as a coolie for a period of _____ days in the Dahingepar Estate for which I hereby acknowledge to have received from the Manager of the said Estate, the sum of Rs. _____ as an advance, and I do hereby make the following Covenants :—

1. That I shall like other imported laborers work out the said period of my contract for _____ days without any break or objection and do all the works of a coolie or any work that is required of me of whatever description, under the direction and orders of the Manager or the representatives of the Estate.

2. That the time of my service, viz., _____ days, shall be made up of full daily attendance to my work. I shall serve for _____ days, calculating a day according to the measure of work, which is, or may be, prevalent in the said Estate for determining a daily attendance or full task and I accept the garden Hazirah Book as a true and proper account of the number of my attendance at work from which book the date of the termination of my contract shall be determined.

3. That my wages shall be at the rate of Rs. _____ per month and that every month's wages shall be paid to me within the following month.

4. The amount of any advance made to me, by the Manager in cash or otherwise and the price of rice or any other food I may receive from the Garden Godown shall be deducted from my monthly wages, and I shall only be entitled to receive the balance of my wages after such deductions have been made.

5. That if before the expiry of this my contract I absent myself from the work without leave, or abscond, or if by disobedience to any lawful command or in any other way I cause any loss to my Employer, I shall be liable to punishment under the said Act according to Law, and I further bind myself to refund to my said Employer the said amount of my _____ together with Rs. 25 as compensation for loss, in all Rs. _____ which sum I shall pay without any objection.

Dated the _____

Number.	Name of Coolie.	Father's Name.	Age.	Sex.	Caste.	Zillah.	Pergunah.	Thannah.	Village.	Signature.
										H. Mark. Witness. Witness. Manager.

APPENDIX XIV.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT in connection with ENTICEMENT OF LABOUR FROM TEA GARDENS AND OTHER CONCERNS

IN THE

BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY AND SURMA VALLEY.

The proprietors or accredited representatives of the several companies or concerns who have signed copies of this Agreement do and each of them doth by these presents mutually bind the said companies and concerns to abide by the following Rules and Provisions which are aimed at discouraging and preventing the enticement, harbouring, detention or employment (hereafter called "offences") of garden or other coolies without the consent of the companies and concerns by or for whom such coolies may have been imported recruited or employed and at prescribing certain fines or penalties by way of damages for infringement of such Rules and Provisions, which Rules and Provisions are framed and subscribed on the assurance or assumption that all proprietors, Boards of Directors, and Managing or other Agents or Secretaries of the said companies and concerns may be depended on to enforce due compliance with all awards made in pursuance of such Rules and Provisions, their active support in that behalf being deemed essential to the same being successfully carried out.

For the purposes of this agreement the following definitions will obtain:—

- (1) *Offence*.—A person is guilty of an offence against these rules who employs or harbours or entices any coolie who is claimable, under these rules, by another concern.
- (2) *Defaulter* means any free coolie who has absconded while under *bona fide* advances to his concern or a coolie recruited by one concern who has proceeded direct from the recruiting district to another concern without reporting to, and obtaining the sanction of, the first concern.
- (3) *Bona fide advances* means advances made by a concern or its recognised agents and do not include shop-keeper's bills or line debts.
- (4) *To employ and/or employment* shall include special contract work and/or work under contractors engaged by and/or on the concern.

IT IS AGREED THAT—

1. All coolies living within the area of a concern's grant or premises are to be considered coolies of such concern whether regularly employed or not, but coolies living in the vicinity of a concern and outside its boundaries shall not be considered as coolies of such concern unless under agreement to the concern.

2. No subscriber to these rules shall employ directly or indirectly or harbour or detain any coolie (whether under contract or not) who has been imported by another concern, within the period of 3 years after importation, it being understood, however, that no claim under this rule shall be made or entertained unless duly formulated within two calendar years after the coolie has left the importing concern.

3. No subscriber to these rules shall employ directly or indirectly or harbour or detain any coolie other than mentioned in Rule 2 who may be under Act XIII agreement to another concern, as shown by such concern's Cash and Agreement Books, it being understood, however, that no claim under this rule shall be made or entertained unless duly formulated within two calendar years after the coolie has left the concern to which he was under contract.

4. No subscriber to these rules shall employ directly or indirectly or harbour or detain a coolie who is a defaulter to another concern, it being understood, however, that no claim under this rule shall be made or entertained unless duly formulated within two calendar years after such coolie has defaulted.

5. No subscriber to these rules shall directly or indirectly entice or endeavour to entice any coolies employed on another concern from such employment.

6. No subscriber to these rules shall employ directly or indirectly or harbour or detain any coolie who has been imported *bona fide* by him and has been employed as a coolie and/or as a recruiter, but who, it is proved, was either originally imported, or employed under Act, XIII agreement, or employed as a free coolie, by another concern.

Should any coolie be employed, harboured or detained under the above circumstances no proceedings shall be taken under Rules 2, 3 and 4, but the coolie and his or her wife, husband, child or children shall be claimable under this rule, on tender of the recruiting expenses as provided hereunder in Rule 8.

No claim shall lie in any case where such coolie has been employed as a recruiter in respect of any coolie or coolies so recruited other than the wife or husband child or children of the recruiting coolie as the case may be.

No claim shall lie in any case under this rule unless made within two years from the time such coolie left the claiming concern.

7. The respective penalties for breaches of the foregoing rules No. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 shall not exceed the maximum penalties respectively laid down for breaches of these respective rules in the schedule hereto. Such sum or sums as may be awarded under this Schedule shall be in addition to any other sum, properly claimable under Rule 8 as recruiting expenses.

8. In all cases in which under these Rules (save as hereafter provided in cases coming under the provisions of Rule 6) coolies are properly claimable from one concern by another and are returned to the claiming concern the claiming concern shall not be responsible to pay the concern from which

such coolies return, any sums of money advanced or any bonuses or other like sums paid by such latter concern to such coolies. In cases of claims under Rule 6, where the recruiting coolie and his or her wife husband child or children are returned to the claiming concern the claiming concern shall be liable to pay the actual recruiting expenses paid by the concern from which such coolies are claimed in respect of such coolies.

9. Every complaint as to the alleged infringement of the foregoing rules or as to an offence of the kind or nature in such Rules indicated shall be in writing signed by the Superintendent or Manager in charge who is directly responsible to the Agents or Proprietors of the complainant concern and addressed and delivered or sent to the like Superintendent or Manager of the concern complained against and every such complaint shall state :—

(1) In the case of an alleged infringement of either Rules 2, 3, 4, or 6 as above, such of the following particulars as are applicable to the particular case :—

(a) All particulars necessary for the identification of the coolies who are the subject matter of the complaint.

(b) The period, if any, of the coolie's non-expired service compulsory or otherwise :

Such complaint shall also contain a statement that in the event of the non-return of the coolies the following sums will be claimed, viz. :

(c) The amount of penalty.

(d) The cost of importing and recruiting the coolies when claimed under Rule 2.

(e) The amount of advances outstanding when claimed under Rules 3 and 4.

(2) In the case of an alleged infringement of Rule 5 the grounds which it is alleged constitute the alleged offence.

10. The recipient of any such complaint within three days from the receipt thereof, shall, if the complaint be made under Rules 2, 3 or 4 hereof, and in the event of his not repudiating the same either—

(a) Pay or remit or settle the amount claimed in which case he may retain the coolie, or

(b) Forthwith eject (in the presence of complainant's representative if so required) such coolie with all his belongings from his concern.

11. If the complaint be made under Rule 6, and in the event of his not repudiating the same he shall forthwith eject (in the presence of complainant's representative if so required) such coolie with his or her wife, husband, child or children and all his belongings from his concern.

12. In the event of the recipient of any such complaint (whether made under Rules 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) repudiating responsibility therefor—

(c) he shall deliver or send to the complainant a written statement recording the grounds on which he disputes liability in the whole or in part, as the case may be, provided that if he adopts this course his liability shall not be affected should the coolies or any of them abscond before final award or payment thereof.

13. If the recipient of any such complaint should fail or neglect to take either of these courses, he shall stand liable for the full amount of the claim and/or penalties provided by the rules as the case may be.

14. If the dispute be not otherwise adjusted, the complainant may send—

(a) to the Secretary of the Assam Branch :—

(i) when the complainant concern and the concern complained against are both in the Brahmaputra Valley ;

(ii) when the complainant concern is in the Surma Valley and the concern complained against is in the Brahmaputra Valley ;

(b) to the Secretary of the Surma Valley Branch :—

(i) when the complainant concern and the concern complained against are both in the Surma Valley ;

(ii) when the complainant concern is in the Brahmaputra Valley and the concern complained against is in the Surma Valley ;

under registered post, a full copy of his complaint and of the other side's statement to be adjudicated upon by a Court of Arbitration to be constituted in accordance with the following Rules and Bye-Laws, viz. :—

RULES FOR ARBITRATIONS.

(a) The Court shall be constituted by the Branch Committee on receipt of the papers which must contain the full complaint as set out in Rule 9.

(b) The Court shall consist of three Arbitrators who shall be selected by the Branch Committee from any recognised and impartial tea planters or local representatives of concerns other than tea concerns who are willing to serve.

(c) The Court appointed as aforesaid shall elect their own Chairman.

(d) The Court may call for such evidence whether oral or documentary as they require to enable them to deal with any matter coming before them, and the parties to the arbitration or their agents or representatives shall if required submit to examination on oath or affirmation in relation to the matters in dispute and shall produce before the Court all books, papers, accounts or other documents in their possession or power which may be required or called for and do all other things which the Court may require.

- (e) The decision of the majority of the Court shall be taken as the decision of the Court.
- (f) The names of the arbitrators constituting the Court shall not be ordinarily disclosed to the parties nor shall the parties be entitled to such information as of right but the whole question shall be in the absolute discretion of the Branch Committee.
- (g) The non-disclosure of the said names shall not in any case affect the validity of the proceedings or any Award made therein nor afford any ground for objection to the filing of the award.
- (h) If any Arbitrator declines or fails to act or dies or becomes incapable of acting the Branch Committee may substitute a new arbitrator in his place and the Court so reconstituted shall proceed with the arbitration with liberty to act on the record of the proceedings as then existing (if any) or to commence the arbitration *de novo*, as they may decide.
- (i) The Court may at their own instance before making their final award and at the expense of the parties consult, refer to and act on the advice recommendations or suggestions of any two impartial tea planters or local representatives of concerns other than tea concerns not being in any way interested in or connected with either concern involved in the dispute.
- (j) The Court may also at the like expense of the parties consult and take the advice of Solicitors or Counsel upon any question of law evidence, practice or procedure arising in the course of the reference, or as to the form and nature of their award.
- (k) The Court shall make their award in writing within 30 days from the time of entering upon the reference or within such extended time as they may notify. Such Award shall be signed by the Court and when completed a copy shall be sent by them to the Branch Committee who shall forward a copy to each of the parties interested.
- (l) The parties shall in all matters abide by and obey the Award which shall be binding on the parties and their respective representatives.
- (m) Alteration in the constitution of any Firm Company or Concern being a party to the arbitration either by resignation, death or in any other manner either before or after making the award shall not operate as a revocation of the submission or invalidate any proceedings on the arbitration or any Award.
- (n) Neither of the parties shall bring or prosecute any suit or proceedings whatever against the Court or any member thereof for and in respect of the matters in dispute or any of them nor any such suit or proceedings against the other party except for the purpose of enforcing the Award.
- (o) The decision of the Court shall be final. All procedure not otherwise hereby provided for shall be regulated by the Court and no objection shall be taken or entertained by reason of any irregularity in procedure.
- (p) The Court shall have power to award a sum to cover costs and expenses of any party to the arbitration and to direct by and to whom the same shall be paid.
- (q) Subject as aforesaid the Court shall not by their decision or award impose larger sums by way of damages than those prescribed according to the scale and under the provisions in the Schedule hereof.

15. After constitution of the Court as aforesaid the Branch Committee shall give notice by registered post to both parties of the place and date and time when and where the dispute will be investigated and either party may appear in person or by any tea garden Superintendent or Manager or by the local representative of a concern other than a tea concern to conduct his case but neither side shall be at liberty to be represented by counsel, attorney or any legal adviser.

16. Upon receipt of such notice the concern complained against shall have the right to forward to the Secretary a further copy of his written statement of the grounds upon which liability is disputed.

17. Failing satisfactory settlement or compliance with an Award, by the Superintendent or Manager of the concern involved, the case first shall be reported for action to the Proprietors, Boards or Agents concerned. If no satisfactory action is taken within sixty days after such report by the Proprietors, Boards or Agents of the concern involved, the other party shall be at liberty to take such steps to enforce his Award under the Civil Procedure Code or otherwise as may be open to him.

18. In the case of a company or private concern being signatory to these Rules, it is understood that the same apply to all branches of the said company or private concern, whether devoted to the culture of tea or other produce or to other industrial pursuits.

19. These provisions shall be binding on any other tea company or concern on whose behalf these presents or a copy thereof be hereafter signed by its proprietor or accredited representative.

20. This agreement shall continue in force until the fifteenth day of October 1923 subject to previous termination hereof in respect of any signatory by giving twelve calendar months' notice in writing of his or their intention so to terminate the same, such notice to be addressed to the Secretary, Indian Tea Association, Calcutta.

THE SCHEDULE ABOVE REFERRED TO.

- 1. For an offence against Rule 2 the penalty will be a maximum sum of Rs. 300 for each coolie for the first offence, and of Rs. 500 for each coolie for a second or subsequent offence, such penalty to be in addition to any sum awarded by way of damages under Clause 4 hereof.
- 2. For an offence against Rule 3 the penalty will be a maximum sum of Rs. 200 for each coolie for the first offence and of Rs. 300 for each coolie for a second or subsequent offence,

- such penalty to be in addition to any sum awarded by way of damages under Clause 4 hereof.
3. For an offence affecting any coolie who is a defaulter to another concern, as provided under Rule 4, the penalty will be Rs. 50 for each coolie in addition to payment of all *bona fide* advances shown against such coolie in the concern books and such sum as may be awarded by way of damages under Clause 4 hereof.
 4. For an offence against Rule 5 the penalty will be a maximum sum of Rs. 500 for the first offence and of Rs. 1,000 for a second or subsequent offence, irrespective of any penalties which may have been previously enforced under Rules 2, 3, and 4.
 5. For failure to comply with the terms of Rule 6 the penalty will be a maximum sum of Rs. 1,000 for each offence.

APPENDIX XV.

Number of tea-gardens employing more than 50 labourers with the number of adult labourers (working and non-working) and children living in garden lines or on garden land on 30th June 1921:—

District.	Number of gardens.	Adults.	Children.
1	2	3	4
Caehar	179	80,838	57,158
Sylhet	155	96,896	77,379
Kamrup	14	2,829	1,628
Darrang	130	82,101	60,587
Nowgong	83	15,980	10,979
Sibsagar	158	141,211	118,381
Lakhimpur	142	152,321	113,406
Total	811	571,526	439,518

EVIDENCE RECORDED

BY THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

1921-1922.



SHILLONG:

PRINTED AT THE ASSAM GOVERN

1922.

Price Rs. 3-6.

Agents for the Sale of Books published by the Assam Government.

Agents in India.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(1) Messrs. Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta.</p> <p>(2) Messrs. W. Newman & Co., Calcutta.</p> <p>(3) Messrs. S. K. Lahiri & Co., Calcutta.</p> <p>(4) Messrs. A. M. and J. Ferguson, Ceylon.</p> <p>(5) Messrs. R. Cambay & Co., 6 and 8/2, Hasting Street, Calcutta.</p> <p>(6) Messrs. Thompson & Co., Madras.</p> <p>(7) Babu Hari Ram Dhar, B.A., Popular Library, Dacca.</p> <p>(8) Messrs. D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 10, Meadon Street, Fort, Post Box No. 18 Bombay.</p> <p>(9) The Indian School Supply Depôt, 309, Bow, Bazar Street, Calcutta.</p> <p>(10) Messrs. Rai M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, 90-2A., Harison Road, Calcutta.</p> | <p>(11) Messrs. Students & Co., Cooch Bihar.</p> <p>(12) Messrs. Vas & Co., Madras.</p> <p>(13) The Standard Literature Co. Limited, 13-1, Old Court House Street, Calcutta.</p> <p>(14) The Standard Book Stall, Karachi.</p> <p>(15) Mr. Mangaldas Harkisandas, Surat.</p> <p>(16) Messrs. Karsandas. Narandas & Sons of Surat.</p> <p>(17) Munshi Seeta Ram Managing Proprietor, Indian Army Book Depôt Juhu, Cownpore.</p> <p>(18) Proprietor, New Kitabkhana, Poona.</p> <p>(19) The Association Press, Calcutta.</p> <p>(20) The Manager, The Hitavada Craddock—Town, Nagpur.</p> |
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Agents in Great Britain.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(1) Messrs. Constable & Co., 10, Orange Street, Leicester Square, W. C.</p> <p>(2) Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 68-74, Carter Lane, E. C., London. Oriental Department, 39, New Oxford Street, London, W. C.</p> <p>(3) Mr. B. Quaritch, 11 Grafton Street, New Bond Street, W.</p> <p>(4) Messrs. P. S. King & Son, 9, Bridge Street, Westminster, S. W., London.</p> <p>(5) Mr. B. H. Blackwell, 50 and 51, Broad Street, Oxford.</p> <p>(6) Messrs. Deighton Bell & Co., Limited, Cambridge.</p> <p>(7) Messrs. Henry S. King & Co., 65, Cornhill, E. C., London.</p> | <p>(8) Messrs. Grindlay & Co., 54, Parliament Street, S. W., London.</p> <p>(9) Messrs. W. Thacker & Co., 2, Creed Lane, London, E. C.</p> <p>(10) Messrs. Luzac & Co., 46, Great Russell Street, London, W. C.</p> <p>(11) Mr. J. Fisher Unwin, 1, Adelphi Terrace, London, W. C.</p> <p>(12) Messrs. Weildon and Wesley Limited, 28, Essex Street, London, W. C.</p> <p>(13) Messrs. Oliver and Boyed, Tweeddale Court, Edinburgh.</p> <p>(14) Messrs. E. Ponsonby, Ltd., 116, Grafton Street, Dublin.</p> |
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Agents on the Continent of Europe.

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| <p>(1) M. Earnest Leroux, 28, Rue Bonaparte, Paris.</p> <p>(2) M. M. Friedländer & Sohn 21, Carlstrasse Berlin.</p> | <p>(3) M. Otto Harrassowitz, Leipzig.</p> <p>(4) Martiaus Nijhoff, The Hague.</p> |
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SHILLONG

PRINTED BY H. H. KING, SUPERINTENDENT, ASSAM GOVERNMENT PRESS.

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A 674

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EVIDENCE RECORDED

BY THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

TEZPUR, 17TH DECEMBER 1921.

[ALL MEMBERS PRESENT.]

No. 1.—Mr. W. NEWNHAM-DAVIS, *Manager, Majulighur Tea Estate* :—

Tezpur.

I have been in Tea for the past 28 years, of which 6 were spent in Nowgong. I have never worked in any other districts in Assam.

I am of opinion that (i) generally speaking, the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort, and (ii) that it is quite impossible to convert the above-mentioned concessions into an increase of money wages. I think the coolies are very well off at the present time and that everything possible is being done to ameliorate their condition. I consider that the type of coolie recruited at the present day is as good as that recruited ten years ago.

It is absolutely essential that the European staff should be conversant with the vernacular commonly spoken by the coolies. A bonus of Rs. 300 is generally given to new Assistants who become conversant with the language within a year.

I have not had much unrest amongst my labourers in the Bishnath district, but there has been unrest on the neighbouring tea estates. My garden *had* was stopped for a month in June last due to the agitation of non-co-operators who picketed the roads and prevented supplies from coming into the gardens. The intention apparently was to cause trouble on the gardens and to prevent coolies from getting their supplies; and coolies naturally clamoured for their supplies.

Previous to the political agitation there was no feeling of unrest as far as I am aware. I am of opinion that but for the agitation of non-co-operators, there would have been no unrest so far as the Bishnath area was concerned. Looting was due to economic conditions during the war when prices had gone up. I consider that the coolies had no grievances, economic or personal, of which agitators could make capital. The sporadic nature of the unrest was due to the efforts of non-co-operators who held meetings at various centres inciting coolies to strike.

I have no system of fines.

I consider Rs. 9 for a man and Rs. 8 for a woman a decent living monthly wage based on the assumption that the coolie has no other means of subsistence. With all the advantages a coolie receives on the garden, I consider that if Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women respectively is earned monthly, it is sufficient to keep them in health and comfort and enable them to save a little. Roughly the extent of difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 would be about 50 % rise. It is less now because the prices have come down.

Earnings are not inadequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year. Coolies could earn just as much in the cold weather as in the rains.

When prices were very high, cloth was bought by my estate and sold to the coolies at reduced rates; it was not supplied free of charge except in special cases.

I did not supply the coolies regularly with paddy; they obtained their own supplies from the villages. I have a lot of rice which is not supplied to the coolies regularly, but only during times of high prices. I have 450 acres of paddy land. Half Government rate of rent is charged. Government rate was Re. 1 a *bigha* and I charged 8 annas a *bigha*. Land newly opened is given free for cultivation during the first two years just to encourage the coolies. The actual cultivators of this land

Tezpur. are both coolies as well as members of their families. I am unable to give the percentage of residents living on the garden who are dependent on paddy cultivation alone. Most families have one or two dependents living with them on the garden.

I consider that my coolies are quite happy with the pay they receive, but at the same time a good deal depends on the size of the family; with a small family, a man can earn as much as he wants.

I work on the basis of the unit system. My experience is that increased wages do not encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours. Some coolies just earn a certain amount, say, 4 annas, and do not care to earn more though they could easily earn as much as they wish.

In my opinion 4 annas was not sufficient to cover the needs of the coolies, but they are actually managing on that sum. My main object was to induce them to earn more; they could easily earn 8 annas a day if they wanted.

I have no *ticca* system, nor are coolies forced against their will to earn more than they themselves want. It is during the rains that the coolies go out to do their cultivation and do not care to earn more. My own opinion is that the coolies can live comfortably on six to seven annas, but on less they would be lacking in clothes and little luxuries.

It is quite possible for coolies who earn just a bare living wage to deteriorate, in which case they are put on light work until they are strong enough to do ordinary work. They are given full pay even for light work. I consider that coolies could not be induced to do a certain given task within a specified time without coercion which practice of course had long since been abolished. The present system has been in force for the past 10 or 15 years.

I do not think a coolie is over-exhausted by the four annas work which he does in a day, nor is he required to perform such work hurriedly.

I am of opinion that Act XIII agreements are necessary. Coolies invariably take the contracts at their own option and if the Act were repealed, there would be a great many complaints on the garden, as may be evidenced from the fact that certain gardens, in order to economise, stopped giving advances and this caused a flutter among the coolies. Subsequently the advance system had to be resuscitated. I would certainly discontinue the present system of granting advances if the coolies were not put under contract, as in that case there would be no security for the return of the advances. Nor would I give the money as a bonus at the end of a year's work, because it would cause a feeling of discontent all over the garden if some coolies (*i.e.*, the deserving ones) were given the bonus and the lazy or undeserving ones were not. The agreement for lazy coolies was 313 days actual work. It would never do to give them a bonus at the end of the year, as some may have had 3 or 4 months' leave in the *interim*.

It is possible that the grant of an advance to a coolie at the beginning of the year would make an impression on the coolie's mind that he was entering into a new agreement.

I consider that a coolie would not be more content if he were not under contract.

If a coolie did not want a bonus he would not take the agreement.

Approximately the proportion of those with agreements and those without was half and half.

If I am asked whether I am of opinion that in any agricultural community in the world, the earnings of a man alone are quite enough to support a wife and family without the latter themselves being required to work, I would say that my knowledge is confined to tea-gardens only, and speaking from that point of view, I consider a man is able to earn sufficient to maintain a wife and one child, though it is not really necessary for him to do so, as his wife also works. In addition, it is the custom on tea-gardens to make a monthly allowance of rice or *dhan* to every non-working infant.

With regard to the statement made by a certain witness, Mr. Heron of Powai Tea Estate of the Lakhimpur district before the Labour Committee of 1906, *viz.*, that the policy to pursue was to spend money on the coolie up here and save money in the recruiting district; money alone would not keep a coolie, but if he received small privileges and if he was well-treated, he would never give any trouble—I do

not think that the coolie would ever give any trouble, but as soon as the coolie ^{Tezpur.} considers he is well off his idea is to be independent so as to "set up" for himself. In these circumstances recruiting becomes necessary.

I agree with the statement that the grant of leave tends to the healthiness of the labour force.

No. 2.—Mr. ALEX ATKEN, *Resident Engineer, Bird and Company, Tezpur* :—

I am interested in Messrs. Bird and Company, who have a Resident Engineer in Tezpur, and I do contract work here. I was in Tea for 9 years in Golaghat and Bishnath. I left Tea in 1909. My labourers are not imported but recruited locally; they work all the year round. The men are practically all *ex-tea-garden* coolies.

I did not ask my men why they gave up work on the gardens, nor did they tell me that the work of my firm is more attractive than tea-garden work. My work is partly connected with tea-gardens. I am not in a position to say what wages the tea-garden coolies receive at the present moment. My men do an 8-hour day's work. I do not employ lazy coolies.

I pay my labourers for unskilled labour 10 to 12 annas a day for a man, and 6 annas for a woman. I do not concern myself with the way a coolie lives. I do not provide my coolies with accommodation, medical attendance, clothes and the like. If the coolie becomes ill he simply goes away. My coolies rent houses for 8 annas or Re. 1 each month. No coolie who does not do 8 hours' work in a day is employed. Very few men have left my service; 75% have been working for several years. All my coolies reside in or near the municipal limits. My coolies are given contract work, and I have two rates, one for coolies going out to tea-gardens and one for those in town. There is no comparison between Nuns engaged for seasonal work and tea-garden coolies.

No. 3.—Mr. E. J. NICHOLLS, *Manager, Dikora Division, Bishnath Tea Company* :—

I have been 15 years in Tea—Jorhat 10 years; Dibrugarh 2 years; and Dikora 3 years. I have never been in the Surma Valley or in the Doars.

I consider the type of coolie recruited at the present day better than that recruited 10 years ago for the simple reason that we are enrolling a better class of sardars and the class of coolies recruited by them is superior.

I consider it essential that the European staff on the garden should be conversant with some vernacular. We generally give a bonus to the European staff if they qualify within a year. If they qualify in 6 months, they get Rs. 300; it is, I believe, the general practice throughout the district.

I do not think there has been a widespread feeling of unrest during the past few years. It has only lately manifested itself and this is due entirely to the propaganda of the non-co-operators. There have been no riots in our immediate vicinity, but some *hats* have been interfered with and coolies prevented from working on the gardens. I do not consider the coolies have had any particular grievances. I think they have been the unfortunate dupes of non-co-operators. My opinion is that the object of the agitators was to create a spirit of unrest which would develop into strikes. As far as I am able to recollect I think there were much fewer riots before the year 1917.

Coolies' wages have been raised this year. I do not know when the previous increase was made. I recommended to my Agents in 1920 an increase in wages and they intended granting it, but unfortunately the state of the industry did not permit. I recommended that a man should get 5 annas and a woman 4 annas as against 4 annas and 3 annas previously received by them. This increase was effected only in 1921 and the tasks have become considerably less. The wages they receive do not include *ticca*; it is based on the unit system. The majority of the coolies could earn up to 8 annas if they liked, but very few do so. They consider what they actually earn as sufficient for their needs. The rise in wages does increase the cost of production. My Company sustained a loss of approximately 4½ lakhs in 1920. The Banks, I understand, refused to advance money. The loss in 1920 was not particularly confined to the Bishnath Company alone; it was more or less general. We had a reserve fund in the Bishnath Tea Company, but as we had to meet a loss in 1919-20 it disappeared.

Tezpur.

This year a budget estimate of approximately 1½ lakhs has been set aside for payments to coolies. Coolies have been given leave in the ordinary course for cultivation purposes, and I have from time to time been taking contract work from Government with a view to afford extra wages to my coolies. Neither was the monthly wage reduced nor the *ticca* work restricted. They were allowed to earn as much as possible.

The outturn of tea in 1919 was 8,670 maunds, in 1920, 10,428 and in 1921, approximately 9,000; the reduction in 1919 was due to drought.

Economies in other directions were being effected where possible as a result of the increase in the cost of production. The European staff was reduced. The pay of the rest of the staff as also of the coolies was not reduced.

I do not know if there is any rule requiring a coolie who has left one garden to remain two years in the village before he is employed on another garden.

If a man in one garden wishes to marry a girl in another, an exchange is generally made and we pay Rs. 150 which covers the expenses of recruiting her even though the girl may not be under agreement. I do not consider it a restriction on the coolie's freedom; coolies are at liberty to go anywhere out of the gardens. I do not know the rule in other gardens, but speaking personally if a coolie absconds, his whereabouts are ascertained and he is generally brought back and the cause of his absconding enquired into and grievance, if any, remedied. There is no *chaukidari* system on our gardens to ensure that coolies do not run away.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

The extent of difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 would be 50 or 60% rise. It is possible for a coolie to maintain himself together with a wife and one child in health and reasonable comfort.

We do not give any allowance to non-working children.

Sick persons are fed in hospital and on being discharged are given a bonus of a week's pay, and suitable light work. Further increased wages would encourage labourers to work shorter hours, as coolies now earn sufficient and they can earn more if they want. The longest task is 8 hours. In their spare moments coolies go hunting, fishing, and do their own cultivation.

No. 4.—Mr. G. CAUSTON, *Manager, Namgaon Tea Estate, Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company* :—

I have been in the Tezpur District for the past 26 years. I have never been in any other district; my experience is confined to Tezpur only.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it is possible or desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages and to make deductions for medicine supplied, etc., from the coolies' pay.

Speaking personally the type of coolie we are recruiting at present is as good as that recruited 10 years ago.

There has been unrest due to economic conditions since 1916. I think the coolies did have economic grievances of which agitators made capital. But for the incitement of agitators, I do not think there would have been any unrest. The real trouble began with the advent of Mr. Gandhi to Assam in August 1921. My garden, however, was free from any trouble.

We could work without Act XIII agreements, but I think it would be advantageous to both parties if the Act was not repealed.

Approximately 75 % of the adult coolies are under agreement. I certainly prefer to work with the Act.

I do not think a coolie would be more contented if he was not under contract, ^{Tezpur.} as it would really make no difference to him. Both free coolies and those under contract earn just the same amount of money, except that the former do not receive any bonus.

I am not in favour of retaining the bonus if the Act is abolished.

We give a bonus of Rs. 12 to men and Rs. 10 to women. We do not give it to children.

During the past 5 years a recommendation was made for an increase in the wages of the coolies and the Agents considered the proposals favourably: it was ultimately accepted by the Board at Home and given effect to in 1920. I was on leave in 1920, and the proposals were made during my absence.

Men getting a daily wage are not allowed to earn as much *ticca* as they like. Owing to our big labour force, it is unnecessary to give *ticca*.

We stock *dhan* which we sell at concession rates only when there is a scarcity and prices are high.

We get cloth for the coolies and sell it at cost price.

In my opinion the economic grievance was not so great as to produce a state of utter starvation or nakedness among the coolies.

Coolies have fewer days to work in the week now than they had 10 years ago. We give more leave, because they like it: they come up and ask for the leave.

No coolies were prevented from earning *ticca* last year owing to reduction in the wages' budget. Nor do I find that inability to earn extra money depletes our force, for the coolies remain on the gardens satisfied with the conditions in which they work. Women got the usual plucking *ticca*.

We now give coolies 4 and 5 annas, in other words an increase of between 50 to 60%. I think this increase is sufficient, because if it was not, they would want to earn more by working.

We have about 75 acres of paddy cultivation distributed among the coolies. We have also taken up some land in the neighbourhood of our gardens, which is given to our coolies free of rent.

In weighing leaf deduction is made for the basket only, but on wet days deduction is also made for wet leaf. I have never heard of deductions being made for "factory charges." About 4 pounds are deducted for the basket, and for wet leaf generally 2 pounds. The deduction for wet leaf is not made invariably; it is made only when the leaf is wet, with the sole object of obtaining the same proportion of *pucca* tea from the green leaf, on wet and fine days.

No. 5.—Mr. L. CHURCH, *Acting Superintendent, Rupajuli Tea Company* :—

I am Acting Superintendent of the Rupajuli Tea Company. I have a wide experience in tea covering 30 years. My experience is confined to the Darrang district only.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

I do not think it would be practicable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., into an increase of money wages. I do not think the coolie would be as well off as he is at the present moment. He is very improvident and I think if we did not come to his assistance in cases of child-birth or sickness he would not be as well off as he now is, and I am certain that the death-rate would be very much higher. I also think that it would be undesirable to make such a conversion.

I do not think I am over-estimating the fact when I say that in old established gardens in Assam about 2½% of the labour are at liberty to quit whenever they choose and the majority have got their own *bustees* and land to go to. It does not cause us the slightest bit of anxiety whether a coolie is under contract or not. The only advantage to us is that it undoubtedly has a settling effect on the labour. When a man takes a contract, it means that he has made up his mind that he is going to serve for another 12 months. With a man who is inclined to give trouble, the mere fact of his having taken the agreement has a settling influence on him.

Tezpur. At any rate whether he takes the agreement or not we never ask him to enter into it. A number of them work for two years continuously without taking the agreement. We have never sued absconders in Court. My experience is that taking the *pros* and *cons*, we are very much better off to lose our men than we hope to be by going to Court. Of course in flagrant cases of fraud, for instance where a man comes and takes an agreement to-day and absconds to-morrow after having taken the bonus, we would sue him in Court. It is after all a clear case of fraud. But there is also the distinct advantage that numbers of them who know that we do not use the Court against them, return to us. Whereas if they know that we do not hesitate to sue them, they would give us a wide berth. If the Act XIII-Agreement was abolished I would not be in favour of giving the coolies a bonus. The only advantage we derive by giving agreements is that we can more accurately judge the amount of work of our labour. I have never had an Act XIII case in Court for 30 years.

With regard to unrest among tea-garden labour in the last few years, the economic factor cannot altogether be ignored. It is impossible to argue that the coolie has been as well off during the last two or three years as he was prior to the war. We were unable to increase wages owing to the peculiar circumstances we found ourselves in. In 1919 and 1920 we sustained a loss of £ 13,000 on a capital of £ 18,000; in 1919, it was £ 2,900 and in 1920 it was £ 10,400, and unless we could show from our estimates that we could carry on for another year with a reasonable prospect of making ends meet, no banker would have financed the Company. But as soon as we saw what the trend of the market was likely to be, and we could afford to launch out with more money, then we gave the coolies facilities to earn more. We have not reduced the wages' budget of the coolies. The old rates were never reduced within my own experience. We, however, increased the rates subsequently when we were able to frame more satisfactory estimates.

I consider that generally speaking a monthly wage of anything between Rs. 8 and Rs. 10 would be sufficient for a coolie who had no produce of his own, but had to buy everything from the bazaar. At the present moment, however, it would be a good deal less because *dhan* has come down enormously in the last few weeks.

The difference in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 would be 60 to 75 per cent. rise.

We give the sick medicines and food in hospital. We also give them an allowance of Rs. 5 a month, if they are absolutely sick and unable to work; this applies to pregnant women as well. The doctor decides the period of leave for the latter; it may at first be fixed at three months and then it may run as far as seven months according as the doctor recommends.

A free allowance of *dhan* used to be given to large families for all children of a certain age, but we had to discontinue the allowance from the beginning of this year owing to the heavy loss of last year. The grant has been stopped for the time being only.

From 1st January 1921 to date there have been 47 births as against one infant death for the same period.

I am not aware of the custom of giving coolies in exchange or lump sums of money at the time of intermarrying from one garden into another.

No. 6.—Mr. R. JOHNSTONE, *Manager, Nahorani Tea Estate* :—

I have been on the Nahorani garden since 1907. I was there previously as an Assistant in 1899-1900. I have also been in Dibrugarh and Jorhat. I have been all my time in the Assam Valley.

My Company has three gardens in Assam and they also have gardens in other parts of the country.

I think the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It may be possible to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages, but I do not consider it desirable as the coolie would not look after himself in the way we do as regards his medical comforts and everything else.

The type of coolie recruited now is inferior to that recruited ten years ago in Tezpur. respect of physique. We are not now getting the agricultural class owing to the great demand for labour elsewhere.

It is essential that the European staff should be conversant with the vernacular commonly spoken by the coolies. We always give a bonus to Assistants for obtaining a working knowledge of the language after two or three years.

As far as I remember the unrest in Tezpur started with the arrival of Gandhi in August last. Coolies undoubtedly were hit by the rise in prices, but they showed no ill-feeling.

I consider Rs. 13 a decent living monthly wage for a man and his wife, sufficient to keep them in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little.

The difference in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 may be estimated at anything between 50 to 75%.

In the case of a coolie with his wife and children, I would not say that his total earnings are sufficient to maintain him and his family. Most families naturally have to work in addition. I do not think a man's wages are sufficient to maintain him, his wife and one child.

I do not think that increased wages would encourage the labourer to work substantially longer hours.

We are working with the Act XII one-year agreement.

I do not think it would be practicable to give the coolie the same advantages as now if he were not put under the contract. The coolie takes the agreement with the idea that he is going to work for a certain period. It is to the advantage of the coolie to take the contract as he would then be entitled to the bonus. We do not force a coolie to take the contract; in fact he comes and asks for it voluntarily.

We have not had any cases against absconding coolies under Act XIII Agreement for some years past.

It is difficult to answer the question whether a coolie on a tea-garden requires more medical attendance than a villager. The coolies on gardens get all the medical attendance that is necessary for them; it is to our own benefit to keep them in good health.

Sometimes in famine years coolies are in bad health when first they come to the gardens. Life in Assam does cause them to become more healthy; soon after their arrival they show signs of improvement.

There are a good many villages round about the gardens and the villagers go to the charitable dispensaries for medical treatment.

Women earn up to 8 annas a day and in some cases men earn as much as 9 annas a day. I consider these wages sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort. Children are getting 3 annas and can earn more.

We give the coolies land for cultivation, rent-free.

There was trouble on my garden, but just for half an hour when the coolies struck. I do not think they had any grievances; this demonstration is attributable to outside agencies. There was violence in one of the adjoining gardens; unfortunately there happened to be an acting Manager who was not naturally as well known to the coolies as the permanent Manager.

I have seen evidence of non-co-operation in villages and I have also been shouted at.

The agitators stopped one *hát* last week and I was informed by the Manager that he had notice that the Marwari traders were not to attend. The Tarajuli *hát* was closed by picketing; it belongs to the Imperial Tea Company.

Though the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 had gone up, the tendency at the moment is on the downward grade due to the good rice crops now being reaped in the district. The price of cloth also is showing a tendency to come down.

Nearly in all cases women are accustomed to work and they do work in addition to their husbands.

Tezpur.

No. 7.—Dr. CHARLES E. P. FORSYTH, M.B., M.R.C.P., Lond., D.P.H., *Medical Officer, Tezpur and Gogra Division, Bengal United Tea Company, Limited*—

I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort at present; I do not think it was sufficient last year, owing to bad harvests and the sustained high prices of all commodities. Rice was twice the price last year. Cloth also was expensive and is still very dear.

I am in charge of fifteen gardens in the Tezpur district. I visit the majority of them once a week.

I do not consider it possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages. Even if it were possible I think it would be most inadvisable to do so.

It is part of my duty to make recommendations from time to time about improving the conditions of labour. I am in charge of housing, water-supply and hospital arrangements, in so far as my functions are wholly advisory.

I think the medical arrangements generally are quite satisfactory. There are always good supplies of medicines and medical comforts on the gardens, and there is no tendency to economise in that direction. Water-supply is, on the whole, good. The health of the labourers is of paramount importance to the gardens, and I take it that Tea Companies are not unmindful of this fact. The houses of the labourers are generally satisfactory. They supply their own *charpoys* or usually make their own *machans* in their houses. Personally, I prefer thatched houses to those with iron roofs, as they are not so subject to climatic variations as iron roofs. Thatch is warm in winter and cool in summer, and therefore more comfortable. I think also that coolies prefer thatched houses, though the prejudice against tin houses has been very much less in recent years.

I have been fighting against hookworm, which is prevalent. Latrines have been built but have not as yet come into general use. I have latrines in the neighbourhood of certain hospitals, but no latrines for lines. It is both possible and desirable to have latrines if only we can educate the coolies to use them. I have found some lines in a very unhealthy state due to the habits of the coolies. It is possible to educate the people to more carefulness. In the case of certain castes this would be much easier than in the case of others.

Very often coolies bring disease with them from their country on arrival in Assam, e.g., skin disease, hookworm and malaria; the last, however, not to any very great extent. They contract malaria in Tezpur which is an intensely malarious district.

Abortions are fairly frequent, and there is much venereal disease among the coolies. They cannot readily become infected with venereal disease on their journey up under present conditions of recruiting as they generally travel in family groups, and not as single men or women.

By the expression "reasonable comfort from the coolie point of view," I mean that he ought to have enough to fill his stomach with good, wholesome food; he should have enough to buy clothes for himself, and have a little over for luxuries. It may be desirable that a coolie should have some savings but that must depend on whether he is extravagant or not, or on his own personal ideas of comfort.

It is not easy to say whether the granting of liberal leave to a coolie has any good effect on his health. Some classes, or individuals, will take all the leave they can get, which means that earnings become insufficient to support them properly. I think overmuch leave is a bad thing for that reason. It is good for a coolie to have time to attend to his own affairs, cultivation, and so on. He should not, however, by the granting of excessive leave, be encouraged to relapse into idleness.

New gardens appear more unhealthy than old gardens for the first few years. It is extremely likely that this is due to the garden being worked by new unacclimatised coolies; also to the influence of newly cleared land, while it takes time to construct lines and hospitals and to make the necessary sanitary arrangements.

A good water-supply is general throughout the gardens.

I have no difficulty in getting money from Agents of the gardens for making improvements in the way of housing or water-supply. Being a medical man interested in public health I should like to see things a good deal better than they are, but I recognise there must be limits to the attainment of ideal conditions, perfect lines,

and perfect latrines. I can say that reasonable improvements suggested by me have ^{Tezpur.} always been carried out. As regards the use of latrines by coolies I would not coerce them in any way. In course of time they are themselves bound to see the advantages of latrines. I have always anticipated trouble as regards the children. There are difficulties in getting the right type of latrine, and difficulties where there are large numbers of houses together. Before introducing latrines on some gardens it would be necessary to re-model the lines.

I think the coolie often prefers to make his own house rather than live in lines provided for him. In the case of certain races or castes this could be left to their option. Others require supervision and should be housed in lines. In no case should *bustee* lines be placed at great distances as in the event of sickness supervision would become most difficult. *Bustee* lines are suitable for the more robust class of coolies who are seldom sick, and are more able to look after themselves.

I consider the wages of the coolie might be raised a little to meet existing high prices.

No. 8.—Dr. E. T. JAMESON, M.B., *Medical Officer, Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company, Limited* :—

I look after 9 gardens in the Empire Tea Company. I have been in this district since 1913, except during the war. I have also been in Cachar and the Hailakandi Valley. There are no remarkably unhealthy gardens in my Division.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments, together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. I would give the same answer for conditions which prevailed last year, as the wages were raised about this time last year.

I do not consider it desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

I consider Cachar in some respects healthier than Tezpur. This district is very malarious. The children's spleen index is very high, up to about 70 or 80% on some gardens. Recent counts show up to 40—50% only.

With regard to the prevention of hookworm, I have been doing my best to improve the latrine system. I have introduced latrines in some gardens and I have found coolies using them. There are about 120 latrines at the present moment. Since my return in 1919 I have been asking the Company to supply more latrines. Before 1919 there were no latrines. I found many cases of anæmia. I think it is a sound business proposition to spend money on latrines. The hookworm disease is mostly contracted while the coolie is on the garden. The coolies are satisfied with the water supply. There is very little water-borne disease on the gardens. The gardens are all old ones. There are altogether about 120 latrines owned by the Company. They were started by me in 1919. The hospitals were fitted out first and then some coolie lines by the end of 1919. The result was that we had 90 cases of anæmia as compared with 500 cases previous to the introduction of the latrine system. The anæmia ratios have come down after the coolies were urged to use the latrines. I think the health of the district has greatly improved. The question of making improvements depends on the funds being available. It is more a matter of money than of co-operation of the Managers and the Directors. The proposals put forward by me have from time to time been recommended by the Managers.

No. 9.—Mr. STEPHEN THOMSON, *Manager, Dibru-Darrang Tea Estate* :—

The name of my garden is Dibru-Darrang. I have been on this garden since the commencement of the Company in 1916.

I have also worked in Dibrugarh and Ceylon.

I consider Rs. 10 for a man and Rs. 8 for a woman a decent monthly living wage, not merely a subsistence allowance, but a wage that would suffice to keep them in health and reasonable comfort, with a possibility of saving a little.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

Tezpur.

I do not think it desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

I do not think that increased wages encourage labourers to work longer hours; on the contrary, where tasks have been reduced, I have found labourers inclined to work shorter hours on the same pay. There are certain classes who like to save money and these work longer hours and get extra pay; others are slackers and do not care to earn more.

The coolies on my garden hold about 65 acres of land for cultivation. About 10% of the adult coolie population hold land.

I do not think we would be able to work without Act XIII Agreements. I think the Act is necessary in order to put the coolie under contract. If there were no contracts I would be willing to make the present advances in particular cases only.

The sick coolies are fed in hospital during the period of their illness. They are not allowed any money until they are better as everything necessary for their comfort is given to them free. Those who have been seriously ill and therefore unable to do hard work are put on light work so as to enable them to earn adequate wages.

There was a slight disturbance on our garden about five or six weeks ago, which I attribute to the efforts of political agitators. There were no economic grievances whatever. The disturbance took the form of a strike which lasted for a day only. Wages have not been raised this year but it has been possible for coolies to earn more by making the tasks lighter.

We work on the unit system; it is a sliding scale from 1 anna to 8 annas per man. It is possible for an average coolie to make 8 annas in a 6-hour day. We pay the coolies weekly.

No. 10.—Mr. C. A. W. HUTCHINSON, *Manager, Tezpur Tea Company, Limited, Bahipukri Tea Estate, Orang* :—

I am three years on the garden. It is a new garden now three years in existence. Prior to this I was in Dibrugarh for eight years. Then I went up to the Margherita-Makum Tea Company, finally coming down to Darrang. I have never been in Cachar or Sylhet.

Whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient, depends on what system the garden is working on. If it is the unit system, the coolie can earn as much as he likes. The unit system was adopted when I came here three years ago. I do not think it is the general system.

Most of our coolies are under Act XIII-Agreement. The money given them as bonus is not recovered. I would give them a bonus even if they were free labourers. I would give the money as a sort of *bakshish* to the coolie. At present the coolies get a bonus at the beginning of the year. If the Act is repealed I would tell them that if they worked for a year I would give them a bonus of Rs. 12 at the end of the year. I have no objection to giving them Re. 1 a month, but I think they prefer receiving a lump sum to one rupee a month. I do not remember ever having had a single court case against any coolies in all my experience. Sometimes coolies work for 15 or 16 months before coming forward to ask for their bonus. I would give a man the bonus for working 12 months on the garden, provided I found him deserving of it. The thumb impression is taken at the time of paying the bonus. I do not think the coolie tends to sacrifice quality to quantity under the unit system. I think he wants to earn as much as he can and the work should not necessarily suffer. A coolie can earn just as much as he likes in the cold weather. There is a rate and he can easily earn 5 to 6 annas. A woman can earn 5 annas in the cold weather for pruning. A new coolie may take four days to learn to prune as well as the oldest coolie, but some coolies never learn though it is quite an easy thing.

In weighing leaf 15% is deducted for wet leaf; a deduction is also made for the basket.

We have no rice advances. The coolies are just starting to cultivate, and I am encouraging them in this direction. I did a certain amount of cultivation for them to start with in the new garden. In opening a new garden there is always plenty of work to be done for the garden all the year round.

No. 11.—Mr. W. J. GRAY, *Manager, Orang Tea Estate* :—

Tezpur.

The name of my garden is Orang and I have been two years here. Before that I was in Sylhet. I have been 12 years in Sylhet district. Orang is a new garden opened only two years ago.

I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it is possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages. I am afraid the coolies would live like animals if we did not fend for them.

I think it is essential that the European staff should know the language spoken by the coolies thoroughly. Our coolies are Oraons and Kisans from Ranchi. We have not had any difficulty with this class of coolie. It is true that the new Oriya coolies cannot speak any but their own language, but I have been quite accustomed to them.

I have had no trouble on my garden. In the district there was one disturbance due to political agitation as far as I know. The infection has spread to certain gardens only. There has been no trouble in Mangaldai. But there has been agitation in the *bustees*, e.g., picketing of bazaars, but this has never affected the gardens in the least. *Bustees* were seething with agitation.

Coolies earn 8 annas a day. The coolies had no grievances either economic or personal of which agitators could make capital.

Most of my coolies are under Act XIII Agreement. I do not think the coolie would do without the agreement. He looks at it as a sort of perquisite especially when he wants to buy cloth. All new coolies are not put under the Act straightaway.

It is very difficult to say whether the coolies are better paid here than in Sylhet. At any rate the comparison is difficult. The class of coolie here is far better than in Sylhet. The climate also is much better here I think, and the garden death-rates are very low.

Our recruiting is done by means of sardars. If we sent down people to tell those who want to work in Assam, what Assam can do for them, it would be an attraction.

I have not seen any of the recruits in their own districts and I do not know who supervises them there. As a matter of fact I think coolies hardly have any supervision till they come up here, and they may have been living like animals before they came to our gardens.

No. 12.—Mr. K. H. WATTS, *Manager, Dhansiri Tea Estate* :—

The name of my garden is Dhansiri. I have been there for 2½ years now. Before that I was in Darrang for 6 years and 3 years in Sibsagar.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

With the rice concession I think the rate of wages was sufficient last year. Under Act VI rice had to be supplied at Rs. 3 a maund. Now rice and *dhan* are supplied at different rates. The rates vary from time to time. I think the coolie was able to live in reasonable comfort last year. Wages have not been raised on my estate since last year, but the coolies were getting concessions in rice when the price of rice in the bazaar was high last year. Last year rice was supplied at Rs. 5 a maund. At present there is no need as rice is cheap.

We work on the unit system and the coolie can earn as much as he likes. Most coolies earn 8 annas (for a man) and 6 annas (for a woman). The average earned by a man and woman is 6 annas and 5 annas. There is no limit; they can earn as much as they like.

I do not think under the unit system a coolie sacrifices quality to quantity; it is purely a question of supervision. I am of opinion that on most gardens the coolie can, in the cold weather, earn as much as he likes. The women can earn up to ten annas. My garden, however, is a new one.

Tezpur

My garden is very isolated and there has been no trouble.

My coolies are absolutely free. I do not use Act XIII and I think the result has been satisfactory. My neighbours increased the wages of their coolies and I gave my men a bonus. There have been one or two absconders only. I give a bonus of Rs. 12 for men and Rs. 10 for women.

I have 500 adult coolies—men and women. We have 500 acres of tea at the present moment.

No receipt or thumb impression is taken at the time the bonus is given; it is simply given as a *bokshish*.

We allow coolies land for cultivation. On the whole the garden is healthy, though there is a certain amount of malarial fever. Coolies very often come to us with spleen.

I have had no trouble in the garden. I have near me Cachari *bustees* only. Trouble has spread to the *bustees* here and I believe it has reached my Cacharis though not to any great extent.

TEZPUR, 18TH DECEMBER 1921.

[ALL MEMBERS PRESENT.]

No. 13.—Babu JOTINDRA CHANDRA MAITRA, *Pleader* :—

I am a Pleader at Tezpur and Managing Director of Panbari Tea Company which has a new garden, Panbari, started in 1919 which has just come to bearing. 180 acres have been planted out and 20 more are being planted out.

There are 200 working coolies, of whom 170 are male and female adults.

The labour force is inadequate. There has been no trouble on gardens on Borsola side. I have been connected with tea for long as a shareholder.

There has been some discontent among tea-garden labour during the past few years. This is mainly due to heavy recruiting in the last two or three years from famine-stricken districts. The coolies found their position in Assam no better than in their own country. For the last three years there has been a rise in the price of food-grains and for the last five years in the price of cloth. The less energetic coolies were allowed to go to the villages owing to the slump in tea where they could earn 6 to 8 annas daily as against 4 annas on the garden; and I think that new coolies infected old coolies. Possibly they also were harangued by the agitators in *hats* and other places. Some of the coolies have relations in the villages who go freely to the *hats* and have thus the opportunity of impressing their ideas on their relatives in the garden. I do not think agitators enter the gardens. Some of the coolies who thus went to villages came from Pertabgarh.

I used to pay coolies in my garden 6, 5 and 3 annas for men, women and children, respectively. In 1919 I raised the pay to 8 annas for men, 6 annas for women and 4 for children. A good coolie could do the task in five hours. In my opinion coolies had an economic grievance. There has been no unrest in Indian gardens. In some cases for two and three months in Indian gardens the coolies did not get full pay but the Manager gave advances in money, cloth and paddy. I think Tinkhoria which is the largest Indian garden in Tezpur borrowed in this way about Rs. 15,000. Such advances were recovered when feasible. My coolies have got about 160 *bighas* of rice land in the grant and also cultivate Government land. My coolies are all free. They are locally recruited from the villages.—Sonthals, Oriyys and others. I do not think any of them come from gardens. I do not recruit, but my coolies were probably originally recruited by some gardens. In my land in the village at harvest time I give the labourers food in addition to 8 annas daily. I could in my private work employ about 50 coolies constantly throughout the whole year. I pay the debts which the coolies whom I take from the village owe to the Marwaris or others. In a way I have a hold on a coolie because he is under obligation to me as I have paid his debts. I lose a certain sum every year by coolies absconding without repaying their debts. Agricultural labourers have sufficient work all the year round.

To enable a coolie man to live decently he requires about 8 annas a day for 24 or 25 days in a month, a woman 6 annas, a child 4 annas. The average coolie family

consists of a man, woman and 2 children. I think coolies prefer cash payments to pay-ments in kind. I give free housing, medical attendance with a qualified doctor babu and paddy cultivation in addition to pay. I found that coolies preferred to buy paddy in the village. I do not supply cloth, but I advance money sometimes to buy it, which is recovered. Coolies are suspicious about the quality and the weight of the rice they get from gardens. Tezpur.

I do not think it should be left to the coolies to build their own houses which would not keep out the rain or be sanitary. They also could not be left to look after their medical comforts. Other concessions could be converted into cash. A house costs Rs. 15 and lasts for about two years. Medical comforts including the doctor babu's pay and medicines cost my garden about Rs. 1,000 yearly. Tezpur Municipality pays labourers 10 annas a day. My task rate for deep hoeing over 12 inches deep is 20 *nals* for 8 annas. The coolie gets 4 annas for a half task. If in one day he does 6 *nals*, he gets nothing that day, but if he does 34 *nals* next day he will be paid for 40 *nals* including 6 *nals* for the previous day. My rate for light hoeing is 35 *nals* for 8 annas. I give weak coolies a chance to earn 8 annas. The task varies according to the kind of soil. In most places in my garden the soil is light. In some cases my coolies save money and buy cattle. In 1920 I found about 100 coolies squatting in Tezpur station. They were short-term people from Ranchi. I cannot say if they were returning to their district. They were mostly Mundas. I cannot explain why coolies, who for two or three months did not get their full pay but who were only promised pay in future, should be more content than those who have been paid in full for the work done unless they husbanded and saved money when regularly paid before. I have heard that in some cases the babus who recorded the tasks done disappeared after the riots. I think unjust recording of work may be a cause of discontent. This would not happen if a Manager could supervise everything. Coolies are sometimes discontented because the Marwaris do not give full weight. I think the position would improve if there was better supervision by the Manager. One remedy might be to pay coolies weekly instead of monthly. In Darrang weekly payments are usual. I do not think daily payments would be feasible. In adjoining gardens content or discontent would depend on difference in wages. A coolie would be more content if he could do what he pleased, e.g., tend his own cultivation instead of earning money for his employer, but it would be bad for the employer. If I put pressure on a coolie to do work he will leave the garden. I must engage him to do what he can perform. I have no quarter *haziras*. Quarter work is added to the task of the following day. I record half *haziras*.

No. 14.—Babu KISSEN CHAND OSWAL, *Merchant* :—

Our firm has shops in fourteen or fifteen gardens and I am residing in Darrang for nearly 22 years. Coolies take goods from our shops as well as from the bazaar. I have a little money-lending business with coolies. Coolies buy as much from our shops as they did five years ago but prices of all sorts of things are now higher. The price of cloth is getting higher for the last six years, but it has now fallen a little. The price of rice rose 2½ years ago and nearly the same price is continuing now. The price of cloth is more than double what it was six years ago. Some cloths sell at three times the former price, some at one and a half times. *Dhotis* and *saris* are more than double the price. Formerly we sold a pair of ordinary *dhotis* for Rs. 2, Rs. 2-8 and Rs. 3, but now the price is Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 (it has now fallen a little). Before the war garden Managers did not import cloth.

No. 15.—Mr. A. J. LAINÉ, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner of Darrang* :—

I have been Deputy Commissioner of Darrang for the last 21 months. Before that I served in Golaghat, Garo Hills, Karimganj, Sylhet, and Goalpara in Assam.

There has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour in this district. The present political agitation in my district was intensified in the last six to eight months. There was a certain amount before especially in the west part of the district. The Monabari disturbance occurred during the Pujahs of 1920; the Halem disturbance was at Easter, 1921. The former in my opinion was almost entirely due to economic reasons. That was the first disturbance after I came to the district. As regards Halem I came to the conclusion that the Munda population had

Tezpur. been infected with the agrarian discontent which prevailed in their own country, from which some had recently returned. Many of the Mundas were Christians of various denominations—Roman Catholic, Church of England and Lutheran. I found no economic grievance of any consequence. The Manager and his wife were probably on more friendly terms with the coolies than was the case on any other garden in the district: perhaps too friendly, and perhaps there was too little discipline. At the time of the riot the Manager had just come back from leave. Perhaps in his absence the acting Manager was less in touch with his coolies. I believe that the Local Government accepted my conclusions.

Before the Sonajuli disturbance in October 1921 there had been a number of minor strikes on gardens in the Thakurbari area. Between March and October last there was no disturbance. In the end of September there was a temporary strike at Rupajuli for a few hours which spread to Dhulapadung, Bindukuri, Sessa, Rangapara, etc. In the latter case, *i.e.*, Rangapara, the strike lasted three days. These strikes were non-violent; no threats to the management were offered. In my opinion there was an economic basis for these strikes. There is no doubt that the coolies were affected by the propaganda of the agitators in villages and *hāts*, but I have no direct evidence that non-co-operators carried on their propaganda inside the gardens. I believe that sardars in some cases were got at in *hāts*, grog-shops and villages. In these strikes coolies wanted 8 annas for men and 6 annas for women in every case. These gardens all adjoin each other. The impression gained ground that the coolies who struck had got what they wanted. In Rupajuli the Assistant, in the absence of the Manager, did give a temporary increase for a day or two until the Manager's return. In these strikes the coolies also wanted reduction of tasks. For some time I have been of opinion that coolies' wages should be increased. I am referring mainly to conditions before the riots as on many gardens wages have since been raised. I do not think that managing Agents and Directors are sufficiently familiar with local conditions nor do they realise the extent to which the rise in the cost of living has affected the coolie. I should estimate that the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 rose about 75 % perhaps. I think that the rise of prices touches industrial more than agricultural labour as the latter have crops to sell. Some coolies get more land on the garden than they are entitled to and they make money out of it.

In October there were riots at Sonajuli, Kacharigaon and Dhendai. I believe that the ultimate cause in these cases was to a large extent economic. The coolies had too hard work, insufficient leave, and the Managers were not in such close touch with the coolies as they might have been. This applies especially to Kacharigaon and Dhendai which were in charge of acting Assistant Managers. Too much was left in the hands of garden babus and mohurrirs who squeezed the coolies unduly. There were also complaints of short measure given by *kayas*. The permanent Managers of those two gardens were on leave at home. At the same time the labour had become infected by the agitators. I do not think there was economic unrest in the neighbouring villages but only political. Mr. Gandhi visited Tezpur in August last. Many coolies from Thakurbari district where the riots occurred came in to the meetings. Sonajuli belongs to the Empire Company; the others are semi-private. Mr. Gandhi and his friends stayed two days and many *ex-tea-garden* coolies also attended the meetings. In Mangaldai there was then no labour trouble worth talking about. Many gardens in that district are new and higher wages are paid. In the Sadr some gardens were over-manned. There were programmes for opening out extensions and there was recruiting for that purpose. Then the slump in tea came. Some of the surplus labour was transferred to new gardens but a large number simply walked into the villages and took up land, sometimes on *adhi* terms. A few went home but not very many. As a rule the price of foodstuffs is lower in Mangaldai than in other parts of the district. This is partly because of difficulties in communications.

Coolies who leave gardens would not get 8 annas daily the whole year round in villages but only in the busy season. In the slack season there is a falling off in demand. Garden coolies also in the busy season find employment in the villages. I am not in a position to speak of the present condition of the coolies in Monabari after the rise in wages. There has been a slight reduction in food prices but there is no guarantee that this will continue. There are still a number of gardens where I think wages should be raised. I don't think it would do any harm to have gardens inspected once a year. I do not like to venture an opinion as to what should be a decent living wage for a coolie, but if you put a coolie in a position to earn 8 annas a day he would be comfortable. He can live on less than that. The difficulty is about those who are below *par*. Many of the new recruits were of an inferior stamp as they arrived with their vitality impaired, which affected their earnings. In one garden I calculated that it would take a good coolie one and half hours to earn one anna. An able-bodied

coolie could keep this up. This was under European management. I am of opinion that a coolie wants to do less work and to have more leave. The result of increased wages in many cases will be that he will just do enough to keep himself and his family and then have leisure to do what he likes. Coolies want leisure not only for cultivation but also for fishing, *shitar*, cock-fighting, and so on. I think a good deal could be done to equalize conditions on tea-gardens, e.g., on adjoining gardens. I have heard from coolies that the babus who record the work are often not reliable. They were making money out of the coolies; not only the babus who measured the work but also the doctor babus. In one garden I was told that the coolies had to bribe the doctor babu to get leave. I believe that in all gardens babus make a little. When they overstep a certain limit there is discontent. There are many Managers who do not come to court to file Act XIII cases but who nevertheless give agreements. If the agreement was abolished and the advance or bonus was done away with the coolie might not like it. Tezpur.

In some cases letters from Calcutta Agents betrayed ignorance of conditions on the gardens. It was their duty to find this out. I would not say that this was the case generally. The attitude of the Managers was, I should say, sympathetic. The state of the tea market caused the Agents and Directors to be rather stringent and careful in expenditure. I think there has been a distinct improvement, and given favourable circumstances, this is likely to continue. I take it that the granting of increased pay to Monabari by the Agents was an admission that the coolies were underpaid before. Monthly payments are decreasing and I think that weekly payments are better. The ticket system, so far as I know, is not in force here. The advantage of a weekly payment is that a coolie can remember what he has earned in the previous week.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that they are quite sufficient to maintain him in health but not sufficient to keep him in a very high degree of comfort, especially as regards clothing. On all the gardens where the October riots took place, the coolies were well nourished but clothing was not as good as it might have been.

I do not consider that it is possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., should be converted into an increase of money wages. In some gardens there is no firewood. If the concessions were converted into cash, gardens would only employ able-bodied labour, while under the present system all coolies get some form of employment which would not be the case under a cut-and-dried system. Tea-gardens treat their coolies from a more humane point of view than ordinary industrial concerns. By preference, gardens recruit families of coolies as a nucleus for their future labour force.

KOWPATI GARDEN, MANGALDAI, 12TH DECEMBER 1921.

[MR. MCMORRAN, KHAN SAHIB WALI MAHAMAD AND MR. DAWSON PRESENT.]

No. 16.—Mr. GEORGE BRIDGE, M.L.A., *Proprietor, Bunglagor and Tongani Tea Estates, and Director of the Mangaldai Tea Company* :—

I have been 48 years in Tea, of which 32 have been spent in Mangaldai. I have also been in Jorhat and I was at Barduar in Kamrup for 10 years. I am of opinion that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by a coolie is sufficient to maintain him in health and reasonable comfort and I think that it would be impossible and undesirable to convert these concessions into an increase of money wages.

I have two gardens of my own in Mangaldai district, Bunglagor and Tongani and I am Superintendent of Kowpati garden of the Mangaldai Tea Company. I shall confine my remarks to my own gardens. I pay my men Rs. 8, Rs. 7, Rs. 6 a month, women Rs. 5 and Rs. 5-8, children Rs. 3 and Rs. 4. Rs. 8 is for tea-house men, Rs. 7 for good coolies and Rs. 6 for inferior. The monthly wages are calculated on a daily *bazira*. There is as much *sicca* work as the coolies like to do except in the cold weather, but men in the cold weather can earn their 4 annas a day. I have little rice land inside the garden and my coolies have not much outside. A few work for contractors. The acreage of both gardens is 360 acres and the working force is about 1½ coolies an acre. I think my coolies can earn enough to keep them in reasonable comfort. Mangaldai is a cheap district. A coolie can live on 2 *dols* of paddy a month which

Kowpati
Garden,
Mangaldai.

Kowpatl
Garden,
Mangaldai.

would be about 36 to 40 seers. A *dol* now costs Re. 1 as against Re. 1-8 two years ago. A *dol* would yield about 12 seers of rice. My coolies are quite content. When paddy was Re. 1-8, I used to sell at Re. 1-4 a *dol* and then they never asked for more pay. About two weeks ago one lot of my men came to me on *hât* day and said they wanted more pay. I said I could not afford more and that they were able to live on their present pay. I said I would have to close the garden. They said other coolies were getting more pay. I said they could go if they gave me back the advances. My coolies are under Act XIII Agreement. I live $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Mangaldai Court. I never had a coolie come to me for a *namkat* chit. A few coolies who are in debt or who have run off with another man's wife do occasionally leave, but I think I lose less than any other garden in Darrang. I am in the thick of the non-co-operation agitation. *Hâts* have been closed by Gandhi-ites. People have been stopping my men getting rice. On my garden coolies have no economic grievance. I have been 26 years here and the coolies know me. I pay the coolies myself. I believe that in some gardens the Indian staff take advantage of the coolies. To keep the coolies content a great point is personal supervision. The Manager must know what is going on. If on pay-day a coolie says he worked on a day for which he has got no pay I ask the sardar. I also personally listen to all complaints of the coolies. The sardar tells the babu who have done work and the latter records the work in a book. I pay monthly and *ticca* weekly. When coolies ask for an advance for good reasons—they may be hard up or may want money for a marriage—I give advances but not to lazy coolies.

In plucking in the season my rate is 8 seers for 2 annas 9 pies and I pay *ticca* at the rate of one pice a seer. Last year my rate was 12 seers, but this year I pluck finer. My yield in Tongani with 220 acres is 10 maunds an acre and in Bunglagor, a re-planted garden of 137 acres, it is 6 maunds an acre. In 1920 I made 2,400 maunds of tea, and this year about 2,000 maunds. My rate for light hoeing is 30 *na's* for 3 annas which can be done in 3 hours in a morning, and I pay 4 annas for the same work done in the afternoon. In this way a coolie can easily earn 7 annas. Children earn a good deal.

Increase in the cost of living has been felt by my coolies only in cloth as I gave them rice at Re. 1 a *dol*. Cloth may cost a coolie Re. 1 or Re. 1-8 more a year. I give Act XIII agreements for one year with advances Rs. 12 to Rs. 10 depending on the class of the coolie. I cut Re. 1 a month. There are very few non-agreement coolies. Coolies consider Act XIII agreements as binding both parties. If there was no agreement, I do not think things would go so well. I do not think I have more than one Act XIII case in a year. I think Act XIII is a good thing for both parties; otherwise we would not be so liberal in giving advances, and in that case coolies would go to the *mahajan* or *kaya* who charges interest at the rate of 2 annas per rupee per month in which case it would pay a coolie to take an advance from me and lend money out.

One rupee a *dol* of paddy was the rate in 1913, and is the rate now. This year we have had good crops. Rs. 1-8 was the rate in 1919. I tell my coolies that they are free to go to work or not as they choose, but if they are deliberately lazy, I call them to task. I have no musters. I have a few coolies from the village. My coolies live in groups of houses here and there. Each family has its own house and vegetable plot. The garden builds the houses. The coolies get one day of leave a week. When the tea crisis was on, hundreds of coolies passed through here on their way downwards. I have very healthy gardens. In 1920 my death-rate was $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ and my birth-rate considerably exceeds the death-rate. Pregnant women get half pay for about a month or so. After the child is born they are not forced out to work. The coolies drink *laopani* and sometimes sell it to other coolies and make a profit. The coolie nowadays has much more time to devote to his own pursuits because attendance at work is not compulsory. It will be no inducement to a coolie to hold out to him a hope of a pension for long and faithful service; he cannot look ahead. But the case is otherwise with the establishment. Coolies would not contribute to a provident fund. My coolies take *ganja*, even the little boys. The *ganja* grows wild. After 1913 I did not alter the rate of *hazira* but I gave one anna more for *ticca* in the last two years. For advances of rice I took cash payments. I do not know how much paddy I sold at cheap rates. I have recruited in recent years. The coolie of to-day is not so good as ten years ago. He is inferior in physique. Sometimes it pays me to repatriate weakly coolies though I have paid the recruiting agent for them. It is my experience that increased wages do not induce coolies to work substantially longer hours. The effect of *laopani* is not bad, but I cannot say the same about country spirit. The effect of *ganja* is worse. Opium is now too expensive for a coolie to buy.

PANERIHAT, MANGALDAI, 21ST DECEMBER 1921.

Panerihat.
Mangaldai.

[DR. WILLIAMS AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.]

No. 17.—Mr. D. M. SOMERVILLE, *Superintendent of the Hatigarh Division of the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Hatigarh* :—

I have been 28 years in Tea. I have been in North and South Sylhet, Upper Assam and Nowgong. About half my time has been spent in Upper Assam.

I do not consider the type of coolie recruited at the present day as good as ten years ago; the present-day coolie is inferior in physique. Since the influenza epidemic coolies are not so good physically. The physique of *jungli* coolies is as good as ever.

Much labour is attracted by Indian industries which are expanding, especially Sonthali and Bengali labour. The sugar estates in Kamrup do not appreciably interfere with tea.

I consider it essential that the European staff should be acquainted with the vernacular. In my Company a language award of Rs. 200 at the end of two years is given to Assistants who make themselves proficient in the language.

I think there has been considerable unrest among labour for about the last 18 months; there was none before that. As regards economic unrest, I can only say that the times are hard and the coolies, like everybody else, have been suffering from economic pressure and from profiteering. I would fix the rise in prices from about the beginning of 1919, when cloth particularly rose. The price of cloth rose considerably during the war, but it is now coming down gradually.

I am of opinion that the recent disturbances amongst tea-garden labour have been caused by agitators. There has been no disturbance on the gardens in Mangaldai, though we had heard rumours from outside to that effect. I must say that as far as my old garden Salal (in Nowgong), from which I have recently come, is concerned, we knew of agitators in the *bustees* round about the garden but they made no visible impression on the total labour although the labour on adjoining gardens was affected.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and about Rs. 6-8 for a woman as earnings on which they can live decently; of course this excludes concessions.

The difference in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 would be about 60%. The price of *dhan* rose from Rs. 2-4 to Rs. 4-8. Of course, the price of cloth rose first and then that of foodstuffs.

Up to the present time improved communications have tended to raise prices in the cheap districts to the level of the prices of the dear districts. This is due to the fact that the *kaya* fixes the price of rice sold to gardens on the basis of the price at which common rice can be imported from Calcutta. The rice that is supplied by *kayas* is frequently bad; if 10 bags of rice are bought one bag would be bad and 9 bags good, but if one happens to be careless, one would find 9 bags bad and only one good.

As to whether a coolie gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort, taking into account all the earnings and concessions and with the present price of rice, I say 'yes.' The cold weather earnings in comparison with the earnings during the rains are barely adequate, while the rains' earnings are a good deal more than adequate. For instance, a woman may earn Rs. 20 a month in the rains as compared with Rs. 5 in the cold weather, though the average would come to more than that. A woman of this type is quite content with Rs. 5 for a month or two and the short hours required to earn it, and is well-to-do on these earnings.

Families of agricultural labourers all over the world work conjointly and the income that is derived from their labours is a joint income. I do not think a coolie living with his wife and children would, as a general rule, be able to maintain himself and his family in health and reasonable comfort on his own bare earnings. It is done but not frequently.

I don't think increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours. A proportion of all coolie labour is content with a bare existence.

I do not consider that it is possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., should be converted into an increase of money

Panerihat, wages. Clothing is not generally supplied, except to the poor; even in the latter case it is not supplied as a rule. Advances are recovered only from those who are in a position to pay. Land is given out on a pepper-corn rent so as to retain possession. The charge is about 4 annas or 8 annas a *bigha*. I think it is necessary to charge at least a nominal rent because a man who may be exempt from paying rent for an indefinite period may turn round and say that as he had been holding the land for such a long time and had not to pay any rent for it, he would not part with it.

Generally speaking, I think it is necessary to put the coolie under contract. The existence of the Act enables us to look after the coolie better. It is certainly very desirable as far as health conditions are concerned, as, having a hold on the coolie, we can compel him to go into hospital during illness. All my labour is not under contract. As a matter of fact coolies come forward freely for the contract when they are pleased with themselves. About nine-tenths of the force in Salal Tea Estate in Nowgong are under contract. But this would vary in gardens. In some places the percentage not under agreement is very high and in some it is very low.

There is every possibility of the checking staff doing things which would make coolies discontented, but at the same time coolies and the clerks collaborate in cunning ways. For instance a coolie might come to the clerk and ask that the *paniwala* be allowed to carry water to his house, and the clerk would write up the *paniwala's* absence as *hazira*, the coolie being required to give the clerk something for it. I have also known *dusturi* being taken. I have known a garden where, when a child is born, the coolie takes Rs. 5 to the jemadar. The only remedy is the closest European supervision. These malpractices are less common now than they used to be, because there is more vigilant watch now.

I do not think the clerical staff are underpaid. If they were underpaid there would be temptation to illicit gains. I would not recommend an increase of pay to the clerical staff. As a matter of fact their pay was increased recently owing to the rise in prices. I do not think jemadars were well paid in past days, but I do think they are well off now in that respect.

In Hatigarh the daily wage system obtains; and the coolies are paid every morning in tickets. Tickets are cashed once a week. Metal discs are used for tickets, and the coolie knows the next day what he has received for the previous day's work. The *hazira* rate is 4 annas for a man and 3 annas for a woman in Hatigarh; *ticca* work is in addition to this. We work on the unit system as far as possible. Work given out as *hazira* takes about 3½ to 5 hours to complete in the case of a man, and about 3 hours in the case of a woman. At Salal I had no limit for coolies earning *ticca*. The average pay exceeds 4 annas; a fair proportion of the women earn 4 annas a day. They could earn more if they wanted by working a little longer. These wages, are, in my opinion, sufficient to keep the coolies in good health and comfort.

I do not think a man can maintain himself together with his wife and one child on Rs. 8, but I think he can maintain himself alone on less than that sum. This assumes wife and child as doing no work. As part of the family earnings it is fully adequate.

I have suggested measures for ameliorating the lot of the labour force and these measures were always sympathetically considered.

The prosperity of a garden may be indicated by dividends but may be best determined by the profit per acre. Dividends declared only show roughly how a garden is prospering or otherwise.

No. 18.—Mr. J. R. FRASER, *Manager, Attareekhat Division, Attareekhat Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have now been 11 years in Mangaldai and 3 years in Sylhet—total 14 years.

I consider that physically the type of coolie recruited at the present day is inferior to that recruited 10 years ago, owing to famine conditions and the influenza epidemic in recent years.

There has been no unrest of any sort in this district as far as I am aware. This is due perhaps principally to our isolation, while the pay compares favourably with other gardens. Living is also cheaper here than in Tezpur. We have not been employing local labour since 1919 in which year we imported about 2,000 coolies. We do not require Cachari labour now. The only local labour we are likely to take

are the Nunias. We have about 20 *ex-tea-garden* coolies. We pay outside labour the same as garden labour, except that they do not get medical attendance because they do not ask for it. Panerhat.
Mangaldal.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 6-8 for a woman a decent living monthly wage.

The difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 would be about 30%. The price of cloth went up considerably during the war. It is still higher than the pre-war rate. Rice and *dhan* are fairly cheap; rice sells at 8 seers per rupee. We stock *dhan* and sell it to the coolies when they require it. We have no occasion to sell it at present as it is cheap. We supply rice to the coolies during the rains when supplies from the bazaar are not obtainable.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities, provided of course he takes advantage of his opportunities to earn. The present system, which is based on the unit, was started in 1912.

Yes, it is the case that earnings are inadequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year. I have this year increased the cold weather earnings. I have allowed men 6 annas and women 4 annas.

The percentage of working coolies is about 75. They have not got cultivation to any great extent, either inside or outside the gardens. We charge a nominal rent of 4 annas for land given out just to retain possession.

As a general rule the earnings of a coolie living with his wife and children would not be sufficient to maintain him and his family in health and reasonable comfort without some members of the family working. It would of course depend on the size of his family. A good working man with a wife and one child could support his family on his own earnings.

I do not think increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours.

Yes, we put coolies under Act XIII Agreement. I am in favour of retaining the Act, as it gives one a certain hold on the labour, otherwise we have none whatever. Remove the Act and the coolies can walk off the garden at their pleasure. We usually give the agreement to one in a family. Personally I am not in favour of the Act being abolished. If the Act were abolished, I would not give the coolies an advance or raise their pay, but I would give them a bonus at the end of the year. It would not be safe to give it at the beginning of the year except to selected coolies. I do not think a coolie would be more content if he was not under contract.

We have not had any Act XIII cases for some years now.

There was recruiting in 1919 soon after the influenza epidemic. We recruited very few coolies in 1920-21. I am not in a position to say how the 1920-21 coolies compared with those recruited before the influenza. Of course in 1918-19 before the influenza epidemic the coolies were much superior physically.

The coolies never asked for an increase in wages within the last five years.

There has been no rise in the pay of the coolies since 1913. Prices rose about 30% between 1913 and 1920. *Nirikhs* have been reduced. Coolies would not earn the increased wages; only a few would earn more than they had been doing before.

The task for deep hoeing is 3 *nals* per anna; it is based on the unit system. A coolie can complete the task of 15 *nals* in 5 hours. In 1912 the rate was 20 *nals* for 5 annas. In this case the hoe was 9 or 10 inches deep.

We pay no allowance for children under a certain age, but newly born children are maintained by the garden for some time after birth.

There has been a certain amount of unrest outside the gardens due, in my opinion, to the efforts of agitators; it has been in evidence to a less or greater extent during the last five years.

Rice and *dhan* are fairly cheap all the year round; Rs. 5 a maund is the normal price; it is the standard rate. I do not allow it to go over. Before the war the price of rice here was approximately 12 seers to the rupee. At the end of the war it was at any rate cheaper here than elsewhere owing to the fact of our isolation. The present price of *dhan* is Rs 2-12-0 a maund. We have a rice mill on the garden. The coolies have had no difficulty in purchasing *dhan* from the villages. But during the last two weeks there has been some interference with the bazaar inasmuch as it was closed down. A very small percentage of the coolie's earnings is spent on cloth now

Panerihat, and I do not think coolies are more badly clothed now than they were a few years ago.
Mangaldai. A coolie would rather be badly clothed than hungry. As a matter of fact owing to the rise in the price of cloth, we were supplying it at concession rates up to the end of last year; we have not done so since the beginning of this year. We supplied blankets on several occasions last year to all necessitous cases, i.e., to deserving cases; the number thus supplied would be nearly 50% of the working labour force. I do not mean to imply that 50% of my force are in necessitous circumstances. As a matter of fact each house gets a blanket. We have given about 80 to 1,000 in a year. The total population on the garden is about 5,000, and the working number is 2,040.

No. 19.—Mr. F. COUTTS, *Manager, Panery Tea Estate* :—

I am Manager of Panery Tea Estate. I have been 15 years in Tea, and all my time has been spent in the Darrang district.

I have personally had no experience of unrest in this part of the district, not even as a result of the rise in prices. The gardens have so far been unaffected by the political agitation prevailing in the district.

I consider Rs. 8-2-0 for a man and Rs. 6-8-0 for a woman a decent living monthly wage.

The difference between the cost of living in the years 1914 and 1920 may be put at 25%. The cost of living was certainly higher last year than it is now; it still tends to decrease. There have been good harvests. At present a coolie can buy *dhan* at Rs. 2-12 0 a maund. This time last year *dhan* was selling at Rs. 3-2-0 to Rs. 3-4-0 a maund. We sell rice at 8 seers for the rupee. Coolies have cultivation of their own on the gardens. Roughly there are about 240 acres of garden land under cultivation. Rent is charged at 12 annas a *poorah* (four *bighas*), and about 230 men hold this land, or a proportion of 40 to 50%. An average holding consists of about one *poorah* of good rice land.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie together with the present price of necessities, I would say he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort. As to whether I would give the same answer for conditions which obtained last year, I must say that there is no very appreciable difference between this and last year and the coolie has sufficient this year. Last year probably things were a bit hard for the coolie. The pay has been raised this year and earnings also have been increased. The wages now are undoubtedly higher than seven years ago.

The difference in the cash earnings of coolies between 1913 and 1921 for the months of March and September is :—

		Men.		Women.		Children.	
		Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.
March 1913	...	6	1 4	4	0 0	2	1 0
March 1921	...	7	6 8	6	8 9	4	9 4
September 1913	...	7	1 6	7	11 9	3	11 2
September 1921	...	10	1 3	11	9 0	6	14 0

The wages of carters are not included in the wage returns, even though they may be tea-garden coolies. Some of the carters' names are on the ordinary *hazira* books. Cart hire is a separate payment and does not come under wages.

My experience is that coolies are not so keen on earning a high wage during the cold weather even if opportunities are given them of doing so. Their working hours are much shorter, owing to the fact that they engage themselves a good deal on their own cultivation work.

The daily average strength of the working force on the garden is about 68 to 70%.

It is not my experience that increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours.

I think it is neither possible nor desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., into an increase of money wages. Of course rice could be converted, but it might be rather difficult to control the prices. We supply rice during probably five or six months in the year. Altogether we supply about 1,500 to 2,000 maunds in a year. The present rate is Rs. 5 a maund, as supplied by the garden; this year and last year the prices have been the same. This year we supplied rice at 7 and 8 seers per rupee and the same last year.

I think it is necessary to retain Act XIII and to put the coolies under agreement. The advantage of the Act is that its existence is the only means of controlling the coolie in the way of looking after him, seeing that he is well housed and attends hospital when he ought to. It would be exceedingly difficult to do that under the free labour system, especially if the coolies were living in the *bustees* rather than on the garden. Agreement advances are paid to coolies but never recovered. New coolies are never put under agreement immediately after their arrival.

I have had very few absconders from my garden. It is very difficult to recover the advances from absconders because we do not know their whereabouts.

I do not think a coolie would be more content if he was not placed under contract.

With regard to my answer to question No. 73, I said that it may be possible to convert the concession of rice into a money payment, but I would much prefer continuance of the present system of issuing rice as it would be very difficult for the coolies to procure rice during the rains.

There is one liquor shop in Panerihat about a mile and a half from my garden.

Coolies never asked for an increase in wages during the last five years. We increased the wages by extending the unit system during the past 18 months; for instance the task for deep hoeing was reduced from 3 to 2½ *nals* per anna.

About 200 or 300 coolies are not under agreement, but they have the same concessions as coolies under agreement, e.g., medical attendance and rice concessions. It frequently happens that a man and his wife do not take the agreement together. The man may take the agreement one year while the woman may take it the following year.

A bonus of Rs. 12 for a man and Rs. 10 for a woman is given only to those coolies who are under agreement; others are not given the bonus. It has not been the practice on my garden to recover any agreement advances paid to the coolies.

No. 20.—Mr. G. S. Ross, *Manager, Dimakusi Tea Estate* :—

I am Manager of Dimakusi Tea Estate. I have been in this district since May 1917. Before that I was in Jorhat and Tingri in Upper Assam. I have been about 15 years in Tea.

I think there has been very little unrest in this district—in fact practically none amongst the coolies. Political agitation has not affected the gardens. We had a little agitation lately connected with bazaars, but it has not reached the gardens so far. There is, however, a tendency to induce people not to come into the bazaars. There is a Local Board bazaar about a mile south of my garden and so far there has been absolutely no trouble in it. I consider that the immunity from trouble on our garden is due to the distance from the seat of trouble, i.e., Mangaldai Town, as also to the cheapness of the district.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 6-8 for a woman a decent living monthly wage. There has not been a very great rise in prices of foodstuffs during the time I have been here except in cloth. There has not been much rise in the cost of food-grains since 1916. 1920 was an expensive year but prices are dropping now. Rice was very cheap in the latter part of 1918.

Taking into consideration all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that a coolie gets sufficient to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities and on our present rates of working.

Considering what a coolie is earning now his earnings in my opinion are quite adequate even in the cold weather.

I have a certain amount of land inside the garden, but there is no great keenness to take it up. The coolies do not care to take up the land for cultivation owing to the low price at which *dhan* is sold in the villages. The land is a bit heavy to clear but I think it is quite all right for the cultivation of *dhan*. We charge no rent whatever for land given to coolies.

It is neither possible nor desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages. I supply very little rice. I have a certain amount of *dhan* which is supplied in case of emergency. At any rate a very small quantity is supplied during the year. As a matter of fact we commenced to supply rice and *dhan* only when the prices went up. In 1919-20 we lost Rs. 4,245-13 on rice. The price of rice varied from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8-8 a maund, and we

Panerihat, Mangaldai. sold it at an average rate of Rs. 4-12. We have now discontinued the supply of rice, but there is plenty of *dhan*. There is no rice mill on the garden. In my opinion prices went up in 1919 when rice was being exported by the railway. The Marwaris come from outside and subsidise the ryots. But conditions have changed somewhat since the opening of the line to Tangla, and it is not difficult to get rice on my gardens as railway communications are good.

The majority of our coolies are under Act XIII Agreements. I should not prefer to do without the Act. It is more or less necessary to put the coolie under contract. It is advisable that he should be under some sort of restriction for the sake of discipline from the health and other points of view. There is no compulsion, however, in this respect.

I don't think the coolie would be more content if he was not under contract, because there is no obligation on his part to take an agreement and the majority of them do take it. The bonus undoubtedly influences them to take the agreement.

The acreage of tea under cultivation is 658, and the working population is about 1,111, while the total population is about 2,000.

All non-working children get about 3 seers of rice a week as free ration.

There has been an increase in wages during the last five years, and this was brought about by decreasing the task. Coolies never asked for an increase of wages. We pay them on the unit system. Wages exclude concessions, in other words, it is simply cash wages. The present rate does not include rice. It is cash paid for work done. All coolies have free medical attendance when required. Pregnant women have a special allowance of Rs. 3-8 per month for six months during which they do no work. Rice concessions are made only in hard times. We sell *dhan* occasionally when coolies are unable to obtain it from the bazaar. At any rate I do not sell more than about Rs. 20 worth in a week.

The usual custom with the '*junglis*' is to pay down a certain amount to the ryots before the crop is cut. Coolies have the same facilities of purchasing rice as they have of purchasing *dhan*. In Tingri the coolies were very keen on taking land for rice cultivation but here they are not. The reason for this is that *dhan* is not only cheaper but much more plentiful here. Some of the coolies advance money to the ryots and get *dhan* at cheaper than the ordinary rates; others purchase rice from the bazaar.

There are also coolies who are not under agreement and still enjoy all the facilities open to coolies under agreement, e.g., medical attendance, etc., but we have not the same hold on them in the matter of sending them to hospital as we have on the coolies under agreement. We can exert more pressure on the coolie under agreement to go into hospital as also to go to work.

We have not had a single case under Act XIII. If a coolie should abscond I would ascertain his whereabouts and then try to induce him to return. Since January last I have had about 10 absconders, of whom 2 have since returned from their country.

Since the year 1915 wages have increased by about 50% only in certain kinds of work such as trenching, deep hoeing and forking.

The rate for deep hoeing is 2½ *nals* per anna; light hoeing 8 *nals*. The average earning of a coolie per day would be 5 annas for deep hoeing. If he earned 8 annas I do not think the work would be quite satisfactory. A strong man, however, might do 16 *nals* in a day. The depth of the cultivation is approximately nine inches.

No. 21.—Mr. A. SIMMONDS, *Manager, Orangajuli Tea Estate* :—

I am Manager of Orangajuli Tea Estate. I have been in Mangaldai 19 months now; I was in the Dooars for about 10 months, one year in Calcutta and 10 months in Upper Assam. I have also been in Sylhet for nine years.

I have not noticed any feeling of unrest on any of the gardens I have been connected with.

I do not think coolies have had any economic grievances which might have given scope for agitators.

In my opinion Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman is a sufficient wage for a coolie to enable him to live in comfort with a possibility of saving a little. In the year 1914 (I have not been able to find the figures for 1913) rice was selling at about 8 to 10 seers for the rupee in Orangajuli; in 1920 about 5 to 7 seers. The present rate is

about 7 to 8 seers per rupee. The price of cloth has risen almost cent. per cent but that is a small percentage of the coolie's cost of living. Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities. Panerha.
Mangaldai.

Earnings are not inadequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year, because, being short of labour, we encourage the coolies to do extra work. The women probably are not able to earn as much, but men are.

We have 992 acres of tea under cultivation and an effective labour force of rather under one coolie an acre.

It is certainly not my experience that increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours.

I do not think a coolie, living with his wife and children, can by himself earn sufficient to maintain them in reasonable health and comfort.

I do not consider it advisable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

As many as ask for the agreement are put under it. About 30 to 40% approximately are under agreement. Advances are not recovered. If the Act was repealed it would make no difference except that we would not have quite the same discipline as we now maintain with the Act.

There have been a few absconders during the past two or three years. The coolies have been going into the *bustees* and taking up Government land, the reason being that they get the land for a nominal sum and they can very often dispose of it profitably. The Government rates are very low—about 3 to 4 rupees a *poorah* a year I believe.

Since 1915 the wages have risen. We now, for a single task with a Sunday off, pay annas 4 for a man and annas 3 for a woman. In 1918 the system was on a monthly basis of Rs. 6 for a man and Rs. 5 for a woman. We now work on a unit system—4 annas being the unit. Tasks have been reduced so as to enable coolies to earn higher wages than they did in 1914. The tasks for plucking have been the same all along.

The rate for *ticca* hoeing is 25 *nals*—same as pre-war rates. There is more opportunity for *ticca* now than there was before, as *ticca* rates above the *hazira* have been reduced.

Taking the wages and rates into consideration, the coolies' earnings on my garden have increased probably 33 %.

No. 23.—Mr. H. M. LEPAGE, *Manager, Bhutiachang Tea Estate* :—

I have been 12 years as Manager in this district. I think there has been a widespread feeling of unrest, but I do not know the actual cause of it. I have found a number of coolies wishing to leave the garden so as to become free people. For a long time past they have been absconding to the *bustee*.

I consider Rs. 8-2 for a man and Rs. 6-8 for a woman, in addition to the agreement bonus, a decent living monthly wage for coolies.

The difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 may be estimated at 20% to 25% rise. At the present moment rice sells at nine seers for the rupee as compared with 12 to 15 seers three or four years back. I remember rice being sold at 25 seers for the rupee.

The Tangla Branch railway was opened ten years ago.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities. I would say the same applies to last year though perhaps prices were a little higher.

There is very little paddy cultivation within the grant—perhaps not more than 10 acres. Land in Bhutiachang is suitable for rice cultivation, but the difficulty is the scarcity of water.

There is plenty of land for cultivation outside the grant on the other side of the river Nanoi, but it is usually unfordable during the rains.

Panerihat,
Mangaldal.

We have had many absconders and occasionally we get them back. If their whereabouts are known we get warrants out for them.

I would not advise doing without the Act. I do not consider a coolie would be more content if he was not under contract. The system was tried but it proved a failure. Personally I think the coolie prefers the Act as he gets an advance or bonus. Most coolies like to live outside in the *bustee* as they appear to think they can live a freer life and can go where they please and do what they please. To such coolies no concessions are given though on a garden there are many attractions. Coolies object to hospital discipline and do not place much value on medical attention. With agreement coolies, it must be admitted, a little pressure can be put on them to attend hospital when sick. Agreement coolies are not pressed at all to go to work. About 55 % of my force turn out to work daily, and 4 % were sick, taking the figure of yesterday. The remainder are doing their own house work or looking after their cultivation, etc.

No. 23.—Mr. R. M. CLARKE, *Manager, Corramore Tea Estate* :—

I have been Manager of the Corramore Tea Estate for the past 8 months. I have been working in this district for 3½ years now. Before that I was in Burma working as an Engineer. I have had about 3½ years experience in Tea.

I consider that an average coolie gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort. We are isolated and things are very much cheaper here than in most other places; we are also surrounded by *bustees* and the tea-garden is practically self-supporting where *dhan* is concerned. The coolies have rice cultivation, aggregating 350 acres. Little rent is charged. No rent is charged during a particularly bad year with bad crops. There are about 1,200 coolies at Kerkeria and the acreage is about 1,000 acres including the two out-gardens.

We do not employ Cachari labour. We employ *bustee* labour in addition at Ghagrpara and pay them just the same as the coolies on the garden.

We stock *dhan* which we supply only during times of scarcity. About 300 maunds have been taken by the coolies this year. We buy *dhan* at the rate of Rs. 2-12 a maund, including carting charges, and sell it at the same rate. Only *dhan* is sold as the coolies do not prefer rice.

There has been a little disturbance in Ghagrpara *hât*. There has been no interference at Kerkeria *hât*.

It is optional for coolies to take agreements. More than half the coolies are under agreement. From the coolie point of view, I considered it necessary to put them under agreement and my reason for it is to enforce cleanliness. At any rate I do not think it would make much difference to my garden if there was no Act at all.

There have been no absconders during my time. There is plenty of cultivation on the garden, but we do not insist on coolies taking up the land. We assist them to buy bullocks. To coolies of two years' standing and those with large families who have not been able to save sufficient to buy themselves a pair of bullocks, we give an advance just to encourage them to take up land.

New coolies are also put under agreement as soon as they arrive with a view to giving them an advance to 'set up' for themselves. Agreement advances are never recovered.

I have seen village labourers in their houses and I consider that they compare just equally with our coolies.

No. 24.—Mr. R. BOWDER, *Assistant, Hatigarh Tea Estate* :—

I am Assistant in charge of the Hatigarh garden.

I have been 5½ years in Tea. I have been in Hatigarh since June 1918. For 6 months of that period, I was in the factory, and 3 years with the labour outside.

As far as I am aware there has been no unrest in Hatigarh. I have heard of agitators having come to Ghagrpara *hât* with the intention of preventing foodstuffs from entering the *hâts*. Their presence has had some sort of effect. First and

foremost there is a somewhat different feeling amongst the labour to what there was a few years ago. When a coolie, whether he is under agreement or not, wants to go into the *bustee*, he is required to ask me for permission. Panerikat
Mangaldai.

I think a coolie does get enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort. I do think, however, that a new coolie, coming from his country, finds it hard to make ends meet if he is alone. We provide for him in several ways. We do not put any coolie under agreement unless he has been on the garden for 12 months with the object of giving him an opportunity to judge for himself. When a new coolie arrives, I generally start off by giving him some fuel. I give him a couple of rupees to buy himself some utensils, and I also give him a blanket. If he should come and complain that the two rupees were not enough, then I would give him another rupee which I treat as an advance or subsistence allowance according to my judgment.

We work on the unit system.

For light hoeing we gave last year 30 *nals* for four annas. For deep hoeing we gave a pice for each *nal*. The task has altered in recent years, it being smaller now. We give a full *hazira* for six months to a new man unable to complete the full task of light hoeing or deep hoeing or any other form of work. We give *ticca* as well which is considerably lower. A man would take from 3 to 3½ hours to complete 30 *nals*. *Nals* are measured by twelve-foot *nal* rod. This is the first year that coolies have been given land inside the garden grants; about 20 to 30 acres have been taken up by coolies; and about 150 to 200 acres have been taken up outside the garden. There is any amount of land inside the garden, but I do not know why it was not given out before. There is plenty of grazing ground as well.

The working population is about 52%; the rest, including children, are cutting *dhan* at the present time.

It is left entirely to the coolie to earn as much as he wants in any season. In the cold weather he has got his own work to attend to and therefore does not care to earn more on the garden. One great handicap with our coolies is that they have to go great distances to collect fuel from the surrounding jungles. A coolie just does his *hazira* of 4 annas and goes away to do work for himself; daily earnings of 6 annas and 5 annas for men are quite common, and for women 5 annas and 4 annas this cold weather. Firewood is got from the Government reserve as well. A man by himself may be required to collect his fuel every day. If he has a large family he may probably take in a stock for 6 months. In the cold weather they have greater facilities for collecting firewood.

No. 25.—Dr. J. LOUDON, *Medical Officer, Mangaldai Association* :—

I am Medical Officer of the Mangaldai Association which comprises the whole group of gardens in this district. I have about 9 gardens to look after. I have been 8 years in this district; before that I was in the Straits. The coolies intended for the rubber plantations passed through my hands before going to the estates. As far as I remember, when I left 7 years ago, there was no conservancy system in the Straits plantations. There is a complete latrine system in Bamanjuli Tea Estate. The system is a bucket latrine system. The lines are provided with latrines which have a raised platform under which is placed a bucket. The whole thing is covered in and divided into compartments. There are separate latrines for men and women. Buckets are removable from the back of the latrine and the soil is removed every day and fresh buckets are put in. The Bamanjuli garden was started about 2 years ago, i.e., 6 months after my arrival. The latrine system was introduced about 9 months after the garden was started immediately labour commenced to come into the garden. I think the system is undoubtedly a success.

At present there is a 40-bedded hospital. There are no sick in the hospital. At present there is a labour force of about 600 coolies, and the sick rate is about 3 per day while the anæmic rate when the coolies first came into the garden was about 25% simply judging with the eye. The anæmic rate has now dropped to about 7 and 5%.

As a rule the coolies come up to the gardens with *anchylostomiasis*. The usual form of anæmia is due to hookworm which lives in the intestines of an infected coolie. The coolie catches the infection by walking on the ground polluted with the *faeces*; it takes the form of coolie itch or what is otherwise known as ground itch. The embryos ultimately find their way into the intestines. If the ground is kept free from infection by the use of latrines and the *faeces* are disposed of, it is impossible for the coolies to become infected.

Panerihat,
Mahaaldai.

An attempt was made to institute latrines in the lines at Bhutiachang, but I am unable to say how far it has advanced. There is only one water latrine; it is a modification of the septic tank. The actual latrine is not satisfactory. The difficulty is that Bhutiachang has not got a sufficient water-supply. The genuine idea carried out faithfully would be very efficient but it would only be applied in gardens where storage tanks for water were not used. Water has got to be brought now from considerable distances, but generally speaking, arrangements for water-supply on the gardens are satisfactory. A coolie, however, is not a very intelligent individual and it is really essential to provide a fool-proof supply. We are gradually introducing the latrine system in practically every estate in Mahaaldai. The system it is proposed to introduce is the pit system with a portable superstructure. I think it is very desirable to introduce a latrine system on tea-gardens. It would conduce to the general health of the coolie and prevent *anchylos'omiasis*.

Experiments were tried during the last rains and it was found particularly during the rains that the coolies used them, especially the women, as they were very much afraid of being bitten by leeches and other jungle insects.

I would like to make a suggestion, and that is, in order to arrive at some definite conclusion in the matter of a coolie's welfare, one ought to have an estimate of the actual amount of rice necessary for a coolie's diet, the cost of his clothes, the average size of his family, the earnings of his wife, and the average prices throughout the year at the local bazaar. As regards the quantity of rice necessary for an adult coolie, I would say that he would require three-quarters of a seer of rice per day.

SYLHET, 6TH JANUARY 1922.

[PRESIDENT AND MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

No. 26.—Rai Sahib DURGA CHARAN CHAKRAVARTI, B.A., *Jailor, Sylhet* :—

Sylhet.

I have been Jailor of the Sylhet Jail since 1914.

The annual average expenditure on diet per convict, excluding garden crops derived from the jail garden, from 1913—1921 (as taken from the printed reports) was—

					Rs.	a.	p.
Pre-war rates	{ 1913	...	...	...	35	13	0
	1914	...	...	...	48	10	0
	1915	...	...	...	50	10	0
	1916	...	...	...	48	7	0
	1917	...	...	...	47	15	0
	1918	...	...	...	35	12	0
	1919	...	...	...	39	11	0
	1920	...	...	...	55	5	0
	1921	...	...	...	54	1	0

These figures include the cost of coal. The rates for paddy for the same period were :—

					Rs.	a.	p.
Pre-war rates	{ 1913	...	...	...	2	8	6
	1914	...	...	...	3	6	6
	1915	...	...	...	3	0	0
	1916	...	...	...	3	7	6
	1917	...	...	...	3	4	0
	1918	...	...	...	1	9	6
	1919	...	...	...	3	1	0
	1920	...	...	...	3	14	0
	1921	...	...	...	3	10	0

The daily diet of a convict consists of 12 *chattaks* of rice (or 3 *powas*), 2 *chattaks* of *dal* and 3 *chattaks* of vegetables plus condiments; this fare constitutes three meals a day; 2 *chattaks* being doled out in the morning, 5 at noon and 5 in the evening. A maund of ordinary coarse paddy in the jail equals 27 seers rice.

There has been no change in the dietary for the past seven or eight years. Previously 13 *chattaks* of rice and 8 *chattaks* of *dal* used to be given. The reduction was due to a good deal of wastage taking place. I do not consider that the quantity of food given to the prisoners is insufficient. Prisoners are weighed every fortnight and, as a rule, they are found to gain in weight. Of course some complain of insufficiency of food, they being voracious eaters. Fish is given generally twice a week and for this one *chattak* of *dal* is deducted. Sylhet.

The contract for the purchase of foodstuffs is generally made at the beginning of the year. Sometimes when prices are high we do not make the contract at the beginning of the year but wait till about April at the latest to see if prices come down. After April prices do not show a tendency to decrease.

The average cost (exclusive of labour and profit) of clothing per prisoner for the year :—

							Rs.	a.	p.
1913	was	...	...	...	...	...	5	14	0
1914	"	...	...	...	...	...	8	15	0
1915	"	...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
1916	"	...	...	...	...	...	7	2	0
1917	"	...	...	...	...	...	6	0	0
1918	"	...	...	...	...	...	7	5	0
1919	"	...	...	...	...	...	9	13	0
1920	"	...	...	...	...	...	7	10	0
1921	"	...	...	...	...	...	7	10	0

Generally cotton yarn is purchased and woven in the jail. We do not purchase any cloth from the merchants.

On admission into jail a prisoner is given a pair of *juhjis*, one *kurta*, one *gumcha* and one cap. This is generally supplemented by another *gumcha*, *junjia* and cap in the course of the year. The prisoner gets a blanket coat as well; also 3 blankets to last three years, besides a *tat* bed. Including the price of mattress made of cocoon fibre or aloe fibre Rs. 7 is sufficient per head for clothing.

I have no experience of tea-garden coolies. There are a large number of *ex-tea-garden* coolie convicts from Dibrugarh. The health of such people has generally improved since admission into the jail. If a convict becomes ill, he is compelled to take medical treatment; he has no option in the matter.

No. 27.—Babu KALI NATH ROY, Secretary, All-India Tea and Trading Co., Ltd. :—

I am Secretary of the All-India Tea and Trading Company which comprises the following estates, *vis.*, Singrimari in Mangaldai, Jalalnagar, Sridharpur and Madanpur in Sylhet. I have been Secretary to the Company since 1917. Before that I was head clerk. I have been connected with the Company since 1913. I have never worked on a tea-garden; I have been doing office work all along. But I have inspected gardens.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It is neither possible nor desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

There has been no unrest in any of the gardens belonging to my Company.

The rates of wages have not been increased, but concessions have been extended.

The coolie population on the various gardens is :

Singrimari	} 479 garden coolies. 111 <i>bustee</i> "
Sridharpur	...	...	...	307
Madanpur	...	...	...	170
Jalalnagar	...	...	...	164

All the coolies are not under agreement. We take an agreement simply because the coolie is liable to abscond once he has taken the advance. We encourage the agreement system. Old coolies voluntarily take agreements. We pay a bonus of anything between Rs. 10 and Rs. 16; it varies on different gardens. Agreements are taken by the Manager. During my incumbency no coolies have been taken to Court.

Sylhet.

The rates for adults vary on different gardens. The monthly rates on the Sylhet gardens for a *hazira* consisting of 27 working days are Rs. 6, Rs. 5 and Rs. 3. In Assam they are Rs. 8, Rs. 6 and Rs. 4. The task of one *hazira* would take about 5 to 6 hours. Coolies generally go out at eight o'clock in the morning and return by one o'clock or two o'clock in the afternoon. A coolie is not satisfied with his *hazira* work but is given *ticca* in addition. I have no personal experience of the working of coolies. There has been a considerable decrease of coolies in Singrimari. I have no personal knowledge of the cause of this decrease.

No. 28.—Mr. NAGENDRANATH DATTA, B.L., *Pleader* :—

I am a Pleader, and the Managing Director of Bharat Samiti, Limited. I have only one tea-garden, Kalinagar, in the Chargola Valley.

The remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., up to the end of 1920, was sufficient to maintain the labourers in health only but not in reasonable comfort.

I have no experience of European gardens; my experience is confined to Indian gardens only.

Consequent on the exodus I started a *panchayat* in Kalinagar. I made the coolies elect their own members and directed them to represent their grievances to the *panchayat*. In this way I pacified the coolies who remained on the garden. I lost 330 coolies out of a total of 538. About 80 coolies have since returned and more are returning. Those who left for their country have not returned. Since the exodus I raised the rates. I now give a male adult 5 annas for a full task, a female 4 annas, and a working child 3 annas. These rates were fixed some 3 or 4 days after the exodus, immediately I arrived on the garden and found that they were demanding a rise. They wanted 6 annas for a man, 6 annas for a woman and 5 annas for a child. I told them that I had started a *panchayat* and they could represent their grievances to that *panchayat* when I would ultimately consider them. The former rates were 4, 3 and 2 annas. The present rate for plucking is one pice per pound. I have reduced the task and raised the wages. For hoeing we have two rates, one for hard soil and one for soft soil. I cannot say what the effect of my new system has been. I have not heard of any discontent on the garden since the wages were raised.

I consider it neither possible nor desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

There was a feeling of unrest before the exodus. When I met some coolies they were bitterly complaining against the Manager. I spoke to them and told them that it was certainly against Mahatma Gandhi's policy that they were leaving the gardens. They said that the Manager would not listen to their grievances. I sent a wire to my former Manager to come, and he came and he tried to pacify the coolies, but they in the beginning paid no heed. He subsequently succeeded in sending back some 66 coolies. My Manager attended the Ratabari meeting without my knowledge, and when I went to the garden after the exodus and obtained evidence of his extreme unpopularity, I dismissed him. If I had kept him on, I am afraid I would have lost all my coolies.

My impression is that this labour unrest is due partly to the all-India labour unrest and partly to political propaganda. The common people look upon Gandhi almost as a divine providence or deliverer; they actually adore him. Probably coolies, before coming to this country, have been led to believe that Assam was a land of plenty and that if they went there they could return after amassing some wealth, but when they did actually come they found their hopes were not realized, and that the only alternative then left to them was to resign themselves to their fate. But when they found somebody coming forward and holding out hopes of ameliorating their condition, they lost no time in grasping the opportunity, and the result may be evidenced in the recent troubles. My impression is that the root cause of this unrest is the general labour unrest, prevailing throughout the country. At Kalinagar the Bengali population are not very advanced and there is not much political agitation round about, so it is difficult to say who put the idea into their heads. The unrest among the masses would appear to be due more to economic causes than to political causes; but the economic unrest is now assuming a political form.

Even if there was no meeting at Ratabari, still I think the coolies would have left sooner or later. An up-country gentleman, who appeared to be a Pandit and presumably belonged to the Congress Committee, came to me and I advised him to speak to the coolies. He exhorted the coolies not to leave the garden but to remain and strike work if any occasion arises for the same. They did not listen to the Pandit, but left carrying all their property with them and selling their goods and cattle for little or nothing on their way. As far as I know there was no exodus in Maulvi Bazar. I don't think any political agitator in Karimganj recommended any exodus.

I have experience of agricultural labour, and I think there is a sort of unrest everywhere. The unrest has extended even to servants. I would say that there is unrest both amongst the classes and masses; this I consider is a part of the general unrest all the world over. The unrest, in my opinion, would appear to be due to many causes. As far as the classes are concerned, I think the unrest is more political than economic, and as regards the masses, economic rather than political.

I am a landlord and I know the agricultural wages. Before 1912 agriculturists were getting 6 annas; they would probably demand 8 annas now.

No. 29.—Babu RAJANIRANJAN DEV, B.A., *Proprietor, Madhabcherra Tea Estate, and Director, All-India Tea and Trading Company, Ltd.*—

I am a Director of the All-India Tea and Trading Company. The Company has four gardens, viz., Sridharpur, Jalalnagar, Singrimari and Madanpur. I am also Director of Baikunthapur garden in Habiganj. I have started a small tea-garden of my own near Dakshinbagh.

It is a fact that there has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour during the past few years. I attribute it (1) to the increased cost of living, (2) to the reduction in budgets since 1920, (3) to the reduction in earnings due to restricted outturn of crops, (4) to indiscriminate local recruiting (wages amounting to 8 annas per *hazira* being given on some new gardens), (5) to a feverish excitement for extensions of indifferent quality amongst certain Company Managers, particularly of bad financial position, who, with a view to enable themselves to advertise large acreages and to capture the imagination of the investing public thereby help to engender among the coolies a spirit of indifference for the quality of the tasks. The unrest was there, but visible manifestations might have been delayed had it not been for the spirit of the time; (6) to an idea prevalent of bettering oneself but without a full comprehensive idea of the situation. I speak of Indian-managed gardens only. Items (4) and (5) above have particular reference to Indian gardens. I have no personal experience of European gardens. As regards the Indian gardens, I go several times in the year to inspect the gardens and I always come across the coolies from whom it is a part of my duty to enquire about their health and comfort and other things. They put forward their grievances at that time. For instance they have been telling me that such and such a garden is paying 8 annas a day whereas we give them 4 and 5 annas only. During the last 4 or 5 years about 50% of the coolies on one of the gardens gradually but peacefully absconded to Tipperah, without causing any commotion.

I would attribute the recent disturbances among tea-garden labour less to the activities of the agitators than to those of local recruiters. The Chargola and Balisera Valleys are noted for their policy of stinginess and are in the grip of the planters. I have no personal knowledge of the actual condition of things there, but I personally know that these two valleys supply the bulk of the discontent in labour and these are typical examples of places where local recruiters reap substantial harvests. We benefit by receiving coolies from other gardens. Coolies prefer Indian gardens to European gardens, particularly the people at Balisera and Chargola. It refers to the period before the exodus for about ten years. They say that they are better treated on the Indian gardens. Some of the gardens have better *haziras* and besides the treatment generally is lenient. The coolie is, at places, let off with a lower standard of work; occasionally the standard of work is really poorer than on the European gardens or on normal Indian gardens. I know of an actual case of an Indian garden from which about 50% of the coolies absconded from 1916-1920 to Hill Tipperah due to inducements and allurements offered by estates under construction. As far as Indian gardens are concerned, I can say that agitation is practically non-existent; the Kalinagar trouble was a particular and not a general accident in Indian-managed gardens. I do not know anything about European gardens.

Sylhet.

I inspected about four gardens last year. There are about 1,500 coolies on all the gardens, and the total acreage is nearly 1,200. Each garden pays a monthly wage of Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 for men, Rs. 5 for women, and Rs. 3-8-0 for children. There are medical arrangements on almost all the gardens.

Coolies are attracted to Tipperah because they say that they would get 8 annas for each *hazira* and also plenty of paddy fields. There are certain sections of the coolies who never take to the plough, e.g., the single man, the indolent and the diseased.

I know of one case where a recruiter was bound hand and foot and kept all night in the stable of an Indian garden. That man was caught while talking big things in darkness. At day-break when he was questioned he said that he was an ordinary passer-by, but ultimately we came to know that he was an Assistant on some Tipperah garden.

My impression is that the wages received by the coolies are sufficient to keep them free from hunger, but there is much room for the provision of clothing and accommodation. Poor houses and poor clothing are two complaints which should be remedied. Increased wages will not always help the situation. Bonuses should be given from time to time; they should be given not only in money but in kind as well. We limit improvements to financial conditions. There is a limit under the present conditions of tea growing. To some extent tea growers are the victims of extraneous circumstances. We recognise the need of improving matters when finances improve.

I do not think that it would be of much practical help to the coolie if the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions were converted into an increase of money wages. There should be an increase in the bonus, in periodical rewards and other concessions such as clothing. The price of cloth is very dear nowadays; more money might be spent on clothing and accommodation, and sanitary conditions should be improved. The necessity for borrowing should be removed, as, at the present moment, coolies borrow a certain amount of money. There should be a small increase in money wages. The reported indebtedness of the coolie is not generally borne out by facts as they do not represent the true conditions of things because the advances are occasionally recovered but not credited in the books, and whenever there is a discrepancy in the books the balance is shifted on to irrecoverable accounts.

About 10% of a coolie's earnings is spent on clothing.

We employ outside labour and pay them 2 pice or one anna more than we pay the coolies on the garden whose rates for *haziras* are 5 annas, 4 annas and 2 annas 6 pies for men, women and children. They have full *haziras* and they are able to complete the full tasks in the course of the day.

No. 30.—MR. W. J. BALLANTINE, *Superintendent of Police* :—

I have been eight years in Sylhet.

Tea-garden disturbances in this district may be divided into two kinds :—(1) the general exodus in the Chargola Valley; and (2) the ordinary troubles on tea-gardens.

As regards the exodus from the Chargola Valley, I am definitely of opinion that it was due almost wholly to propaganda and superstitious and religious excitement and fear, and of this we have proof. Economic conditions affected it just as much as economic conditions have been responsible for the unrest, e.g., agrarian, industrial and political, the world over, no more or no less.

As regards the ordinary troubles on tea-gardens, we have had two phases of them : one early in the year from April, May, June 1921 in which the causes were also due to propaganda. They were all grouped in one place—the Lungla Valley. The trouble was due to propaganda; the coolies were told to stand out for the ordinary wage paid to *bustes* labourers. The coolies on the Lungla garden certainly tried the experiment for a few weeks and the effect has been that if any propagandist went to Lungla now he would most certainly receive his deserts.

The second phase was where the coolies began to ask questions about shortage of payment and there was trouble on gardens where in almost every case it was due to speculation or wrong accounting on the part of the subordinate Indian staff. This was specially evidenced at Kaliti and Jagcherra.

I think the European supervision should be closer and more efficient. I don't think in certain cases the supervision was all that it should have been, otherwise these cases should not have occurred. In order to be able to supervise one must have an empirical knowledge of the work. The measuring up of tasks of field work is almost wholly relegated to the Indian staff and the coolies have not always been satisfied that a particular measurement has been full and fair; in cases it would be found to be the contrary. Very often the Indian staff are recruited from people who live quite near the garden or who have friends and relatives in the surrounding *bustees*. Garden coolies are taken off the garden and put on to work on the *bustee* lines and paid *haziras*; I know of four or five gardens where this has been done. I am only talking of cases which have come under my notice professionally.

In the way of a co-operative credit society, I think a very great deal could be done. The purchasing value of what is given to the coolie could be increased by 25%. The garden has the money which might be put out and the coolie would derive the benefit. Incidentally the garden would be discharging a part of its obligations in regard to the ticket system.

Tea-gardens are self-contained units as they stand. Excepting the shops, they are something like compact villages. During the 14 years' experience I have had, I have found the *kayas* rising up by leaps and bounds and getting fat on none other than the coolie's money. The population of the *bustee* has not increased, but it is the coolie population that has, and it is the money of the coolies that has gone to fill the coffers of the *kaya*. If that money went to the coolie, it would be of very material advantage to him. The system should not be left to each garden to run. There should be a combination amongst the Agents, and a central distributing agency should be started in Calcutta with men of business training who would be capable of running it. Then centres may be created for the various valleys and shops opened on each garden, supplies being requisitioned from the various centres. Gardens have been importing and supplying things as a temporary and alleviating measure, but no proper system has been adopted.

The system advocated by me would remove chances of outside contamination and swindling. The ticket system could go on, if the ticket was honoured for the full face value at the garden. From the policeman's point of view, I would say that there would be no handling of remittances because the money would be there in the garden for circulation. Managers now get it from the *mahajan*. Coolies have to pay something like 50% to 60% discount to get back their own money.

I am aware of one case in which the ticket system was abused. The ticket was not cashed by the garden but by the garden *mahajan*. He took a discount on the ticket, that is to say a man took a ticket worth 4 annas and he simply got 15 pice from the *mahajan*. In this case the *mahajan* received a discount from the garden for cashing tickets and was therefore guilty of swindling not only the coolie but the garden.

We must fight non-co-operation with co-operation. For instance, if the shops are closed down and the coolie is unable to buy his foodstuffs, the garden ought to come forward to his rescue. If for any reason the coolie cannot be given his food for three or four days, there is bound to be great trouble. A garden-run shop would make this form of coercion impossible.

There has been a rise in the prices of necessities. Police constables have received an increase in pay. I do not know what they were receiving in 1905, but in 1912 they were appointed on Rs. 10 (unarmed branch) and Rs. 11 (armed branch). Now they receive Rs. 16 and Rs. 18, respectively.

Written statement submitted by Mr. Ballantine on 17th April 1922.

In dealing with the question of labour rates one should not lose sight of the fact that this is a country run by *dustoor* and people of the coolie class are intensely conservative. As a policeman I am not concerned with the rates of wages paid by employers to their labourers, but in whatever way it may be decided to alter or add to the earnings of the coolie, it should be so devised as not to upset existing *dustoors*. Coolies are for the most part of mean intelligence and I know personally cases where they have not been able to appreciate pecuniary advantage by an alteration of existing methods.

Sylhet.

The second point is that this country is also run very largely on *bakshish*. The management of a garden always has been, and always should remain, patriarchal. The coolie recognises the Manager as his "*Ma-Bap*." He comes with his grievances and sorrows to him for redress or alleviation, and I know as a fact that the great majority of Managers spend no inconsiderable amounts from their own pockets in giving *bakshish* to deserving cases. While this was possible in the past, economic stringency has very largely curtailed it. The prestige of the Manager on which so much depends is being undermined by hard and fast decisions as regards wage rates by Calcutta Agencies. Very few Managers are given any latitude in making adjustments, however temporary, in rates. I have proof of this from the fact that in a great many cases of coolie trouble and discontent in gardens in this district, the Manager has found himself unable to make any concession by reason of strict orders to the contrary by his Calcutta Agent, and cases are increasingly frequent of coolies wiring direct to the Agency for relief. This is a practice unheard of formerly, and though it is probably the result of the necessity for very strict economy during the period of slump, it is also most subversive of discipline and that very necessary patriarchal control by the Manager.

On this point I venture a suggestion. A sum of money calculated on the basis of head of labour force—say one rupee per head per annum—should be included in the annual estimate and the lump sum placed at the disposal of the Manager for expenditure absolutely at his own discretion but only for the benefit of the coolie whether for individuals or communities or families or the labour force as a whole. Every Manager would know how best to spend this and it would go a long way towards keeping the labour force content and happy and binding them more closely to the management. In providing this sum it should be without prejudice to the Manager's commission.

No. 31.—MR. G. P. STEWARD, *Manager, Malmicherra Tea Estate* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea in Cachar, Sylhet and the Dooars. Since 1919 I have been Manager of Malmicherra. I should say that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort. I do not think it either possible or desirable to convert these concessions into money wages. I am not aware of a widespread feeling of unrest among my tea-garden labour. Any possible grievance that they may have had has been due to high prices. I consider a decent monthly wage Rs. 8-6-0 for men and Rs. 6-8-0 for women in addition to the agreement bonus. Where it cost a coolie 3 annas a day to live in 1913 it would have cost 4 annas 6 pies in 1920 and even now. I pay in tickets which can always be cashed by the garden; shop keepers also cash them, and give full value. Generally speaking, coolies' earnings are not inadequate in the cold weather at least if they are willing to work. To maintain a coolie and his wife and children, it is necessary for both the man and wife to work. Increased wages may sometimes encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours but not generally speaking. If a coolie knows that he can get 6 annas for 30 *nals* in place of 4 annas he would do no more than his task, but if he gets 24 *nals* for 4 annas and 30 *nals* for 6 annas, he would probably do the 30. I say so as a result of my recent experience. With fine plucking it takes a coolie as long to do a task as with coarse plucking. I make no deduction for factory charges in weighing leaf. I deduct 5 pounds for the basket but 8 pounds for a wet basket. We are supposed to get one maund of tea for four maunds of green leaf. For 25 pounds of perfectly dry leaf we pay for 20 or 22 pounds. This keeps the factory right. On the whole, things right themselves. It takes a coolie 5 hours to do a task at the beginning and end of a season when plucking without a definite task, and it takes about the same time to do a full task in season. We have to work up to our estimate per maund of manufactured tea. If no deduction is made the estimate would have to be raised, owing to the less quantity plucked at the beginning and end of a season. In Act XIII as amended I take a contract to mean one calendar year.

I was 9 years in Pathemara in Cachar where our *haziras* were 3 annas for men and women while neighbouring gardens gave 4 and 3 annas. I had a cheap bazaar. I decided to raise the rate on a line with my neighbours. The coolies liked the idea but it was found that bazaar prices went up in proportion to the pay. This was long before the war. The point I wish to bring out is that increase of pay might mean a rise in bazaar prices to the coolie.

No. 32.—Mr. P. WOODLANDS, *Manager, Lackatoorah Tea Estate* :—

I have been 17 years in Tea in the Assam Valley, Cachar, the Dooars and Sylhet. I have been 6 years Manager of Lackatoorah and previously I was Assistant there. I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by coolies is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort. I do not think it desirable (though perhaps possible) to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the concessions into an increase of money wages. In answer to question No. 24, I should say that Rs. 8-6 for a man and Rs. 6-8 for a woman, in addition to the agreement bonus would be a decent living monthly wage. As to the difference in the cost of living in 1918 and 1920 I should say that 3 annas a day was sufficient in 1918 but 4 annas 6 pies would be necessary in 1920. 1920 might be called a famine year; rice is cheaper now, but I think that 4 annas 6 pies is still necessary.

Up to the end of 1921 there was no increase in *haziras* in Lackatoorah, but for 1922 we are giving the agreement bonus as *bakshish* instead of as an advance. We always recovered it before.

In weighing leaf we deduct 33% of the actual leaf. Our plucking rate is about 10 annas per maund of green leaf. On very wet days we cut as much as 50%. This 33% represents loss in manufacture, but it is made up to the coolie in the course of the season. It might be possible to raise the task, and to pay for actual leaf, but the coolies might be suspicious of a new practice. 44% of the adult male coolies have cultivation. They also make much money by the sale of fire-wood, fodder and milk.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII, because it acts as a moral binding on the coolie and he would not abscond. The agreement very often encourages the coolie to abscond; he may take the agreement to-day and go away to-morrow with the advance.

It is desirable that the wages should be raised so that coolies (men and women) may earn enough. The rates have been raised to allow the earning of Rs. 8-6-0 and Rs. 6-8-0 if they work full time. In some places the coolies have no facilities for doing outside work and the wages are not sufficient to keep them comfortable. But with us coolies have ample opportunities.

If the coolie does not do his allotted task, he would be paid proportionately.

If a coolie wanted to leave the garden, I would let him do so; I would not put any pressure on him to remain. In other words, we must allow the coolie to please himself. If he is satisfied by doing half the allotted task, he gets half the wage.

Ordinarily a man finishes hoeing in 3 hours; but a good man would do it in 2½ hours; a man would have to work 6 hours a day to earn Rs. 8-6-0. An average man could work 8 hours a day for 6 days in the week.

CHANDICHERRA (HABIGANJ), 7TH JANUARY 1922.

[PRESIDENT, DR. WILLIAMS AND MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

Chandi-
cherra,
Habiganj.

No. 33.—Dr. J. STEWART, *Medical Officer, Luskerpur Tea Company, etc.* :—

I am in charge of all the European gardens in Habiganj. I have been in the Luskerpur Valley since 1919. I was not in Tea before that, but have been in India from the year 1912.

Except for the influenza epidemic which has been raging during the past two years, and for the presence of *anchylostomiasis*, I consider the health of the gardens quite good. Hookworm is one of the main diseases prevalent on the gardens. Coolies are averse to becoming indoor patients and the result is that it is difficult to make the treatment systematic. It is difficult to treat coolies in their houses. Single men with no relatives on the garden come into hospital freely, but in a case where a man has a family, he is loath to leave his family alone in the house and come into hospital, and this is the main reason for their aversion to become patients. There are many who do not like hospital treatment at all, and such people can only be induced to take treatment by pointing to cases that have been cured in hospital. Generally there are no indoor patients in the hospitals.

Chandi-
cherra,
Habiganj.

I am not in favour of compulsion being exercised on the coolies to make them use hospitals. As a matter of fact it is very difficult to get people to undergo treatment although it is for their own benefit, except, as I have already said, by pointing to cases that have been cured in hospital. The latrine system is one way of preventing hookworm. It would also be possible to have a parade occasionally of the coolies to see how many people are affected. The Manager may be unaware of cases and I would call his attention to them. The trouble is about re-infection. We have the trench system on one garden and on another of the gardens there is a proper latrine constructed, but it is never used. The trench latrine is used on a very small scale; it is not an expensive arrangement and would be effective if adopted. I would advocate, as far as possible, the introduction of the trench system with a view to bringing about conditions that would tend to prevent re-infection.

Pregnant leave is granted freely by Managers, and in doubtful cases, is referred to the Doctor. Abortion is not prevalent to any extent on my gardens. I do not think it is excessive, as far as I know. It is possible that every case may not be brought to my notice.

On some gardens the system is in vogue of giving a bonus on the birth of a child. I think it would be very sound to give the bonus after, say, 12 months when the child is produced and found to have been kept in good health.

My previous experience in India has been in the Gold Fields of Madras and Mysore among the coolie population there. The coolies there were of the Telegu, Tamil and Malayalam type; they were housed by the employers. The housing system is comparatively better here. There the population was limited and the ordinary size of a coolie hut was 9' x 9'.

Generally speaking the coolies under my charge on the various gardens are living in health and reasonable comfort.

No. 34.—Mr. J. E. AIRD, *Manager, Deundi Tea Estate* :—

I am Manager of Deundi Tea Estate. I have been in Tea for the last 33 years. I have been in Cachar 4 years and 28 years in Deundi.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort.

It is possible, though not desirable, to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages. If such a conversion was effected, the coolies would not understand it.

For the past 5 years we have not been putting coolies under agreement. We have not had any difficulty in keeping up our labour force. Losses by death are generally made up by the young generation springing up. We give no bonuses. The present system has worked very well. There are hardly any absconders from the garden. Nearly every coolie has some land for cultivation, the income from which supplements his earnings. We work on the unit system. The plucking rate varies throughout the year; it may be 5 pounds for an anna, or 6 pounds, and sometimes 4 pounds also. Four annas is the usual *hazira*. Even if a coolie were to pluck not more than 5 pounds on any single day, he would still get one anna. The unit system is more advantageous than the other system from the point of view of the garden, as one can always check the books by the amount of work done. It is also advantageous from the coolie's point of view in that he would know what he was going to get when he was told the weightment. We do not have the ticket system; we pay in cash. We have never tried the ticket system.

The difference between the cost of living in 1913 and at the present moment may be approximately 50% rise, considering the fact that the price of rice has gone down very much now as compared with 1920.

I consider Rs. 8 a decent living monthly wage for a coolie at present prices. This sum would cover his food, clothing, and various other things required by him.

In addition, we give certain concessions such as housing which is not included in that sum. I should think the coolie is now adequately remunerated to enable him to live in health and reasonable comfort.

I have never done any recruiting and I have experienced no difficulty in maintaining an adequate labour force so that I consider the present system has worked quite well. We get coolies from all over the country. The source of supply however is *ex-tea-garden* coolies. I entirely agree that there would not be sufficient labour to go round if every garden adopted this system. Only one or two gardens could possibly continue working on this system. We have not been working with the agreement of late. I do not think the coolie is unhappy by being placed under agreement. There is absolutely no difference between a coolie under agreement and one not under agreement. Our coolies never ask for agreements and we do not give them. If the coolies want an advance, I give it to them and take a personal security for the money.

Coolies' houses require annual repairs, but the type of houses with tin roofs do not require much repairing, and half the number of houses on my garden have tin roofs. Only thatched roofs are repaired annually. The cost of repairing a single hut would amount to about Rs. 10 to Rs. 12. This sum is spent on posts, some of which may require renewing every year, and also on walls and roofs.

In view of the fact that the cost of living in 1920 was almost double that of 1913, we enabled coolies to tide over the difficulty by giving them facilities to earn more money and to do increased work; for instance, in allowing them to do lighter hoeing by not insisting on the quality of the work; also with regard to plucking. The rates for plucking alter continually; there is no standard rate. We have lessened the task for plucking also. So that in 1920 by making it easier for the coolie to earn a certain amount of money, the coolie was able to meet the increased cost of living. The only difference was in the cost of clothing. In 1920 they did not get the same amount of clothing as they were accustomed to before, but this deficiency was common all over the country.

No. 35.—Mr. H. GILBERT, *Manager, Chandicherra Tea Estate*:—

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It might be possible to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, but considering the class of coolie we have, I do not think it is desirable to make such a conversion.

I would put the money value on a house at about Rs. 24 per annum for a family consisting of a man, wife and two children. Our coolies have land for rice and sugarcane cultivation; also *baris* for vegetable growing. No rent is charged. The money value of the rice land and sugarcane cultivation may be put at Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 a month. This applies only to the best coolies. I have given coolies clothing occasionally. Benefits, however, do vary from year to year. If the conditions are hard on labour, we find it expedient to help them, say, with rice, etc. If rice is dear, we assist them by purchasing and selling it at concession rates.

About 160 acres of land are held by 320 coolies and about 65% of the male adults hold cultivation.

We have agreements and I think they are necessary from the coolie's point of view. If a coolie gets a lump sum of money in his hand, he always invests it in the purchase of cows or anything like that.

I do not think agreements nowadays give us any hold over labour in the way of making them turn out for work.

So far as I am aware there have been no disturbances in this district. There were attempts to close *hats* but I had no difficulty in my own bazaar. I do not know if agitators did anything underhand, as nothing came to my notice.

I have lost a certain number of coolies; they were attracted to Tipperah by being promised higher rates. Most of the absconding took place in 1919. Coolies on my garden are quite contented with their lot. They look on the garden as their home.

Chandi-
cherra,
Khabiganj.

The labour for the construction of a coolie's hut would cost about Rs. 35 to Rs. 40 excluding materials.

The average value of the produce on land is about Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per acre, but it varies a great deal according to price of rice and sugarcane.

No. 36.—Mr. P. CREICKSHANK, *Manager, Amoo Tea Estate* :—

I have been in Tea 25 years, and in this Valley since 1914.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not consider it desirable that the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages, though it might be possible to do so.

I have not noticed any widespread feeling of unrest among the garden labour during the past few years.

The difference between the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 would probably be double.

In 1913 coolies earned Rs. 4-15-0 and in 1921 Rs. 6-15-8. In addition to the cash earnings rice is sold 20% cheaper than bazaar rates during times of high prices.

We have the agreement system. Advances of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 are given and never recovered.

We have not taken any Act-XIII cases to court, but there have been cases where coolies have absconded with the advance. The agreement is for one year.

No deductions whatsoever are made for factory charges except for the basket and for wet leaf. If a woman brings in 25 pounds of actual leaf in a basket weighing 5 pounds, the leaf being perfectly dry, she would get credit for 15 pounds. The system has been in force for a long time. The coolie understands what deduction has been made. The wastage in manufacture does not affect the coolies in any way.

The entire coolie population on the garden is 3,300, of which 1,890 are working coolies. I do not know how many houses there are for the coolies, but the average would be about four coolies to a house.

The total cost of constructing a coolie's house including labour and material is Rs. 60. The annual repairs cost about Rs. 15. These expenses are shown separately under "Building and repairs to coolie lines."

Sufficient pregnant leave to ensure the health of the coolie is given and during that time we give half to three-quarter *haziras*. A bonus of Rs. 2 is given when a child is born.

I consider Rs. 8 each a decent living monthly wage for a man and a woman and Rs. 3 for a child.

We pay in cash and not in tickets.

No. 37.—Mr. C. S. CRESSWELL, *Manager, Teliapara Tea Estate* :—

I have been 22 years in Tea. I started in Cachar where I put in nine months. I then went to Chittagong for three years and then to the Dooars for eight years. The rest of my time has been spent in Sylhet and Cachar. I have been on my present garden, Teliapara, since 1914.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages, even though it may be possible to do so.

I have not noticed any widespread unrest for the past few years. The only difference is with Tipperah. I have had no trouble except for one day when the coolies asked for increased pay; they wanted 8 annas for *haziras*. I explained and said that they were at liberty to earn as much as 8 annas, but that I would not double their wages. The garden bazaar was stopped by the order of the Tipperah non-co-operators and my coolies had to go into Tipperah to get their food. I reported the matter and after six to eight weeks the garden bazaar was again opened. My coolies never went on strike. There was some agitation such as non-co-operators attempting to stop the *bustee* bazaars, but so far as my garden was concerned, there was no trouble when the bazaar opened again.

Chandi-
cherra,
Habiganj.

My rates are 4 annas, 3 annas and 2 annas, with opportunities of earning more. Such opportunities are taken advantage of by the good working coolie of the Chota Nagpur type, e.g., the Munda and Oraon castes.

It would take, say, 3½ hours to 4 hours for a good working coolie to complete a single task or *hazira* in the rains, and 4½ to 5½ hours in the cold weather.

KALIGHAT, SOUTH SYLHET, 10TH JANUARY 1922.

Kalighat.

[THE PRESIDENT AND MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

No. 38.—Mr. C. MACLEOD, *Superintendent of Deanston Division of the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Ltd., Balisera* :—

I have been now 23 years in Tea in Sylhet. I have recently joined the Deanston Division. Previous to this, I was 7 years at Amrailcherra.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages, as coolies would not appreciate it.

We have spent about Rs. 1,80,000 on recruiting during the last five years without any corresponding increase in the labour force. The reason why the labour force has not increased is because coolies have been induced to go to Independent Tipperah, and the main attraction is land for cultivation. The conditions on the gardens in Tipperah are certainly inferior to those obtaining on our gardens. There is not much done in the way of sanitation, wells, and medicines, and no sick *haziras* are given in Tipperah; nor are there rice concessions. I am sure that coolies would not go to Tipperah for garden work alone if the land for cultivation was not the real inducement.

I consider it essential that the European staff should be acquainted with the vernacular of the coolies. My Company gives a bonus of about Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 if the Assistants qualify in a couple of years; sometimes it is given earlier if the man is proficient.

The ordinary *hazira* wages of the labour force have not been increased between 1913 and 1919. The European and Indian staffs have received a slight increase, excluding the Manager whose pay has not been increased. With regard to the labourers, in order to mitigate the hardship in the cost of living, blankets and other things have been given at cheap rates and free to poor coolies.

During times of high prices we were selling Burma rice at the rate of about Rs. 5-11-0 or Rs. 5-12-0 as against Rs. 8 in the local bazaars; country rice supplies were short and dear. I think the coolies prefer country rice to Burma rice. I would not say that Rs. 5-11-0 and Rs. 5-12-0 were dear rates to the coolie on an average, but these rates were perhaps slightly dearer than those of 1913. There was a system started before the war of giving a bonus to coolies who did 24 days' work in the month. To begin with, we insisted on a man earning a full *hazira* for 24 days. We went on that basis. Then we reduced it to earnings of three annas a day or if a woman earned two and a half annas, she would get the bonus. Also if a good man was 'seedy' and did half *hazira*, we overlooked it and paid him the bonus. This was in addition to the agreement bonus.

Kallghat: I never suggested any measures for ameliorating the lot of my labour force during the past five years for the simple reason that I considered the coolies were amply paid for what they did.

The rates are—men 3 annas 9 pies, women 3 annas, and children 2 annas 3 pies, to 2 annas 6 pies. The rate for men has been raised to 4 annas recently in order to equalise the pay on gardens round about.

We have the ticket system.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 6-8-0 for a woman a decent living monthly wage. This is inclusive of the agreement bonus, medical attendance and housing, but exclusive of rice concessions. This sum includes direct and indirect income from the garden as well as outside it.

In the case of those who have no cultivation 6 annas for men and 5 annas for women would have to be earned daily and this and more can always be earned if *ticca* work, which is always available, is done.

We do not recover the agreement bonus.

The task for plucking is 16 to 20 pounds. It has altered since 1913. In 1913 it is used to be 28 to 32 pounds. The reduction is due partly to finer plucking, but has been made mainly on account of altered conditions.

The standard deduction for wet leaf is 10 per cent. The yield per acre in Amrailcherra is 6 maunds.

We estimate four maunds of green leaf for one maund of tea, and if good leaf was always plucked this would be sufficient, but a considerable amount of coarse, useless leaf is invariably plucked and this has to be picked out and thrown away; consequently we have to deduct a little more in weight than would be the case if sound leaf was always plucked. The plucking rate for green leaf in Deanston is 13 annas per maund.

Pregnant women get three months' leave with half pay; it is always given. In addition they get Rs. 3 when a child is born and Rs. 2 at the end of a year. I think it is a sound system as it draws the mother's attention to the necessity of looking after her child.

We have agreements. An advance of Rs. 12 to men and Rs. 10 to women is given. I have had one or two cases against absconding coolies, but got no satisfaction.

I think the agreement is necessary. If you lend a coolie a sum of money he would not look upon it as an honourable obligation as the agreement bonus is looked upon. Cases of default are taken to the criminal court. I am inclined to have the coolies tried in the criminal courts and not in the civil courts. I have no idea of the coolie's mind as to whether he would prefer to go to the criminal court or to the civil court. There is no agreement system in Tipperah as far as I know. There are also coolies on any garden without agreements. The reason why they do not take the agreement is perhaps because they have their own cultivation or business to attend to. A coolie not under agreement is morally obliged to turn out to work whenever required owing to the fact that he resides on the garden. I would not refuse the monthly bonus to those coolies who have private interests, *e.g.*, cows, cultivation, etc., to attend to, but they would have to work in the same way as agreement coolies.

Many of the coolies who went to Tipperah have returned; and I am sure more would return, but for police and zamindars' interference.

No. 39.—Mr. J. W. HALLAN, *Manager, Phulcherra Division, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company* :—

I have been in Tea since the year 1902, and at Phulcherra from 5th May 1921.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It is not desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages, though to do so would not be impossible.

The total population of the Phulcherra Division is 1.88 working coolies per acre for Phulcherra garden, and 1.34 working coolies per acre for Kakiacherra garden.

The outturn is approximately 6 maunds per acre. Owing to abundance of labour it is not possible to give *ticca* for major works; the coolies have to depend mainly on the *haziras*. Yet the garden is very popular and there are no absconders. The rate given to men has recently been increased from 3 annas 9 pies to 4 annas; for women the rate is 3 annas; children from this month will get a *hazira* of 2 annas 6 pies as against 2 annas 3 pies previously given.

There are 163 acres of rice land held by the coolies inside the grant and this amount is held by 264 tenants. I charge 8 and 9 annas a *kear*. I have this year allowed the coolies to open out sugarcane on the *tilas* and waste land, and am not charging any rent because they have jungle to cut. *Gur* is very expensive at present and coolies make it from sugarcane and sell it. There is plenty of work to be had for the garden coolies. Coolies like to serve on my garden because discipline is necessarily lax and they like to be free. I am in a position to let coolies remain idle in the lines. Owing to my large force, I can afford to be very lenient in the way of granting leave; the coolies in my garden have plenty of freedom, i.e., time to follow their own pursuits.

There are certain other advantages, e.g., plenty of land for cultivation, good drinking water, a running stream for washing purposes, and also the close proximity of a good bazaar (Srimangal); the granting of leave freely is a distinct attraction to the coolies. My garden is certainly a very healthy one. It has the advantage of a low death-rate, a good water-supply and comparative liberty to the coolies to do what they please. I should think that the Phulcherra labour force is the largest per acre in the Balisera Valley.

Every opportunity is afforded to my coolies of earning as much *ticca* as they like in neighbouring gardens belonging to this Company.

We have agreements. On the Phulcherra garden alone, we have 610 contracts. None of my coolies go to Independent Tipperah. On the contrary, I have regularly to refuse work to outsiders who are desirous of coming in to settle. I don't know from where they come.

I consider Rs. 7-8-0 for a man and Rs. 6-8-0 for a woman working on the garden a decent living monthly wage.

One *hazira* would take 4 or 5 hours to complete both in the case of a man as well as a woman. At present they usually go out about 9-15 A.M., and finish between 2 and 3 P.M. The rest of the day is their own to do what they please.

There has been trouble on account of agitators. There was one *hartal*. Except for that day the coolies never struck work. On the *hartal* day when they struck work, they made absurd demands. They wanted that no Europeans should speak to the women, that no balus should speak directly to them and that everything should be done through their own sardars. The agitators made them understand that it was more respectable to be treated in this manner. Srimangal was a hot-bed of agitation. A meeting was held at Srimangal and then the coolies came to me with their demands, which of course I had to refuse. There was no demand for higher pay. They are now perfectly quiet and perfectly satisfied as far as I know.

There are about 250 coolies on Phulcherra garden who are not under agreement, and I do not know the reason why they do not wish to enter into an agreement.

I charge for land 3 annas a *kear*. I am in favour of retaining the agreement system. For one thing it gives the coolie a handsome bonus once a year in actual cash, and for another it gives the garden a certain hold on the coolie, inasmuch as if he were to abscond he could be brought back. It is desirable but not necessary that we should have coolies under agreement. I would prefer taking cases under the Act to the criminal court and not to the civil court, but I do not like coolies to go to jail. Criminal proceedings have a greater deterrent effect and under Act XIII one can extradite from Tipperah.

If a woman were to bring in 25 pounds of actual leaf in a basket weighing 5 pounds, leaf being perfectly dry, I would pay her for 25 pounds. I deduct up to 10% for wet leaf. All leaf is bulked and weighed and we count 90 lbs. for every 100 lbs. of leaf, 10% being deducted for the factory.

Our estimate is 15 annas per maund of green leaf; and the actual cost in 1921 was 14 annas 6 pies. Three annas for 20 pounds was the maximum task last year. One woman was paid 5 *haziras*, i.e., 15 annas one morning.

My coolies are at all times allowed to earn *ticca* on other gardens, but the offer is seldom taken advantage of.

Kailghat. No. 40.—Mr. R. T. FRASER, *Manager, Sathgaon Tea Estate, Lookan Tea Company* :—

I have now been 34 years in Tea and in Sathgaon all along.

As far as my garden is concerned, I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it is desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages, though it might be possible to do so.

In my opinion five annas a day for a man and four annas for a woman is sufficient to keep them in reasonable comfort, provided they work 24 days in the month; this is in addition to free housing, medical attendance and the agreement yearly bonus and assuming that rice is selling at Rs. 5 a maund; on this a man can maintain 2 non-working children.

We give an agreement bonus which is not refunded. As regards the rates of wages, Government laid down the rates of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month when rice was selling at Rs. 3 a maund. The difference of wages between then and now meets the present day higher cost of living.

No reasonable Manager would, in my opinion, refuse to give a coolie leave to cultivate his rice land if he could possibly arrange to do so.

The incitement of agitators has created a stimulus to insubordination amongst the coolies. It would, however, be unfair to say that the agitators were answerable for all garden disturbances, but I would certainly say that they aggravated the conditions. As far as we are concerned, there have been no disturbances.

The proportion of adult coolies under agreement and those not under agreement would be half and half.

It is impossible to say why certain coolies do not take agreements. As a matter of fact they may take an agreement one year, and not do so the next year. I think they take agreements whenever they are in need of money.

No action is taken against absconding coolies in the criminal courts. Act XIII has been a dead letter on my estate. I would have no objection to doing away with the contract system, if something else were done to make the coolie understand that he was under a moral obligation to work. Either the Indian Contract Act or Act XIII would suit equally well.

The ordinary dimensions of a coolie's hut would be 18' x 12', and the labour for its construction would amount to about Rs. 9-8-0 exclusive of materials. The entire cost of a hut would come to Rs. 12. Huts are renewed every two years. Repairs effected in the second year would cost about Rs. 5 after which the hut is re-built. The average cost per hut may be estimated at about Rs. 12 *per annum* for two apartment accommodating two couples. There are about 90 superficial feet floor space per family; a large family would require the two apartments. The average cost per adult is about Rs. 3 *per annum* which represents the actual concession for the house.

No. 41.—Mr. JAMES A. MINTO, *Manager, Mazdahee Tea Estate, Naraincherra* :—

I have been 16 years in Tea, and at Naraincherra since December 1919.

About the end of May last year there was some trouble on my garden when the coolies were put up by agitators to demand extra pay and if it was not granted to go on strike. They struck work for two days and ultimately went back to work without obtaining their demands. Three agitators were convicted for trespass. The strike was the work of outside agitation entirely.

Between the years 1913 and 1920 there has been no increase in *haziras*. The rates are 3 annas 9 pies for men, 3 annas for women, and 2 annas 3 pies for children. When prices were high, we helped the coolies with cheap rice and increased the possibilities of earning more *ticca*. We always sold rice at Rs. 5 a maund to the coolies; we never sold it at a higher rate. The present bazaar rate is Rs. 4-8-0; this is due to the fact that there has been a bumper crop.

Assuming rice is sold at 8 seers for the rupee, I consider Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman a decent monthly wage which would enable them to live comfortably. This is in addition to medical attendance and free housing.

A coolie bringing in 25 lbs. actual leaf is credited with 20 lbs. For factory charges 12% deduction is made, but this is not debited against the plucker. Kailghat.

The average yield per acre for the last five years was 3½ maunds of tea. The plucking *nirikh* is 20 pounds for 3 annas, but if the average on a day's plucking is, say, 16 lbs., we fix 16 lbs. as a *nirikh*.

No. 42.—Dr. HUGH S. SMITH, *Medical Officer, Balisera Valley Estates Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Ltd.*—

I am in charge of James Finlay and Company's gardens. I have been just one year in the Balisera Valley. I came out to India in 1894. I spent ten years in Bishnath, and was in Mangaldai and Golaghat for a time.

I consider the coolies of Assam are a better class as compared with coolies of these parts. I daresay a coolie going from here to Assam would be accepted, but he would not be considered a first-class worker compared with first-class labour there. Since my coming out to India conditions have improved a great deal in the way of accommodation, hospitals and supply of medicines, and more care is taken of the coolies now.

In my opinion the doctor babu here on Rs. 60, who has passed the Third Board examination, would do better than the highly skilled man brought up from the Calcutta Medical College, as he would be able to look after the coolies better being intimately acquainted with them. Hookworm is no worse here than in Assam. Generally, coolies bring the disease with them on their first arrival. As regards malaria, I think very few people escape it even in their own country. There is not a large proportion of spleen among the adult coolies on the gardens, but children are affected to a greater degree. There have been epidemics of cholera on the gardens and they have usually been traced to the *bustees*. Conditions are better now than they used to be. Latrines have been tried on some gardens, but the trouble has been that sweepers are scarce. For instance, when latrines are blown down, it is difficult to get the place repaired. In Bishnath we introduced the trench system some years ago, but the coolie did not like it. Coolies are always afraid to go out any distance in the night to ease themselves. There is thus danger of pollution of the *kutcha* wells round their huts. Coolies like these wells. To fill them in might be resented as an interference with the liberty of the subject.

A pregnant bonus of Rs. 5 is given and I think it is very sound. Abortion is very difficult to trace and Managers can do nothing with regard to its prevention.

LUNGLA, SOUTH SYLHET, 13TH JANUARY 1922.

Lungla.

[PRESIDENT AND MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

No. 43.—Mr. L. W. WARNER, *Manager, Lungla Tea Estate* :—

I have been a little over 2½ years in Tea, of which 16 years have been spent in the Lungla Tea Company.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. At present good coolies earn about 4 annas a day and bad coolies from 2 annas 3 pies to 3 annas.

In my opinion it is not possible to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

During the last 5 years about Rs. 62,000 has been spent in recruiting. There has been no increase in the labour force during that period; on the contrary there has been a decrease to the extent of half what it was in 1918. I have lost approximately 1,000 working coolies. About 800 absconded into Independent Tipperah during 1919-20. I have been told by those who returned that the reason they absconded was that they had gone *pagal* (mad). I however understand that they were offered higher pay but I do not know if that is a fact. Coolies have a good deal of land for cultivation amounting to about 800 acres inside the grant and this is one of the main reasons they don't care to earn more. There is not much *ket* land outside the garden. We charge rent at the rate of Re. 1 for the first *kear* and 12 annas for each additional *kear*. The actual rent in 1920 was Rs. 628 only.

Lungla. My coolies went on strike for 3 weeks last April, after they had been preached to and incited to strike by non-co-operators in villages adjacent to the garden. They asked for the same rates as were given at Kajaldhara and Karimpur. The hoeing *hazira* was bigger than I was giving but this was because the tasks were heavier. I offered to pay the men the same rates as on other gardens, but when they came to know what the nature of the hoeing task was on those gardens, they refused the higher rates offered by me. I allowed them to remain on strike, but when they returned to work they got no concessions. They have been working quite satisfactorily since May last. The *haziras* have been raised from 1918.

In 1918 the cost per acre for hoeing was Rs. 2-4-0 and in 1920 it was Rs. 4.

The rates for daily *haziras* are 3 annas for a man, 2 annas 3 pies for a woman and 1 anna 6 pies for a working child.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman a decent living monthly wage.

Between 1913 and 1920 the difference in the cost of living might be put at 33%. In 1920 rice was certainly very dear; at the present moment it is cheaper. The rise in the cost of living at present is very slight.

In plucking, the actual weight of the basket is deducted *plus* 1 or 2 lbs. additional to make up for loss on plucking early and late in the year when leaf is scarce. A separate deduction is made for wet leaf, according to the amount of leaf in the basket and degree of moisture.

At the beginning of the season there is no plucking task, and at the end, the task is considerably reduced as the leaf becomes scarcer. When engaged on other works the coolies are allowed to do what they wish after finishing their tasks.

In the plucking season a good plucker can do her full task in two to three hours.

It is a fact that some gardens are more popular with labour than others. The reason for this is that they are more healthy and contain large tracts of rice land which is given to the coolies; fuel is easily obtainable, and there are good bazaars in the locality. My coolies are all free labourers and they can go whenever they like.

There are about 1,000 head of cattle and about 40 odd carts pulled by buffaloes. The value of a buffalo varies from Rs. 40 to 60. There are goats to be numbered by the hundred, and about 150 pigs. About 15 maunds of milk are sold partly in the *bustees* and partly on the garden. There is no lack of rice on my garden. I think the coolies sell rice if they know they can get a good price for it outside. We have about 1,000 maunds of Burma rice in stock and none of it has been sold. I have never sold rice at more than Rs. 5 a maund. I bought about Rs. 3,000 worth of cloth at the coolies' request and only about Rs. 1,000 worth has been taken by them, and the remainder left on my hands. The water-supply is quite satisfactory. There are approximately 200 *kutcha* wells. We have no latrines.

I give half pay during pregnant leave according to the advice of the Medical Officer. I also give a bonus of Rs. 2 when a child is born and Re. 1 periodically till the mother has had Rs. 12. As a matter of fact they seem to be so well off that they seldom come for the balance of the bonus. I think the system is sound, because it is an inducement for them to look after their children better.

No. 44.—Mr. R. MORTIMORE, *Manager, Kajaldhara Tea Estate*:—

I have been 21 years in Tea and all the time in Sylhet. I have been Manager for 10 years. I was in the Chergola Valley for about 16 years.

I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it is possible to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages, and even if it was possible, I would not consider it desirable to do so.

I have had no trouble whatsoever on my garden.

There have been a few cases of absconding into Hill Tipperah.

The rates for daily *haziras* are 4 annas, 3 annas and 2 annas for men, women and children, respectively. Before my arrival the rates were 3 annas 6 pies, 3 annas and 1 anna 6 pies.

In my opinion Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman is a decent living monthly *Lungia* wage for the coolies, in addition to the agreement bonus.

The *ticca* rate for plucking is Be. 1-4-0 per maund of green leaf. The cost of plucking for the whole year round would come to about a pice a pound.

If a woman brought in 25 pounds of dry leaf she would be paid for the actual weight, *i.e.*, 25 lbs., except the weight of the basket and of the scales, the former weighing roughly 7 to 8 lbs. and the latter anything between 16 and 20 pounds. At the beginning of the year the coolies go out without any plucking rate at all. We pay *hasira* up to 25 pounds and over that *ticca*. The rate never alters even in the height of the season. Some of the good pluckers earn from Rs. 20 to Rs. 24 a month, probably with 2 children to help each woman. For moisture 2 pounds are deducted, that is to say, if a woman brought in 20 pounds of wet leaf she would be paid for 18 pounds only.

There is a bazaar near the garden. Rice sells at Rs. 4-8-0 to Rs. 5 a maund, I think. Last year at this time I think it was selling at Rs. 7-8-0 or Rs. 8. The rates in the bazaar are reported to me by a *babu* and a record is kept.

Fine plucking has altered the task, and with a reduced task it is possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice.

There are numerous cattle. In fact every coolie has a cow and non-workers have cows as well. A lot of milk does leave the garden to be sold in the bazaar.

It is certainly not my experience that increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours. On the contrary if a coolie is paid 6 annas a day and he knows he can fill his stomach on 4 annas, he is apt to do no more than 4 annas work.

In 1920 I made a loss by selling rice at concession rates. I sold it at 7 and 8 seers to the rupee. There are about 700 coolies under agreement. The remaining coolies do not like to take agreements because they are well-to-do and do not need the bonus.

In 1921 the estimate of expenditure for labour was considerably reduced. I worked up to that provision more or less by cutting off certain items such as buildings and other things.

The birth-rate is 40 *per mille* and the death-rate 7 *per mille*.

I very occasionally employ outside labour.

No. 45.—MR. J. ELDER, *Manager, Chatlapore Tea Estate, Alinagar Tea Company* :—

I have been 19½ years in Tea and all my time in Sylhet. I have been Manager of Chatlapore Tea Estate for 5 years now.

At the present time I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It is neither to the interests of the garden nor to the benefit of the coolies that the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

• There has been no unrest whatever on my garden. There are no villages round about my garden.

I have been suffering a good deal by enticement of my coolies into Tipperah which is bounded on two sides by my garden. This was in 1920 and in the beginning of 1921 when about 80 coolies went into Tipperah to work on gardens newly opened out. The inducements are usually those which new gardens invariably give, *i.e.*, a bonus and a high rate of pay. But a good many of those 80 coolies came back, because the gardens closed down and also because the coolies did not find things so promising as they were made to understand they would be.

For a fixed *hasira* I pay 3 annas both to men and women, and in addition they can earn as much *ticca* as they like.

I think Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort assuming that rice is selling at Rs. 5 a maund; this includes income from cultivation and *ticca*.

The difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 may be put at 33%. In view of the present price of rice, I would put the difference at the present moment at about 25% roughly.

Lungta.

Within the last 5 years I have not increased the rates, but I have reduced the task on some works, *e.g.*, plucking. It takes the same time to do fine plucking as it would coarse plucking. It would take a woman 4 to 6 hours to do a fixed task of 16 pounds. Some of the best women could do $2\frac{1}{2}$ and sometimes 3 tasks a day, *i.e.* pluck 48 pounds on a 16-pound task.

In a normal year the average yield is 10 maunds per acre.

The deductions in leaf are 25% for dry leaf and $33\frac{1}{3}$ % for wet leaf. If a woman brings in 25 lbs. of dry leaf she would be credited with 18 lbs.

In 1921 my actual cost of plucking was Rs. 3-13-0 per maund of manufactured tea, as against my estimate of Rs. 3. The shortage was slightly over 1,000 maunds. In that case the coolies got more because of finer plucking.

The task for hoeing has not been altered since 1913, except for deep hoeing, which was reduced from 15 *nals* to 12 *nals* per *hazira*. Deep hoeing is done once a year; light hoeing four or five times. In 1913 the *ticca* for light hoeing was 4 annas and so far it has not been altered. There has been no alteration with regard to *ticca* for deep hoeing.

We have 400 acres of rice land available for cultivation in the garden, of which 360 acres have been taken up by 742 coolies at an average rent of 8 annas 5 pies per *kear*. Roughly speaking, about 45% of my adult male coolies have land for cultivation. I did not realize any garden rent in 1921.

We give pregnant leave as circumstances require, and after birth from 3 to 6 months; 8 annas weekly is paid for 3 months to the mother, and if the mother is in poor health then she is paid 2 annas 3 pies daily. There is no separate bonus paid apart from this daily or weekly allowance.

It is the practice when rice is dear to sell it to the coolies at concession rates. We have been selling rice at an average price of Rs. 5 a maund.

We take agreements; we do not recover the bonus money that is paid to the coolies.

We have not had very many Act XIII cases. Taking into consideration the number of warrants and the number of people involved, I think we have lost by running cases. All this trouble has been due to coolies absconding into Tipperah. It might have a salutary influence on other coolies. I am in favour of retaining the agreement for disciplinary purposes, as if we do not have it, people may go anywhere and do anything they like. For the sake of keeping the peace and also retaining labour, I think it is necessary. If the Act was repealed I do not think the old coolies would go away; perhaps the new coolies might go.

A decrease in the consumption of liquor is noticeable since I came to Chatlapore. The average coolie looks after his family before venturing to spend any money on drink.

No. 46.—Mr. F. W. WILSON, *Manager, Phcoltollah Tea Estate* :—

I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It is neither possible nor desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

The type of coolie recruited at the present day is much better than ten years ago. In my opinion rather better types of coolies go to Assam as compared with Sylhet.

We gave 25% increase of wages to the labour force in the beginning of 1920.

We pay in tickets. The daily *hazira* for men and women now is 3 annas 9 pies; it used to be 3 annas before.

As regards a decent living monthly wage for a coolie, I have a *babu* clerk with 40 years' experience, and he tells me that Rs. 7 for both men and women is a decent wage, assuming that rice is selling at 10 or 11 seers to the rupee. But a man with a large family would require more. If the price of rice rose to Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 then Rs. 7 would not be enough.

The rate for plucking is 12 annas per maund. Our estimate is 12 annas a maund. The average yield in a normal year is 10 maunds per acre. I am satisfied if I can get one maund of tea out of 4 maunds of leaf plucked.

In 1920 the average coolie earned Rs. 5-7-9 a month.

Lungla.

It would take about 4 hours to complete the daily task; the rest of the day would be available for cultivation.

Eighty acres within the grant are cultivated by 200 coolies and 40 acres outside are cultivated by 100 coolies. Rent is charged at the rate of Re. 1 a *kear*.

A bonus of Rs. 5 is given one year after the child's birth. Some of the coolies are given to drinking and spend a good deal of their money on it.

At the present moment our wages here are the same as they were when I was in Assam 10 years ago.

If a higher wage is given on another garden, it might be assumed that the wages are higher there because rice is dearer, or that the Company could afford to pay higher rates, or that the tasks were bigger.

My garden is about a mile away from the Tipperah border and I have had a good deal of absconding, but since last cold weather it has not been so frequent. Coolies are simple, ignorant people and are very easily misled, and this is how they are induced to go into Independent Tipperah.

No. 47.—Mr. E. B. SHAW, I C.S., *Subdivisional Officer, Maulvi Bazar* :—

I have been Subdivisional Officer of Maulvi Bazar for the last 9 months.

In April last year there was the Lungla strike; in early May there were strikes in the whole of the Dhalai Valley, save on Madhupur and Kantabheel gardens. There was a strike in Ghazipore for 2 days in April and towards the end of May and in the beginning of June there were strikes in Kalighat, Phulcherra, Jagcherra and several other gardens. On the Kaliti garden there was a strike on or about the 20th of September. There was a small strike at Patrakhola about a week ago. These were the only ones of any importance and in addition there have been small strikes in other places as well.

As to the reasons for these strikes, I may say that the Lungla strike was undoubtedly due to a big non-co-operation meeting held on 1st April at Tilagaon. On the 1st May there was a meeting at Adampur in the Dholai Valley followed by another about 3 or 4 days later. The result was that on the 2nd or 3rd May nearly all the gardens in that Valley went on strike, and the agitators would appear to have been responsible for this. The Ghazipore strike which took place on the 13th of April might have been the result of the political meeting. Mr. Ballantine and myself went there but we found nothing underhand going on. Somebody would appear to have put the idea into their heads of striking for more pay. At the time of the railway strike Srimangal had a gang of non-co-operators, so that it is significant that the only gardens who struck were those within 4 miles from Srimangal, i.e., from Jagcherra down to Kalighat. Naraincherra also struck because there people went to the bazaar and told the *busteewalas* not to supply rice; I convicted those people under section 107, Criminal Procedure Code. As a result of their machinations the coolies were unable to get any food and therefore went on strike for about 3 or 4 days. The method adopted by these people towards the end of May was to get *busteewalas* to close down their bazaars in contrast to the previous method of holding a meeting and then getting coolies to strike. They had apparently given up the method of direct contact with the coolies by getting at them through the *busteewalas*. The Patrakhola strike was, I believe, due to 3 or 4 malcontents living on the garden. I did not go into the matter very much as the strike was over by the time I got there.

As regards the two strikes in Kaliti, I went to Kaliti on or about 21st September in response to a wire from the Manager. Mr. Ballantine was also there and we both talked to the coolies and certain sardars. I also saw Thakur Singh, the Government propaganda agent. I got the people together and with the Manager held a meeting with the help of Thakur Singh at 2 o'clock. I asked the coolies if they had any definite grievances to put forward; they said some things against the *kerani* babu, but I had nothing definite to go on. There was a *fakir*, one Mustan Shah, whose case it was my intention to try at the time, but I was advised not to hold the trial on the garden. Originally he had been run in for criminal trespass in Kaliti for going round in June or July and preaching a strike. There was a case against him but the coolies would not come forward with any evidence. He was ultimately convicted under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code.

Lungla.

I talked to coolies at several places but could not get anything definite out of them. Their complaint was that they were not getting enough to feed themselves. All the coolies I met looked quite well fed. There are a few grievances put up such as cattle pounds and distribution of land for cultivation on the gardens and things which a Manager is in a better position than myself to determine.

Reports were submitted to the Local Government regarding the strikes and I submitted my reports to the Deputy Commissioner.

The strikes at Lungla and in the Dholai Valley I would put down entirely to non-co-operation. In the Balisera strikes non-co-operators were not so very much in evidence and at Kaliti and Jagcherra they were not definitely to the fore. Steps have been taken by the Government to stop the activities of the non-co-operators, inasmuch as most of the fiery speakers had orders served on them under section 144, Criminal Procedure Code, and several of them are now in jail. At any rate it is up to the Managers to prevent volunteers from entering gardens.

It is my general opinion as the result of talks with planters that coolies might be better off. I have occasionally seen cases of new coolies who seem to be badly nourished but this is the exception. A Sub-Deputy Collector is responsible for reporting the current prices of rice, but I do not know how he gets about it. With reference to question 17, I can say nothing definite about gardens in general.

No. 48.—Mr. M. BATHER, *Joint Manager, Rangicherra and Muraricherra Tea Estates* :—

I have been 18 years in Tea—all the time in Sylhet. I have been 6½ years in Rangicherra.

I certainly prefer to increase the pay of my present force rather than resort to recruiting. I consider that the money now being spent on recruiting should be devoted towards increasing the wages of the labour force already on the gardens, and though for the start this method would not meet with any appreciable degree of success, yet I am certain it would pay in the long run when the labour force became free. I consider 8 annas a day for a man and 5 to 6 annas for a woman a wage sufficient to attract labour from the country to the tea-gardens. Recruiting, so far as free labour is concerned, is certainly necessary, but there should be no recruiting where the agreement system obtains. My policy is to pay high wages and keep everybody free so that there would be no necessity to pay 'coolies' fairs in order to bring them from their own country. I am in favour of recruiting being stopped by introducing legislation.

My best coolies earn 6 annas a day. If recruiting is abolished I would make it up to 8 annas. None of my coolies are under agreement now. I stopped the agreement system since April because I had heard that agreements were going to be abolished. I have since had coolies coming up to me for agreements and I refused to give them; they did not leave the garden on that account.

The *hazira* rate is 4 annas, but I am paying 6 annas for 20 *nals* of light hoeing. For deep hoeing of 6 inches my maximum *hazira* is 6 annas and my minimum *hazira* is what they earn. If the coolie earns the maximum I give him a bonus of 1 anna 6 pies, *i.e.*, 7 annas 6 pies a week; this is in lieu of the agreement bonus, and is an inducement for them to do the full task as I am short of labour. I give a bonus for each additional *hazira*. A first class coolie would earn as much as 3 *haziras* a day. He cannot do more than 20 *nals* in a day. I pass 6 inches as deep hoeing.

I consider Rs. 7 a month for a man, Rs. 6 for a woman and Rs. 4-2-0 for a child a decent living monthly wage sufficient to keep them in health and reasonable comfort. This is the minimum.

At first I found coolies earning just sufficient for their needs and going to their houses, and when I taught them how to earn more money they took the cue. Coolies need to be encouraged by the Managers occasionally to work.

The estimate for plucking this year is Re. 1-2-0 per maund of green leaf. The average *nirikh* nowadays is 15 pounds; the maximum 24.

I am in favour of dispensing with agreements entirely. I do not say that coolies who work under Act-XIII agreement are working under a sort of slavery; but I do think that they are not as free as they might be. For instance they should be allowed more leave, and they should not be coerced into working. Of course if a man refused to do work on a tea-garden and persistently behaved in such a manner, I would turn him off the garden.

I have started a Savings Bank Account. My coolies put in 4 annas a month; it is just to try and show them how to earn more and also how to save a little. I expect them to put in 25 % of their income. I have at the present moment started with the boys and the whole labour force want to join, but funds are very short and I shall have to pay a lot of interest. In the next year's estimate I expect to put down Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 1,500 as interest. The scheme has been in operation for 3 months now and I am making an experiment with it. I could not say that I would recommend it to others as it has only been recently started. At the present moment I keep the money. I would have no objection to the money being held by a bank composed of coolies. I have not yet made up my mind to put the money into any bank.

I have 327 coolies and there are about 350 acres of land cultivated by them, i.e., rather less than one coolie per acre. It is possible that all the circumstances that suit my garden might not suit other gardens, but I do think the banking account would suit other gardens equally well. I have to put a fair amount of pressure on my coolies to get the work done. I pay high rates because I am short of labour.

I made no profit in 1920 nor do I expect to make any in 1921.

My gardens are under the Court of Wards and I am responsible to Government.

No. 49.—Mr. A. BROWN, *Manager, Rajnagar Tea Company* :—

I have been 31 years in Tea and at Rajnagar all the time.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It is neither possible nor desirable to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

The sporadic nature of the troubles that have occurred are chiefly due to the agitator working on the ignorant mind of the coolie, through his religion, and through tempting him with promises of food without work and land now under tea to be given him to cultivate sugarcane on, and such things.

I have had no strikes on my gardens, but from February to June last there was a nasty feeling among the coolies. The people did not talk to me so freely as before.

Roughly speaking the difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 would be about 33%.

The cash earnings of a coolie on my garden have increased since 1913. The average pay in 1913 was Rs. 5-7-9 and in 1919 Rs. 6-0-6, exclusive of *ticca*. The *ticca* in 1919 was Rs. 6,715; in 1920 Rs. 8,426. The rates of wages are 3 annas for men and women and 1 anna 6 pies for small children; and 2 annas 3 pies for big children; the only rise in wages being in the case of women who received 2 annas 3 pies in 1913.

Though the plucking task has been altered, fine plucking takes a bit longer to finish than coarse plucking.

The working population on the garden including children is 1,050.

Our budget allotment for labour was considerably reduced in 1921 but I had to spend more than the sum allotted.

I have not had many coolies absconding to Tipperah, as the majority are all settled coolies. I had a certain number of unsatisfactory coolies whom I repatriated during the end of 1920, by paying their fares back to their country. I did not want to keep such people and I also wanted to reduce expenditure.

There are about 450 acres of land for cultivation distributed among 640 coolies; of this area 200 acres are rice land and 250 acres sugarcane cultivation.

I charge rent at 4 annas a *bigha* inside the grant. I have charged more at times and the coolies willingly paid it.

I dropped the agreement system at the end of 1920 as I could not afford it but started it again in 1921. Of course I explained my reasons to the coolies and when things improved they asked me to start the agreements again. I do not think the coolies consider it *sharm* to take agreements. I have never run a case under Act XIII.

Lungla. No. 50.—Dr. R. B. ABRAHAM, *Medical Officer, Lungla (Sylhet) Tea Company, Limited* :—

I am Medical Officer in charge of the gardens belonging to the Lungla Company and others. There are altogether 20 gardens under my charge. I have been in Lungla for 8 years. I was in the Happy Valley for 3 years; also in Tarapore one year. I think the gardens under my charge are very healthy. The diseases that are prevalent are malarial fever—not severe to any extent—and hookworm—which is extensive. Coolies bring disease with them from their country. For instance, they come up with hookworm and with large spleens. The recruits of two years ago brought the infection with them from the famine-stricken areas and have been suffering from its effects. I think as a general rule coolies have markedly improved by coming here, as within 6 months of their advent I have found them improving in health. Once the coolies become acclimatised they settle down just like old coolies, say, within 18 months.

The birth-rate is very high, the average of this district being 8 births to one death.

The water-supply is being improved. There are no latrines at present but on my recommendation Directors have agreed to consider proposals to institute latrines.

I think the coolies are living in reasonable comfort and are well fed.

I do not think coolies suffered during the recent economic distress except that they received imported rice which is probably not so good for them.

There has been no beri-beri. We have no indoor wards in this valley except during times of epidemics. Dysentery cases are not segregated, as in this district dysentery is not epidemic. The coolie is rather loath to go into hospital as he has nobody to look after his property and family.

I do not think there would be a marked improvement in the health of the coolies if there was indoor accommodation. Our coolies are constitutionally strong and can resist disease. For instance, during the last 8 years we have pushed the prevention and treatment of hookworm to a great extent and have encouraged coolies to take to treatment, with the result that even without the existence of latrines, the treatment alone has brought about a great improvement. Generally a coolie first develops dysentery or some other serious disease and then *anchylostomiasis* predominates and he suffers.

No. 51.—Mr. R. PRINGLE, *Manager, Dolo Tea Company* :—

I have now been over 26 years in Tea. I have been on my present garden since 1913. I was 3 years in the Barora Tea Company and nearly 15 years in the Patra-khola Tea Company.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort, provided they work regularly.

Though it would be possible to convert the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions into an increase of money wages, I do not think it would be advisable to do so.

I had trouble in May last year and I consider it was due to the efforts of political agitators. My coolies went on strike for 5 days and came back of their own accord. They demanded the dismissal of the *kerami* babu which was refused. The only concession I extended to the coolies was by way of paying them on the following day instead of on the third day.

The yield per acre is just under 11 maunds in a normal year.

The rates for *haziras* are 3 annas 9 pies for men and 3 annas for women; no change has been effected since 1913.

Assuming that rice is selling at Rs. 5 a maund, I consider Rs. 7 a decent living monthly wage, over and above a coolie's bonus and income from cultivation.

The rise in the cost of living at the present moment as compared with 1913 would be about 25 % to 30 %.

We pay in tickets which are cashed by the garden. Of course we pay the shop-keeper so much a month for cashing the tickets. I have had no complaints of shop-keepers taking a discount for cashing tickets.

It takes a woman about 3 hours to do a plucking task. With a reduced task for fine plucking it would take her from 3 to 4 hours, not more. The task for both light and deep hoeing has not altered since 1913, but the work now is much inferior. A coolie can earn more now because the work is easier and he also has the chance of making more *ticca* because the labour force is now depleted. Lungia.

The coolies have about 150 acres of rice land inside the grant and 60 acres outside; I charge no rent. I never sold concession rice at over Rs. 5 a maund at any time.

Pregnant women get as much leave as they desire. Sick pay is also given to coolies. A bonus of one rupee is given when a child is born.

We have agreements; the agreement money is not recovered.

I would be willing to pay a coolie the bonus at the expiry of a year's work, but he prefers to have it in advance as at present.

Our coolies are now fairly temperate probably owing to the high price of liquor. As far as I am aware I do not think any rise in wages has tended to increase intemperance.

No. 52.—Mr. Wm. Scott, Manager, Champarai Tea Estate, Patrakhola Tea Company:—

I have been about 16 years in Tea, and in Champarai 6 years now.

My *hazira* rate is 4 annas both to men and women; this rate is higher than the rates on the adjoining gardens. Owing to the distance from a good bazaar and also the high rates prevailing we have always given our coolies higher wages.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing and garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

It would not, in my opinion, be practicable to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, save in regard to free labour in which case it would be preferable from my point of view but not so in the interests of the coolie as he would be apt to neglect his health for one thing.

CHANDKHIRA, KARIMGANJ, SYLHET, 18TH JANUARY 1922.

Chandkhira.

[MR. WITHERS AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.]

No. 53.—Mr. B. J. Lamb, Manager, Bhubrighat Tea Estate:—

I have been 12 years in Tea and all the time at Bhubrighat. I do not think it necessary to put the coolie under contract. I anticipate no difficulty if Act XIII be abolished. About two-thirds of my coolies are under contract. In 1913 rice cost much less than in 1920 and other commodities rose about 75 % but concessions by the garden bore about 60% of the higher cost of living.

I have taken the following measures to lighten the burden of the coolie. Rice is sold at 8 seers per rupee; since 1919 hot tea is provided at noon to all outside workers and also about 120 children get free meals at noon; serge tunics have been imported and sold below cost price; cloth has been bought for women and the cost recovered by small instalments; there has been an increase in allowance to pregnant women (now 3 annas per day); lands have been given rent-free for cultivation; for a full week's work to men and women and big children a weekly bonus of one day's pay is given; and a monthly allowance of Re. 1 is given to widows for each small child. Coolies are allowed to earn a good deal more money now. There is no restriction as to the amount which a coolie may earn. My garden is undermanned. I now employ fewer Sylhetis. It was not necessary to sell rice in 1913 as it was plentiful; in 1920 we made a big loss in rice; in 1921 the loss was less. If there is a shortage of rice in the bazaar I sell rice. I do not know the present price of rice in the bazaar, but know it to be less than Rs. 5 per maund.

I consider that the remuneration at present received by the coolies along with the concessions is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort. If the contract was abolished I think I would give a bonus at the end of a year's work,

Chand-
khira.

and I have told my coolies accordingly. Many of my coolies make their own rice beer. No safe inference as to a coolie's prosperity can be drawn from the amount spent in drink. A habitual drinker might spend money in drink even at the cost of the welfare of his family. I think a coolie earns enough to have a few luxuries. There is a margin of saving if he does not drink. I have not run Act XIII cases since 1913. It would be an advantage to a garden to abolish Act XIII as the bonus would be paid on expiry of a year's work. A coolie benefits by the agreement more than the garden. If my labour force was increased coolies would still be allowed to earn more. I consider a decent living monthly wage to be Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman. I am assuming that rice would be Rs. 5 a maund. At this rate with a thrifty coolie there would be a margin of saving. I sell rice at 8 seers to the rupee. Seven seers a rupee would not be enough in my garden. It costs me 4 annas a day to brew 120 gallons of tea at noon. The idea is to prevent the coolies from drinking a large quantity of cold water on the top of parched gram. Cases of colic have gone down as a result of this. I believe it a paying proposition to feed children in the middle of the day. It enables the mothers to go out to work as their children are looked after. It costs me about Rs. 57 a month to feed 120 children. I have done so for 2 or 3 years. By experienced medical treatment hookworm has much diminished in the last 5 years. I have no latrines. A man and his wife would not use the same latrine. I have no indoor ward. Serious cases are treated in the lines. I pay 3 annas a day for 2 months to pregnant women irrespective of the condition of the family. I do not see why thrifty people should be penalised by not getting the pregnant bonus. To sick coolies I never pay less than 12 annas a week. In certain cases full pay would be given if there was no bread earner. At present coolies go out to work about 8 o'clock with an average three-quarter mile walk to work; the average coolie would finish his 4-anna task by midday. Some earn 6 annas in 6 hours at hoeing. These are my best coolies. I fine coolies for drinking ditch water as I supply good water by water-carriers during working hours.

The majority of the United Provinces people are satisfactory. In recent years I have recruited from Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Fyzabad, Sultanpur and Ghazipore. Many of my coolies have connections by marriage in the Chargola Valley. In 1919 I got many famine-stricken people; they have been looked after and are fit now, and some are my best workers. There has been no unrest apart from agitators and none in my Estate. My Directors have acquiesced in any concessions suggested. Round about there are agitators. At the time of the Chargola exodus I lost no coolies.

No. 54.—Mr. W. K. ALLIES, *Manager, Sephenjuri Tea Estate* :—

I have been about 20 years in Tea and have had experience in Darjeeling, the Dooars, Sylhet. I have been 13 years in the Sephenjuri Company. It would make no difference to me if Act XIII was abolished. I would give a bonus all the same. Where coolies are under contract it would be difficult all at once to abolish contracts but ultimately it is desirable to have free labour. The ideal is to remove Act XIII and all the Emigration sections of Act VI, but there is a danger of the *arcutti* system coming in. Hill Tipperah can recruit free labour. I cannot. I think that Hill Tipperah recruits mainly from British tea-gardens on the border.

Taking a family as consisting of a man, wife, one working child and two non-working children I consider that the present earnings are sufficient to keep them in health and reasonable comfort. As a rule, though there are exceptions, a man's earnings do not suffice to maintain his wife and family. The system of weighing leaf varies considerably. The real important thing is the provision made for coolies' wages. It does not matter what deductions are made. If 33% is deducted the task is 33% less than it would be if there was no deduction. In April and November 4 maunds of leaf would make one maund of tea; in the monsoon season 4 maunds would not work out to this. In normal times my provision is Rs. 3 per maund of tea for plucking, that is 12 annas a maund for green leaf. This enables a coolie of average efficiency from May to November to earn 6 to 8 annas a day and in many cases much more and very few earn less than 4 annas at that season.

I consider that an adult coolie's budget, *i.e.*, his cost of living, would be Rs. 4-12-0 a month. This figure was worked out by three babus on my garden. I am assuming that rice does not rise above 7 seers to the rupee at any time during the year. The average for the year will be Rs. 4 a maund. At present rice is 10 seers to the rupee

and tends to go up. When rice was dear I sold at 7 seers to the rupee. I am buying paddy at Rs. 2-8-0 a maund and selling at that price. In framing the Rs. 4-12-0 estimate my doctor babu used the jail scale of rations. In that estimate I do not think provision was made for marriage ceremonies. I do not remember the details of the estimate but a man got 2 *dhotis* and a woman 2 *saris* a year. Rs. 4-12-0 is really the minimum required. I consider the remuneration in money together with the concessions is sufficient to maintain a coolie in health and reasonable comfort. I give no bonus at child-birth but pregnant women get a sick *hazira* if they come up for it. The three months' leave for pregnancy counts towards the agreement. It is impossible to calculate the concessions mentioned in terms of money, particularly as regards rice and clothing which constantly fluctuate. It is therefore my view that the suggestion indicated would neither benefit the coolie nor the garden.

Since 1913 I have not increased the *haziras* but tasks have been slightly altered at times when *ticca* was not common (e.g., in the cold weather). Increased facilities for earning *ticca* were given. In giving agreements the name of the coolie and father, amount of advance, and period of contract, are entered in the register. I do not remember if the monthly wage is mentioned in the register. It is not in my register. I use a standard form. No stamp is used. Thumb impression is taken. The verbal agreement is that a coolie will work for one calendar year. The wage returns for September 1920 are incorrect. I was then at Home. The reason why the wages in the return of September 1921 are lower than in September 1920 is that in 1921 my best coolies spent more time in paddy cultivation. The average wages of children in September 1920 are high. In column 6 I have included subsistence allowance paid to orphan children.

No. 55.—Mr. C. TOWNSEND, *Superintendent, Longai Tea Company* :—

I am the Superintendent of the Longai Tea Company and since 1903 I have been at Chandkhira. I have been 47 years in Tea; in the Dooars, Darjeeling, Cachar and Sylhet. I like Act XIII. I know it is not very binding but the coolie seems to have an idea that by touching the pen he has to carry out his part of the agreement when he takes the money. Act XIII is a light Act. In weighing leaf we turn seers into pounds. A woman bringing in 30 seers is paid for 30 pounds. Under Act XIII a coolie gets as much leave as we can give. A coolie values the bonus. I consider that the remuneration in money payments along with the concessions is sufficient to maintain a coolie in health and reasonable comfort. I think a coolie does not spend more than Rs. 3-8-0 or Rs. 4 a month on himself. The bulk of his expenditure is in rice. We sold rice at 7 seers a rupee when the market rate was above that. When I say Rs. 3-8-0 or Rs. 4 a month, that does not include expenditure on children. Most of my coolies have cultivation. A coolie would probably not enter into an agreement except for the bonus. I have never run a coolie in under Act XIII. If I had to go to court I would prefer to go to the civil court, but I prefer best to go to neither. I do not think the abolition of Act XIII would make much difference in the number of coolies absconding. I would not give the bonus if there was no agreement. I think that giving a bonus at the end of a year would come to practically the same thing but at first a coolie might be suspicious of a new practice. I use no stamps in taking my agreements.

I consider the remuneration in money payments along with the concessions is sufficient to maintain a coolie in health and reasonable comfort. I think it impossible and undesirable to convert the concessions into an increase of money wages. More than half my coolies come from the United Provinces. On the whole they are good but I prefer Sonthalis. At the time of the Chargola exodus my out-gardens lost a certain number of coolies. Those who went said they had got orders to go along with their *bhailog*. They were all Bilaspuris. I lost no North-westerns. Including men, women and children, I lost from Lalkhira 229, from Adamtila 100 and from Longai 200. Those who went were all new coolies recruited in 1919. The three gardens I have named are in my Company. None of the coolies who left complained of any economic grievances. Hearing that Longai coolies were about to leave I went to see them. They said "*Gandhi-ka-hukum*". The coolies went out to work for an hour and then left the garden salaaming me. Very few of those had cultivation. I was not aware of any agitators having actually been in the lines. I met agitators going along the public road towards Longai. It was after this that

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khira.

the coolies left. I had no reports from my Managers that any agitators had entered the lines. I do not think any of the babus in the gardens did anything to propagate the Gandhi doctrine or were mixed up with them. The coolies go to Chandkhira bazaar and may have come into contact with agitators there, but I cannot say positively that agitators went to that bazaar. There has been no trouble in the bazaar. The villagers round about have always been quite friendly with me and there is no noticeable change in their attitude towards me. I consider Rs. 7 for men and Rs. 6 for women is adequate to meet the cost of living.

No. 56.—Mr. V. G. EVERY, *Superintendent of the Pathini Tea Company* :—

I have been 14 years in Tea—all the time in the Pathini Tea Company. I am in favour of retaining Act XIII. I am not sure of its advantages, but I think it desirable from a coolie's standpoint as he gets an advance. I do not think it would be satisfactory, from the garden point of view, to give a bonus at the end of a year's work. It does not matter much whether the coolie gets his bonus at the end of a year's work or at the beginning. I lost no coolies at the time of the Chergola exodus. From time to time I have lost a good many coolies who have gone into Hill Tipperah. Some were under agreement, others not. We have got some back from Hill Tipperah. In my answers to the printed questions I said that the cash earnings of coolies had not increased since 1913, but I have not at any time examined the wages actually earned. As a matter of fact wages have increased. Coolies owe to the gardens in my Company Rs. 20,708 which I do not consider excessive. A large portion of this is probably due from sardars who have gone recruiting and brought back nobody. Advances are given to sardars recruiting. We keep in our books for some time advances made to coolies in the hope that we will be able to recover them. Our system of payment is monthly. Part of the Rs. 20,708 is for rice advanced to coolies but not paid for in cash at the time of taking it. We sell rice for cash, but if a coolie has not enough to pay in full, we give it on credit. An adult man would require a minimum of Rs. 5 or perhaps less to live on in a month, but coolies may be doing their own cultivation, so one has to discriminate. The coolies have lots of cultivation. I grant no bonus at child-birth and I pay no allowance to pregnant women though sometimes I use my own discretion. I would say that 7 seers to the rupee is a moderate price for rice. In the last 4 years about 400 of my coolies absconded to Hill Tipperah. Rice was sold to the coolies solely because there was a scarcity in the local bazaars. In 1923 I was importing rice at Rs. 7 a maund and sold it at 7 seers to the rupee. I sold about 500 maunds a month at this rate which had been fixed at a meeting of Longai district planters. The present price of paddy is Rs. 2 a maund. I regard Longai district as a cheap district because we are near Tipperah. I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort and I believe the coolie thinks so too. It is impracticable and undesirable to convert the concessions into an increase of money wages.

No. 57.—Mr. J. C. DAWSON, *Manager, Isa Bheel Tea Estate* :—

I have been 24 years in Tea in Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Sylhet, and since 1908 have been at Isa Bheel. I think I could get on without Act XIII provided some equivalent of the present bonus is given. Lately I have had a few absconders, but not many—65 in 2 years. I lost none at the time of the Chergola exodus. I consider that the remuneration in money along with the concessions is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort. At any rate this is the case as regards the average coolie willing to work, but perhaps it is not true in the case of an elderly coolie. I think it nearly impossible to convert the concessions into an increase of money wages. Tea districts differ in cheapness of living, and to convert the concessions into money wages might give a wrong impression in comparing different gardens. I am rather favourably situated as regards rice. The present price of paddy is 24 seers to the rupee, *i. e.*, about Rs. 1-13-0 a maund. Among my coolies I have had no unrest, but

agitators who tried to tamper with the bazaar were turned out by me. At Nilam's Bazaar it has been given out by beat of drum that no boats are to be taken to my garden for carrying tea or stores. I have also been threatened on the public road. The reason for this is that I have helped Government by reporting about agitators. The name of one of the Chargola agitators who was arrested was given by me and because of that the non-co-operators offered Rs. 1,000 to any one who would kill me. Chand-
khira.

My *haziras* are 4 annas for men, 3 annas for women in the case of *tila* workers, and 5 annas for men and 4 annas for women in the case of servants. In 1920 I think, Dr. McLaughlin proposed the idea of a bonus monthly to coolies who did 24 days' work in a month. It was not carried into effect. Perhaps other Directors did not approve of it. I think a coolie at the present time is better off than in the days of Act VI when he got rice at Rs. 3 a maund. I work practically on the unit system. Many women do considerably more than their task, e.g., at present, in pruning, forking and sugarcane cutting, they are earning extra pay. In draining, the unit system is in force and for that work yesterday 9 annas 6 pies was the highest earned. The great difficulty is a weak coolie. The average coolie earns enough but in the case of a weak coolie not up to a full task work, though willing, his average earnings are less. Most of my coolies come from Basti and a few from Bilaspur. They do me well and most of them have been a good many years in the garden. I have a big percentage of Chamars. I lost none at the time of the Chargola exodus. From Isa Bheel there is a pathway through the jungle to Magura in the Chargola Valley, and I believe that after the Chargola exodus the intention was to start at Isa Bheel and have an exodus from the Longai Valley. One day I came across coolies who were leaving Kalinagar garden in the Chargola Valley. They said they had no complaints but that they were going because it was *Gandhi-ka-hookum*.

No. 58.—Dr. C. G. TERRELL, *Medical Officer, Longai Valley Medical Association* :—

All the gardens in the Longai Valley are in my charge; about 14 in all. I have been just over a year here. During my war service I had some experience of tropical diseases. I think that the medical arrangements in this Valley are as good as can be expected. In some gardens coolies will not go to hospitals. I think in some cases an improvement in the water-supply is possible, but on the whole the water is good. We are trying to keep down hookworm as far as possible. I do not think latrines are feasible. As far as possible cases are treated in hospital, but where this does not exist or for any other reason, they are treated in their houses in the lines. I inspect the lines from a sanitary point of view. Coolies have a great objection to going to hospital as in-patients. It largely depends on the kind of coolie whether you can overcome this prejudice. I would say that the average coolie at present is well clothed and well nourished. Pneumonia is largely due to coolies lying about and getting a chill. Coolies I think generally sleep on the ground. Perhaps a *machan* would occupy too large a space in the house. A large number of coolies have blankets which cost a coolie about Rs. 2 from the garden as against Rs. 3 in the bazaar. I would not say that the Longai Valley is a particularly healthy one: it is distinctly malarious. Dysentery is uncommon, so is cholera. Most of the wells are open and uncovered and they are mostly unfenced. From a sanitary point of view, it is ideal that a well should be protected with wire-netting but open to the sun. Wells are fortnightly inspected and cleaned where necessary. In certain gardens a system of tanks well fenced reduces dysentery. This tank system is not necessary if there is no particular epidemic in gardens where there are wells. In these tanks water is drawn off by pumps through pipes. In several gardens we have a pump system in connection with wells. In one case river water is pumped into filters. Sometimes coolies drink water which is taken straight from the river or *nullahs*. I have traced three cases of cholera to this. With a latrine system, unless there were sweepers and good organization, it would be a source of more infection than the present system. I have heard of coolies breaking pumps and throwing them into the well. Generally Managers respond willingly to requests for improvement so far as funds permit. I do not recommend any uniform system of sanitation.

Dullab-
cherra.

In 1918-19 most of my recruits came from Basti district. I could not say that they were all satisfactory. Many had to be fed up. Many of those who left in the exodus had been in the garden for 6 or 7 years and one had been 27 years. About 10 or 14 have returned, some from Basti, some from Chandpur and some from Allahabad. Sardars had gone up to their home districts to interview them. The men who came back said that all the coolies had got "*Gandhi-Baba-ka-hookum*" to go. In my opinion the exodus was primarily political. One man who returned said he had come back because he could not fill his belly in his country where he had gone. Between 1913 and the exodus there was no increase in the rate of *hazira*. Between 1913 and 1920 the cost of living had risen 25%. The same concessions were given in 1913 as in 1920, but I daresay rice was cheaper in 1913. Hence the loss to the garden was more in 1920. Hospital expenses increased in 1920, as there was more sickness. If a new recruit goes to a different garden there is a settlement made between the Managers of the gardens concerned. Those who are not under agreement with me are not absconding.

The figure Rs. 3-12-0 for a coolie's expenditure per month is guess work; I made no calculations.

Before the Ratabari meeting there was no unrest in my garden. Two of my coolies attended the meeting. They gave me no report. A male coolie who has since returned said to me at the time of the exodus that he would not stay for a rupee a day. I saw many of my coolies on the road on the way to Karimganj. They said they were going because it was *Gandhi ka-hookum* and their *bhailog* were going. I stopped some of them for a little but they continued on their way. The man whom I referred to had two cows that came back to the garden. He said they had more sense than he had. In the case of this particular man with the two cows economic pressure could not have been severe. It was the idea that an increase of wages would stop the exodus, but it did not stop my coolies who deserted on the 8th of May. I myself was opposed to an increase until sanctioned by the Agents. When Mr. Crawford sanctioned it I gave it at once. I wired to my Agents asking for sanction. I would say that the exodus in my garden was entirely due to the efforts of non-co-operators. I did not previously see a copy of the minutes of the Dullabcherra meeting of 6th May 1921. I told my coolies that they would get whatever increase Singlacherra, the next-door garden in the same Company, might give. I told them so on the muster ground on the day they left. The Magura coolies had left before the arrival of Mr. Crawford who sanctioned the increase. On the 8th May when they appeared on the muster ground they had their things packed up ready to go.

I hold sick muster and if any one wants leave or is sick he gets leave or is sent to the hospital then. If a coolie wants leave he comes to muster and asks for it, and I decide whether he is to get it. All coolies come to sick muster. Leave is invariably given if asked for. I do not have children put under agreement.

No. 61.—Mr. E. TODD NAYLOR, *Managing Director, Chargola Tea Association*:—

I am Managing Director of the Chargola Tea Association. I came out to Coffee in Ceylon in 1879 and to Sylhet in Tea in 1883. I retired in 1911 but I come out in the cold weather of every year. I was out here the whole of 1917 and 1918. I do not think Act XIII contracts are any good. The coolies get money and touch the pen. Since the exodus we are not giving agreements. I did not approve of the rise of wages; 6 and 4 annas is absurd, but I would not have objected to a slight rise. I would have raised men to 4 annas 6 pies and women to 3 annas 6 pies. Wages in the Longai Valley were not raised. I do not think that owing to the increased cost of living wages should have been raised. The North-westerns are a lazy lot who do not want to do *ticca*. If coolies want to earn more they can earn more. The North-westerns are an inheritance from the past. They were on the garden when I first joined and since then I have got up Central Provinces coolies. In recent years we have got coolies from famine districts. They are cheaper to recruit. In the old days we used to bring boat-loads of them at Rs. 14 a head. Many of them died on the way. At that time we paid *haziras* 3 annas 9 pies to men and 3 annas to women, i.e., Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month. I had a few Act VI coolies at Oliviacherra. We had to give rice at Rs. 3 a maund if the bazaar rate exceeded that. A coolie in those days could live on one anna a day and save. With rice at Rs. 4 a maund a coolie could now live on Rs. 4-8-0 a month including clothes. North-westerns do not buy many clothes. In March 1921, I left Chargola. With reference

to the minutes of the meeting of 6th May to the effect that there was a consensus of opinion that coolies' wages should be raised, I did not see that there was any economic distress that pointed to that. Coolies who have come back have told me that they were forced to leave the garden by threats of what would happen to them and of divine displeasure.

No. 62.—Mr. W. R. P. GUNNERY, *Manager, Chargola Division* :—

I have been 26 years in Tea in the same Company in Sylhet.

In the exodus I lost 900 to 950 working coolies, of whom about 750 left the garden on the morning of May 3rd—the morning after the second non-co-operation meeting held at Ratabari close to my garden. These meetings were held on May 1st and 2nd, 1921. On the morning of May 3rd a number of coolies demanded an increase of wages, i.e., 8 annas and 6 annas for men and women. Previous to this an increase of wages had not been asked for. I told them it was impossible for me to give them the wages demanded and urged them to go out to work which a number did. The remainder were hesitating when some one amongst them shouted *Gandhi Maharaj ki jai*. They left the muster ground in a body and in half an hour were leaving the garden. This move was previously arranged as is proved by the fact that all their belongings were packed up, and cattle tied up ready for the exit. The coolies left the muster ground in an orderly manner and no insult was offered to myself or my Assistant. A great number of them salaamed as they passed us.

The exodus of coolies was the direct result of the non-co-operation meeting held the night before. The coolies had been told that if their demand for 8 and 6 annas was refused to leave the garden. One speaker who addressed the meeting in Hindustani made the most inflammatory speech. It was he who appealed to the coolies and instructed them to demand annas 8 and 6 and, if they did not get it, to leave the garden. He said that Gandhi had sent a steamer to Karimganj to take them to their country where they would be given land free. They were told that the British *Raj* was at an end. This was a new and big move on the part of the non-co-operation agitators, ordinary strikes on other gardens having failed. The coolies, I have been told, were made to take an oath over a bowl of holy water not to disobey Gandhi's orders. I was warned by the Police Sub-Inspector of Ratabari of the impending meeting. I told him I should not try, except by persuasion, to stop the coolies from attending. In the first place it would be impossible to do so with the meeting-place so close to the garden, and secondly by forbidding them to go it would only arouse suspicion. I took no steps to move the authorities to prevent the meeting being held. Nearly all the coolies who left on the first day were the newer imported coolies, mostly from Basti district. During the next 2 or 3 days more coolies left including some Central Provinces coolies some of whom have returned.

I motored the Deputy Commissioner and Subdivisional Officer to Patharkandi and Karimganj and met and interviewed many coolies. We were repeatedly told that it was by Gandhi's orders they were leaving. We tried to reason with the coolies on the road, and in Karimganj, and persuade them to return, but without avail. It was decided to issue warrants on certain of the ringleaders under agreement. A few were served on coolies from Mookham. The coolies were bailed out and garlanded by the non-co-operators in Karimganj. In accordance with advice from officials no more warrants were executed.

Act XIII is of no use in organised strikes. The only case where I personally have found the Act of use is where defaulting sardars have taken advances and refused to return from their country. On May 6th a meeting was held at Dullabcherra at which the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police were present. I was ill and unable to attend. Next morning the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner accompanied by the Manager of Dullabcherra visited me and I was informed that the Managers had agreed to raise the wages of the remaining coolies to 6 and 4 annas with the object of stopping a further exodus and settling the coolies. I was told Mr. Wray of Maguracherra had "jibbed" a bit at the meeting and Mr. Dunlop of Goombira being a "canny Scot," had wired to the Agents in Calcutta for instructions. Minutes of this meeting were drawn up, but these I never knew of until to-day. It was a slippery way of getting out of it and I think it was most unfair that minutes should be drawn up and fixed without reference to all Managers in the Valley.

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cherra.

I sent a wire to my Agents in Calcutta, Messrs. James Finlay and Co., to the effect that in conjunction with other Managers I proposed to raise the wages to 6 and 4 annas. I received a reply that on no account could wages be raised and that Mr. Crawford was coming up from Calcutta. On the afternoon of Saturday, May 7th, I assembled all the remaining men coolies at the bungalow and talked to them at great length and explained I was not in a position to raise their wages without the sanction of my Company and that they knew as well as I did that I got a monthly remittance to pay them with and that I could not get rupees from the earth or sky. I told them my *Burra Sahib* was coming up from Calcutta and that I would do my best for them as I had done in the past. The assembly closed with hands up for the *Sahib* to which every coolie to a man responded. All the remaining coolies had worked regularly throughout the week at the old rate of wages. Sunday, 8th, was our pay day, and pay was proceeding as usual when word came that three neighbouring gardens had raised the wages to 6 and 4 annas. From this moment the coolies went absolutely mad and for three days the garden was in an uproar. It was stated that Gandhi had raised the wages. A *Bhor* boy (of about 18 years of age), upon whom the "Spirit of Gandhi" was supposed to have descended, was placed on the Hindu shrine in the lines and worshipped by the coolies for two days. The third day he made a fatal mistake by stating that it was Gandhi's order that in the future the women were to do all the work and the men squat. This caused a break up, and was the starting point of the coolies becoming more reasonable. After Mr. Crawford's visit it was decided to increase the wage to 6 and 4 annas as other gardens had already done so. Since the increase of wages no agreements have been given. I think the increase of wages is working well though it is only in the experimental stage. But I consider it was wrong that this should have been given under pressure. I consider that Government should have taken firmer action at the time of the exodus and not allowed or encouraged an increase of wage under the pressure of a strike. It was on this account the coolies thought it was through Gandhi's orders that the wages had been raised.

Coolies who have returned to the garden have acknowledged, they were deluded. I do not consider that if a coolie worked well, and with other benefits received on the garden, the old rate of wage was inadequate, though owing to the increased cost of living many of the new coolies were hard hit and not as well off as they were previously. If I had been at the meeting I should not have agreed to raising the wages without first consulting the Agents. I think it was wrong any garden raising wages unless all the gardens in the Valley did so simultaneously.

I should say some 400 to 500 out of about 800 newer coolies were a poor type and many not good workers. Some of these coolies were useless and had no intention of working, and by getting rid of these, the garden has benefited. We were hard up for labour and recruited largely from famine districts. Some of the coolies should never have been allowed to come up, as they were physically unfit for work. Had these been repatriated we would have got into bad odour with the recruiting agents.

During the season of 1921, 602 acres had to be semi-abandoned, of which 179 acres will be abandoned altogether and not reclaimed. In place of a normal yield of 12,000 maunds the yield of 1921 will be 6,000 maunds. By reducing the estimate for coolie labour, we did not, so far as my garden was concerned, reduce the coolies' earnings. The reason for reducing the allotment for coolie labour in the 1921 budget was to curtail expenses as much as possible, but, if necessary, we are not restricted to budget figures. No coolie was discouraged from working though leave was given freely to those desiring it.

The provision for the labour force in the budget of 1919 was Rs. 99,010-8-0, in 1920 Rs. 1,00,326-12-0 and in 1921 Rs. 89,645-8-3. These figures were based on the existing labour force at the time the estimates were made out.

The amount spent on recruiting was :—

1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.
Rs. 17,266-14-9.	Rs. 5,493-0-3.	Rs. 20,826-5-9.	Rs. 10,562-2-9.	Rs. 1,945-2-0.

In 1917 the labour force was 2,501. In 1918 there was a decrease of 154; in 1919 a decrease of 110; in 1920 an increase of 5; and in 1921 after the exodus a decrease of 1,028. In 1919 we lost a large number of coolies owing to a very severe epidemic of influenza. We have also suffered heavy losses owing to coolies being enticed away to Indian-owned estates in the district which has largely counterbalanced the

increase by recruiting. I hear that recruits and exodus coolies who wish to come back are being tampered with in their country. We have got 10 of the exodus coolies back to date. Coolies are also being tampered with on the road from Karimganj, for example, at Nilam's Bazaar. Dullabcherra.

Between the 1st of January and the 1st of May 1921 there was little *ticca* work. In 1921 there was no *ticca* hoeing till the cold weather when the semi-abandoned tea was being reclaimed. On Sundays in 1921 there was *ticca* plucking both before and after the rise of wages. In 1919 men could earn by *haziras* and *ticca* 6 annas or more.

In 1920 I was away on furlough. I had no reason to believe that before the exodus there was any interference with the coolies. I have heard that before the exodus coolies got letters from their country referring to Gandbi, but I never got proof of it.

The coolies we have now on the garden are better coolies and do harder work than the majority of those who left. I know nothing about resolutions passed at the Sylhet meeting in September 1920 that workers should leave European service. At present agitators are busy boycotting Dullabcherra bazaar. Things on my garden are at present all right.

No. 63.—Babu JNANENDRA KISHORE DUTT RAY, *Kalinagar Tea Estate* :—

I have been in Kalinagar garden from 1910. I was a clerk and am now Manager since the coolie exodus. The former Manager resigned just after the exodus when we lost 335 coolies, of whom about 100 have returned. Sixty or 70 came back from Karimganj, 15 or 20 days after the exodus; others came back from villages and to-day 3 coolies have returned from their country. The coolies left the garden owing to economic causes and there were also complaints of ill-treatment at the hands of the Manager of Kalinagar. Our coolies left on the 15th May. After the Ratabari meeting the coolies asked for higher *haziras*—5 and 6 annas. On the 13th May we informed the coolies that wages would be increased to 5 and 4 annas for men and women as against 4 and 3 annas, but after telling them this the coolies left.

In 1920 my coolies found living hard owing to the high price of food and clothing. We sold rice at one *kathi* (i.e., $3\frac{1}{2}$ seers) for 9 annas 6 pies to 10 annas when the market rate was higher. The present price is $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 annas a *kathi* but is getting dearer. I have about 500 maunds of paddy in stock which I bought last year. In 1919 I spent Rs. 7,491 in recruiting, mostly Chamars. The people who left in the exodus were mainly new coolies. In 1919 the men's *haziras* were increased from $3\frac{1}{2}$ annas to 4 annas. I was then a clerk and I cannot say why this was done. My agreement bonuses are Rs. 6 and 5 to men and women yearly. I do not think it necessary to put the coolie under contract. I prefer free labour. My agreement and non-agreement coolies get the same pay. Possibly if I doubled the advances, agreements might be more popular. Since last June I have put no coolie under agreement. It is not the case that men and women get 6 and 5 annas as stated by the Managing Director in his evidence at Sylhet. We have a panchayat system. Coolies obey the panchayat. Grievances come before the panchayat and through them to the Manager. These are mainly disputes between coolies. Complaints about tasks and wages would come direct to me. The panchayat system is not general in gardens, but I cannot give details. In my garden the panchayat consists of 2 sardars appointed by coolies, one chowkidar, one *tila* babu and a doctor babu. The coolies select all the members of the panchayat. The complaints against the former Manager were about his ill-treatment towards coolies and about wages. In the last 2 years we have not supplied blankets or clothing to coolies. I know nothing about the resolutions of the Sylhet meeting of September 1920. Agitators have not come to my garden.

No. 64.—Dr. J. DUNLOP, *Medical Officer, Chargola Valley* :—

Since February 1917 I am Medical Officer in the Chargola Valley. Before that I was Medical Officer to the North Cachar Medical Syndicate for 9 years. On the whole, the Chargola Valley is healthy. There is a fair amount of malaria. Water-supply

is very good, all *pucca* wells with pipes leading to pumps away from the wells; I know of no better supply anywhere. There has been a good deal of dysentery, especially among new coolies who often bring it with them. I think that coolies, if they are physically fit for importation, improve when they are in this Valley. I consider that at present there is no proper medical inspection in the recruiting depôts and this would apply to many of the recruits in 1918, 1919 and 1920. The coolies who left in the exodus were mainly new coolies and a percentage of them were physically unfit. The gardens did their best to feed them up. It takes a coolie one year at least to get acclimatized. The coolies here are much inferior in all respects to those in North Cachar. Basti and Gorakhpur coolies in the Chargola Valley were of poor physique and some of those imported must have been the scum of the bazaars. Of the people who went in the exodus 80% were reasonably fit but others were not fit. It was part of the Gandhi propaganda that coolies should have nothing to do with hospitals and Western medicines. Intravenous injection for cholera was not looked on by the non-co-operators—not the coolies—with favour. I should say that 80% of those who left were physically fit to do a day's full task.

No. 65.—Mr. G. E. RAYNER, *Divisional Manager, Goombhira Division* :—

I have been 28 years in Tea, all the time in Sylhet district and 18 years at Goombhira. At the time of the exodus I was in England. I think it was a mistake to put up the rates at the time of the exodus, but it was done with the object of saving the situation; the Managers at the time thought it might perhaps have some influence to keep the coolies. It is a mistake to put up wages when you are dictated to. It did not prevent our coolies from leaving. The coolies of Goombhira Division left on the 10th May after the Club meeting of the 6th of May. On the 8th of May Mr. Dunlop, the then Manager, gave out that the coolies would get 6 and 4 annas. He wired to the Agents who told him not to grant this. From 1915 to 1920 we recruited heavily. In a way the coolies were satisfactory, but had not the same physique as coolies from Chota Nagpur and *junglis*. This valley recruits from the north-west because it has a connection with that part. It is only in a few valleys, such as Chargola, Longai and Hailakandi, that the north-west coolie can live. I left for Home on 14th December 1920. There was then nothing which pointed to the need for higher wages. The *hazira* had not been altered since I came to Goombhira 18 years ago, but there were some reductions in tasks and the opportunities of earning money increased. Hoeing tasks were reduced by 25%; coolies could earn *haziras* quicker. We did a lot to help in the way of rice concessions. I have never suggested to my Agents to increase coolies' wages. If the price of rice is about Rs. 4 a maund a good coolie would spend Rs. 5 in food and clothing. Up to the time of the exodus a coolie of average efficiency could earn that. Anyone who wants to take up land for cultivation can have one or two *kears* perhaps to each family. 1920 was a bad economic year. Up to the end of 1920 I do not think that my coolies had any economic grievance. The coolies with the present *haziras* of 6 and 4 annas are getting a very liberal wage. We have no agreements now. I would say that 5 and 4 anna *haziras* would be preferable. Concessions which we gave with the former *haziras* in the form of agreement bonus, cheaper rice, midday meals, clothing and blankets, will gradually have to be eliminated. We used to give these concessions; now we give none. Our garden lost £ 19,000 sterling in one year. In abnormal circumstances we might have to sell rice at cost price. I do not think it possible or desirable that the concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages. I think the concessions are necessary in the interests of the coolie. Before I went on leave I heard of meetings at Sylhet and Karimganj towards the end of 1920. This was about 2 or 3 months before I went Home. There was a resolution to remove all clerks from tea-gardens, and in the Karimganj meeting it is said that it was intended to denude tea-gardens of labour. The Karimganj meeting was subsequent to the Sylhet meeting. In August 1920 my pluckers were divided into 4 *daffas* and an examination of the books by the Deputy Commissioner revealed the fact that women in a *daffa* of inferior workers were earning very low pay compared with the better workers in the first *daffa*. I was not aware that there was so much difference until my attention was called to it by him. We have only 50 or 60 Basti coolies left. At present rice concessions are not required as rice is cheap. Coolies who realized the advantages of living on a tea-garden did not leave in the exodus. In 1920 men got no *ticca* except on Sundays. If they did a full task they were not

fed at garden expense. In 1920 rice was sold at Rs. 5-8-0 a maund to the coolie; I do not know the price of rice in 1913. We lost Rs. 17,000 on rice in 1920. When we sold rice coolies could buy as much as they wanted. In 1920 the task for light hoeing was 30 *vals* for 4 annas and the coolies were not allowed to do more than that. The budget for 1921 was reduced in everything except where coolies' wages were concerned in spite of the fact that we made a loss in 1920.

Dullab-
cherra.

No. 66.—Mr. N. H. MACLEOD, *Manager, Mukamcherra Tea Estate* :—

I have been 15 years in Tea—all in the same Company, and have been at Mukamcherra since June 1919. At the time of the exodus I lost 740 coolies from Mukamcherra and the out-garden Damcherra. I am of opinion that this was the result of the Ratabari meeting. I do not think that coolies had grievances. At the Club meeting of the 6th May I was present and I agreed to raise *haziras* to 6 and 4 annas, but I did so merely in agreement with Mr. Bather (my Superintendent) and other Valley Managers, as Mr. Bather stated that his coolies were 'wobbling' and he intended giving out that night the news of the increase in the hope of stopping his force from stampeding. I do not think that paragraph 6 of the minutes of that meeting is a fair statement. Mr. Webster, Commissioner, was strongly in favour of increasing wages. He suggested that wages should be raised to stop the coolies leaving. The Government could not help us. I did not say at the meeting that coolies' wages were too low. We were left to help ourselves; several said "Raise wages a little"; some said "No, don't raise them." Mr. Webster pressed the 6 and 4 anna rates. I do not think it was a matter of coolies' wages at all. The rates, 6 and 4 annas, might be called an inducement to help to keep the remaining coolies in the gardens. I cannot say now whether it was a good move or not. I think it is too soon to say whether it will be beneficial. I am not now giving agreements. I do not think I am getting my money's worth at the 6 and 4 anna rates. The quality of work is inferior. At present I have 540 coolies as against about 1,175 before the exodus. The rates 6 and 4 annas were the highest that were suggested at the meeting. Since May last I pay at these rates. Since May I have had 2 or 3 strikes. On the last occasion the coolies had a row among themselves and 16, including the ringleaders, were run in. In December last they were released on bail and returned to the garden and shouted "*Gandhi-kijai*" and continued to create general disturbances on the garden. I wired to the Deputy Commissioner after consulting my neighbours on both sides who agreed with me that the situation justified a telegram asking for prompt Government action. The Deputy Commissioner came out with a large body of police and arrested the offenders. Nine of the 16 were convicted and the ringleaders have been turned out of the garden. The ringleader is now in the bazaar at Dullabcherra. It was a display of firmness that restored order. Before the Ratabari meeting I had heard of a strike at Lungla Tea Estate but not of the September Sylhet meeting.

KARIMGANJ, SYLHET, 23RD JANUARY 1922.

Karimganj.

[MR. WITHERS AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.]

No. 67.—Rai Bahadur PANCHU GOPAL MUKERJEE, *Extra Assistant Commissioner, Subdivisional Officer, Karimganj* :—

I have been Subdivisional Officer, Karimganj, since August 1918 except for a period of about 11 months when I went on leave.

I was here at the time of the Chargola exodus. I am of opinion that it was mainly the result of the efforts of political agitators. I believe that for some time before this event happened there was some sort of propaganda work in the neighbourhood of the tea-gardens carried on by political agitators in the villages, and matters came to a head when the meeting at Ratabari was held. I think the coolies had been told beforehand that the management of European-owned gardens was in the hands of "*Shaitans*," that the condition of the garden coolies was miserable inasmuch as they could not get even a living wage. When this meeting at Ratabari took place hundreds of coolies from the neighbouring gardens attended and were addressed in

Karimganj). Hindustani by a man called Radha Krishna Pande of Silchar who tried to impress on them that they should refuse to serve for anything less than 8 annas a *hazira* for men and 6 annas for women and that the Government was satanic. It was sought to be impressed on them—at least that was the impression they had when they attended the meeting—that it was Gandhi Maharaj's *hookum* that no *hazira* less than 8 annas and 6 annas should be accepted. This happened on 2nd May 1921. The meeting sat for two days, *viz.*, 1st and 2nd May. On the 3rd May 1921 the coolies of Anipur tea-garden mustered on the ground in probably unusual numbers and gave an ultimatum to Mr. Gunnery, the Manager, to the effect that they would not work unless 8 and 6 annas were given them forthwith. The Manager explained that it was beyond his power to do so, but that he would represent matters to the Directors of the Company, and that he would be quite willing to increase their wages if the Directors so permitted. He then asked the coolies to go and resume work as usual, but they did not do so. Eventually, the same afternoon, they left the garden in large numbers. About one-third of the labour force of Chargola and Anipur left the gardens for Karimganj shouting on their way "Gandhi Maharaj ki jai". I was not present at the time this happened, but was informed of all that took place. I think there had been propaganda work on one garden from before as the Head Clerk told me after the exodus that letters had been received by certain coolies from the United Provinces to say that Mr. Gandhi would arrange for the free conveyance of coolies to their homes. I asked the clerk if he had communicated the news to the Manager of the garden and he said he had not because no such question was asked him. This happened about 2 or 3 months before the exodus commenced. On certain gardens the coolies on being told that they could leave if they did not agree to work on the present *haziras*, said they were not willing to leave the gardens. Some said that they had cut the jungle and made all the tea bushes and also seemed to think that tea would be abandoned so that they could then cut out the tea and plant paddy and sugarcane instead. During the exodus the villagers of the neighbouring villages, as was reported to me, encouraged the coolies to leave. Their intention was to buy up the cattle, paddy and *gur* of the coolies as cheaply as possible, and I think they also expected that when the labour force left, the gardens would be abandoned and they could then have the lands for their own cultivation. The coolies who left the gardens came into Karimganj and were in the hands of the non-co-operators for several weeks. Attempts were made to induce them to return to the gardens, in certain cases by tea-garden sardars and by planters who came from the gardens to take them, by the Deputy Commissioner and also by myself; we spoke to many of them, but they were heedless. Some of the coolies told me that they were experiencing great hardships in Karimganj, but they were unwilling to return for three reasons: *viz.*, (1) that the coolies who were still on the gardens would taunt and jeer at them, (2) that the lands which they had on the gardens and which they left behind would in all probability not be given back to them, and (3) that the Managers would not treat them so kindly as they would other coolies who had stayed on. About a third of the 300 coolies who had cleared out of Kalinagar tea-garden, which is an Indian-owned garden, returned to that garden. The majority of the coolies who left their gardens during the exodus and came to Karimganj were provided with short journey tickets by the townspeople of Karimganj—mainly non-co-operators—by rail as well as by steamer, and it was not until the 3rd week in July, so far as I am able to recollect, that the final batch of coolies left Karimganj by steamer. They could not leave earlier owing to the railway strike. There had been a measure of discontent among the coolies. A very large number of coolies had been recruited during the season 1918-19. I think the number was roughly about 10,000 for the whole subdivision, according to my recollection; and 1,800 sardars' certificates were issued during that period. In 1920 the number recruited was about 5,000. Many coolies came up in indifferent health, carrying the influenza infection with them. Influenza was epidemic in this subdivision in 1919-20 and a large number of coolies were reduced to a bad state of health, as a result of which many of them were not able to work hard and earn a decent wage. Prices were ruling high and this affected their economic condition to a great extent. During the exodus I found a lot of coolies, mostly dependents, in rags and many appeared to be ill-nourished, though the majority of those who left were in a good state of health and fairly well clad. On the 3rd of May I met the very first batch of 300 coolies who left Anipur at a place called Nilam's Bazar 10 miles from here, and held them up there till the following morning. I reasoned with them and told them that I had come out for the purpose of listening to whatever grievances they had and, if possible, to bring about some amicable settlement between the management of the garden and themselves. I believe they had half a mind to return and on the morning of the 4th were actually preparing to

return, when another batch of about 250 coolies who had halted overnight at a place ^{Karimganj.} not far from Nilam's Bazar, came marching up and met the first batch persuading them to move on to Karimganj. The second batch which also belonged to the same management were determined not to go back to the gardens. The two parties thus combined and proceeded to Karimganj. At Nilam's Bazar I conversed with the coolies and some of them complained against the ill-treatment received at the hands of the Jamadar of the Anipur garden. During the following week I again spoke to these coolies as also to other batches whom I met in different places. They said nothing against Mr. Gunnery, the Manager, but some of them were displeased with the treatment accorded to them by the Jamadar, while others said the reason why they left the gardens was—" *Pet nahi bharta.*" I pointed out to them that many were under agreements and that it was illegal to leave, but that they could come into Karimganj and apply for their discharge in the usual way. They admitted that that was the procedure adopted in the past but as all the coolies were willing to leave in a body at the moment they were not prepared to observe the usual procedure, the more so as it was Gandhi Maharaj's *hookum* that they should not serve for less than 8 annas and 6 annas. As the Managers would not give them the rates of *haziras* stipulated for, they felt compelled to leave. Some of the coolies also said that the Managers had asked them to go if they did not want to serve on the old rates of *haziras* which were generally 4 annas and 3 annas for men and women respectively. During the exodus the Deputy Commissioner, Commissioner and myself, together with other officials, tried to explain to the coolies that their action meant misery to themselves, but nothing would stop them.

Propaganda work, I was informed by the Managers, had been going on even before the Ratabari meeting took place and of course previous to the exodus. I had heard of meetings having taken place outside tea-gardens in the neighbouring subdivisions before the meeting at Ratabari. It was stated at the Ratabari meeting by Radha Kisan Pande that the coolies had left certain gardens within the jurisdiction of Lakhipur police station in Oachar; this was cited as an example which was held up to the coolies. The Ratabari meeting was reported to me by the Sub-Inspector of Police in charge of the police station. I think many of the Managers were not aware of any propaganda work having been carried out before the exodus, while some did have knowledge of it. Some of the coolies told me that a notice was circulated proclaiming the holding of the Ratabari meeting, but I could not say how long before the meeting the notice was so circulated. The coolies told me that it had been given out that there would be a big meeting and that "*dharam ka bat ho ga : sab kahi ah ke suno.*" (Speeches will be delivered about religious matters; all are invited to attend and listen.) At the meeting of 1st May about 400 coolies were present. From the Chargola Valley 8,000 to 9,000 coolies left and of this number one-third were dependents or non-workers and two-thirds workers; the majority were new coolies who had not been on the garden for more than 5 years.

For this subdivision the market rates are ascertained in the Karimganj bazaar and reported to the Local Government who publish them in the Provincial Gazette. Since the year 1913 there has been a considerable rise in prices. In 1919-1920 prices reached the maximum and thereafter showed a tendency to fall, and at the present moment prices are on the downward grade. The price of cloth now is double (if not more than) that of pre-war figures. Before going on leave in 1920 I visited most of the gardens. It is very difficult to say whether the wages that were being earned then were sufficient to feed and clothe the labourers, as that must naturally depend on the working capacity of each individual. Those who were able to earn well, looked quite healthy and well off, but others who did not appear to be in good condition would probably have been unable to earn enough by reason of their poor health or through laziness so that the difference is obvious. Of course, I would not say that the wages that were being paid in 1913 were enough for 1920. The *haziras* no doubt might with advantage have been raised a bit in 1920. The pay of Government chaprasis in 1913 was Rs. 7 and Rs. 8 and now it is has been raised to Rs. 11— $\frac{1}{2}$ —15. This does not represent their sole earnings; they have incomes from other sources, *e.g.*, cultivation which is carried on by their families in their villages. But before this scale was adopted they were receiving a grain compensation allowance, to alleviate the increased cost of living. I think the non-co-operators had a large field among the discontented portion of tea-garden labour in the Chargola Valley. I think there were coolies receiving smaller wages on other gardens and yet did not leave perhaps because they were more sensible people whom the non-co-operators could not move. There are coolies who certainly want to be under agreement simply for the sake of the advance. But that does not spell insolvency. The average coolie needs

Karimganj. money to buy cattle or for a marriage ceremony and the like, and instead of borrowing, he prefers to take the agreement especially in view of the fact that such money is not in many gardens recouped. It would be difficult to say whether a coolie would be more contented with a rise in wages instead of the agreement bonus.

I think Act XIII is not being used much at present and may be abolished without any serious inconvenience to the tea industry. Many cases are from time to time amicably settled. The planters are generally not very keen in coming up with Act XIII cases; it is only in very rare cases that they do so.

I consider Rs. 10 for a man and Rs. 8 for a woman a decent living monthly wage in addition to concessions, agreement bonus excluded. For a man to feed himself it would cost not less than Rs. 5 a month, probably Rs. 5-8-0. I suggest he should have something for clothes and something to put by, say Re. 1 or Rs. 2 a month. In the case of a family, if the husband and wife are working and they have two non-working children under 8 years of age, they could in my opinion manage with Rs. 18 between them with concessions but without the agreement bonus. A tea-garden labourer may possibly be able to put by 15% to 20% of his income. I do not think that rent of lands for cultivation should exceed Rs. 3 an acre; Rs. 6 an acre is the regular rate here for a tenant under a *mirasdar*. Outside labour is paid 6 to 7 annas a day, but with them there is the disadvantage that they may not find work throughout the whole year as regular coolies on tea-gardens do. But there are certain seasons during which they may be able to find work every day. Such outside coolies do not I think work more than 6 hours a day. Working on roads is considered derogatory. This is because *buttee* people are well off. I think that as a rule a day labourer can if he likes put by 10% to 20% of his earnings. There is indebtedness among villagers but I do not know to what extent. If a coolie in good health were to work diligently he could finish a *hazira* in about 5 hours. In some cases coolies find time to do *ticca* work; in fact the *hazira* is a sort of convenience to them. It would certainly not be fair to regard the remuneration of a tea-garden labourer from the *hazira* point of view alone, as a certain percentage go out to work in addition to the *hazira* nor would I look upon the Government wage returns as a true index of the prosperity of the tea-garden coolie. At all events as the contentment of the labour force is an asset to the garden, I think they should be paid liberally, so that I consider Rs. 10 as a fair monthly wage.

We pay our *punkhawalas* Rs. 6; they are mere boys. A villager can live somehow in the village on Rs. 6 or Rs. 7 without cultivation. A chaprasi's wife and small children do not go out to earn money but they work in their own home and fields. During the time of the exodus I found a boy in one of the gardens proclaiming that the spirit of Gandhi had come upon him and he asked all the people to gather round him and listen to what he had to say. He told them that he had seen Gandhi in a vision and that he was inspired to give them an exhortation. This happened at Anipur; similarly another man did the same thing at Singlacherra. It was more or less a hoax. Generally, the people who came to Karimganj did not talk much about religion.

Under the advice and personal guidance of the Deputy Sanitary Commissioner, special sheds were put up here for the treatment of cholera and influenza cases among coolies during the exodus and coolies also attended the dispensary and were treated there.

As regards the provision of food, the Commissioner passed orders that those among the coolies who appeared to be needy should be given rice and salt at Government expense. I obtained a stock of rice and salt and arranged to supply the coolies. About 200 coolies came up to me on the 7th or 8th May as far as I remember and the first question they put me was whether this rice was being supplied by Government or by tea-gardens; they said they would not touch it if it was supplied by the gardens. I said that Government was supplying it, but some of them seemed to doubt whether it was really so; I naturally felt annoyed. I told them that if they did not want to take the rice and salt that was offered them, they might go. Nobody took anything and they all went away. On the following day about 300 coolies, mostly from Mukamcherra, came up and asked for rations. I gave this and told them that if any more coolies wanted rations, they might come in the afternoon. My information was that the coolies who had been in the grip of the non-co-operators were dissuaded from accepting any Government rice, and as a result nobody turned up that afternoon. Later in the evening of the same day I found coolies being supplied with doles of rice by the non-co-operators in the bazaar, and from that day onward handfuls of rice were distributed to the coolies for several weeks by the non-

co-operators. The ration was certainly less than a quarter seer and many of the coolies ^{Karimganj.} complained that the quantity given was not enough. These rations were taken mostly by women and children.

Wages have been raised on several gardens in the Chargola Valley without any corresponding increase in tasks. I do not know if the concessions have been taken away. But I heard complaints from several Managers that even with those increased wages the coolies were doing just as they liked and were not working satisfactorily. They often went on strike for one or two days even after the wages had been increased. On one or two gardens they wanted a reduction of the *nirikh* or *nal* and put forward flimsy excuses. I have no information as to whether or not pressure was put on the garden management to increase the wages. Perhaps they were actuated to do so in view of the rise in the cost of living.

I heard there was a proposal months before the exodus took place to raise the wages of the coolies. I do not remember to have asked Managers the question whether they considered their coolies well-paid or ill-paid.

No. 68.—Babu LALIT MOHAN CHAUDHURI, *Pleader*:—

I am a pleader practising at Karimganj. I am interested in tea, being a Director of the India Tea and Commerce, Limited, which owns the Chhotalekha garden. I have submitted my answers to the questions. The only particular point I would like to emphasize at the moment is the relationship existing between the European staff, Indian staff and the coolies. My suggestion is that there is a feeling that the European Manager is not easily accessible to the coolies and the Indian staff, in the same manner as the Indian Manager of an Indian-owned garden is. I was informed by certain European Managers that some of the Indian staff in their gardens had something to do with the recent strikes. They complained to me that some persons of the Indian staff on some gardens appeared to be disloyal to them. I told them that they should find out the causes. On the other hand, the Indian staff complained that they could not approach the Managers, that the Managers themselves always kept aloof, and that the Managers do not generally treat them courteously. In my opinion I consider that if more friendly relations were established between the Managers, the Indian staff and the coolies, and if the Managers manifested greater sympathy in hearing their grievances, the coolies as well as the Indian staff would be on the side of the Manager. For one thing, if the European staff was well conversant with the common coolie vernacular, it would help to establish and strengthen the relationship between the Manager and his management. Of course during the recent strike I heard coolies complaining of the harassment which they had received at the hands of the babus and jamadars on the gardens, whereas on the other hand they had all praise for the European Manager. In cases where the babus and jamadars were ill-treating them, the Manager, it was said, was in the grip of the babus. Some coolies complained that after doing their *hazira* work, the jamadar compelled them to cut grass for his cattle and for this sort of things they liked to approach the Manager. The coolies labour under the delusion that if notice of their grievances is taken, this would only result in their earning the rigorous displeasure of the sardar who would ill-treat them all the more. My suggestion is that the Managers should be well acquainted with the customs and habits of the coolies.

No. 69.—Babu UMESH CHANDRA ADITYA, B.L., *Pleader*:—

I have a suggestion to make. My idea is that Government might employ an officer, preferably an Indian (Hindu) who is in touch with the recruiting districts, to visit tea-gardens at intervals. The object of his visit would be to mix with the coolies and hear their grievances, and to submit reports of the prevailing conditions to the Government as well as to the garden authorities. My object in making this suggestion is to prevent a recurrence of the unrest which manifested itself a few months ago in this subdivision, so that the activities of outsiders sowing the seeds of dissension and discord amongst the coolies may be detected at once, thus preventing a recrudescence of events such as the exodus. Sometimes false rumours are spread among the garden coolies causing a mischievous alarm among them, and the presence of such an officer as I have suggested would check the spread of such canards. In my opinion if the suggestion made by me is carried out, it would be to the interest of the coolies as well of the garden authorities.

SILCHAR, CACHAR, 27TH JANUARY 1922.

[(MR. WITHERS AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.)]

No. 70.—Dr. G. C. RAMSAY, M.D., of *Scottpur and Tarrapore Tea Companies, Majagram Tea Estates, Cossipore Tea Estate and Lakhipur Saw-Mills* :—

I joined this practice before the war about the beginning of 1914 and left just after the war broke out. I was demobilised in August 1919 and came back to the Tarrapore Tea Company on the 3rd October 1919.

President :—Q.—Is it your experience that the coolie objects to being treated as an indoor patient?

A.—I do not think so. As far as my practice is concerned I have found the coolies quite willing to be treated as indoor patients. I have been particularly fortunate in having succeeded a most excellent European doctor who was very popular with the coolies.

There is a Central Hospital at Labac where coolies from the 14 tea-gardens and the Saw-mills are treated. It is mainly for surgical cases, but serious medical cases are also treated at the Labac Central Hospital. The Tarrapore Company has 9 gardens, Scottpore 3, Majagram 1, Cossipore 1, and all these gardens with the addition of the Lakhipur Saw-mills contribute to the up-keep of the Central Hospital. I have an inspecting doctor babu, a most capable man, who is well liked both by the European as well as by the Indian establishments and labour forces. His duties are to visit garden hospitals periodically, inspect the various garden hospitals and report to me on any serious cases. He advises the local doctor babus as to the special line of treatment to be adopted for the sick under their charge; he also inspects the sanitary condition of the lines, the wells, and the garden medical arrangements generally.

My own duties are chiefly concerned with the treatment of serious medical and surgical cases at the Labac Central Hospital, but I, as a rule, inspect all the garden hospitals in my practice at least once monthly and further give weekly lectures to the doctor babus in my practice. There are 15 hospitals in my practice. I consider the local arrangements are satisfactory in the hospitals under my supervision. The Agents give me the necessary executive powers as Doctor to run the Medical Department which I do in much the same status as a Superintendent of a Division. I took over charge of this practice on the above understanding.

Very few serious cases are treated on the gardens with the exception of pneumonia, as I consider the undue strain caused by transportation of pneumonia cases to the Central Hospital would militate against the patient's chance of recovery in an acute serious disease of this type where complete rest is the principal line of treatment. There is no difficulty in getting patients either to the subordinate hospitals or Central Hospital. I have always instructed the doctor babus to go round the lines and make themselves friendly with the coolies in order that the coolies may get to know them well and look up to them as their adviser and friend in illness.

As regards latrines my own opinion is that the coolie is a non-co-operator in this respect. We have *pucca* latrines at Labac Central Hospital; there are many objectors, but some coolies do use them. However the coolie prefers to go to the jungle rather than use the latrine. As regards the question of hookworm I made an analysis last year when I cultured the stools of 300 healthy coolies and babus and found that 93% of these apparently healthy people were infected but showed no outside signs of infection. So I say hookworm is more or less omnipresent throughout the labour force. Every well in my practice is chlorinated daily so that the chances of water-borne diseases are greatly minimised. As regards malarial fever I have never met a coolie who has not suffered from it. I do a fair amount of operative surgery,—over 1,000 operations during the past two years. Many of the above coolies would have died but for surgical treatment. I also operate a good deal on cataract cases. In my practice there have been over 100 coolies who, but for the operation, would have remained blind for ever and now they can work and earn their own living. We supply them with spectacles at the Company's cost after the operation. Speaking of Scottpore I must say that the death-rate has been fairly high for the last 3 years. The reason for this is that the type of coolie there is a North-Wester and as we know North-Westers are wheat-eaters and when they come to a garden where the coolies live on rice,

physiological change takes place in a North-Wester's system owing to the change in diet and I think he is a bad type of coolie to recruit. The close proximity of undrained jungle also partly accounts for the high death-rate. The spleen index is fairly high. There are many *Balantidium* dysentery cases as well due to the existence of pigs, the pig being the carrier of the above type of dysentery. There is also a fair number of phthisis cases as a *sequela* of the influenza epidemic and the mortality is fairly high owing to a number of such cases still remaining behind on the garden. I am certainly not satisfied with the medical examination which takes place in the recruiting districts through depôts. The newly recruited coolies are very unsatisfactory. Of such coolies more than a quarter die and another quarter live on the hospitality of the Tea Companies in this practice. I believe that it is a useless investment to spend money on recruiting coolies of the above type from outside; I believe that money spent locally is money well spent.

In one of the divisions in my practice coolies are given mosquito nets and various other amenities; also putties for their legs, and generally in my practice the concessions to the sick are excellent.

In my opinion hookworm reduces the efficiency of the coolie by about 50%. Hookworm can be tackled by sanitation, latrines, or by the supply of boots to coolies. I have frequently noticed in the case of babus that they take off their boots in wet weather to keep their boots clean. As is well-known it is during the wet season that hookworm infection is liable to take place through the feet. But in my opinion sanitation is the first thing to tackle. My own impression is to impart to the coolies some knowledge of the disease through the medium of a bioscope. I would have an interpreter such as my inspecting doctor babu to explain the seriousness of the disease to the coolies.

I am in favour of opening a medical school at Silchar for the training of doctor babus for the tea-gardens. The Berry-White and Calcutta Colleges do not turn out enough doctor babus for tea-gardens. The Berry-White and Dacca schools turn out doctor babus of the Sub-Assistant Surgeon type who, owing to their limited number, demand high rates of pay. In my opinion, I train doctor babus at the Labac Central Hospital to be as efficient as the Berry-White or Dacca trained man and under the present auspices with the shortage of efficiently trained babus I consider it is much better to train one's own men and put them in charge of the garden hospitals in one's own practice. It is rather a pity that Government abolished the Local Board examination. I have a number of men trained locally and I consider that they should be allowed to sit at the Dibrugarh and Dacca examinations.

The cost *per diem* of maintaining a patient in hospital is about 2 annas 9 pies; in some of my hospitals it is a little more, say, 3 annas. My Agents have always considered any proposals put forward by me most sympathetically.

I believe in centralisation of serious medical cases (with exceptions such as pneumonia and surgical cases) but the administrative difficulties would be great in practices where the gardens composing the practice were controlled by different Agency Houses.

This Central Hospital was started in 1900 by Dr. Glover.

Where the doctor is a whole-time Medical Officer, that is where he is responsible for the medical arrangements in his practice to his Agents or employers direct, there are rarely complications but in practices where the doctor deals only through the individual Managers in his practice there are endless complications as "dual control" is at all times an impossibility and is neither to the advantage of the employers nor employees.

No. 71.—Mr. W. K. GREEN, *Manager, Daloo Tea Estate* :—

I have been 34 years in Tea, 6 years in Assam (North Lakhimpur), and the rest of my time in Cachar. I have been in Daloo since 1910.

Roughly half the number of my coolies are under agreement. Personally I do not think it would make any difference if the Act was abolished. My people seem to take it as a moral obligation and whether the Act was abolished or not, they would continue as heretofore.

Assuming that the price of rice is Rs. 4 a maund, I think an average coolie who has been on the garden for 5 or 6 years and has no cultivation would need about Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 8 in the case of a man and Rs. 6 in the case of a woman, as an ordinary

Silohar. living wage which would constitute the average for a year. This is liberal with rice at Rs. 4 per maund, but it is very seldom down to such a low figure. A limited amount of land for cultivation is held by my coolies, but everybody has cattle. The lower castes keep pigs, goats, etc.; I do not object to their keeping pigs, but some of the other coolies do. There are, however, few good caste coolies here and very few Muhammadans. For a family consisting of a man and wife and 2 children I would say that Rs. 14-8 a month would suffice.

There was a strike for one day only on one of the out-gardens—the other divisions were not affected—on the 26th May, *i.e.*, the day after the Railway strike, but the coolies went to work the next day without obtaining any concessions. In my opinion the strike was due to some outside political influence and not to any economic distress. I have not had any trouble since. The rates of pay on my garden are 4 annas 3 pies, and 2 annas 8 pies a *hazira* for men and women, respectively; for pruning or any other heavy work a woman is given 3 annas 2 pies. The rate for women has been in force from time immemorial. As regards the rates for men, there has been no change since 1906; and although tasks have practically not altered, work is much easier now than say eight years ago owing to the increased labour force and better cultivation.

As regards rise in coolies' earnings between 1913 and 1921 I may quote my answer to question 23 :—

Year.	Average daily muster for July to September inclusive.	Total earnings.	Average for the three months.
1	2	3	4
		Rs.	Rs. a. p.
1913	1,332	23,053	17 4 10
1919	2,107	47,409	22 8 0
1920	2,242	43,719	19 8 0
1921	1,772	29,789	16 12 11

In 1920, tea cost me about 13 *d.* to manufacture and the price realised was 6-18 *d.* The coolie did not get so much *ticca*. He is, however, getting it now. Only for a few months in 1921 did coolies' earnings decrease somewhat. We allowed *ticca* in 1921. The Agents have never refused any recommendations submitted by me for ameliorating the lot of the coolies.

The maximum price at which rice was sold in 1921 for cash was Rs. 5 a-maund. I am not aware of any proposals having been made in 1921 for a general increase in the coolies' wages. I am not in favour of giving coolies a bonus. Rice is mostly sold for cash at or below cost price. The taking of rice in advance is not encouraged. If the coolie pays cash he knows exactly where he stands. Free grazing land is available in the garden and coolies pay a nominal sum—one anna per head of cattle per month—for cowherds. My agreement advances are Rs. 12 and Rs. 7 for men and women, respectively. To give coolies a bonus at the end of the year would pay the garden, but not the coolie. For instance, an agreement might be given on January 1st and the coolie might die or abscond on February 1st. If the bonus were given at the end of the year the coolie would have worked for the money. I do not consider that the reason why coolies ask for the agreement money is because their wages are inadequate. They want a lump sum of money for a marriage or to buy a cow. Presuming a man earns Rs. 10 per month, including his agreement bonus, he practically gets 10% of his annual income paid in advance without interest. Personally I should be very glad to have this privilege for myself. All coolies could easily pay back such small advances. But there are others who do not want the money to be deducted from their pay and therefore take the agreement. In spite of the fact that the price of foodstuffs had increased during recent years, coolies never came and asked for increased wages and this was due I think to the fact that they

realized that we were hard up just as much as they were. Payment is invariably made either by me or by my Assistants; it is never made through the sardars. On the average a working child earns Rs. 2-11-7 a month. Pregnant women get Rs. 4 a month for two months and Rs. 2 on the birth of the child. With regard to orphans my usual plan is to make them over to people of their own caste and I give the latter a monthly allowance to look after the children. Sitchar.

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No. 72.—Mr. H. D. MARSHALL, O.B.E., *Superintendent, Scottpur and Bhubandhar Tea Companies* :—

I have been connected with Tea since the year 1890. I was four years in Sylhet—in the Longai district—and then I came to Cachar in the beginning of 1895. I have been at Polarbund since April 1919. I am Superintendent of Scottpore Tea Company and Bhubandhar Tea Company.

I think it would be quite possible to work without Act XIII, but at the same time I think the coolies like it as it affords them a source of income. I do not think coolies would be any better off without the Act. In my opinion it would be rather the reverse, for a coolie would lose the bonus if the Act was repealed.

No general proposal was made to raise the wages of coolies in 1918, but my predecessor, Mr. Mason, suggested to the Agents the advisability of raising the rates in the near future. The actual *hasira* figure has remained the same. We pay a man 4 annas and a woman 3 annas. There has been no increase in the wages, but all the tasks have been gradually lowered. I pay higher wages on the new garden—Bhubandhar—5 annas for men and 3 annas 6 pies for women, but we paid 6 annas and 4 annas for about 2½ years and only reduced the rates to 5 annas and 3 annas 6 pies in August 1917. The reason why we pay higher wages on a new garden is to open out the garden as quickly as possible and to attract as much labour as possible. We pay *bustee* labour the same rate. There is a lot of rice cultivation at Bhubandhar. When this garden was first started in 1915 (January), there was a small area already under rice cultivation. The area now under rice, cultivated by the coolies, is probably quite fifteen times as much. The coolies are thoroughly settled, prosperous and well off in every respect, with the estate rapidly maturing, and minus the drawbacks which are at first inseparable, from a new clearing in virgin forest; we reduced rates in August 1917 to annas 5 and 3 annas 6 pies.

Rice is selling at about Rs. 4-8-0 per maund. Just now we supply rice to about 12 or 15% of the coolies. New coolies are supplied with rice at Rs. 4 a maund. The unit system is in force on our gardens. In 1921, a man was not allowed to earn more than 5 annas, but a woman was allowed to earn as she liked. Coolies did not earn as much in a given time as when coarser plucking was in practice. When I lowered the plucking *nirikh* at the beginning of last year, I did so with the intention that coolies would be able to earn as much at plucking as in former years. But in practice it did not work out and earnings were less.

Leaf is weighed on an iron frame after being turned out of the basket and we find no trouble with the system. The task for hoeing has been reduced 12% since 1913.

We recruited a good many coolies in 1918-1919, but very few since. These coolies have remained on, except the Ooriyas, a lot of whom absconded in 1921.

They were badly famine-stricken when they arrived and a good many died on the gardens. I am not at all satisfied with the medical inspections in recruiting districts. A good number of coolies are affected with various maladies when they come up to the gardens. In a great many cases they come up with some disease and die on the gardens.

If we did away with Act XIII we would have to give coolies something else so as to make it up. In my opinion, it would be just the same if the wages were increased instead of giving the coolies an agreement bonus. If merely a bonus were to be given, I would much prefer that it be given at the beginning rather than at the end of the year. A coolie does not consider himself very greatly bound to the garden by taking Rs. 12 as an agreement bonus, but there is certainly a moral effect produced on the coolie. We have never run in coolies under the Act. I consider that the present rates of Rs. 1-8-0 for a man and Re. 1-2-0 for a woman per week for an ordinary *hasira* are quite sufficient to keep them in good health and in comfort,

Silchar. exclusive of *ticca*, assuming that rice is selling at not less than 9 seers to the rupee. If rice is expensive as it was in 1920 and also last year, we sell it to the coolies at not more than Rs. 5 a maund. There is a restriction on the amount sold, e.g., 6 seers and 5 seers a week are allowed to men and women, respectively.

There are advances outstanding against the coolies on account of rice supplied to them. There are some coolies at present who get their rice from the godown weekly, and it is put into the rice advance account against their names. These coolies, however, are the riff-raff of the garden.

A family consisting of 3 or 4 children would generally be given a concession of 3 or 4 seers of rice per week.

No. 73.—Mr. E. HOBSON, *Superintendent of the Burtoll Division of the Tarapore Tea Company* :—

I have been connected with Tea since 1896 and have been all the time in the Tarapore Tea Company. My opinion of Act XIII is that it has no great value one way or another. If the Act is abolished I still hope to give the coolies the bonus. I have never had a single case under the Act in all my experience. New coolies are treated just like old coolies except that the former are given a less task. If a coolie wishes to go he is at liberty to do so. I do not consider that the Act in any way restricts the coolie's freedom. The coolie once he takes the agreement simply knows that he is under a moral obligation to fulfil his contract. I do not think he considers himself legally bound. We have a labour force of 2,271 coolies, of which 1,655 constitute an effective force, the remainder being non-effective. There is no difference between these coolies as regards rates of pay.

I think coolies do get enough to keep them in health and comfort considering the concessions given them. If the standard of living could be raised, the facilities for earning should also be raised. As regards actual money wages I think they get enough. In my opinion they are extremely well paid and the result is that there is a good deal of drunkenness. Even if the Act were repealed and the bonus discontinued I think the strong coolie would be less affected than the weak coolie. Agreements are given for one year at a time. If the various concessions, *viz.*, cheap rice, land for cultivation at reduced rents, medical attendance and food when ill, full pay for women on pregnant leave, housing, cheap clothing, etc., were converted into money wages, I think the result would be simply chaos. Drunkenness would be rampant for one thing. I think it would almost be criminal to make any drastic alterations in this respect. We recruited a few coolies in 1917, 1918 and 1919 and practically none in 1920. The wages of the men on my gardens have not been raised for years, their *hazira* being 4 annas; women's wages were raised about twelve months ago from 3 annas 6 pies to 4 annas, as I thought, taking into consideration the children, it costs the women as much to live as the men. I do not think the women have a much harder time on the garden than the men. They no doubt work slightly longer during the plucking season. I had a little trouble last May between the coolies and the babus. The coolies said that they could not stand the sight of a certain babu and wanted him to be removed. The babu went away eventually when he heard the coolies shouting after him.

In my opinion I consider the garden coolies better off than the coolies living in the *bustees* round about the gardens.

The agreement contract is for 313 days. I give it to weak coolies also; it is not my practice to give it only to the best coolies. I am not in favour of abolishing Act XIII agreements. In hard times concessions such as cheap *dhan* and cheap cloth are given. The loss on cloth in 1920 was about Rs. 7,000. In 1921 it was very much less. We always supply cloth at slightly less than the cost price. For instance if we purchase at about Rs. 2-1-6 we might sell it at Rs. 2.

In my opinion I think a family consisting of a man, wife and 3 children, should be given facilities for earning Rs. 2-4 a week to allow of their living in comfort. With increased wages the tasks have not been raised. The work on a garden is not quite as good as it was twenty years ago.

In 1920 about Rs. 25,000 was lost on rice in the Burtoll Division only in addition to about Rs. 7,000 which was given away in clothing.

No. 74.—Mr. E. G. PETERS, *Manager of Ruttonpore Division, Bengal United Tea Company, Limited* :— Silchar.

I have been in Cachar for 25 years and in Ruttonpore for 10 years.

If Act XIII was repealed it would be the coolie alone who would feel it as then he would not get the agreement money.

I did a considerable amount of recruiting until two years ago but not since then. I have had to rely very largely on the United Provinces type of coolie. A number of such coolies become acclimatized and settle down, others do not. These coolies when given rice here preferred it to wheat which was the staple food of the United Provinces. The reduction in the labour force was due to a certain number of coolies, about 70 in number, who took their names off the books but still reside on the garden. Of course they were given the option of having their names taken off. The reason was that we were not anxious to supply work to people who were not themselves anxious to work. We increased the *haziras* of men from 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies in 1915, because prices showed a tendency to rise and also because some of the neighbouring gardens had raised their rates.

The maximum rate at which rice was sold to the coolies in 1920 was 6 or 7 seers to the rupee. In 1920 we lost Rs. 922-0-0. I gave my people more facilities for earning *ticca* so that they could buy rice. In 1920 there was no loss on cloth but a considerable sum went towards the hospital.

I consider Re. 1-8-0 a week for a man and Re. 1-2-0 for a woman, excluding dependents, a decent living wage, assuming that rice is selling at Rs. 4-8-0 to Rs. 4-12-0 a maund. At present we are supplying rice to hospital cases, to widows and to people who are hard up.

A great majority of those 70 coolies, who wanted their names cut off the books, remained on the gardens. Some of them still had a certain period of the unexpired agreement to work off. No coolies have so far been prosecuted under Act XIII.

There are 850 acres under tea which is sufficient to keep all the coolies working. Pregnant women get a full *hazira* for 3 months. They are also given Rs. 3 at child-birth and Rs. 2 after two years.

A man is not able to support his wife and children on his earnings alone.

No. 75.—H. L. BIGGE, *Manager of Lallacherra Division, Bengal United Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been 24 years now in Cachar. I was at Barakoi, Chundowa and Silcuri before coming to Lallacherra where I have been just one year now.

Personally I do not mind whether Act XIII is abolished or retained. I have many coolies under the Act.

In 1916 the *haziras* for men were raised from 3 to 3½ annas before I came to Lallacherra.

There has been no political unrest in Lallacherra garden itself, but outside there has been a considerable amount. My bazaar was stopped for 2 months in May and June last and I got no supplies, and now since the past month unrest has started again. Vendors are being told not to come and sell their stuffs, but so far no heed has been paid. At the present moment my garden bazaar is going on very well.

If the Act were abolished and my coolies came and asked me for the bonus I would certainly give it. I do not think there would be a tendency to abscond if the Act were abolished. I consider that the bonus is very much valued by the coolie.

I do not think a coolie would like to take an increase of Re. 1 a month in lieu of the agreement bonus. I think he would much prefer to have a lump sum in his hand so that he could buy cattle or some valuable article. The bonus tends to increase the number of cattle on the garden. Coolies sell a good deal of milk among themselves and also to the *bustee-walas*.

The total population on the garden is 1,800. The working population is: men 438, women 538 and children 161.

I was at Silcuri for 7 years up to April 1920. Later I acted on another garden for 8 months and finally came to my present appointment. Up to 1920 the *hazira* in Silcuri was 3 annas for men and women and 1 anna 6 pies to 2 annas for children. From the time I left there has been no change so far as I am aware. There is a very large amount of paddy land attached to Silcuri—about 1,000 acres. The majority of the coolies there have rice lands, and all who want land get it. Some coolies do not care for such work, but the majority certainly do. We charge Re. 1 a *kear*. I am not in

Silchar. favour of renting out the land for a period of years on Government terms. The practice obtains in some gardens of giving out a certain amount of *ticca* work to the sardar's *daffa* and when that work is completed the money is paid to the sardar who distributes it. On most gardens wages are paid by the Manager or his Assistants. The wages at Lallacherra are paid entirely by the European staff. But coolies have never complained against the giving of wages by sardars because if they had any grievance they would complain to the Managers at once. We did this at Silcuri sometimes and never had any complaints.

I certainly think a man and woman can live in comfort on Rs. 6 each a month with 2 or 3 non-working children; they would be able to save a little from it. Of course I am assuming that rice is not over Rs. 5 a maund. For the past year I have sold no rice. In 1920 I was at Aenekhal and we sold rice at 7 and 8 seers to the rupee making a loss of Rs. 10,000. We pay in cash. The *nirikhs* have never been altered since 1916. The task for light hoeing is 30 *nals*; previously it was the same. Coolies' earnings are never restricted but it is possible to do so. If the *haziras* were increased from three to six annas, the coolies, in my opinion, would only do less work.

No. 76.—Mr. G. D. WALKER, M.B.E., I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner* :—

I have been about 2 years and 8 months Deputy Commissioner in Cachar. I was in Gauhati for my first year; I was Subdivisional Officer of Golaghat for 4 years; in Dibrugarh for two periods of a month each; in Tezpur as Assistant Commissioner at headquarters for 6 months. I was Subdivisional Officer at Mangaldai for 1½ years and I acted as Deputy Commissioner at Tezpur for about 6 weeks. Most of my service has been spent in tea districts, except for a period of 1½ years in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers. I have little more than 13 years' service.

During the time I have been here I have had a considerable number of strikes. The present disturbances have been due partly to a change in management, *e.g.*, a stranger acting for the Manager away at Home. But more recently we have had political agitation in the neighbourhood of Lakhipur which produced strikes on the gardens in that locality and similarly in other parts of the district.

Q.—Do you think that economic causes had anything to do with the strikes?

A.—It is difficult to say that economic causes had anything to do with strikes in some cases. Probably the strikes would not have occurred if there was not some undercurrent other than economic working on the gardens.

But I would say that economic causes had something to do with the strikes, though some strikes had no economic aspect at all. Political agitation started in March or April 1921. About the middle of April there was trouble. The outstanding strikes at the beginning of April were on the Burtoll Division of the Tarapore Tea Company. The strikes were general on the two gardens, Burtoll and Lydiacherra and on both the coolies drove out some of the babus. Mr. Bartley, Superintendent of Police, and I got there to find that the place was in a state of strike. The grievance was that a particular babu was cheating them in payments and they demanded that he should be turned out. The babu having left, the coolies went back to work and I did not go into the matter any further. In the Dewan Division the coolies made a demand for 8-anna *haziras* and the Superintendent fearing that they would all leave the garden, gave them *bakshish* to stay on. Later on when the Superintendent went away, the coolies tried to give trouble again and the new Superintendent simply let them go. These coolies were recently recruited and of poor physique. About 10 or 20 coolies from Rampur came into Silchar and remained here for about a week. Their grievance was that they were not adequately paid. I went into their case by examining the figures of that garden and found that they had no intrinsic grievance; on the other hand I found that Rampur paid their coolies exceedingly well. I sent the coolies back to the garden and they remained there until the Manager went Home on leave when they finally left the place. By this time their demand for an increase had reached the figure of 12 annas a *hazira*. They have not yet returned. There have been no serious riots, but mostly strikes. There was a small riot in which I was myself a party, but it bore no political significance. Strikes have been mostly for demands of increased wages. There was violence shown to certain babus on 2 or 3 gardens of the Tarapore Company. On the Burtoll garden the coolies said that they would get rid of the babus first and then deal with the Manager. I have reported every strike that has come to my knowledge to the Government.

The total number of persons proceeded against under Act XIII of 1859 in—

1917 was by planters 10, by others 41, total 51.

1918 „ by planters 11, by others 88, total 99.

1919 „ by planters 9, by others 124, total 133.

1920 „ by planters 8, by others 167, total 175.

1921 „ by planters 19, by others 89, total 108.

By “others” is meant timber traders, paddy cultivators, etc.

Yes, I think if an absconded coolie was willing to refund the agreement money, the complainant would be satisfied.

I would say that the average coolie looks as fit and well-clothed as the cultivators of the district. In some cases, however, the coolies do not look so satisfactory, but that may be due to the fact that they were not keen on earning enough. I agree that money wages are no indication whatever of the prosperity of a coolie; the lowest paid are often the most contented. The non-co-operation movement in some places has prevented coolies from buying rice in their accustomed bazaar. Coolies have been prevented from buying rice in the bazaar with the object of forcing them to take what was called *Swadeshi* rice, and in that way to entice them away from the garden.

In a great many places these non-operators started opposition bazaars outside the gardens in order to be able to get at the coolie. But most of these bazaars have now ceased to exist.

The movement of enrolling tea-garden coolies as volunteers is a recent development and I am not in a position to say what it would lead to in time to come. At Bundoo, the Manager told the coolies not to go out with Gandhi caps and badges and the coolies left their work. The Superintendent went up to them and tried to explain that their action was illegal, and he got 15 or 20 of them to give up their caps and ultimately succeeded in persuading half the coolies to go back to work. The trouble is that these volunteers have taken some sort of oath not to obey the Manager and it is possible that at some future date they might be given orders which would be entirely against the interests of the garden. If we were empowered to look upon the Gandhi uniform as illegal and to take steps in that direction, I think the resources at my command would be sufficient for any one garden at a time.

Mr. McMorran :—*Q.*—I have heard that the coolies have been organized by a headman and have been told to wait for some “hookum”. This organized force is waiting for orders from somebody. Is your force sufficient to see that the liberty and security of the individual is not interfered with by these non-co-operators?

A.—I don't think the force at my command is sufficient to secure that the liberty of the individual is not interfered with.

Q.—Do you know the reason why these volunteers parade about the streets?

A.—They do so simply to show the people their numerical strength and to encourage others to join them. They have not interfered with any excise sales.

Q.—Judging from all this political agitation that is going on at present in the district of Cachar, it seems reasonable to infer, I take it, that the troubles on tea-gardens are due to political agitation?

A.—I don't think I can answer that ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ From a purely superficial view people might be inclined to that inference but I would not support it at all.

The earnings have been increased since 1913.

I am not in favour of the abolition of Act XIII.

No. 77.—Babu MOHIM CHANDRA BISWAS, *Pleader* :—

I am a Pleader practising at Silchar. I am employed by the Indian Tea Association. Formerly I belonged to the non-co-operation party for about 6 months. I have since changed my views and am now employed by the Assam Valley Branch of the Indian Tea Association. I have had coolies coming up to me with grievances which were mainly about inadequate wages. When Mr. Gandhi visited these parts some coolies were produced before him and he told them that they had no complaints to make and that they had better go back. I have been able to find out the conditions on some gardens. For instance, I examined two budgets, one at Rampore and one at Thailu.

sachar. As regards the complaint at Rampore I satisfied myself that there was no cause for complaint, but in the case of Thailu, I was of opinion that the wages were not quite adequate.

I voluntarily offered my services to the Tea Association because I thought that I could do them some good and also incidentally be of some patriotic service to the country. When I was in the non-co-operation movement I was deadly against the coolie exodus. In my opinion I consider that the present unrest was due to political agitation though at some future date economic causes would have led to such unrest. I would say that the political agitation precipitated the unrest; it may be looked upon as being the dominating factor in the creation of this unrest.

I would put the difference in the cost of living between 1913 and now at 150% increase. The prices at present are about the same as in 1920. The price of rice varies from Rs. 5 to Rs. 7-8-0; in 1920 it was about the same.

I did not attend the September Conference held at Sylhet owing to illness. I became aware of the resolutions passed at that Conference later on. I have been holding meetings and on one occasion I addressed an audience of about 12,000, of whom 900 were tea-garden coolies. In some of the meetings I was asked by coolies whether it was high time for them to leave the gardens and I prevented them from doing so. This was at Lakhipore in the month of March 1921. The coolies were presumably influenced by non-co-operators before I addressed them. I was invited to the Batabari meeting but did not go. Mr. Pandey spoke to the coolies; he did not however directly make any suggestion that they should go, but his speeches did infuse a spirit of independence and free will into the minds of the coolies. I do not think Mr. Pandey had any personal grievances against tea planters; nor could I say so of the other agitators.

I have been in Silchar for the last 25 years. I have been practising as a Pleader for the past 16 years. I was also a Mukhtear for a time. I have been conducting many tea-garden cases, largely on behalf of the coolies.

I consider Rs. 10 a month for a coolie a living wage exclusive of concessions.

I left the non-co-operation movement because I considered the programme entirely destructive and far from constructive.

No. 78.—Mr. W. E. D. COOPER, *Manager of Binnakandi Tea Estate, Eastern Cachar Tea Company* :—

I have been connected with Tea for 21 years now, and most of my time has been spent in Cachar in the same agency. I am now exactly a year in charge of the Eastern Cachar Tea Company.

I don't think it would make any difference whether Act XIII were repealed or retained. If it is repealed we would still go on giving the coolie a bonus on the understanding that he would work for one year.

Taking the average I would say that Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman or a total of Rs. 13 *per mensem* would be ample for a small family to live comfortably under existing conditions on this garden.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by a coolie is sufficient to maintain him in health and reasonable comfort.

I have now increased the *hazira*. I give 4 annas to a man and 3 annas to a woman, but that is only a nominal wage. They are often able to earn up to annas 6 for a full day's work. The *hazira* is no guide to what a coolie earns.

I consider it undesirable that the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages. It is difficult to give a definite answer to question No. 25 as to the rise in the cost of living, as in the case of coolies the cost of living varies with the changing price of rice. The year 1920 was a famine year and rice was given at concession rates as an alleviating measure. My Company made a loss of Rs. 11,000 in 1920 on rice supplied to coolies. Cloth has perhaps gone up 50% to 75% but this represents a very small percentage of the coolies' expenditure. Wages are paid by the Manager or Assistant into the hands of the coolies. No money is paid by sardars. Coolies certainly have access to the Manager at a certain hour every day to put forward grievances of any kind, and every opportunity is afforded them of doing so.

As regards the conversion of the concessions into cash, I think the coolie would not be able to convert cash into the actual concessions he gets now, and the unsatisfactory results would only reflect unfavourably on the management. It is the duty of the management to see to the coolies' health and comfort, and from that point of view I think it is essential that the question of concessions should be left solely in the hands of the management. Bonuses are paid at the end of 313 days' work. These are frequently given at the time of engagement for special reasons.

Men's *haziras* were raised on the 1st of January last. Before that coolies were getting 3 annas, both men and women. The number of coolies working on my garden is 1,670. The total population would be probably 3,000 or 4,000 in 5 gardens. The acreage under tea is 1,000 and the total acreage in the grant is 8,000. I consider that there are a sufficient number of coolies for the acreage under tea. I consider Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman a living wage including medical attendance and housing. I would also include one or two non-working children. I spend about Rs. 150 per month on feeding orphan children. Some gardens give rice concessions to non-working children, but I don't think it is necessary with us because there is ample rice land.

I am not at all in favour of giving the coolies a share in the profits of the tea industry. It was tried by Mr. Chalmers on his garden and proved a failure. Coolies would not understand it, e.g., in one year the Company may make a profit and the coolie may receive a good bonus; the next year may result in a loss, and if the coolie was not given a bonus in this year, he would fail to understand the reason why, being unacquainted with the vagaries of the tea market.

I consider the chief reason coolies prefer life on a tea-garden, with, to them, its unnatural discipline, is that they are protected from the results of their own improvidence in bad times as well as good.

No. 79.—Mr. H. M. CROZIER, *Manager, Doodputtee Tea Company, Hatticherru Tea Estate:—*

I have been 33 years in tea, of which period I have spent 27 years in my present billet. I was 2 years in Kurkoonie garden.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII as it has a good moral effect on the coolie. The majority of my coolies are under the Act. Instead of an increase of pay I would much prefer to give the coolies an equivalent at the end of the month. Of course in that case I would have to reduce the agreement bonus. I would give a coolie so much bonus for so many full worked *haziras*. I have not tried the system, but I should like to do so. To those who have not done full *haziras* I would give on a much reduced scale. New coolies are not put under agreement for the simple reason that they consider that they are bound down to the garden for a certain period. We generally give agreements after 3 years; in some cases where good working coolies themselves come up and ask for it, I give them the agreement after two years. I do not think coolies are so liable to abscond if placed under agreement. Coolies have a natural antipathy to becoming indoor patients; they think that if they go into hospital it is only to die; this notion has been formed by the coolies owing to the fact that serious cases or neglected cases are taken into hospital as a last resort and in many of these cases the patients succumb. But the Central Hospital is less objected to by the coolie, because it is a big institution and more care and attention can be paid to patients.

I have not had any unrest on my garden. There has been unrest in the neighbourhood but so far it has not affected us.

I consider Rs. 7-8-0 for men and Rs. 6 for women a decent living monthly wage assuming that rice is not selling above Rs. 5 a maund. These amounts would cover the upkeep of one or two small children. I made enquiries yesterday about the daily fare of a family consisting of a man, wife, one working child and 4 non-working children, and was told that half a maund of rice is consumed in a week by the lot of them. Coolies are indebted to the garden to the extent of Rs. 12,765. The number of coolies so indebted is 1,946. About a third of that sum may be accounted for by rice advances. Most of the debt was incurred during the last two years.

Q.—Is it correct to say that the coolies were not able to pay for the rice they took at the time?

A.—Yes.

The average monthly pay in 1913 was Rs. 5-11-5 and in 1920 Rs. 5-15-3. I agree that it is a pretty small rise, and that the coolie was not able to pay for the concession rice because the pay was small during that period.

Silchar.

The budget estimate on coolies for 1921 was not cut down; on the other hand we spent over and above the estimate. My coolies have a good deal of land. Fine plucking invariably results in less earnings, more especially during a bad growing season, no matter what the rates are. The ordinary *hazira* rates are 4 and 3 annas. It took an average man 5 hours to complete his task; at present it takes less.

Wages are paid into the hands of the coolies by the babus in the presence of the Manager or Assistant. The Assistant calls out the name and puts his initials in the book, but the actual payment is made by the babu in the presence of the Assistant.

Coolies are given every facility of approaching the Manager in his office in the evening every day. If there were any urgent cases, they would come to the Manager's house. The Manager is always accessible to them. Of latter years I have not noticed or heard of cases where the Indian staff have been oppressing the coolies.

On one occasion volunteers entered Doodputlee garden on the banks of the river near Silchar during the Sunday bazaar. They entered the bazaar by marching through the lines and told shopkeepers not to sell anything that was imported. I am not aware of any attempts being made to enlist tea-garden coolies as volunteers. All the bazaars are situated on the garden land.

We pay fortnightly, but to a certain number of lazy coolies we pay weekly. They are paid in cash at the week-end. When rice is dear it is purchased and supplied in advance between one pay day and another, and the money is deducted from their pay. For the last 10 years the coolies have been buying their own rice, except on one or two occasions.

We have had to write off large sums as irrecoverable advances paid in cash or in rice concessions in the case of coolies who are poor workers. Coolies are allowed to earn as much as they like over and above the *hazira*; no restriction is placed on their earnings.

I am informed that a man and his wife can live comfortably on Rs. 11-10-0 a month taking food into consideration only, and that clothing would cost a rupee more for each adult, but this sum does not appear to be spent by them. A non-working child of 7 or 8 would cost another Rs. 3 a month. These figures were taken from their statement of requirements. Coolies have ample facilities on my garden for earning over and above the *hazira*: the *hazira* alone would not cover the coolie's expenses. In my opinion the coolie is sufficiently remunerated taking into consideration the concessions received by him. I should prefer to continue the concessions as it encourages the coolies.

Haziras have not been altered for a long time: they have been in force all the time I have been here—*i.e.*, 27 years.

No. 80.—Mr. A. F. STUART, *Manager, Koomber Tea Estate* :—

I have been connected with Tea for 26 years, and all the time in the district of Cachar. I have been Manager of Koomber for the last 8 years; previous to that, 12 years, Manager at Larsingah, and as Assistant for six years previous to that at Koomber.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII simply because it has a moral effect on the coolie from the point of view of the management. It is also desirable from the coolie's point of view because if he were deprived of his bonus he would raise a hue and cry. We put new coolies under agreement. We recruited new coolies in 1919-20; they were mostly from Gangpur and the Central Provinces. A good many of them came up infected with hookworm. These coolies should not, in my opinion, have been passed by the medical authorities of the recruiting district. In so far as they were unsatisfactory, I agree that it was a loss to the garden to some extent.

The pay of the staff has been raised in recent years; in addition the staff received a war bonus.

Haziras have not been raised within recent years but coolies have received an equivalent in concessions. For instance, they were supplied with rice at below cost price, also clothing such as blankets, *dhotis* and *saris* in some cases free of charge, in others below cost price.

The estimated expenditure on coolies has slightly increased since the year 1917.

We have never sold concession rice over Rs. 5 a maund.

I have only recently introduced the unit system. A man gets a pice a *nal* up to 16 *nals*, thereafter 2 pice for each additional *nal*. So far this system has been satisfactory. Of course it is subject to alteration twice a year. In the cold weather the coolie was not allowed to do more than his task, but now he can do as much as he likes. There is a natural tendency to sacrifice quality for quantity. But so far the system has not proved unsatisfactory.

A good coolie can earn 6 annas for 8 hours' work of light hoeing. No deduction is made from the coolie's wages for the payment of cowherds.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. I do not think it is possible, nor do I consider it desirable, to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages. Before the unit system was introduced the *hazira* was 4 and 3 annas and the coolies were allowed to earn more than that. I quite agree that the *hazira* is no guide as to what the coolies actually earn in a month; a coolie might earn considerably more than his *hazira*.

I would put down the difference in the cost of living between 1913 and the present moment, taking a conservative estimate, at 50%. A very heavy loss was made on rice in 1920. A coolie who is getting his concession of rice is better off than the coolie living in the village, so that the rise in the cost of living would not affect the coolie in the garden as much as it would those living in the villages.

Q.—Would you say that the average *bustee-wala* was a man with some land?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If rice is dear does he not benefit with a high market?

A.—Yes.

The system adopted in the treatment of hookworm cases is briefly this: on arrival the coolies are examined by the medical officer and those found to be suffering with hookworm are put on the sick list and given a course of treatment. Every Wednesday the coolies afflicted with the disease are taken to hospital and there treated with medicine; the treatment is continued for approximately 3 months when they are examined once again. If they are found to be cured, they are discharged, otherwise the treatment is continued.

Q.—Do you offer any inducements to people to undergo this treatment?

A.—They get full *haziras* for the days they are in hospital.

Coolies take to the treatment quite freely. But I must say that this treatment has been made possible by the fact that I have got a good doctor *babu* who takes an interest in the treatment.

Wages are always paid by the Manager or his Assistant. Coolies have no difficulty in finding access to the Manager whenever they have any grievances to put forward. I agree that there is a tendency on the part of the coolies to refrain from coming forward with any complaint against the Indian staff, for fear of reprisals, but there is no difficulty in the way of coolies approaching the Manager or Assistant whenever they wish to do so.

I approve of the agreement system because it is an old established custom which the coolie thoroughly understands and recognises. I have never found the Act doing any good from the legal point of view, nor do I think the coolie recognises the legal aspect. I consider it purely a moral contract. Coolies know that if they were prosecuted they could simply pay back the advance and thus escape scot-free. I have had a few defaulters but the Act has done me no good because they paid up the advance. I have practically no land for cultivation by the coolies. The reason why the cash earnings in September and February of 1921 were less than those of 1920 is because there was no *ticca* work and less cultivation was done. No extra work was allowed them; they simply did the ordinary work. We give a bonus at childbirth. Up to the time the child is on the books, the bonus is given. Concessions are also allowed in money as well as in rice. Coolies have gardens on which to grow vegetables. The produce from these gardens is part of their income.

Mr. *McMorran* :—Q.—Would you regard the earnings for March 1921, *viz.*, Rs. 8-6-8 on the average sufficient to meet the cost of living in the case of a single individual?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that the mere fact that your wage for some part of 1921 was less does not necessarily mean that your coolies were not getting sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort?

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A.—That is so.

Coolies hold practically no land outside the garden.

No. 81.—Mr. B. GUPTA, *Manager of Vernerpur Tea Estate.*—

I am Manager of Vernerpur Tea Estate. I have been connected with Tea for over 25 years and have been Manager of Vernerpur for over 15 years now.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII. I have given agreements for not more than 2 years or 623 days. The reason why I am in favour of its retention is that it would afford a little protection to the employers. New coolies are never put under agreement immediately on arrival. They are generally put under agreement after one year when they have settled down. I consider that if the new coolie was put under agreement immediately on his arrival and given the advance, he would in all probability feel tempted to abscond with the money. I think it is a mistake to give new coolies an advance immediately on their arrival. I had very few absconders last year; before that there were many. In one year I think I lost about 60 coolies, some having gone to the Burma Oil Company, some to the Surma Valley Saw-mills and to some other gardens. In 1916-19 we imported a lot of wretched famine-stricken coolies many of whom were physically unfit. We recruited these men through the Labour Supply Association. It is my opinion that many of these recruits ought to have been rejected in the recruiting districts and not allowed to come up.

The Manager is the only person who imposes fines. If a coolie absents himself a fine of 2 annas is imposed for that day's absence. The fine is not imposed for continued absence; it may be imposed for one or two days only, the object being to maintain discipline. In a whole year the amount of fines would not exceed about Rs. 2. There has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labourers recently owing, in my opinion, mainly to the dearness in the cost of living and not much to any political causes. There were many political meetings held close to my garden, but my coolies never attended those meetings. There has been agitation round about the *bustees* and the agitators tried to stop my bazaar as well. I would say generally that political agitation has very slightly affected the coolies; I think the real reason for this unrest must be ascribed to economic reasons.

We increased the rates for *haziras* in 1913 from 3 annas and 2 annas 6 pies to 3 annas 6 pies and 3 annas; and in 1921 to 4 annas 6 pies and 4 annas for men and women, respectively. I raised the rates in 1913 with a view to equalizing the wages which were given on the adjoining gardens. I raised the wages in 1921 owing to the high cost of living. The cost of living between 1913 and 1921 has risen by at least 50 %.

My coolies are indebted to the garden to the extent of about Rs. 5,000. This sum is accountable for cash advances taken by the coolies, and also includes sums outstanding for a certain number of years. We are required to write off a good amount as irrecoverable. It is difficult to say for how many years we keep advances outstanding against coolies before we write them off, but generally I should say the period may extend to three years.

I am in favour of giving coolies a bonus proportionate to the prosperity of the garden year by year but only under certain conditions, *viz.*, according to the quantity of work and attendance. I made proposals to the Tea Association suggesting that for at least 75% of the working days those coolies who earned 75% of the full *haziras* over the whole year should be given a bonus of so much according to the profits made by the garden. I have not tried it myself so far.

Q.—But supposing the garden made a loss and the coolie got no bonus in a particular year, would the coolie understand it?

A.—The intelligent coolies would certainly understand it: it is possible that all might not understand it.

As a rule I do not give rice except when prices are ruling high when I allow the coolies rice and clothes at concession rates. In 1920 I sold rice at the maximum rate of Rs. 5 a maund. I made a loss of about Rs. 2,500 in that year.

The coolies have a good deal of paddy land and we charge rent at the rate of Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-8-0 per *kear* for paddy land and Rs. 3 a *kear* for sugarcane land against the *bustee* rate of Rs. 4 and Rs. 5 per *kear*. About 90% of my coolies have got land.

I would be prepared to give the agreement bonus after a year's work instead of at the beginning. There have been many absconders during the last few years, but not a single case was taken to Court.

Q.—If the agreement were not taken from the coolies, the coolies, I take it, would abscond, so that the agreement is necessary?

A.—Yes, but those who do not want to stay may clear out; no compulsion is imposed on the coolies.

The political agitation in my opinion has been directed against the Government, also against European as well as Indian gardens. The agitators as I have already said tried to interfere with my own bazaar by attempting to stop it. People go about saying that garden coolies are very badly paid and that they should not obey the garden authorities. I do not allow *swadeshi* preachers to come into my garden bazaars; my *chaukidars* are there to see that these people are kept at a distance. I have had no *hartals* on my garden.

The Rs. 5,000 which has been outstanding against the coolies as cash advances was taken for ceremonies, marriages and sometimes for *khoraki*, the latter accounting for about Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 1,500.

As regards a share in the profits of the garden I would give commission only to those coolies who worked steadily during the year. If there were no profits made by the garden, the coolies would not get anything. The intelligent coolies would certainly understand the principle. I grant that the unintelligent ones would not.

Mr. McMorrin:—Q.—You mention that you keep advances on your books for about 3 years. On what principle it is done?

A.—Advances are not written off as long as the coolies against whom such advances are outstanding are residing on the garden. When I do write off the advance after three years I would not tell the coolie that I had done so.

Q.—So that he may still think he is indebted to the garden for the full amount?

A.—I do not think he would because no advance would be cut from his pay so that he knows that he is not owing anything to the garden. We charge no interest at all on this account.

If a poor coolie, indebted to the garden, left the garden I would not take any steps against him as I consider that it would be throwing away good money after bad money, unless of course I knew that it was done with the intention of defrauding the garden, when I would, if I knew the coolie's whereabouts, take action against him.

Q.—Have you discussed the matter of giving a special profits bonus to coolies with your Directors?

A.—No, but I intend doing so at to-morrow's meeting. I have made a proposal to give coolies a bonus, but unless my Directors agree I cannot give effect to it.

Q.—Are you aware that the programme of the non-co-operator is to interfere with the European-managed gardens?

A.—I am not aware of that.

Q.—Might I draw your attention to a resolution published in the *Assam Gazette* which stated that at a Conference it was decided that service under European planters and residents should be refused, and from this may it not be inferred that the programme of the non-co-operators was directed against European gardens rather than against Indian gardens?

A.—Previously it was directed against all; for instance, Kalinagar, an Indian garden in the Chargola Valley, suffered.

Q.—You know that in the Chargola exodus, Bidyanagar which belongs to an Indian firm was exempt from trouble?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that it is quite possible that your own security was due to the fact that you are an Indian and not a European?

A.—Possibly so.

Q.—The fact that it was directed against Europeans might explain why you have not been attacked?

A.—On our side agitation is very scarce and many European gardens have also escaped.

Q.—As regards rent, you charge an economic rent on your rice and sugarcane lands which generally amounts to 2 *kears* per working man, i.e., Rs. 2-8 per *kear* or Rs. 5 annually. When you recover the rent, do you admit that so far as that rent is

silchar. concerned you are recovering in the rent something equivalent to the extra wage that you are paying to the coolie ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—About the loss on rice, could you tell me how much was so lost in 1919-1920 ?

A.—Rupees 2,500 in 1920 ; the rest in 1919. Prices went up in the latter part of 1919. For cloth in 1919 and 1920 I lost a good deal. I gave away winter clothing amounting to Rs. 700 or 800 besides *dhotis* and *saris* worth about Rs. 200 or 300. No portion of these sums is recovered from the advances.

Under the agreement I give a bonus of from 7 to 10 rupees in the case of a man and from 6 to 8 in the case of a woman according to the stamp of worker. When an agreement is renewed and a man is indebted to the Company to the extent of Rs. 3 at that time, I always recover the amount from the bonus. I give the agreement partly with a view to reducing the indebtedness of the coolies to the garden.

The rent which a coolie would pay for his land forms a very small proportion of his profit from the land.

No. 82.—Col. R. ST. JOHN HICKMAN, *Manager of Boro Jalinga Tea Estate* :—

I have been about 38 years in Tea—in Cachar about 27 years, Sylhet 10 years and Boro Jalinga about 11 years now.

I am in favour of putting the coolie under contract, speaking from the coolie's own point of view.

We put new coolies under agreement on arrival, and I do not think they abscond with the advance.

I have done a lot of recruiting during the last 10 years. I have recruited about 800 or 900 coolies and have been very lucky in getting a good class of men.

Rice was sold at concession rates in 1920 only and the maximum rate was Rs. 5 to the maund.

A certain amount of rice was sold to people in the garden who are not coolies working on the garden at the higher rate.

Rice was supplied to new and poor coolies at a uniform rate of Rs. 5.

You say in answer to question 72 that you purchased rice at Rs. 7-10-0 a maund and sold it at Rs. 6-8-10. Would you call that rate dear from the coolie's point of view ?

A.—Yes, as the normal rate is cheaper than that.

As to whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages, I can only say that from the garden point of view it is almost impossible to do so, while it would be most undesirable from the coolie's point of view.

We pay a bonus of Rs. 8 to men and Rs. 6 to women under the agreement. These sums are lower than the advances paid in the neighbouring gardens. It has been a custom more or less with us and has been based on the popularity of the garden. The bonus is never recovered. Coolies have other advantages also.

Six hundred and thirty-two acres of land are cultivated by 538 coolies. We give one *heer* of land free of rent to all working coolies. Ninety-five per cent. of the men have got cultivation.

My system of payment is weekly. I supplied rice only once during 1920 when prices were very high. My *haziras* are 3 annas for both men and women. I have a labour force of very nearly 2 coolies to the acre. Coolies are at liberty to earn as much as they like. More *ticca* is given now and the work is easier. The *nirikh* tasks have also been reduced considerably.

Q.—Is it fair to assume that a coolie finds it easier now than 10 years ago to earn his pay and has facilities for earning more now ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Financially he is better off and yet the *hazira* remains the same, so that the *hazira* is no indication of what a coolie earns ?

A.—Yes. The coolie earns far more now than he used to 10 years ago and in a much shorter time. To earn 4 annas a day it would take a coolie 4 to 5 hours.

A coolie's expenditure varies entirely according to the price of rice. Taking a s^{ilchar} high figure for the rate at which rice is sold I would say that Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 would be ample for a coolie to live in comfort with 2 non-working children. This sum would include clothing and I think they could live luxuriously.

Wages are paid under European supervision. I have never heard of any complaints from coolies against exactions by the Indian staff. Complaints are made to the Manager or Assistant and coolies have easy access to them.

The coolies recruited by me were quite healthy and strong and as far as I know the medical examination testified to this. Coolies are examined in the recruiting district as well as by the medical officer on the garden and results are reported to Calcutta.

I am of opinion that the agreement has a moral influence on the coolie. As far as I can recollect I had only one or two cases under Act XIII during my experience of 35 years. Nearly all my coolies are under agreement. Agreements are taken both by poor coolies as well as by rich coolies, that is to say, those who are well off as well as those who are not quite so well off.

No. 83.—Mr. C. W. SLOCOCK, *Manager of Borakai Tea Company* :—

I came out to Tea in 1904 and have been in Cachar all the time. I was at Silouri for some time. I have been at Borakai for the past 7½ years. We put coolies under agreement. I do not think it would make any difference whether the Act was abolished or not. I think we could work without the Act, but the coolies would certainly miss the bonus as if the Act was repealed we need not give the bonus.

We recruited a bad lot of coolies in 1920—they were Nunias, quite fit physically but too lazy to work, and with the exception of about 10 or 15 all of them left, as they were not willing to work.

The increase in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 may be estimated at 100%.

The rate of *hazira* for both men and women is 3 annas; they are paid weekly. *Haziras* have not been altered in recent years. The hoeing task has not been altered either. It takes a coolie 4 hours to do his task, or in other words to earn 3 annas. There are 400 acres of paddy land distributed among 440 men. We charge rent at Re. 1 or annas 8 a *heer*. We give no sick pay in the case of pregnant women, but we give them as much leave as they require. Rice has always been issued at concession rates, that is to say, one or two seers in the rupee below the bazaar rates.

We do not give agreements to women. The reason why we made a difference between men and women in regard to the granting of the agreement bonus was that there were so many women already and we did not want to employ any more. The practice observed with regard to putting coolies under agreement is to give the agreement to the husband and not to the wife, or at any rate to one member of the family.

There was agitation on my garden when a big meeting was held in the *bustees* on or about the 10th December and on the 12th the coolies came up demanding 8-annas *haziras*. I said I would not give it. They went to work till later when they came again and demanded that they did not want the sardars and babus on the garden. They attempted to strike but I told them that if they did so, they would not get any wages.

I consider that the money wages of the coolie together with the concessions are quite sufficient to maintain him in health and reasonable comfort. I consider it impossible to convert the concessions into an increase of money wages, and even if it was possible, I would consider it most undesirable. We intend increasing the rate of our *haziras* from 3 annas in the case of men and women to 4 annas, and 3 annas 6 pies respectively, and in the case of children from 1 anna 6 pies to 2 annas, the reason for doing so is because tea is improving.

Mr. Dawson. - Q.—Would it be correct to say that the increase has been suggested because of the economic necessity of the coolie?

A.—I do not think so; other gardens have put up their *haziras* for some years now and I think we must follow suit, especially as we can afford it now that tea is improving. I have never before applied to my Agents to put up the *haziras*.

SILCHAR.

Wages as also *ticca* are always paid by the European staff. At Silchar, however, *ticca* is paid by the sardars; not at Borakai. The sardars take the contract for the *ticca* and pay the coolies themselves. Some of these coolies are under Act XIII.

Major Fox—Q.—Why do the people like to take agreements?

A.—Because they are in need of a lump sum of money which they want to invest in the purchase of cattle.

Q.—Is it the case that the man who is under agreement has a less amount of freedom than the man not under agreement?

A.—To some extent it is so.

Q.—Is there any distinguishing line?

A.—No; they are equal. The men generally come and ask for the agreement of their own accord.

Q.—But the increase to 3 annas 6 pies in the woman's wage practically makes up for the difference in the agreement, since she does not now take the agreement?

A.—Yes. Although I do not consider the economic condition of the coolie bad, I am prepared to give him an increase in view of the more promising outlook in tea. The Company made no profit in 1920.

Coolies are afforded every facility of approaching me whenever they wish to put forward any grievances.

I do not know whether the coolies would want an increase if the agreement was abolished, but I should certainly say that the men would be discontented.

Q.—When a coolie is under agreement, you can compel him to go to work?

A.—I think you can tell him that he should. The loss on rice as noted from the books on my return from leave in 1921 was Rs. 1,153. I do not know at what rate rice was sold, but I can only say that it was sold below the market rate.

No. 84.—Mr. J. E. WEBSTER, C.S.I., C.L.E., I.C.S., Commissioner :—

President. You are Commissioner of the Surma Valley?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How long have you been Commissioner?

A.—Since December 1920.

Q.—Before that?

A.—I was Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet in 1914 to the beginning of 1917.

Q.—Have you served in any other tea districts?

A.—No.

Q.—Can you give us an account of the Chargaia exodus which took place in May 1921?

A.—The position when I first came to this Division was that the tea industry was passing through a serious crisis owing to the low price of tea and inability to get rid of stocks in hand. Several gardens were in financial difficulties. It was apprehended that coolies would be unable to obtain the usual amount of employment and that there would be a serious drop in their earnings and consequently unrest. However gardens were doing their very best to keep work going and to prevent the coolies from sharing in the general depression. They went on all right till February 1921, when Khilafat and Congress meetings started both in Sylhet and in Cachar. There was also, I noticed, an article in the *Surma* about that time headed "My brother the coolie," which showed pretty well the line that was going to be taken by the agitator. I drew the attention of local planters to that and I think they took measures. In March again Mr. C. R. Das visited this Valley and there were more meetings both in Sylhet and Cachar. Then on the 31st of March and on the 2nd of April there were meetings at Brahman Bazar and Tilagaon, at which coolies were present. It was obvious that this was likely to lead to trouble, and I communicated with Major Fox on the subject and took steps to have the garrison of the Division strengthened in anticipation of trouble. On the 11th of April there was another meeting at Rajnagar which did not produce any immediate result that I know of, but on the 12th the coolies on the Lungla tea-garden went on strike and on the following day a number of coolies at Ghazipur went on strike. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Sylhet, went to the locality and, I think, they were able to settle the Ghazipur affair. There was further trouble in the north of the district which was not directly connected with tea and in the

meantime there were strikes in various parts of Cachar chiefly out in the Labag and Dewan direction, and towards the end of the month I went down to the Lungla Division and visited Lungla garden and the coolies, after having the conditions explained to them, went back to work with, I think, no immediate concessions. Silchar.

Q.—Did you explain the position to the coolies yourself?

A.—Yes. The party came to me at Prithimpassa and I pointed out to them that they could not expect a rise in wages while the gardens were working at a loss and that they must wait for better times. They were quite reasonable at the moment and actually went back to work on the following morning. There was also during this time a meeting at Shamshernagar which is right in the tea district, but comparatively few coolies attended it and the only immediate result seems to have been a very brief strike of a few hours on the Alinagar garden, which was settled without official intervention. While I was down there I had discussed with the Deputy Commissioner and with certain planters the question whether it was necessary to stop all meetings in the neighbourhood of gardens and we came to the conclusion that no immediate action in this direction was necessary, but that we should carefully watch all such meetings and take notes of what was said there.

Then came this intimation of the Chargola gardens and the Deputy Commissioner's request for my approval to his action in forbidding all further meetings within seven miles of tea-gardens, which I gave. I got as far as Karimganj on my way back to Silchar and I met the Deputy Commissioner, and Mr. Ballantine, Superintendent of Police, and drove out with them to Dullabcherra garden. We had a little preliminary talk with planters in the course of which I gathered that the general impression there was that this strike was in some degree at least the outcome of the refusal of the Calcutta Agents to sanction the increased wages which had been recommended by local Managers. Mr. Dawson, Mr. Ballantine and I were at the meeting of the 6th May held late in the evening from about 8 P.M. to 10-30 P.M. which was attended by representatives of most of the gardens, except Mr. Gunnery, the only important Manager who was not there and who was detained by illness. Well, the general impression seemed to be that the coolies should have a rise in wages, that it must be a substantial rise or it would have no effect, and that it must be given at once or the exodus would continue and the Valley be depleted. As to what this rise should be, each member present at the meeting was asked in turn what, in his opinion, would be a reasonable figure, and different members had different ideas on the subject. The opinion of the majority was in favour of the rates which were finally adopted at the meeting, and it was decided that these concessions should be announced immediately without waiting for sanction from Calcutta as that sanction might arrive too late. The Managers present asked if they could put it on record that they acted with the full approval of the officials present and I said that they could do so and that I would record a note of which they could make use for this purpose. I recorded this note on the following morning and handed copies to Mr. Bather.

Q.—Did you suggest any rates yourself?

A.—Not at the meeting, as far as I know.

I had an informal discussion and mentioned certain rates to certain individuals, but in the meeting I carefully abstained from giving any advice, that being a matter which was one for tea-garden Managers and not for Government officials to decide. I may say that I would not have suggested such high rates as were offered because I did not think that such high rates could be paid. Actually one Manager informed his coolies through his chowkidars of the concession immediately after the meeting, others did not do so till later, and one Manager at least declined to announce any concessions holding that it was not fair to his employers to do that without approval. On the following day we went over to Chargola garden where we saw Mr. Gunnery and informed him of what had happened. He quite approved and wired to Calcutta. I think he said he proposed to announce the same concessions. Of course, I did not see the telegram but I know that before he had announced them he heard that his Calcutta Agents would not sanction them. Later in the day, at the instance of the Manager of Singlacherra, Mr. Dawson and I went to his garden, and on his behalf explained to the coolies the decision that had been come to with the result that they agreed to work on the terms announced. That evening some at least of the gardens received telegrams telling them that these concessions could not be sanctioned. That evening it was reported from Dullabcherra that there was some unrest and that the coolies wanted to see the Manager, and the following morning he went down to the tea house where he interviewed a number of coolies. He heard their grievances and explained what had been done. I may say

Silchar. that the chief grievance put forward was the extent to which the coolie was cheated by his sardar, that is to say, the sardar was employing an excessive number of coolies on his private work. One of the sardars admitted this and was fined on the spot. The coolies also put forward their fear that these concessions, though granted temporarily by the Manager, would not be continued, and Mr. Bather gave his solemn assurance that his word would not be broken. Not more than half an hour after the coolies had dispersed, apparently satisfied, news was brought to the bungalow that the men and women were leaving the lines. Mr. Dawson and I went down to see what we could do and found a stream of coolies going across country. We tried to intercept them first at one spot and then further down on the main road. We stopped several and spoke to them but they would not listen to us, those who had anything at all to say declaring that these concessions would not be confirmed and that they were only temporary.

Q.—Do you think that the coolies had come to know the decision of the Calcutta Agents?

A.—That was my inference at the time. In fact I inferred that the value of the concessions was discounted by the knowledge that Calcutta refused to confirm them. Of course I could not prove that, but that was my inference from the demeanour of the coolies.

That is really all I saw of the exodus in the Chargola Valley. Later I saw some of the coolies in Karimganj. Some of the coolies as they left Dullabcherra garden were shouting "Gandhi Maharaj ki jai," and a day later, when I passed a number of them in Karimganj town, I heard them exclaiming "Hindu-Mussalman on ki jai"; that was the main cry.

Q.—Then the coolies would appear to have known about the telegram before that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are the Agents the same for all these different gardens?

A.—No, there are different Agents. The Agents for Bidyanagar are Messrs. Martin and Company.

Q.—Was there no trouble on Bidyanagar garden?

A.—There was no trouble. Concessions were announced probably, as I understand, by the Manager, just in time to prevent trouble. I believe he has been supported all through by his Agents. Messrs. James Finlay and Co. are the Managing Agents in respect of some gardens, and I believe they are forwarding Agents only in respect of others. The Agents of Dullabcherra are Macleod and Company who are forwarding Agents and not Managing Agents.

Q.—Did they send the telegram to Dullabcherra?

A.—I think so. I should add that in Karimganj we met Mr. Crawford of Messrs. James Finlay and Co. and Mr. Trevor of Messrs. Macleod and Co. and Major Fox, on the morning of the 8th I think.

Q.—Did Mr. Crawford and Mr. Trevor approve the concessions?

A.—I would not say they did, but I understand that they subsequently recognised that they could not be withdrawn. I told them myself that I did not think it would be safe to withdraw them. Their recognition of this was too late to stop the exodus.

Q.—Do you consider the action of the Agents mainly responsible for that exodus?

A.—It is rather difficult to say, but I think the concessions would have been more likely to have been effective in stopping any further exodus if they had been confirmed by the Agents. My impression on the 7th was that the coolies were prepared to accept these concessions, and I think if they had been assured that these were permanent concessions which would not be taken away from them, they might have gone on working.

Q.—Is that all you have got to say about the Chargola exodus?

A.—I think that is all.

Q.—That brings it up to the 8th of May. There was a repetition of the exodus later on?

A.—Yes. In June there were further strikes brought about owing to a change in the Managers. That, however, was on one garden, but a number of coolies continued, for several days after the 8th, to leave the different gardens. They kept coming in in big batches to Karimganj. I think the largest exodus was from the Maguracherra garden which declined to announce any concessions at all.

Q.—Did the Chargola exodus have any effect on the gardens in Hailakandi or Cachar? Was there any trouble or were any meetings held? Silchar.

A.—There was not much trouble in May. The trouble began first of all in Cachar in March when there were strikes on several gardens, in some cases resulting in the dismissal of garden babus who were objectionable for some reason to the coolies. Most of these strikes collapsed after a few days, and in some cases undesirable coolies were expelled from the garden, which action had a deterrent effect on the remainder.

I found some of these coolies afterwards down the line and made enquiries as to whether gardens were willing to take them back. A few were willing, but most of them were not. I would not say that the Chargola exodus itself directly affected either Hailakandi or Cachar; I have no information to prove that. I did not myself visit any of the gardens in Cachar on which there were strikes, so my information regarding the Cachar gardens is only second-hand. A number of small strikes, I believe, went on up till May.

Q.—And in Sylhet there was trouble on gardens after the Chargola exodus throughout the year?

A.—Yes, throughout the year off and on. There were strikes at Dholoi; that apparently was a special case, because the coolies objected to the Manager having called in the Police on a matter which they thought should have been settled by the garden. It collapsed after the Deputy Commissioner went. There was a certain amount of unrest at Patrakhola. The September strike at Kaliti was connected with objections to the head clerk who was said to have got too much power and to take excessive *dasturi*. In the end of May and beginning of June there were strikes in the Ita and Karimpur divisions in the Lungla district. These seemed to have been due to no definite economic grievance but to be the outcome of political unrest. Then there has been trouble again at Baroora, and later at Jagcherra in the Balisera direction,—not very serious, but all the outcome of the general unrest.

Q.—What would you call the trouble at Jagcherra?

A.—I believe it was ostensibly a grievance against the head clerk. I do not quite know what was at the bottom of it.

Q.—In Cachar there have been no serious riots during the past year?

A.—No serious tea-garden riots, but there was one case in which the Deputy Commissioner and the Manager of Uranaband garden were assaulted; this was in the beginning of November. There was some trouble before that on Uranaband garden. The Assistant, I understand, struck a woman, and there was a row. The Manager held an enquiry and dismissed the Assistant and head clerk who were responsible for the trouble. Later on the Manager himself committed some petty assault and the coolies got out of hand. He asked the Deputy Commissioner to come down; the latter came and heard what the coolies had to say and passing no definite orders went off with the Manager through the tea house coming out against a crowd of coolies who came up to them in a threatening manner and asked what was the charge. They were not satisfied with the answer and seized *lathis* and attacked the Manager. The Deputy Commissioner, intervening to protect the Manager, was hammered himself.

Q.—In the other cases the disturbances took the form of a strike?

A.—Yes. There had been a few cases where the coolies had come into Silchar in the old fashion to present their grievances and had gone back again. In a few cases the people deserted altogether.

Q.—I understand that volunteers have been enlisted from among the coolies on the gardens in Cachar?

A.—This is the very latest development. In fact the enlistment of volunteers in the villages is rather a recent development in Cachar. In the early part of the year there were comparatively few volunteers; just in the towns you found a few volunteers keeping order at meetings, but since September very large numbers of volunteers have been enrolled in the villages especially in Hailakandi and towards Borkhola and Lakhipur in the Sadr subdivision. They are mostly Muhammadans of the lower classes as well as school boys. It is only within this month that I have heard any word of coolies being enlisted as volunteers.

Q.—Have you any estimate of the number of volunteers in Cachar at the present moment?

A.—I have no reliable figures, but I imagine it to be something like 20,000 from the various reports that have been made.

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Q.—Any extension of this volunteer movement to tea-garden coolies would be very dangerous I take it ?

A.—I think it is most dangerous because once a coolie gets to recognise another authority than his Manager, it will be impossible to maintain discipline on the gardens.

Q.—Are there any further points on which you would like to make a statement ?

A.—I do not think so.

Major Fox :—Q.—Would it be fair to assume that the rise in wages was given very largely for the purpose of stopping the exodus of coolies from the gardens ?

A.—Yes, it would be fair to assume that the rise was given very largely for that purpose, but not solely.

Q.—That is to say, the general consensus of opinion was that the coolies had some economic grievances ?

A.—Yes, and I was informed that this matter had been represented by at least some of the gardens to their Calcutta Agents some time previously.

Q.—There was a difference of opinion as to whether six annas and four annas should be given, and I take it from what you have said that some of the Managers were not in favour of giving such a large increase ?

A.—Yes, some Managers thought five and three and a half annas would be sufficient. I have kept no note, but there was a good deal of difference of opinion.

Q.—Would it be fair to assume that the higher rate was given with the idea of stopping the exodus and the lower rate for the purpose of remedying the economic grievance ?

A.—I would not say that ; I would say that those who proposed the higher rate thought that that was a fair rate to give the coolie, though, but for the immediate necessity, they might have tried to temporise by giving a lower rate in the first instance.

Q.—At this meeting when wages were considered was anything said with regard to concessions ?

A.—Yes, it was considered that probably the concessions would have to be withdrawn and that a higher standard of labour would have to be insisted on, that for the time being tasks should not be changed, but that possibly in the long run it might be possible to increase the tasks slightly owing to the general rise in the efficiency of the labour.

Q.—Then at this meeting the officials took no active part in suggesting to the Managers that there might be a rise in the wages ?

A.—Not an active part, but in the preliminary discussion some of the officials expressed the opinion that garden-coolies should have better pay.

Q.—What then was the general drift of their advice ?

A.—The general drift was that if the coolie really required an increase in wages it would be a mistake to withhold it.

Q.—There was no figure, I take it, arrived at as constituting a fair wage ?

A.—Not beyond six and four annas put down in the note. I may say that I mentioned to one of the Managers present that my own idea would have been five and three and a half or four annas, but they were very definite—those who proposed the higher figures—that no lower figure would be of any use.

Q.—Did the discussion take place between two or three Managers or between many of them ?

A.—We met in the Club beforehand and we talked to various people in groups and I also talked more particularly to Mr. Bather, and to his Assistant who drove us out. Mr. Gunnery was not there. I cannot remember whether I talked to Mr. Simpson or not.

Q.—From the evidence we had at Dullabcherra I gathered that the Managers themselves felt at this meeting that this discussion about wages was more to stop the exodus than to remedy the economic grievances ?

A.—I should not say that. I came away with a strong impression that the Managers thought that they were very badly treated by the Calcutta Agents who had placed them in this difficult position by withholding concessions, and that this trouble had brought matters to a head and compelled them to act on their own initiative without waiting for sanction. It was certainly my impression that this was what they would have done themselves before the exodus if they had had a free hand. I mean that they would have raised the coolies' wages, though to what figure I cannot say.

Mr. McMoran.—*Q.*—You said quite rightly that tea was passing through a very difficult time. I suppose these Managers were aware of this just as much as yourself ?

A.—Yes, or better, as they knew the conditions of their individual gardens ?

Q.—I suppose it would not be an exaggeration to say that not one of these Companies had shown a profit for the year 1920 ?

A.—I could not say that for all the gardens. My general impression was that they were working at a loss, but I had no definite information.

Q.—Can it not be said of every garden in Cachar ?

A.—I know certain gardens which made a profit in 1920. As a general rule, however, gardens were not making profits.

Q.—I want to know how Managers in these circumstances made proposals to pay increased wages when the funds were not available. I may say if one is going to be fair with the coolie, he must be prepared to carry out what is promised. There was not the wherewithal to make those increased payments at the time or even prior to the exodus ?

A.—I understood from the Managers that the position was that there were no profits from which to pay the existing wage bills. That might have to come out of reserves in any case. If they did not give this increase they would lose their coolies and the gardens would be ruined. If they gave the increase they might save the garden. They hoped that with the improved efficiency of labour, with better pay, and by economies in special concessions, they would work at only a slightly increased cost of production, and they thought that they were justified in the circumstances in taking upon themselves the responsibility of saving their gardens from utter ruin by incurring a temporarily slightly increased expenditure. That, I take it, was the guiding feeling in the minds of Managers.

Q.—So that the intention was that the cost of production should not be increased ?

A.—I am sure they all hoped that it would not be increased.

Q.—Can you say, approximately, how many coolies went out of the Chargola district ?

A.—I believe the number was something like 6,000 or more—perhaps 8,000. I am afraid I do not remember the exact figure.

Q.—You spoke to some coolies as they were going away from the district. How many do you think you might have spoken to ?

A.—It is difficult to say. I tried to speak to a good many. I may have actually stopped and spoken to eight or ten.

Q.—Which gardens were these people from ?

A.—This particular lot was from Dullabcherra.

Q.—Were these people doubtful as to whether the promise made by their Manager would be implemented ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was it not the case that Mr. Bather was the leading man who proposed this advance ?

A.—He certainly was one of about three Managers who were very much in favour of it ; I think two others were more so than he was. He no doubt took a leading part.

Q.—You got no indication as to why they doubted the word of the Manager ?

A.—No.

Q.—It is extraordinarily difficult to see how the management can prevent coolies going out if a promise that has been made to them is not accepted. There is no other way in which you can deal with labour. The Manager has made a promise of increased wages to the coolies, and in spite of that fact, they go out and offer you an explanation which indicates that they do not expect that the offer made to them would be implemented ? Is that the impression they conveyed to you ?

A.—That is so.

Q.—You cannot say whether that impression was a general one ?

A.—Of course I cannot say what was in the minds of all the coolies of whom there were about 400, but coolies act rather in a mass in this respect, and it is not likely that only particular individuals would hold one opinion against the majority.

Q.—If the Manager had made a promise to the coolies, do you think that the refusal on the part of the Agents to increase the wages was conveyed to the coolies indirectly ?

A.—Yes.

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Slichar.

Q.—The Agents wired back to say that they were not prepared to make the advance ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was that qualified in any way ?

A.—I believe not.

Q.—Was there a similar refusal on the part of other Agents ?

A.—Yes, except in the case of Martin and Co., the lessors of Bidyanagar. Messrs. Finlay and Co. ultimately agreed to pay these rates. I have no official knowledge on the point.

Q.—Coolies have left the Valley since the rates were conceded ?

A.—Many have.

Q.—So that the rates in their instance had not prevented an exodus ?

A.—No.

Q.—Does not that point to some kind of political agitation which was influencing labour ?

A.—I have no doubt that there is a political movement influencing coolies.

Q.—So that even if there may have been some economic justification in this instance, it does not follow they were getting rid of the political influence on tea-garden labour by making concessions in wages ?

A.—No concessions in wages would altogether exclude political influence, but when there is economic trouble political influence has a better soil in which to work.

Q.—In connection with the movement that is taking place just now in enrolling tea-garden labourers as volunteers, can anything be done by Government to limit such activities ?

A.—Government have declared that certain volunteer associations are unlawful associations, and to be a member of such associations is in itself an offence and punishable. You have, of course, in proceeding under this law, to prove that a man is a member of an association that comes within this definition of 'unlawful association', which is, in some cases rather difficult, but if it be found that tea-garden coolies are joining unlawful associations, Government can give the assistance of the law to any Manager who wishes action taken.

Q.—Is it unlawful to wear the distinctive badges of the association ?

A.—It is not unlawful to wear a badge except as a sign of your being a member of an unlawful association. It is in some sense a proof of your being a member. The wearing of a badge in itself is not an offence.

Q.—Some Managers seem to be in doubt as to whether they can take legal measures ?

A.—A Manager of his own accord can take no action beyond dismissing a man, and, having dismissed him, expelling him from the garden in the same way as he would deal with any unsatisfactory coolie. He can, however, make a complaint before the Deputy Commissioner charging this man with being a member of an unlawful association, and it would then be for the Deputy Commissioner to enquire into the matter in the ordinary legal course.

Q.—So far these associations are not taking any definite action, but are apparently waiting for an order ?

A.—They are taking certain definite action. There are picketing shops, especially hops that sell English salt, English piece-goods, and country liquor, and they are trying to prevent people from buying those articles. In other words they are trying to interfere with the normal course of trade and business.

Q.—What we were informed when visiting gardens the other day was that these people are being organized in batches, one being in charge of say ten volunteers with instructions to do nothing until they get the 'hookum'. Would you regard that as a movement that requires some active intervention on the part of the Government ?

A.—I am doubtful whether more active intervention is practicable; it is a very difficult question. One realises the danger of the situation, but it may easily be accentuated by active measures. On the one hand, it is very difficult to say whether repressive measures will not stimulate the movement instead of squashing it. On the other hand, there is the possibility that if nothing is done, everybody will get tired of the movement; they will quarrel among themselves, and the whole thing will fizzle out.

That is the line taken by the apostles of *laissez faire*, and it is very difficult to know whether that or repression is the wiser policy. We had a little time ago, about a month back, started taking active measures, and the results are not so very satisfactory as to encourage us in going on. We arrested a good many leaders and sent them to jail, but we found other men coming up in their place, and I am a little doubtful myself whether it is much use going on with these prosecutions.

Q.—The fear is that as we get away from the time of economic pressure of coolies, many of whom are quite well treated now, the movement may continue and we will not escape the possibility of a similar experience to Chargola? Is Government in a position to take any action with a view to preventing that?

A.—I do not know that we can stop an exodus once people have set their minds on it. I do not know of any way in which it might be done effectively. I don't think there is any.

Q.—I just wanted to know what you thought, as I myself think that there is no way. Is the force at hand sufficient to stop an outbreak?

A.—Yes, under present conditions. We have a very effective force here which we can send to any place to deal with trouble.

Dr. Williams:—Q.—With regard to the rise of wages in the Chargola Valley, are you aware that the agreement bonus has disappeared?

A.—I was not aware, but I anticipated it.

Q.—Do you regard the agreement bonus as a concession?

A.—I regard the bonus as a concession, not the agreement.

Q.—What is your opinion about agreements under Act XIII? Would you continue them or would you transmute them into higher wages?

A.—My personal opinion is to continue agreements with a slight modification in the Act. I think it is a benefit to the coolie to have once a year a little lump sum coming in.

Q.—In what way would you modify Act XIII?

A.—I would transfer to the labourer the option of repaying the advance rather than completing his contract.

Q.—With regard to the Chargola exodus I would like your opinion on the condition of the coolies?

A.—I would say that the coolies, on the whole, were a little below the average of tea-garden coolies. Generally I saw no signs of emaciation or starvation, but they were very badly clothed. Perhaps I may explain that the majority of the coolies who were leaving were the remnants of large batches of *Chamars* and low-caste men from the Central Provinces and Gorakhpur, who had been imported in famine years, had suffered severely in the beginning of the influenza epidemic, and had never quite got over that. Also they had a very poor time on the gardens, because the old, indigenous coolies of Chargola are good caste Hindus who utterly despised those people who had been brought in among them, and, I gather, rather bullied them; so they had special reasons for being unhappy.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—Do you think that a similar rise in wages as was accorded in Chargola, was or is necessary in other parts of the Division under your charge?

A.—I could not generalise. I would not be inclined to say that six or four annas were generally necessary rates. I have in fact made certain suggestions to Government in which I put down a lower scale of wages as being sufficient.

Q.—But some rise in wages was necessary I take it?

A.—Yes, I think it was certainly necessary. On a good many other gardens it would be desirable, but I find it very difficult to generalise. It depends on a great many things. On some gardens even with low rates coolies could earn quite good pay owing to the facilities for *ticca*. There are some coolies who would only do a minimum amount of work and earn merely the *hazira*; other coolies make as much money as they can. I think, however, that a great many gardens ought to have increased the wages on the ground that the rise in wages has not been proportional to the rise in the cost of living. I find from the reports that as long ago as in 1889, a coolie family

Suchar. consisting of a man, his wife and one or two children, earned, on an average, about Rs. 10. The cost of living for a coolie was then estimated to be Rs. 9 or Rs. 10 a month for the family, so that income and expenditure about balanced. Now I find that a coolie family, as far as I am able to judge from statistics, makes about Rs. 13 to Rs. 18 and the cost of living has gone up to about Rs. 20 on the same scale as that of 1889, so that relatively the labourer is worse off and that is perhaps due partly to the fact that he does less work.

Q.—How have the prices of foodstuffs and cloth changed during the last ten years?

A.—I think foodstuffs have gone up about 50% and cloth twice to three times the former price.

Mr. Das:—Q.—What would you recommend for an individual to live in comfort?

A.—The total earnings of a man should be Rs. 10 a month; a woman would probably make less on the average throughout the year, say, about Rs. 7 or Rs. 8, and a child about Rs. 4; these rates include all the concessions. You may give concessions and decrease the wages by a corresponding amount. In my opinion a family would be quite well off with these earnings with three or four non-working children if they had a little land; not otherwise.

Q.—Would you recommend that a coolie should be given a share in the profits?

A.—I doubt whether he has got to that stage of education where he could be made to understand the principle of profit sharing. Experienced planters have told me that if a coolie were to get a share in a prosperous year and nothing the next year, which may be a bad year, he would not understand it.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—Agricultural land, I take it, is held by a good many coolies, while some do not hold land?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Does this not cause some heart-burning?

A.—On a few gardens it has caused heart-burning. I remember one garden in South Sylhet, where the Manager, on taking over, found great dissatisfaction owing to the unequal distribution of land between old and new coolies, and he endeavoured to put this right by a fresh distribution with the result that there was a serious riot. The new coolies were dissatisfied with the old state of affairs, and the old coolies resented any attempt to rectify it.

Q.—Would it not be good for coolies holding land to pay rent to the Tea Company?

A.—On most gardens coolies do pay rent. Some gardens give the land free, some charge a small rent, while others charge an economic rent.

Q.—To remove this heart-burning would it not be wise to charge all the coolies an economic rent and do away with this concession?

A.—I think that even if rent were charged the possession of land would be a concession.

Major Fox:—Q.—With regard to the rise in the cost of living during the last ten years you said foodstuffs had gone up 50% and cloth two or three times the price. Is it not the case that on many gardens foodstuffs are sold at concession rates?

A.—On most gardens I understand.

Q.—And that cloth is also sold?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then would it be fair to say that coolies have not felt this rise to the extent of 50%?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Das:—Q.—Do you know whether Managers are of opinion that the coolie should have some right of possession on the land?

A.—I cannot say what the general opinion is on the subject. I have known a few men who said they would certainly be opposed to it. I cannot speak for the industry as a whole.

Q.—What do you consider is the reason for this?

A.—Firstly, I think some Managers like to reserve to themselves the power of rectifying any unusual distribution; secondly, if a coolie ceased to work for the garden, he should have no right to retain the land which has been given him as a coolie.

President:—*Q.*—Do you think that the half-yearly return which Government has prescribed as regards wages is satisfactory, or would you suggest any alterations?

A.—I have no alterations to suggest in this return.

Q.—Do you think these returns are checked by the garden Manager?

A.—I have no knowledge how the checking is done, but I know that there are many inaccuracies discovered in them.

Q.—So that the presumption would be that they are not checked by the Manager?

A.—I suppose the actual arithmetic is left to a clerk.

Q.—Is it reliable?

A.—Not entirely.

Q.—Would you say, in general, that it is a reasonable return as regards wages on a garden?

A.—I believe so. I imagine that under the usual law of averages these mistakes cancel each other by the time one gets to the figures of the whole province.

Mr. McMorran:—*Q.*—Do you think it would be a reasonable thing to ask the Manager to check the arithmetic of a return like that?

A.—I should not like to do that. Managers might occasionally notice any extraordinary figures and make enquiries before forwarding the returns, otherwise I would not expect the Manager to add up his columns.

PANITOLA, LAKHIMPUR, 4TH FEBRUARY 1922.

Panitola.

[MR. WITHERS AND MR. FOX ABSENT.]

No. 85.—*Dr. F. C. McCOMBIE, Medical Officer*:—

I have been in this district altogether 14 years. I was here first for 3 years from 1904 to 1907, then I went to Bishnath (Darrang district) for 3 years and finally came back here in 1911.

Mr. Dawson:—*Q.*—Would you say that this is a healthy district on the whole as far as the coolie is concerned?

A.—Conditions in the district rather differ. The upper end towards Limbuguri is very malarious, and from Panitola downwards the incidence of malaria is less.

There are about 20 gardens under my charge. Hookworm is not bad in the gardens looked after by me. I always muster the coolies regularly and examine them from time to time with a view to keeping down the incidence. Those whom I find suffering from anæmia are separated and placed under treatment. We have no latrine system in the lines. We have started the septic tank system at one or two hospitals as an experimental measure just to see how the coolies would take to it.

Q.—Do you find any difficulty in getting coolies to go in for indoor treatment?

A.—On some gardens where discipline has been maintained from time immemorial, there is no trouble in this respect. It has been rather difficult on other gardens where there has been labour unrest.

Q.—As regards the taking of indoor treatment, do you find that anything depends on the quality of the Indian staff?

A.—I think the personality of the doctor babu has got a lot to do with getting coolies into hospital. It is essential to have a good doctor babu who is good with labour and well-backed by the Manager.

Q.—Would you say at the present moment that a coolie is well-nourished and well clothed on the gardens on the whole?

A.—Yes, that is so on the whole.

Q.—But would you say that in some cases there is room for improvement?

A.—Yes, on some gardens there is room for improvement. Of course it depends entirely on the class of labour that the garden has. There are certain castes of coolies who are unemployable and much depends on whether the management looks after such coolies and nurses them, at the same time seeing that they get full pay and rice. New coolies on first arrival are segregated for a week or 10 days.

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Q.—In your experience of over 10 years would you say that the physique of the present-day recruit is as good as 10 years ago?

A.—There is a larger percentage of inferior castes recruited at the present time and less of the aboriginal type who are a superior lot. I can say that this physical disability affects the capability of earning good wages.

President.—Q.—Is this district only suitable for certain classes of coolies?

A.—I would not say that exactly, but certain coolies do better up here. We get very few coolies from the United Provinces and my opinion is that they certainly do not get on well, owing partly to climatic conditions and partly to the change in diet. I do not think a United Provinces coolie can feed himself properly here with the high price of flour. I have not had very much experience of United Provinces coolies. In Balijan there were about 200 of them and we got a supply of flour to feed them with, but most of the coolies died. I considered such coolies quite unsuitable.

Q.—What does it cost at present to feed a coolie in hospital?

A.—It would cost about Rs. 5, not including clothing, in a big hospital. During the last few years it might have gone considerably higher. We supply bedding and clothing in the hospital.

Mr. McMorran.—Q.—Would you say that the hospital diet is a slightly specialised diet, that is to say, better than they get in their own houses?

A.—Probably they get more fowl and fish; it may not necessarily represent what a coolie takes in his own house.

Q.—With regard to the cost of food in hospital, one has to bear in mind that that is for a special purpose?

A.—Yes.

No. 88.—Lieut.-Col. H. C. GABBETT, *Superintendent of Budla Beta Tea Company* :—

I have been nearly 26 years in Tea and in my present billet since the year 1915. I am in charge of four divisions. I have been all my time in the Lakhimpur district.

Mr. Dawson.—Q.—When did you give a rise in wages in Budla Beta?

A.—On 1st December 1920. In 1913, men got Rs. 7 to Rs. 6 a month and women Rs. 6 to Rs. 5. The rates have been raised for men 5 annas 6 pies to 4 annas daily and women 5 annas to 3 annas 6 pies daily.

Q.—You say in 1913 the wages were for men Rs. 7 to Rs. 6 a month. Would that have been the case in 1919?

A.—Yes, and women and children were receiving Rs. 6 to Rs. 5 and Rs. 4-8-0 to Rs. 3, respectively. The difference between the seven-rupee coolies and the six-rupee coolies is this: those who take their rice get Rs. 6 and those who do not take it get an extra rupee. Rice is sold at the fixed rate of Rs. 3 a maund in the garden. So also under the new rates, the coolies on the lower rate of pay get rice at Rs. 3 a maund.

Q.—Is it the policy to discourage coolies from taking rice?

A.—We would rather they were free of the factory so that they could arrange for themselves.

Q.—You say in 1920 the loss on rice was Rs. 44,000 on Budla Beta Division alone. Would you say that you lost so much on rice and at the same time you gained by paying those coolies less pay?

A.—In the case of those who take rice, it really costs the garden more. The people who do not take rice are usually the coolies who have a little rice land of their own.

The cost of plucking and manufacturing a maund of tea is estimated at Rs. 6 which is the rate more or less over all the Divisions. We work nearly up to this estimate.

Q.—With regard to question 47, you say the task has not been altered in recent years. If you look at the answer as regards Kanjikoah, you say the light hoe task has been increased by five *nals* since 1913. Is that correct?

A.—Yes, only in the case of light hoeing.

Q.—In Kanjikoah you say in *ticca* hoeing a coolie can only earn one *ticca* and in the other Divisions apparently there is no limit as to what a coolie may earn?

A.—That is wrong; it should have been "a coolie earns as much as he likes in Kanjikoah also."

At Budla Beta there are 1,000 *bighas* of land held by 300 coolies, that is to say, Panitola. 18 per cent. of the adult coolies have got land for cultivation in the garden. Rent is charged at four annas per *bigha*.

As regards irrecoverable loans, about Rs. 40 per annum is written off. This only represents cash which has been borrowed by the coolies for ceremonies, etc.; it does not include money for rice advances. There is not much outstanding in the way of rice advances.

Pregnant women are given leave three months before and three months after birth and are also allowed full pay for the whole period, but no bonus is given on the birth of a child. A pregnant woman may get pay for a longer period according to the advice of the doctor. I think it is a sound policy to give full *hasiras* for six months, because it acts as an encouragement to increased progeny.

Agreement advances are recovered by a book entry transaction.

Q.—Is the advance a bonus?

A.—It is not a bonus, and yet it is a bonus. For instance, a man shown as getting Rs. 6 a month in our pay sheets is given an extra rupee so that he is shown as getting Rs. 7 a month and according to the work he does, say, for full work, every month one rupee is deducted for the recovery of the advance, but his pay is made out at the full Rs. 6 rate.

Q.—In practice would you say that the coolie gets that Rs. 12 into his pocket?

A.—Yes, he does not really pay it back. We put coolies under agreement. Children of 15 and upwards are put under agreement.

Q.—Supposing Act XIII was abolished, would it make much difference to your garden in the way of coolies absconding or doing less work?

A.—I certainly think that if Act XIII is abolished we should probably have a few more absconders.

Q.—Supposing the Government of India did abolish the Act, which is not improbable, would you still continue to give the bonus?

A.—The whole question would have to be reconsidered. I should think that the Company and Directors would require some protection.

President:—Q.—Is the birth-rate higher than the death-rate on your gardens?

A.—I have four gardens, on three of these the birth-rate is higher than the death-rate.

	1921.			Births.	Deaths.
Kharjan	123	70
Kanjikoah	46	36
Budla Beta	106	107
Bokpara	94	59

Generally speaking the birth-rate is higher.

I think it is possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time with a reduced task for fine plucking, as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice, provided the reduction is in proportion.

I think the coolie can earn as much by plucking now as during the war boom in tea.

Q.—Do you think the coolie is as well off now as compared with his condition before the war?

A.—I consider he is better off now in spite of the great rise in prices including cloth. The price of cloth has gone down a good deal during the last two months; I should say the cost of living is now about 60 per cent. above pre-war rates.

Q.—Do you think the coolies are better clothed now?

A.—I think they are about the same.

Dr. Williams:—Q.—What is the method of giving agreements on your gardens?

A.—We have the Agreement Form XIII. There is a separate paper for each coolie and his name and other details are filled in and his thumb impression taken, with a stamp affixed. The monthly wage is entered, and we promise the coolie whatever his monthly wages are. Men Rs. 7 and women Rs. 6 is the present rate; it used to be Rs. 6; this is in addition to the bonus.

Q.—Does he actually get Rs. 7?

A.—Yes, if he works the full number of working days in the month which varies from 24 to 27 days. An average working month is 26 days.

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Q.—If a coolie is sick what happens?

A.—It depends on his sickness a great deal. If seriously ill, he is taken to hospital, but if he is merely seedy and unable to work for a day or so, he is given leave and not paid unless he goes into the main hospital, where he is fed at garden cost. Individual sick allowance is also given.

Q.—The agreement provides that if a coolie is sick, he is still paid so much a month?

A.—(Witness was shown a specimen form by Dr. Williams.) That is not the agreement form used in my Company.

I prefer scattered lines as they make for health and happiness.

Land for rice here is generally not difficult to cultivate.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—Do you mean to say that the coolies are better off now because the wages have been raised?

A.—Yes.

About 60 to 70 per cent. of our coolies are under agreement.

Q.—The remainder who are not under agreement are not given to absconding?

A.—Some of them do go away.

Q.—Does it mean that 60 per cent. of the coolies stay on because they are under agreement but for which fact they would go away?

A.—If they are determined to go, they would please themselves, but I think, being under agreement, they feel that they owe an obligation to the garden.

In the case of non-working children we give free rice to large families consisting of four or five children. For instance, if there was a family consisting of five or six children and only two of them were working, we would supply free rice to the others to help the family through.

About Rs. 4,000 worth of blankets have been supplied in one year.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—You were asked a question which amounted to this: "Do they want to abscond because they are under agreement?" Does it follow that coolies want to abscond necessarily?

A.—No.

Q.—If people abscond there may be reasons which might have nothing to do with the treatment on the gardens I take it?

A.—Yes; in fact I think nearly all the cases of absconding are due to troubles among the coolies themselves.

Q.—The suggestion is always made that the planter is responsible for the treatment of the coolies whereas such troubles arise more often than not out of their own disputes?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not in the interests of the employer to be considerate in the treatment of his labour?

A.—Yes.

As a general rule, a man's total earnings are sufficient to maintain himself and his family in health and reasonable comfort, but that must depend a great deal on various conditions such as how long he has been in Assam, whether he has other means of support such as rice land of his own in which case his pay might cover the expenditure of the whole family.

Q.—But as a general rule an agricultural labourer would be assisted by his wife and family in his earnings, I take it?

A.—That is so.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. I do not think it desirable from the coolie's point of view that these concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

Q.—Occasionally rice cheapens and the price comes down below the average and there is no suggestion made in these circumstances that the coolie should accept a lower rate of remuneration?

A.—No.

Q.—Supposing rice is fluctuating from year to year and that in one year it has been abnormally cheap and in another it has been abnormally dear, may it not be said that the one cancels out the other?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In many other employments wages remain unchanged but prices go up?

A.—That is so.

Q.—So long as it is temporary there is no change necessary in wages. The prices of foodstuffs at present, for example, are quite reasonably low; are they not?

A.—Yes.

Q.—They did compare unfavourably with pre-war prices?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that while we are making this Enquiry the cost of the market for food prices is such as to make the position of the coolie quite a favourable one?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say, or have you any idea as to what percentage of a coolie's outlay in a year is represented by the purchase of cloth?

A.—I cannot say, but it would be a very small proportion I should say.

Q.—It has been suggested that the agreement should be withdrawn, but that the payment made on account of the agreement should be continued. Do you think that a reasonable suggestion?

A.—No, I do not agree with it altogether.

Q.—Would it be reasonable to regard the advances made by a garden to a coolie under agreement as some premium paid for getting his services throughout the year?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So long as it is a two-edged agreement and not one-sided?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You do not necessarily put new coolies under agreement?

A.—Never.

Q.—So that a coolie coming up to the garden is not bound down from the day of arrival, but is free to find his feet in a new district and he does it absolutely of his own free will without any compulsion being put on him to remain?

A.—Yes.

I have had no strikes whatever on my gardens.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—As regards question No. 24 you have given the same answer as the Sub-Committee, i.e., Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman for a decent living wage. Supposing a man and wife, both workers, have two children of five and six years of age, would this wage cover the cost of the whole family?

A.—I think so.

The present rate of rice in the bazaar is Rs. 6-4-0 for *kazla* rice.

Q.—Would you not say that rice in the bazaar was cheap at the present moment?

A.—No.

Q.—What was the price in the bazaar before the war?

A.—Between Rs. 4 and Rs. 4-6-0 as far as I remember.

Q.—Is this three-rupee rate a survival of Act VI?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you remember what was the wage for a coolie under Act VI?

A.—Rupees 5 for the first year for men and Rs. 4 for women, and Rs. 5 and Rs. 6 for the second and third year, respectively, for men, while Rs. 4-8-0 and Rs. 5 for the second and third year for women.

Q.—Did they have opportunities for earning *ticca* in those days in addition to the fixed wages?

A.—Not to any great extent. They could earn *ticca* on plucking and hoeing and that was about all. Nowadays they can earn *ticca* on any work. Women would not make very much in the cold weather, but they can and do earn *ticca* in pruning.

Q.—It is possible that in some cases coolies are absent cutting their crops in the cold weather, but in the Doom-Dooma district there is not much of that, so that there, at any rate, to a large extent coolies are dependent more or less entirely on what they can make on the garden. Would that be correct?

A.—No. A coolie has a hundred and one ways of adding to his salary. He makes baskets and sells them in the bazaar; he grows vegetables which is also another means of adding to his income.

Panitola. Q.—Would you say that the coolies on the Doom-Dooma side, where there is no cultivation, get opportunities of earning more ?

A.—Generally speaking, coolies in the Panitola district, having more rice land, can add more to their income than the coolies living in Doom-Dooma.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII or some other Act on similar lines.

The concessions which are given to a coolie over and above his wages would work out monthly to about Rs. 2-6-0 on the average at Kharjan; that is excluding medicine and housing which, if added, would mean another Rs. 5, i.e., Rs. 3 for housing and Rs. 2 for medicine. If all these concessions were added to the wages of a coolie, his income would amount to something like Rs. 15 to Rs. 16 a month. Rupees 3 for housing covers the cost per adult working coolie or a total of Rs. 36 a year.

No. 87.—Mr. G. E. MOORE, *Manager, Panitola Tea Estate, Jokai Tea Company, Limited*:—

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

From the executive point of view and from the garden point of view if the concessions were converted into an increase of money wages, it would make the working of the garden very much easier, but from the coolie's point of view it would not be at all suitable.

We work on the unit system which was started in the beginning of 1920. We were the first garden in this district to start the system. My example was followed by some other gardens in the Panitola district. I have found the unit system quite satisfactory even from the garden point of view as regards quality of work and the amount of work done.

I had trouble in one coolie line where the coolies complained they would prefer to have their pay monthly and not fortnightly and that they should not be required to pay cash for their concession rice. When I started the unit system I arranged to pay the coolies fortnightly instead of monthly, thinking that it would be to the benefit of the coolies, but they evidently did not like it. They wanted to receive their pay for the ordinary garden task monthly; anything that was earned over the ordinary task was to be given them weekly or fortnightly with a view to enable them to buy their oil, *dal* and other things. They preferred to have their pay proper in a lump sum. The reason they gave was that if they received their pay in small amounts they would never have large sums to buy; say, a blanket or a piece of cloth for ready cash. In other words anything earned over 4 annas for women and 5 annas for men was to be paid to them weekly or fortnightly.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Do you think the coolie himself has benefited by the unit system ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Can you give us a case illustrating that ?

A.—In the out-garden of this division we had a strike and the Assistant Manager reported it to me. I went over and met the labourers. The unit system was instituted there about the same time as it was here. After two months' work under the unit system the labour force of the out-garden petitioned to go back to the old form of pay. I tried to explain to them that they were losers by it but they seemed to be suspicious and I was requested to revert to the old system. When I met the coolies at the time of the strike, their grievance was that Panitola was under the unit system and the also wanted to have it. My conclusions were that they realized that the Panitola hed garden coolies were earning more under the unit system than the coolies of the out-garden under the *hazira* system.

Q.—At what rate do you sell concession rice ?

A.—At Rs. 4-8-0 a maund and sometimes Rs. 5; it is never sold over Rs. 5.

My coolies have approximately 3,062 *bighas* of land for cultivation within the grant and approximately 3,182 *bighas* outside. Approximately 90 per cent. of the adult population have got land for cultivation. The coolies to a large extent are housed in garden *bustees* and prefer this system.

We introduced the latrine system in our lines three years ago as an experimental measure.

Q.—Would you please describe the latrine briefly?

A.—The latrine is a septic tank. A water-tight tank is built in the ground. In this case it is a 2-seated latrine which will do approximately for 35 people. The size of the tank is 6 feet long by 3 feet broad by 3 feet deep. Fitted to this tank is an overflow pipe with a drowned outlet. For the benefit of the Committee I would explain that a drowned outlet means that the overflow is taken not from the surface of the water tank but half-way down the tank. A latrine of that size with a house over it costs approximately Rs. 85.

Q.—Do the coolies use it?

A.—Undoubtedly. When I was building it even before I finished the work I had trouble in preventing coolies from going there. In my opinion as far as latrines are concerned, coolies will use them provided that they are always kept clean. That is absolutely essential. As long as the latrine is kept clean I have no difficulty in getting the coolies to use it. I maintain sweepers and the latrine is under the direct supervision of the doctor babu.

Q.—Do you think that the health of the coolies has improved by using this latrine?

A.—I certainly think so. For instance we had a good deal of anæmia and *anchylostomiasis* in the lines where the latrine is; there is very little now.

I am of opinion that Act XIII is most essential from the labourer's point of view as well as from the point of view of the Company. From the point of view of the employer, I may say that he makes the advance to a labourer and he naturally wants some form of security for it. The money is advanced free of interest and I think you will agree that it is a universal policy that the employer must require some form of security for the money advanced by him, and if Act XIII was repealed, it is my opinion that many employers would be disinclined to make advances and the result can only mean discontent among the labour force.

There is no doubt but that the labourer appreciates the advance which he usually takes from the garden. Of course I do not make a practice of giving the advance to anybody who asks for it. I always go into a man's case and satisfy myself that he wants the money for a beneficial purpose and then I give it to him. My advances are recovered; they are not bonuses.

Q.—Supposing Act XIII were abolished, would you continue the advance?

A.—Personally I would continue to advance the money, but I would not like to answer for others.

We have a very large number of cattle, but very few pigs.

As regards the Act, I should not mind making the advances under any other Act, provided it replaces Act XIII. Personally I would be satisfied with the Indian Contract Act which is a civil transaction. Even if the penal sections in Act XIII are repealed, it would not affect me personally.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—What does a new *kutch*a coolie-house cost?

A.—About Rs. 2-12-0 to Rs. 3 per cubit and the whole hut containing 4 rooms would cost about Rs. 80 to Rs. 90. This would accommodate roughly about 12 coolies; in other words, 4 families of 3 persons (2 adults and one child) in each apartment. The huts are repaired every year and the cost would amount to approximately Rs. 30, or in 2 years such a house would cost between Rs. 110 to Rs. 120; in other words, 10 annas per adult head per month. We used to give coolies quinine very frequently, but we have discontinued the practice now as a general practice.

Under the unit system the daily earnings of the coolie have increased by 25 per cent. in the case of a man and 33 per cent. in the case of a woman. For instance, under the old system 4 annas was paid to a man for 15 *nals* of deep hoeing, whereas under the unit system, the unit is 3 *nals* for an anna so that it constitutes an increase of one anna or 25 per cent. for the same amount of work.

There has been agitation and in my opinion coolies were disturbed by agitators. As an example I might quote an instance of what happened on the out-garden. The coolies had lost a day's work by going on strike. I satisfactorily settled the dispute and they all went back to work. About 2 or 3 coolies for the whole labour force came up to me and asked if the labour could work on the coming Sunday so as to make up the loss. I simply told them that as they had been listening to the babus in the Tinsukia bazaar and carried out their orders, they should go and ask the babus for that day's pay. They left without a word to say. I think it is more or less conclusive that they had been listening to the agitators.

Panitola. Q.—You do not regard any disputes you have had with regard to coolies as a result of economic conditions?

A.—No, I might say that any reason for economic disputes had already been settled in 1920 when the coolies received their increased wages in the beginning of that year.

Q.—What is your plucking rate per maund of tea or green leaf?

A.—I have no rate. I pluck to a unit. The unit weighs approximately 2 seers. Last year the rate was Rs. 5-10-0 to Rs. 5-12-0 per maund of manufactured tea.

Q.—Do you know anything about short-term coolies said to be brought up from Chota Nagpur?

A.—My experience is second-hand. A considerable number came up about 4 years ago but not many to this district. They came for 6 months or a year only.

I should like to make a few suggestions to the Committee. It would appear that the whole of the 85 questions asked by the Committee may be considered leading questions to the following 4 general questions:—

- (1) Are the tea-garden coolies paid sufficient in wages and concessions to keep them in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little?
- (2) Is it possible to fix a universal standard wage?
- (3) Is it possible to place a cash value on concessions?
- (4) The repeal of Act XIII.

Question (1), about a labourer being adequately paid and being able to maintain himself in health and comfort, I have already answered and do not now propose to go further into the question.

Question (2), is it possible to fix a universal standard wage? Standardising of wages, in my opinion, is impracticable over the whole province, but I make a suggestion that there is a possibility of standardising wages in the form of a minimum living wage for an ordinary garden task in groups of gardens or in districts where the local conditions are approximately the same. This minimum living wage to be a minimum living wage on which the labourer could keep himself in health and clothe himself decently but no more, and to be absolutely irrespective of all concessions, not as the Committee's question No. 24 is put. All concessions will then be to the coolie's benefit for either saving, living more luxuriously or in any way he may prefer to utilise his concessions. This minimum living wage might possibly be fixed in groups of gardens or in districts by forming sub-committees with, say, the Deputy Commissioner or some other Government official in consultation. The rates would naturally vary considerably in different districts because one has to take into consideration the fact that the cost of living and local conditions vary very considerably in different districts of the Province.

Question (3), is it possible to place a cash value on concessions? The placing of a monetary value on concessions and paying the garden coolies wholly in cash, giving no concessions, is, in my opinion, quite all right from the executive point of view; it is, however, not favourable from the coolie's point of view. In connection with this it appears to me that a great deal of misunderstanding as to the actual pay of a garden coolie is caused by these concessions when comparing the tea-garden labourer's pay with the pay of his brethren in other industries. For instance, I am given to understand that in the Jute Mills of Calcutta a labourer's pay is Rs. 15 per month. If the labourer lives outside the Mill compound he is paid the Rs. 15, but if he lives within the Mill compound Rs. 3 is deducted for his accommodation and medical attendance, etc. Still the Mill returns his wages at Rs. 15. If this is correct and the wages of the coolies of the tea industry are to be compared with the wages earned by the coolies of other Indian industries who show and return the amounts deducted for housing, etc., as part of the coolies' wages, I say that the tea industry is entitled to the same privilege. The general public know nothing about the working of the tea-gardens and know nothing of the concessions granted. The actual cash pay is all that is taken into account. If the cash value of all concessions were added to the actual cash pay paid to the garden coolie, the total would be found to compare very favourably with wages paid to coolie labour in towns and elsewhere where labourers do not live under such congenial conditions and probably work longer hours.

As regards the return of wages my suggestion is this:—There might be a separate column in the Government return of wages for each of the following, *viz.*, (a) cash earnings of the coolie, (b) cash value of concessions, (c) total amount,

and (d) either below the form or on the back thereof, a table showing what these concessions are. This would show exactly what the coolie earns in pay and concessions. Panitola.

I am putting forward these suggestions for what they are worth.

I consider a garden coolie in this district would be very comfortably off if he earns throughout the year Rs. 8 to Rs. 9, excluding housing and medical attendance but including cheap rice and other such like concessions.

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No. 88.—Mr. L. A. ROFFEY, *Manager, Sealkotee Tea Estate* :—

I have been 21 years in Tea. With the exception of 3 years in Tezpur, I have been all my time in the Lakhimpur district.

President :—Q.—How do you think conditions here compare with Tezpur?

A.—I left Tezpur many years ago and cannot say.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it possible or desirable to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

Mr Dawson :—Q.—You say that the custom on your garden is to give the subordinate Indian staff a commission in the same manner as is given to sardars. Would you please describe the system briefly?

A.—Sardars are given a commission on the plucking, the rate being one anna in the rupee on all plucking over what used to be the old *hazira* and the junior mohurrirs also get that now.

Q.—What is the idea?

A.—I considered the junior mohurrirs were not sufficiently well paid and were not getting a living wage, and to guard against any corruption or bribery, I gave this commission. I think the system is sound and it has worked well so far.

As regards the unit system, I can only say that from the garden point of view it is satisfactory; and the individual coolie has distinctly benefited by the unit system.

The system of payment is weekly. Previous to January 1920 the rates were Rs. 6 for men, Rs. 5 for women and Rs. 4 and Rs. 3 for children. Under the unit system the rate of pay is considerably higher.

Q.—With regard to question No. 35 you say "There is a limit to the minimum amount of units of work a coolie may do." What do you mean by that?

A.—For each task there must be a minimum amount. In the case of a gang sent out for deep hoeing their minimum is 12 *nals* for 4 annas unless for some reason or other they are not capable of doing that. They can earn over and above that as much as they like. The coolie is paid for what he actually does. The task for light hoeing has been reduced. Formerly the task was 35 and 30 *nals* for *hazira* and *ticca* respectively. The *hazira* rate was Rs. 6 a month. Now coolies have got to do 7 *nals* for one anna and 23 *nals* for 4 annas, so that for the same task the coolie gets more money.

Q.—Supposing a layman said to you "What do you mean by a *hazira*," how would you define it?

A.—A daily wage, if it is question of monthly pay. The *hazira* in its ordinary meaning would signify a daily task or what a coolie earns daily, excluding *ticca*:

Under the old Act VI the coolie could do *ticca* in addition to his *hazira*, and rice was sold at Rs. 3 a maund. A new coolie does not earn as much *ticca* as he would when he becomes acclimatised.

Our agreement advance is really a bonus, and under the unit system we still continue it as a bonus. If Act XIII was abolished by the Government of India, in order to enable us to continue the bonus we should certainly want a guarantee of some form or other. The money is considered as a bonus though legally it is an advance, and I do not think we should be justified in continuing it without having some hold on the coolie. All contracts are made on the principle of *quid pro quo*.

We have never supplied rice above Rs. 4 a maund.

Panitola.

No. 89.—Mr. J. H. BUNDOCK, *Manager, Limbuguri Tea Estate, Limbuguri Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea and all my time in the Lakhimpur district.

Out of the working coolies living on the estate, roughly speaking, I have about 1,000 under agreement and 100 not under agreement. I certainly value the agreement system.

President :—*Q.*—Can you say what would happen if Act XIII was repealed ?

A.—As long as the coolie gets his money advance it would not perhaps very much matter. The Act is of help in cases where coolies abscond from the garden. There have been only about 10 cases taken to court by the Limbuguri Tea Company during the past 10 years. In past years there was a good deal of loss sustained by coolies absconding, but of late years it has not been so great. The coolies who left the garden in 1916, 1917, 1918 and 1919 were coolies who had finished their agreements and most of them settled on land near the garden. The reason why they left was because there is a lot of jungle land near our estate and they took up this Government land. The people who absconded went away to other gardens through enticement, in particular to gardens where there was rice land suitable for opening out. Coolies who have finished their agreements are quite at liberty to go and no restriction is placed on them. I encourage them to remain on my land. In 1921 as many came on to garden land as went out of the garden. As long as there is no boom in the industry and other gardens are not opened out, these coolies are likely to remain with me. I have recently had a number of coolies coming back to garden land after selling their lands to the estate. I have had more offers of this kind than I could actually pay for. The reason why they have returned to the garden is because of the bigger wage offered them ; another reason is that very few new gardens were in a position to employ many coolies during 1921.

We gave an increase in wages when we changed from the monthly wage to the daily wage in the beginning of 1921. Then subsequently we gave them a bigger monthly wage. They did not understand the change, from the monthly to weekly wage. I sent for the leading men on the garden and explained the position to them. They asked for a monthly wage which I gave them at increased rates after which they went back to work and seemed quite contented. Those who take rice are paid monthly Rs. 7-8-0 for men and Rs. 6-8-0 for women. Those who do not take rice from the factory are paid Rs. 9 for men and Rs. 8 for women. Formerly the rates were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women irrespective of whether they took rice or not. This increase partly accounts for the fact that the coolies are returning to my garden. My coolies do not like the unit system ; they prefer the monthly rate. If the unit system were worked so that a coolie could be given a monthly rate, they would not understand it ; they might possibly understand it if they were paid weekly. Coolies get *ticca* in addition to the monthly wage. I pay 2 pice a seer for leaf which is customary in the Panitola district. My garden is singularly free from dysentery. I do not keep pigs.

Q.—Of the hundred coolies who are not under agreement, how many are solvent ?

A.—I think they are all solvent as far as I know.

Q.—Am I to understand that only those who require money enter into agreements ?

A.—No, nearly all the coolies ask for an agreement. I have no objection to the Act being repealed provided it is replaced by some other Act whereby the garden would have a hold on the coolies. I would not care to go to the Civil Court for the recovery of any advances outstanding against absconders if that procedure was going to involve an inordinate delay in its recovery, in which case the effect of the Act would be lost. I think Act XII is very convenient as it is.

Q.—Was the rise in wages given owing to the high cost of living ?

A.—Yes.

Coolies like the agreement simply because they get the money. Yes, a coolie is just as contented under an agreement as he is without one ; by taking an agreement he is financially better off.

Q.—Do you know what the coolies have been earning in their own country ?

A.—Yes ; some coolies said they worked the whole day and earned only 2 or 3 annas. They told me that they are better off by coming here. Of course I am only speaking of my own garden.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not think it desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages. There was a certain amount of unrest in the spring of 1921 when agitators were in evidence at Tinsukia. Pantola.

Q.—Do you think that coolies are in any way influenced by the political situation?

A.—There has been a change in the demeanour of the coolie of late; I think the political situation is the cause of the same.

Coolies are allowed free access to the Manager or Assistant whenever they have any grievances to put forward.

The concession rate of rice is Rs. 4 a maund. We have never sold rice above that. There is a certain limit to *ticca* hoeing, 4 annas a day being the limit. About 90 per cent. of my adult coolies possess land in the garden grants.

We have not recruited very many coolies within the last two or three years. I am sending down to recruit this year. This year 15 sardars who were sent down recruiting have accounted for only 10 coolies. I am now sending off another 70 sardars. We recruit a few coolies from Purulia, and Chaibassa and a good many from Ranchi, and a few from Sambalpur. The *Porja* caste of coolies from Madras predominates on my garden. A few sardars have come back; they have not complained about agitators interfering with them. We do not recruit short-term coolies.

New gardens are an attraction to the coolie because they have more jungle land to open out; also they offer higher wages than an old garden does so as to attract labour to the garden.

No. 90.—Mr. J. MACAULAY, *Manager, Chabwa Tea Estate, Chabwa Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been in Tea since 1906, and in the Chabwa Company all the time.

The type of coolie recruited at the present day does not compare favourably with 10 years ago. Some of the Madras Agency Tracts have been closed to recruitment and we cannot now import the Kalahandi type of coolie. This type of coolie I consider was the best we used to get. We do not get labour from Sambalpur presumably because they receive higher wages in their own place. They are perhaps getting 12 to 14 annas a day nearer home.

The only trouble I have had with my coolies so far is when one morning all the coolies had gone out to work, some subsequently filtered back into the lines. When asked the reason for doing so they said they had simply followed the other gardens. They all went back to work the following day.

In 1920 I suggested to my Company a rise in pay all round and it was sanctioned. Coolies used to get Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a month and now they get Rs. 8-2-0 and Rs. 6-8-0 for a month of 26 working days. In 1913 the rates of pay for men and women were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Now they are on a daily wage of 5 annas for men and 4 annas for women. Rice is sold at Rs. 5 a maund which is the maximum. In 1913 rice was supplied at Rs. 4-8-0 a maund.

We have the unit system which was started in 1921. I have found it a success from the garden point of view. I think I get more work done now than I used to get. My hoeing shows that to be the case. The task has come down. A man gets now 5 annas for 40 *nals* where he used to get 4 annas previously. I think more hoeing is done under the unit system and the coolie also gets more. In other words, it means that for doing the same amount of work they get higher pay. Men can earn up to 13 annas a day and women 9 annas for hoeing.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—How would you define a *hazira* to a layman?

A.—I would call it a daily task.

The cost per maund of green leaf last year was Re. 1-8-0. Coolies have got 1,200 acres of rice land in the garden. We charge Rs. 3 for 4 *bighas*. Coolies also have land outside the garden. I am reducing the rent this year to Rs. 2 for 4 *bighas*.

Pantola.

Q.—In answer to question No. 64 you say "Very few advances are irrecoverable and the amount written off each year is very small." Would it be fair to take that as an index of the prosperity of the garden?

A.—Yes, I think it shows that the coolies are quite well off.

We used to experience difficulty in getting coolies to go into hospital as indoor patients, but we now have a very good doctor babu who is popular with the labour force and he gets the coolies to go into hospital. As a matter of fact, we also make a point of asking the coolies to go into hospital as indoor patients. Coolies very seldom refuse to go. Our hospital is not of the best but arrangements are being made to build a new one during the next 2 years.

I do not recover advances under Act XIII. If the Act were abolished I do not think it would make much difference. Nor do I think coolies would abscond if they were not under agreement. We usually do not have much absconding. Personally I would be inclined to give the coolies a bonus even if the Act was abolished.

There is no co-operative store but we run a store for selling cloth at cost price. I started the system in November last. The idea is to get cloth as cheaply as I can for the coolies because they have to pay exorbitant prices to the *kayas* and the bazaars. If I charge Rs. 2 for a piece of cloth the bazaar would charge Rs. 2-8-0 or Rs. 3. My supplies are obtained from Calcutta. I have sold nearly Rs. 4,000 worth of cloth. I think the coolies appreciate it very much. I make no profit on the sales; I sell at cost price.

Q.—You say that the class of coolie imported now is inferior. Is that due to extensions of industries and a greater demand for labour?

A.—I do not think so. The more healthy coolies have usually got *bustees* and cultivation in their own country and the class of coolie that comes up is more of the kind unable to keep themselves going in their own country with cultivation and other things.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort; in fact I think they can save on it.

I do not think it is possible to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, for the simple reason that the coolie would not understand it.

All coolies are given a rice concession of 7 seers for men and 6 seers for women per week.

We never repatriate coolies. Coolies usually settle here; very few go back to their country. That is probably because they like the life here.

Coolies are addicted to drink but not to any great extent. Government provides a liquor shop. They have plenty of money to spend on liquor and I cannot say whether it affects their families.

All destitute children and orphans and those families who have more than 2 children and are unable to feed the lot, are fed in the hospital. There is no latrine system on my garden and I consider that it would be very difficult to introduce it on an old established garden. It might however be possible to introduce it on a new garden.

Q.—Why is the feeding of children necessary?

A.—A man might have a very large family or his wife might fall ill in which case their children cannot be fed properly and we provide them with food; also orphans.

Q.—You have raised the wages of the coolies. Do they do more work now than they used to?

A.—I cannot say that they do more work; I think they do slightly less work, because the tasks are less for more money.

I am rather short of labour now. Coolies are working less now because they get more money for less work.

All our new coolies are medically examined in the recruiting district before they come up. The recruits whom we have been getting seemed physically fit when they first came. I have no complaints to make against the medical examination.

Q.—I suppose the medical examination is optional and not compulsory?

A.—Yes.

DIBRUGARH, 6TH FEBRUARY 1922.

Dibrugarh.

[MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

No. 91.—Mr. W. REID, *Superintendent of the Upper Assam Tea Company* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea. I served first in Sylhet and Cachar and then came to Assam. I have been 12 years in Assam, and as Superintendent at Maijan for the last 18 months.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort. The concessions consist of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land at cheap rates, and many other concessions which cannot very well be specified.

The rate for paddy is Rs. 4 a maund. This year, however, it has been reduced to Rs. 3-8. Paddy is sold to anybody who wants it. On 1st May 1921 the rates of pay were raised from Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6, men and women, respectively. There was trouble in Doom-Dooma and the infection spread through the whole district. Limbuguri raised its rates and we simply followed suit. The trouble was accelerated by the Railway strike.

In connection with medical attendance we have a hospital for housing cases that require treatment in hospital.

At the moment we are clothing and feeding 36 orphans; in fact they are looked after completely by the estate. These children are the aftermath of the influenza epidemic.

We are very badly off for rice land in Maijan. Land is all taken up by Government. There is some difficulty about getting firewood for the coolies, but we meet that difficulty by giving them a firewood allowance of 2 pice a *hazira*. Children who are ill and widows with large families also get an allowance right through, but I have made no mention of it in my answers.

I do not think it would be sound to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages. The coolie is an improvident person and if you give him a lot of money he will misuse it. It is in the interests of the coolies themselves that they should continue to receive these concessions or else they would be at the mercy of the *kaya*.

As regards the water-supply we are undertaking an elaborate scheme which is going to be very expensive. It consists of sinking 2 wells 50 yards apart with a central distributing station. We will do away with *kutcha* wells on all our gardens. The new system would be more under control in times of epidemics. The water-supply for each set of lines would cost, I think, about £ 900.

In addition to the *hazira* work coolies are afforded opportunities of doing as much *ticca* as they like, and this is particularly the case on my gardens as I employ outside labour in addition.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—So that the fact of your employing outside labour indicates that you have plenty of work to give your own people resident on the estate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then the well-being of the coolies, I suppose, might be indicated roughly by their possession in the matter of cattle?

A.—Yes. We have a large number of cattle and in certain parts we have had to abandon tea in order to allow for grazing lands.

During the last 4 years we have spent more money on our labour than was budgeted for.

Q.—Do you think the pay was insufficient before May 1921?

A.—I don't think so, for the reason that all this extra rise in the cost of living was covered by the relief which the coolie received in the way of cheap prices in the garden. There is only one little matter which is the cost of clothing, but I must say that a very small percentage of the coolies' earnings has been spent on clothing. I don't think he spends 10 or 12 per cent. of his earnings on clothing.

We certainly give the coolie a lump sum in the shape of a bonus, and I do not agree that he spends this money improvidently. He comes up to ask for the bonus for a particular object, e.g., to buy a cow, and I consider that the bonus is converted by the coolie into an investment and not merely spent by him at random.

We never deduct rice advances from the bonus money. We give coolies a bonus of Rs. 12.

Dibrugarh. When I spoke of the labour budget I meant all works excepting the European establishment and factory buildings. We employ outside labour to repair houses through the contractor who brings Sylheti labour. I do not know what he pays his labour.

The annual cost for repairing a house would average Rs. 12. A new house 12' x 10' containing 2 rooms would cost about Rs. 30 to Rs. 35.

The tea land which I said was converted into grazing land was certainly valuable land; it consisted of China tea cultivation. We have now about 60 acres roughly of China tea. A woman cannot earn as much in China tea as in indigenous tea, but she gets a reduction of task.

The coolies recruited formerly were of better stamina or physique as compared with the present type of coolie. I don't think higher wages would attract better labour. We have got to take what we can get. We have no choice of labour in the recruiting districts.

There was no unrest until this year. I would say that the unrest has been due to a combination of economic causes and agitation. We had the war first and then the agitators came along and found the people discontented. Then again so many Labour Corps were started in the districts giving high rates of pay. I think all that tended to make the coolie think his position undesirable. There were economic grievances to a certain extent, but I should think they were very slight on tea-gardens.

I do not know at what rates we sold rice in 1913.

There has been a general increase of 30 per cent. in the cost of living, taking everything all round. I am not in a position to say whether the coolie paid more for his concession rice in 1913 than he did in 1920.

Q.—Would you say that wages in 1920 were considerably lower than in 1913?

A.—No, you have got to consider the earnings of March. This year we had a very small labour force and wages are low because the coolies have been out cutting *dhan*. In the winter months the wages would be affected by paddy cutting. They cut other people's paddy as well.

I don't believe in the unit system because I consider that the coolie does not understand it; it is very confusing and leads to a lot of complications. When these strikes were on I spoke to many coolies on different gardens where the unit system prevailed and found that they did not understand the system. They always expected more than they actually got. The unit system might be advantageous in the case of a small labour force.

Q.—It is just possible that in a large labour force you have to impose certain restrictions?

A.—Yes, because the work is very inferior and the coolies rush it through in order to make a big sum. On the unit system I believe coolies have done as much as 3 and 4 *haziras* which it is impossible to do if the work is done properly.

I think an average coolie working 9 hours a day can do one task of hoeing, say, at Maijan and another in the afternoon on another garden which is short of labour. About 17 per cent. of the coolies inside the garden grant at Maijan have land for cultivation.

With regard to fuel, we spent in 1921 about Rs. 10,000 at 2 pice a *hazira*.

We give 3 months' pregnant leave before and 3 months' after childbirth, together with a half *hazira* for that time.

Coolies have never yet come up and asked for an increase of pay even though prices have increased in recent years. I simply raised my rates in conjunction with the other planters in the district. I thought it was necessary to increase the wages so as to check any possibilities of unrest and to keep a contented labour force. It was certainly not necessary for us to increase our wages, but seeing the trouble that had occurred in the Doom-Dooma area we thought it best to increase our wages as was done in that locality.

As regards the firewood concession, it is looked upon as pay, as even if the coolie was not fit to work, he would still be given the concession.

Not very many coolies are indebted to the garden yearly. Nearly every one has got cattle and poultry. They have been able to purchase these out of their cash earnings on the garden.

Q.—Would you be satisfied with the ordinary Indian Contract Act which governs the ordinary agriculturist?

A.—You may take away Act XIII. but you must give us some other guarantee ^{Dibrugarh.} to ensure that the coolie who takes the agreement would work his full term.

As regards the 10 per cent. which I consider the coolie spends on clothing, I asked many coolies about the matter and that is how I calculated the percentage.

In a year a coolie would require 3 *dhotis*, one coat and one blanket. Then again he steals *Hessian* cloth; he also takes rice sacks which he forgets to return to the garden.

At Majjan there are about 157 outside coolies employed; at Nagahooli about 50. I could not say off-hand how many of these are under agreement. We give agreements to people living outside the garden as well. Their working days in the year vary. They might absent themselves for 3 months at a time in the rice planting season which might not be regarded as a breach of the agreement. We do not expect the coolie to work 313 days in a calendar year. In our agreement the unexpired portion of the year constituting 313 days has never been carried on to the following year.

With regard to the settlement of disputes the system that is generally followed is for coolies to come up to the Manager in minor cases for the redress of their grievances. In important cases involving caste issues or infidelity on the part of the husband or wife, I order a panchayat which is generally presided over by the head clerk or the head jamadar. The panchayat decide the case by inflicting a fine which has got to be paid by the offending party. Sometimes the fines may extend to Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 and the caste men pay it I believe. Very often they may come up and say the fine is very heavy when I order a second panchayat and more often than not the fine is reduced. I do not think the coolies pay the fine individually; it is obvious that they could not afford to pay a big fine of Rs. 300; the caste men make the collection and pay the fine.

Roughly speaking, last year we sold about Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 1,400 worth of paddy per month. It was sold throughout the year at the rate of Rs. 4 a maund. There would be 26 to 27 seers of rice in a maund of paddy.

In Nagahooli we spent Rs. 13,415 for recruiting during 1919. The expenditure on coolies has increased. There has been no reduction in the budget estimates.

Wages were raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 in 1921 but the *ticca* was exactly the same. The coolie himself decides the amount of *ticca* he is going to earn. We give him every facility of earning as much as he chooses.

Q.—In the Government return for September 1921, taking the total number on the books, you show a man as having received Rs. 10-0-11, and taking the average daily working strength his earnings are Rs. 12-4-5. It is possible for a man under these circumstances to earn up to the latter sum?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the case of women the corresponding figures are Rs. 9-5-5 and Rs. 10-15-3. In the case of children they are Rs. 4-2-9 and Rs. 5-0-10, respectively. It is your experience I take it that some people do not show particular zeal to earn more?

A.—That is so. They would rather go out fishing or do something else instead of working extra.

Q.—The coolies coming to work on your garden from the *bustees* don't cost you as much as the coolies living on the garden?

A.—No.

I consider Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 a decent living wage sufficient to keep a coolie in health and reasonable comfort together with 2 non-working children and with the possibility of saving a little.

The estimate for a maund of manufactured tea would work out approximately to Rs. 4-8 or Rs 5.

No. 92.—Mr. J. G. ROSE, *Manager, Sessa Division of the British Indian Tea Company* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea and all my time in Assam. I have been nearly 10 years with the present Company and previous to that I was in the Upper Assam Tea Company.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort.

Dibrugarh. I do not consider it possible or desirable to convert the various concessions received by the coolies into an increase of money wages.

We supply rice to new coolies at Rs. 3 a maund for the first year. We charge old coolies Rs. 5-8 a maund, except for the 3 months—August, September and October when the price varies with the market but never exceeds Rs. 5 a maund. The loss on rice in 1921 was Rs. 8,459 in the Sessa Division alone on a working force of about 800 coolies.

There have been no strikes on my gardens. Nor has there been any unrest until last year 1921. I consider that this unrest was due to economic conditions brought about by the war as also by the activities of agitators.

Q.—Do you think it was more due to economic conditions or more to agitation?

A.—In the first instance I think we were inclined to think that it was due to economic conditions owing to the situation on the garden as there was no evidence of agitators getting into the garden. I think it really was the economic condition which created a demand for more money.

We pay wages once a month and *tisoa* weekly and enter it up in a separate book. The rate of pay was increased by Re. 1 from May 1921 as the result of a meeting held at Dibrugarh.

The increase in the cost of living since the war has perhaps been 30 per cent. but coolies have not been affected to a great extent. Perhaps cloth is dearer, but a coolie's expenditure on cloth annually would constitute a very small percentage of his earnings. A coolie would buy a new cloth once in 4 months and I think he would use 3 such cloths in a year.

There are 510 *bighas* of land for cultivation divided among 445 coolies. Land is let out rent-free for the first three years and thereafter a rent of Re. 1 a *bigha* is charged. We, however, make a concession in bad years. For instance in one year owing to heavy floods no rent was charged. Generally, coolies take up land within the second year of their arrival on the garden.

The average cost of a *kutchra* house is Rs. 35. Houses with corrugated iron roofs are more expensive. The annual repairs on a *kutchra* house of 20' x 8' providing accommodation for 2 families would amount to Rs. 10 or Rs. 12.

We have a large area of grazing land. No charge is made for cow-herds. Rice is supplied at concession rates. We supply men, women and children 7, 6, and 4 seers of rice respectively per week.

As regards contracts, we give a bonus of Rs. 10 both for men and women which is not recovered. New coolies are not put under contract for the first year because there is always the fear of such coolies absconding with the money. In my opinion I consider the agreement advantageous both to the coolie as well as to the garden.

We do not work under the unit system.

Q.—Do you think the unit system is more suitable in the case of a small labour force?

A.—Yes; also where labour is insufficient on a garden.

Q.—Do you think this is an extravagant system?

A.—I should not say so, but where we have got settled coolies with a large amount of cultivation they are more or less inclined to spend a good deal of their spare time in their own work.

We wrote off about Rs. 300 on account of rice advances last year.

We had slightly finer plucking in 1920. It takes a coolie slightly longer to do a task of fine plucking. The cost per maund of green leaf last year was Re. 1-3.

The average loss on rice per adult per month would work out to Re. 1.

Q.—How did the necessity for raising wages arise?

A.—In the spring of 1921 rice and cloth were high and altogether looking at the situation from the point of view of the coolie's welfare, I was inclined to think that he required more money. I believe I was the first one who suggested this rise and it was agreed upon by other members of the Committee. Blankets are supplied free of cost to weak coolies, but the average coolie pays for them. A coolie requires one coat and three *cholis* in a year; not necessarily, any head-dress. About 60 per cent. of my coolies are under agreement. A good number of the people cultivating land are not inclined to take agreements.

Q.—Am I to understand that those who do not take agreements are solvent and better off?

A.—Yes, the old established coolie can often dispense with the agreement; Dibrugarh. those who take the agreement naturally require the money.

We have got a very large labour force and at certain times of the year *ticca* work is limited but no limit is placed in the case of plucking leaf. The coolies who went out fishing did so presumably because they had no *ticca* work.

I consider Rs. 7 and 6 in addition to the bonus together with rice concessions sufficient to keep the coolies in comfort. We have not had cholera for many years. The water-supply is pumped into a closed tank. There is little malarial fever about.

No recruiting was done at all in 1921 but there was recruiting in 1919 when very good coolies were imported. Not many coolies were found to be affected with malarial fever and spleen; they were a good type of coolie hailing from the Ganjam district. There is a certain amount of dysentery. Some coolies keep pigs.

Q.—Could you get on without agreements?

A.—I think the coolie would object to do without them as he wants his Rs. 10 bonus. In my opinion he is inclined to think that he forms part and parcel of the garden at the very moment he affixes his thumb impression to the agreement form. A coolie works from 250 to 260 days in the year. Coolies have felt the economic stress only since last year because before that they were making a good amount of *ticca*. Managers in this district felt it necessary to forestall any trouble by giving an increase in wages. The economic conditions have been fully met by the concessions.

Q.—The economic conditions having been satisfactorily dealt with, do you think that your coolies would respond to the attempt of the agitator who has come on your border now?

A.—I don't think they would; they were particularly anxious to get hold of such men and to give them a hammering. I don't think there is an adequate force in the district to protect gardens from an outbreak due to political agitation.

I have always found my Agents sympathetic with any proposals submitted by me for improving the lot of the coolie.

No. 93.—Mr. C. E. LEADER, *Manager, Bokel Division, Jokai Tea Company* :—

I have been 17 years in Tea and all my time in the Jokai Company. I have served in North Lakhimpur as well as in Dibrugarh. I have been only 3 months as Manager on my present garden, but I have been nearly two years Manager of Muttuck Division and acting Manager of various other gardens in the Company, before I became Manager at Bokel.

I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the various concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not consider it either possible or desirable to convert the various concessions received by the coolies into an increase of money wages.

The wages of the average working strength for the months of March and September in the years 1913, 1920 and 1921 are :—

	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
March 1913	6 12 2	4 11 7	3 15 10
September 1913	6 10 6	7 7 10	4 12 11
March 1920	10 12 1	6 4 10	4 6 7
September 1920	12 13 6	9 13 4	5 6 7
March 1921	8 2 6	5 1 9	2 15 4
September 1921	13 12 7	13 0 6	5 9 0

Dibrugarh. The increase in the cost of living has been about 30 per cent.

Up to April 1921 wages were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women. As a result of a planters' meeting those rates were raised in April 1921 to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6. In addition to that there was a reduction of 1/2 a maund on the price charged for rice. Formerly rice cost Rs. 5 a maund, except in the case of new coolies who received it at Rs. 4 a maund. The present rate in the bazaar is Rs. 5-12-0 a maund. The cheapest bazaar rate for rice was Rs. 4-8-0 a maund. I allow a man 30 seers a month, a woman 25 seers and a working child 15 or 20 seers.

I consider that Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 *plus* what the coolies can earn during the busy season, is a sufficient remuneration, assuming that rice is being sold at Rs. 4 a maund, or assuming that coolies have cultivation. Rupees 7 and Rs. 6 without some *ticca* might be barely sufficient. With *ticca* Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 would be sufficient to maintain a family consisting of 2 non-working children.

The task for plucking is 7 seers and the rate is 1 pice per pound. My coolies have about 400 or 500 acres of land. We charge the same rate as Government. If a coolie does 250 days of work he would get a remission of the whole amount of rent save 8 annas. The distribution of land is not quite even and I am thinking of trying to rectify it as far as possible. In recent years coolie recruiting has been more unsatisfactory than before in some respects. We get very few *junglis* now. It might be that the attraction of the coal fields and of work nearer home on higher pay has something to do with the difficulty of recruiting.

No sick allowance is given to pregnant women except milk. But a month before and 2 months after birth, a free rice allowance is given to the mother while she is on leave and Rs. 2 as bonus; midwife and barber are given free.

I have about 72 per cent. of my coolies under agreement. It is not our custom to put new coolies under agreement for the first 4 years. We give an agreement bonus of Rs. 10 which is not recovered. If Act XIII was abolished we would want a *quid pro quo*. In the case of a settled coolie he is not likely to abscond. As a rule we do not supply clothing, except blankets which are sold at reduced prices. We disposed of about 700 blankets this cold weather. Our practice is to send round samples of blankets at the beginning of the cold season to ascertain how many coolies require them and accordingly I get in the requisite amount. The cost for plucking per maund of leaf last year was Re. 1-7-6. There has been no unrest of any description whatever. Coolies have free access to the Manager when they have any complaints to make. Payment of wages is made entirely by the European staff. The earnings of my coolies at the present time are more than sufficient to meet the cost of living.

In the case of disputes, coolies come to the Manager for settlement. If it is a caste question, the Manager orders a panchayat which is composed of the senior people in the caste who settle the dispute, usually by a fine, which in some cases may be out of all proportion to the paying capacity of the individual.

A very large number of the coolies have cattle. With some coolies there is a tendency to save. Others, however, never save.

None of the new coolies have ever absconded, but perhaps during the course of the last 5 or 6 years one or two might have absconded.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—Am I right in understanding that you regard the agreement bonus as a premium which you pay to the coolie in consideration of his undertaking to work for such portion of a year as you are satisfied with?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are prepared to pay that extra amount in order to show that you are willing to employ the man throughout the year?

A.—Yes.

No. 94.—*Mr. W. A. COSGRAVE, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Dibrugarh* :—

President :—Q.—How long have you been in this district?

A.—I took over charge in the middle of November 1920.

Q.—You have also been in other Tea districts ?

A.—I have been in charge of the Sylhet district for 18 months or 2 years. I have been in charge of the Nowgong district for a year ; the Jorhat district for 6 months ; and I am here for 15 months now.

Q.—Can you give us an account of the labour troubles in this district ?

A.—I have written a note on the labour conditions in this district and am willing to place it on the record.

NOTE ON LABOUR CONDITIONS IN LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT.

Labour Disturbances.

1. I understand from the Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, that my evi- lence will be mainly required by the Committee as to the causes of any strikes or disturbances which have taken place in this district while I have been Deputy Commissioner. As I took charge of the district in the middle of November 1920 I would point out that I was not in charge, or indeed in India, when the serious Doom-Dooma riots took place in September 1920. As, however, the Doom-Dooma riots and the increase in pay given on the Doom-Dooma gardens after 30th September 1920, have influenced considerably labour conditions in other parts of this district, I consider that a reference to these riots is necessary. The general view among planters is that the Doom-Dooma disturbances were connected with the successful strike on the Dibru-Sadiya Railway which occurred in July 1920 and that the strikes were engineered by agitators. No evidence as to the working of outside influences has been obtained although careful enquiries were made by a Criminal Investigation Department Officer. I agree with this officer's opinion that the disturbances were mainly due to economic causes. The first serious trouble broke out on the Hansara Tea Estate where the coolies complained of the bad quality of the rice supplied to them. It is admitted by the Doom-Dooma Tea Company that a large amount of the rice supplied by a contractor, Joynarain Phulchand, was unfit for food and as the Company refused to pay for some consignments of bad rice a civil suit for Rs. 17,000 has been brought by the rice contractor against the Company in the Sub-Judge's court. At Dhoedaam Tea Estate where the most serious riot took place, the coolies complained that there was no approach road by which their cattle could be taken from the lines to the garden grazing ground and that their cattle were impounded and had to be released on payment of fines if they wandered into the tea. The coolies on other gardens complained as to their pay being too low as Doom-Dooma is a notoriously expensive place. It is significant that, although the gardens of the Assam Frontier Tea Company are scattered about near the other Doom-Dooma gardens, no disturbances took place on the gardens of this Company which had increased, early in 1919, its rates of pay for coolies who did not take garden rice. I know that Mr. Wood, Superintendent of the Doom-Dooma Tea Company, wanted to raise the pay of his Company's coolies at the same time, but I understand that his proposals were negatived by the London Board. If Mr. Wood's proposals had been accepted, possibly the Doom-Dooma disturbances would have been avoided. Further, he was on leave in England at the time of the disturbances. This was most unfortunate as if he had been at Doom-Dooma the coolie's grievances about the bad quality of rice supplied to them would probably have received more attention. The extensive disturbances round Doom-Dooma compelled the Doom-Dooma planters to review the economic position of the coolies and at a sub-committee of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, held at Doom-Dooma on 30th September 1920, the following resolution was unanimously passed:—

“ Resolved that an increase of Rs. 3 extra *per mensem*, i.e., Rs. 9 and Rs. 8 in lieu of the present Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 should be given to all labourers who were willing to purchase their own rice and that an increase of only Re. 1, i.e., Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 in lieu of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 should be given to those who still desire to take their rice from the factory godowns.”

Thus, although a large number of persons were imprisoned in connection with the Doom-Dooma riots, the labour force round Doom-Dooma generally benefited as a result of the riots owing to the rise in pay being granted after the riots, instead of two years previously when the Frontier Company had increased their pay and when Mr. Wood, Superintendent, Doom-Dooma Tea Company, had also proposed an increase in pay.

2. For the next few months, probably owing to the severe sentences imposed in the Doom-Dooma riot cases, there were no more labour disturbances in the Dibrugarh subdivision, but at the end of March 1921, strikes started again. The first strike on

Dibrugarh. A tea-garden after I took over charge of the district occurred at Kachujan Tea Estate near Tinsukia. The Manager, Mr. Chambers, wired me on 28th March to go there, and to prevent any breach of the peace I sent armed police to the garden. When I visited the garden I found the coolies complained of their pay being insufficient. I consider that the coolies had some cause for complaint as the Hukanpukri out-garden of Kachujan adjoins the Frontier Company's garden of Chota Hapjan and these coolies were bound to know that the Doom-Dooma garden coolies had recently received an increase in their pay. I understand that Messrs. Balmer Lawrie and Company, Agents of the Jokai Tea Company, which owns Kachujan Tea Estate and Tipphuk Tea Estate in Doom-Dooma Circle, refused to come into line when the other gardens in the Doom-Dooma circle increased their pay in September 1920. I advised the Manager to recommend to his Agents that the coolies' pay should be raised. While at Tinsukia I received information that the Assamese head mohurrir of Kachujan Tea Estate was instigating the strike in consultation with some Congress leaders at Tinsukia, and at my suggestion the Manager dismissed this head mohurrir. Possibly the latter took this action against his master hoping that he would also get a rise in pay if the strike was successful. The Kachujan strike, which lasted for a week, was the first of a long series of strikes on the tea-gardens between Tinsukia and Dibrugarh. In April 1921 strikes took place on the following gardens:—

Kachujan	Woodbine	Nahartoli
Borbari	Dinjan	Muttack
Greenwood	Mokalbari	Singlijan
Rangagora	Nadua	Bangliting
Gellapukri	Hatiali	Limbuguri
Nakhroy	Hazelbank	—

It was remarkable that no violence was used in any of these strikes. A technical riot occurred on the Nahartoli Tea Estate owing to the injudicious conduct of an Assamese garden jemadar who beat a coolie woman just when the coolies were returning to work. I was not asked to intervene in any of these strikes but sent armed police to Hazelbank and Nahartoli at the Managers' requests. In one case at any rate, *i.e.*, Greenwood Tea Estate, the acting Manager, Mr. Boyle, told me that he was convinced that the coolies had substantial grievances especially as regards the distribution of rice by the Indian staff who did the work after dark. The only one of these gardens in which I think the strike was due in some measure to agitators was Nahartoli Tea Estate which adjoins the Dikom *hat* and Dikom railway station to which agitators sometimes went on Sundays. I issued a warning notice against one agitator, Devendra Nath Das, who was reported to have made an objectionable speech at Dikom *hat*. In the case of Nahartoli Tea Estate however a non-co-operation agitator had a fertile field for making trouble as I noticed at the time of my inspection on 28th April 1921, that the wages earned by the coolies were very low. I am convinced that the real cause of trouble at Nahartoli (where I had to send police on three occasions) was economic, not political.

3. Some of the leading members of the Dibrugarh sub-committee of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, realising that a rise in pay was inevitable and that it was better to raise a coolie's pay *before* the planters' hands were forced by strikes, called a general meeting of the Dibrugarh Circle. At a meeting held on 27th April 1921, at the Dibrugarh Club at which I was present by invitation, the members passed, by a very large majority, a resolution in favour of increasing the monthly wages of coolies by Re. 1 from 1st May 1921. In the first half of May there were strikes on the following gardens:—

Romai.
Lankhasi.
Sealkoti.
Mathola.

At Romai, on the first day of the strike, the Manager raised the pay by Re. 1 while in the case of Mathola the Manager, Mr. Pengree, told me that he had promised a rise in pay some time ago, but had not yet received sanction from his Calcutta Agents. Although the Managers of the gardens in the Dibrugarh Circle (with the exception of the Managers of three small unimportant gardens) had voted on 27th April 1921, in favour of an increase in pay, some of the Calcutta Agents declined to sanction their local Managers' proposals. There was a second strike on Hazelbank Tea Estate which came to an end when the Calcutta Agents wired increasing the coolies' monthly pay by one rupee. In the case of the Nahartoli Tea Estate the Agents, Messrs.

James Finlay and Company, objected to give a rise in pay apparently on the ground that any concession given now would be due to the previous strike. On three separate occasions I sent (1) the armed reserved police, (2) Assam Rifles, (3) Civil police to Nahartoli Tea Estate, because the Manager was apprehensive of trouble, and I finally informed the Manager, Mr. Stevenson, that I could not keep police indefinitely on his garden because his Agents refused to fall into line with other Agents. I reported this confidentially to the Chief Secretary in my confidential demi-official No. 96C., dated the 25th May 1921, when I recorded my opinion that James Finlay and Company were asking for trouble if they did not raise the coolies' wages at Nahartoli Tea Estate.

4. The sensible action which the Dibrugarh sub-circle of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, took at the end of April prevented further trouble round Dibrugarh and since May 1921 there have only been a few isolated strikes at Naharkhatiya and Tingkhong and Borbam, all in the Jaipur mauza. I found that the wages earned on the first two named gardens are on the low side.

In September there were petty strikes on three gardens, Singlijan, Bordubi (near Doom-Dooma) and Gillapukri. The strike at Gillapukri, which is close to Tinsukia, was probably due to the excitement caused by the visit of Mr. Gandhi, but the acting Manager, Mr. Hopkinson, showed a want of responsibility in sending me a letter in the morning by special messenger saying that the coolies were determined to set up a Bolshevik Government and wiring later in the day that they had returned to work. In the second half of October there was a petty strike on Kumsong Tea Estate (in Doom-Dooma circle) which I investigated shortly afterwards when inspecting the garden. At the request of the Manager I repatriated, at the cost of the garden, one turbulent ringleader.

It will be seen from these details that in the year 1921 there were numerous garden strikes in the Dibrugarh subdivision but that there was no rioting or violence used to the garden staff, European or Indian, and that there is little or no evidence to show that the strikes were due to the influence of Congress agitators. In my opinion the strikes were mainly due to economic causes, i.e., the high cost of living. When a strike was successful on one garden coolies naturally heard about this and thought that they would see what their luck would be about getting a rise in pay. I believe that in a good many cases the Assamese clerks and mohurrirs induced the coolies to go on strike thinking that they also would get a rise in pay. It is a great pity that the Tea industry did not increase the rates of pay before their Managers' hands were forced by strikes.

5. I cannot express an opinion as to the rise in prices in Lakhimpur between 1913 and the present day and have already explained my inability to do this in paragraph 3 of my letter No. 27, dated the 21st April 1921, to the Commissioner, Assam Valley Division. I attach a copy of this letter as it gives my considered opinion on tea-garden wages in this district and I would like this letter to be read as part of this note.

6. To sum up briefly, my views on the subject of Government interference in the management of tea-gardens are as follows:—

- (a) It is impossible for Government to fix a standard wage and I do not think that Government should interfere with tea-garden wages. If rich Tea Companies do not pay a living wage they must expect their labour to use the weapon of strikes in India as is done in England.
- (b) The ordinary able-bodied tea-garden labourer on the majority of tea-gardens in the Dibrugarh subdivision is able to earn a living wage and to live fairly comfortably. Possibly wages on some of the gardens in the Naharkhatiya and Khowang side require to be raised, but rice is cheap in those two localities and I realise that it is impossible and unnecessary for isolated and second class gardens surrounded by rice fields to pay the same high wages as are paid round Doom-Dooma.
- (c) Act XIII of 1859 as amended by Act XII of 1920 should not be repealed as although little use is made of it in the courts it has a moral influence and without some such remedy against absconding coolies it would be impossible for gardens to pay out advances or to spend large amounts on hospitals and lines.
- (d) Generally speaking I consider that the treatment of coolies by employers in the Dibrugarh subdivision is excellent and better than I have seen in any other district of the Province.

Dibrugarh.

7. I have not made any remarks as regards North Lakhimpur as I have no personal knowledge of the labour conditions there and I think that the sub-committee, who I understand will visit North Lakhimpur from Jorhat, should examine my Sub-divisional Officer, Mr. Pritchard, at North Lakhimpur.

Dated Dibrugarh, the 19th April 1921.

From—W. A. COSGRAVE, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur,

To—The Commissioner, Assam Valley Division.

Report on tea-garden wages.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 948-53F, forwarding copy of Second Secretary's letter No. 1922-23G., dated the 3rd March 1921, asking that I should submit a considered report on the whole question of tea-garden wages in this division.

2. On receipt of your letter I called demi-officially for information on the points raised in your letter from nine leading tea planters of this district who I thought would be able to give me reliable information. These nine gentlemen include Mr. Grayburn, M.L.C., Superintendent, Assam Frontier Company, and Chairman, Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, Messrs. Wood, Chambers, and Tweedie, all three Honorary Magistrates, and senior planters of position, Mr. Reid, Superintendent, Upper Assam Tea Company, Mr. Garbett, Superintendent Buddha-beta Tea Company. The last named three gentlemen are all Chairmen of sub-circles of the Tea Association. I also consulted Mr. Rose, Superintendent, British India Tea Company, and Mr. Howie, Dejuo Tea Company, who, at present, is acting as Chairman of the North Lakhimpur Branch of the Tea Association. I did not consider it necessary or desirable to consult every individual planter in the district as I believe has been done in the Jorhat district. Although I picked out nine of the most influential tea planters, the Committee of the Tea Association requested them not to supply information to me without their letters being first laid before the sub-circles of the Indian Tea Association of which they are Chairmen or members.

3. I find it impossible to make enquiries on the lines suggested in your letter under reference as I do not see how I can say what the coolies' expenditure was in 1913. All that might be done from the information at my disposal is to compare (a) wholesale prices in 1913 with wholesale prices in 1920, (b) wages paid in 1913 with wages paid in 1920. In this connection I would note that as the wages' returns received up to the year 1915 in my immigration office have been destroyed, I have had to call for the garden copies of the returns in 1913 which in some cases are not now forthcoming. Further that the records for prices current maintained in my Revenue office give only wholesale rates.

4. A reference to the Provincial Immigration Labour reports for 1913-14 and 1919-20 will show that average wages in Lakhimpur Sadr for the two years were as follows, average calculated on the figures of monthly cash wages including *ticca*, diet rations, subsistence allowances and bonus per head:—

	Total number on books.		Average daily working strength.	
	Men.	Women.	Men.	Women.
1	2	3	4	5
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1913-14	7 7 5	5 12 7	9 8 2	7 5 4
1919-20	7 12 7	7 1 9	11 14 1	9 9 1

It will be noticed that although the average wages earned by men calculated on total number on books showed a very slight increase, there is a great increase in wages (both in the case of men and women) calculated on the average daily working strength. As Mr. Grayburn, M.L.C., has pointed out to me, figures showing wages earned as calculated on the total labour force are misleading and he argues that such figures were quoted against the miners in England to show that they were loafing and did not endeavour to earn the money.

As the difference between average wages calculated on total number on books and on average daily working strength is mostly due to coolies being absent on leave for purposes of cultivation or otherwise, the figures calculated on the average daily working strength are the figures which really matter.

5. As regards the question whether the coolie's wage, with present prices, is a living one, I consider that on most gardens in the Lakhimpur Sadr or Dibrugarh subdivision it is certainly a living wage. There are only some twelve tea-gardens in the North Lakhimpur subdivision and I enclose a copy of a letter dated 5th April, 1921, from Mr. Howie, Manager, Dejoo Tea Estate, North Lakhimpur, and acting Chairman, North Lakhimpur, Indian Tea Association. It will be noted that he says that the system of payment on some tea-gardens in North Lakhimpur is different to that on Dejoo Tea Estate but on the whole I think that conditions on Dejoo resemble other gardens in North Lakhimpur where prices of foodstuffs are lower and more land is available for cultivation and grazing than in the Dibrugarh subdivision. The great majority of tea-gardens in this district, however, are situated in the Dibrugarh subdivision and it will be noticed from the annual immigration labour reports that the wages for this subdivision are much the highest in this Province. It is, of course, not possible for all gardens in the Dibrugarh subdivision to pay the same high rate of pay as is paid by the Doom-Dooma group of gardens who make the highest grade tea in Assam.

6. The general opinion of planters in this district is that the actual amount paid, or given to coolies as concessions, should be all taken into the calculation of the coolies' pay. It is difficult to estimate how much the coolies of each Company have benefited by the provision of cheap rice, but I may mention that in 1920 the Assam Frontier Company, with its twelve gardens, lost Rs. 2,42,909 by supplying rice at Rs. 3 per maund, while the Doom-Dooma Tea Company, with its five big gardens, lost about the same amount. Similarly the Budlabeta Tea Company's loss on rice for 1920 was Rs. 93,685. I mention only three of the leading and best managed companies in this district, but many other companies have similarly lost money on rice concessions.

7. In connection with this question of rice concessions I would point out that it would be quite impossible to fix any standard wage for this whole district, although since the Doom-Dooma riots of 1920 wages and rice concessions have been practically standardised on the big group of gardens round Doom-Dooma. Gardens, which are situated in isolated places and have much spare low land, can settle with their coolies at a nominal rate, land for wet rice cultivation and if their labour force is sufficiently large that leave can be freely granted for cultivation, the labour force on such a garden is quite as contented as, if not more contented than, a labour force on a garden which pays higher wages but which has little or no rice cultivation. Most planters realise that, from the point of view of the coolies' happiness, it is essential for a well-managed estate to have land for rice cultivation, grazing and fuel reserves, as well as for planting tea. On a few gardens in this district where no firewood is available special firewood concessions are given. Thus the big Maijan estate near Dibrugarh pays an extra two pice for every *hazira* as firewood allowance, while on the Assam Frontier Company estate, Sukerating (near Doom-Dooma), firewood is supplied to the labour force at 2½ cubic feet for Re. 1.

8. Coolies are paid, either according to a monthly rate which often varies from garden to garden, or according to the unit system, the latter being a system by which wages are paid for the amount of work done. The anna is the unit of pay and a man or woman can do as much work or as little work as he or she chooses and is paid accordingly. According to this system a coolie can earn anything from one anna to ten or twelve annas per day. The unit system is generally only in vogue on gardens short of labour where Managers want to induce coolies to work as much as possible. Many experienced Managers object to the unit system as they say without careful supervision it leads to quantity and not quality of work. Coolies who are paid at monthly rates can often earn *ticca* pay by doing extra work after their set task has been completed in four or five hours' time. The question whether coolies choose to earn *ticca* pay depends mostly on two factors (a) the race of the coolies, (b) the question whether there is rice cultivation on or near the garden. For example, Mundas and other aboriginal coolies of the best type will prefer to do only their set task if they have cultivation to take up in their spare time, while Oriyas and coolies from the East coast of Madras, who hate cultivating, prefer to turn out in the afternoon and do *ticca* work. Apart from regular wages and *ticca* pay the coolies in this district all get free houses, free medical attendance and either free fuel or firewood allowance. Liberal leave on different rates of pay is given to

Dibrugarh. pregnant women and many gardens give a hot meal free of charge once a day to sickly coolies and to all children who like to come for it. Orphans are well looked after on most gardens and the planter, as a rule, realises that the children of to-day will be the labour force of the future. Generally speaking I consider that planters treat their coolies excellently and that labour troubles are generally due to the Assamese garden clerks or subordinates trying to make money out of the coolies, or to the garden shopkeepers not being sufficiently kept in hand by the Manager. As a whole the tea-garden coolies in Dibrugarh subdivision, especially the Doom-Dooma circle, are quite well off as is shown by the enormous amount they spend in the Government country spirit shops. Mr. Wood, Superintendent of the Doom-Dooma Tea Company, thinks that the recent increase in wages has done little good to the coolies as their extra pay is spent in liquor.

9. I believe that experienced planters are quite correct in saying that garden coolies have more leisure than they had some years ago. The reason of this is that on many gardens the set tasks for hoeing, etc., have been reduced in recent years, while on some gardens intensive cultivation has rendered the soil easier to work. As regards the suggestion made by Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell that coolies should share in the commission earned by garden Managers in prosperous years, I do not think that this practice would work well on tea-gardens though I understand that many industrial concerns in England have now adopted the system of profit-sharing with their employees. Tea-garden coolies could not be made to understand why in the present year, on account of the low price of tea and the high cost of production, no commission would be available, though the amount of manual labour performed by them would be just the same as in other years when large profits are made. The non-payment of commission to coolies in years when the tea market is dull would probably operate as another potential cause of discontent on tea-gardens.

10. Although I have not been able to reply categorically to the questions in your letter I hope that this letter will be of some use to you. I enclose a copy of Mr. Grayburn's letter, dated 5th April, 1921, to my address. Apart from the fact that Mr. Grayburn, M.L.C., is Chairman of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, and Superintendent of the Assam Frontier Company, his letter is very interesting as he shows that the Assam tea-gardens are able to attract labour from Chaibassa and the Santhal Parganas in spite of the huge wages offered respectively by Tata's Iron Works and the Raniganj Collieries. Now that all recruiting for the Assam tea-gardens is done by garden sardars who have had practical experience of life on the tea-gardens, I think that this shows that no interference on the part of Government with tea-garden wages would be justified.

Mr. MoMorran :—*Q.*—Do you believe that the action taken by the Sub-Committee in this district in raising the wages has adequately met the economic position which you regard as responsible in part for the movement of strikes?

A.—I think that a rise in pay is a satisfactory thing. I could not say that it would be sufficient if prices go still higher. It also depends on some gardens whether tasks have been increased. I understand that one or two gardens which were opposed to any increase of pay said that if the Sub-Committee decided to increase the pay they would increase the tasks. I do not think the coolies would benefit much if that is done.

Q.—There has not been a rise of pay in the Tingrai Circle?

A.—I think the wages are low probably round Naharkatia and Tinkong.

Q.—I take it in the majority of these strikes you were not called on to intervene?

A.—Hardly at all. As a matter of fact garden Managers would not report cases until they were specially asked to do so by the Chairmen of their Circles.

Q.—I suppose it is the case that some gardens are in a particularly happy position with rice land, and so on, for their coolies, and can allow them a good deal more leave and freedom?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In such cases it has been pointed out that the wage return may compare unfavourably with these gardens where such land is not available?

A.—Yes. I know of such gardens.

Q.—And the garden is sometimes misjudged by the wage question?

A.—Well, gardens where the highest wages are paid, are not always the most popular gardens. Generally the tendency is for coolies to work "lower down the road" because there is more cultivation.

Q.—So that the higher wages are a premium which gardens have to pay on Dibrugarh account of their peculiar situation in order to attract labour?

A.—I don't think they attract much in the district. Most of the labour is imported from outside. It depends largely on the class of the coolies. I may say the Mundas and people like that are fond of *shikar* and cultivation. I would say that gardens which have a large amount of rice cultivation both in and round the garden grant generally have less trouble in keeping their labour.

Gardens which manufacture the highest grade tea have the highest standard of work and pay their coolies higher wages.

Q.—You speak of Doom-Dooma being badly situated as there is very little land for cultivation. The coolie therefore has to look to his wages; he has got no supplementary means of making money by cultivation, and his wages are therefore higher because he is engaged more fully in working for the garden instead of working for himself in the way of cultivating rice land or going out fishing. Would you expect, in such circumstances, that the wage returns of those gardens would show higher earnings on the average for their coolies as compared with other places where half the time of the coolies is devoted to their own cultivation?

A.—Naturally, if less *ticca* was paid wages would be lower.

Q.—You cannot interpret these returns except in a relative way. You must regard the conditions of the garden as well as the money that is earned?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that it is practically impossible to lay down a uniform rule for the remuneration of tea-garden labour?

A.—I have already said that it is impossible for Government to fix a standard wage.

Major Fox :—Q.—From the last Immigration Labour Return it will be seen that 262,000 acres of land are held by *ex*-tea-garden coolies direct from Government in Assam. I take it that these coolies were allowed special terms by Government?

A.—No; Planters sometimes are given special rates, not coolies.

Q.—Is it fair to say that a tea-garden coolie could hardly leave a tea-garden and go out and settle on land taken up from Government without a certain amount of capital?

A.—I don't think you want much capital. In some places they clear a *bigha* of land and supplement it.

Q.—A coolie probably has got some money, but if he happens to be near a garden he would probably supplement his income by doing *fallu* work (*i.e.*, working on the garden when he felt inclined). Do you suppose that coolies could go off like that from tea-gardens and settle in the *bustees* without any capital?

A.—They must have saved something.

Q.—There is a certain amount of capital required to start in agriculture I take it outside tea-gardens?

A.—I have never made enquiries about that. Budgets of tea-garden coolies were made, but I don't remember budgets having been made for *ex*-tea-garden coolies.

Q.—Would you consider these *ex*-coolies as having improved their condition on the garden or would you consider their departure as any reflection on the garden?

A.—I don't think it is a reflection on the tea-garden.

Q.—May I assume that this is very much to the credit of the tea industry?

A.—I think the majority of the coolies when they save a little money prefer to be on their own.

Q.—Can you describe the economic distress?

A.—I think in certain places the coolies have not been paid much; I have given instances of gardens where I thought wages were very low.

Q.—Do you think the economic distress was brought about by too low wages?

A.—I think the main cause is economic. There is unrest throughout the world and everybody knows it. I do not think the Dibru-Sadiya Railway strike was the main cause of the tea-garden strike. I think the main cause was economic.

Dibrugarh. Q.—Do you think that this rise in wages that was made in the Dibrugarh Circle was a good move ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It forestalled any possible unrest on the gardens ?

A.—As a matter of fact the gardens on the eastern side towards Doom-Dooma had already gone on strike. I think it went a good way to allay the distress.

Q.—Do you think the wage return indicates the possibilities of coolies' earnings on tea-gardens ?

A.—I think the wage returns may not be absolutely accurate, but they could give you an idea.

Q.—On some gardens wages might be very high and earnings very low also ?

A.—That might be if the people were paid half *haziras*.

Q.—Are you satisfied that coolies are getting sufficient wages now ?

A.—I am quite satisfied as regards Doom-Dooma and Panitola. There are possibly some gardens on the Naharkatia side where wages may be raised, but rice is cheap in that area. There are at present about 123 gardens and there is no garden I would call unsatisfactory except one or two very small places which are possibly in the developing stage. A large number of new gardens are however being opened out.

Srijut Siva Prasad Barua :—Q.—Were there any strikes or rioting on gardens owned by Indian Tea Companies ?

A.—I cannot remember any strike taking place, but on certain gardens coolies ran away because they could not be paid.

Q.—Do such gardens recruit coolies from other districts ?

A.—I think they recruit coolies locally ; they are mostly *faltu* coolies. The coolies on Indian gardens were allowed to do more or less as they liked. Possibly there was a lower standard of work and a lower standard of discipline.

Q.—Are there many Indian gardens ?

A.—Not many in existence at the present time. The Indian gardens round here are not as good as the Indian gardens round Jorhat.

Q.—Probably before the strike of March you inspected a good many gardens ?

A.—I had inspected some before the strikes broke out. I commented on the low wages in the case of Nahartoli and Naharkatia. I think the Manager of Nahartoli knew that he was having trouble on account of the low wages. He did his best to get his wages raised because the surrounding gardens were paying higher wages.

Q.—Do you know who were the agitators ?

A.—I think most of the unrest caused on tea-gardens was due to Assamese clerks and mohurrirs. In some cases the local staff wanted to make money out of the coolies ; in others the clerks and mohurrirs thought that if the coolies got an increase they would also receive it.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—Do you think that there was any movement in your district similar to that in the Surma Valley where a series of resolutions were passed urging the people of that Valley to adopt a programme which was calculated to be directed against Europeans and Planters ?

A.—I have already said in my note "No evidence as to the working of outside influences has been obtained although careful enquiries were made by a Criminal Investigation Department Officer. I agree with this officer's opinion that the disturbances were mainly due to economic causes."

Q.—As regards Act XIII agreements, do you know if other forms of labour are put under this Act ?

A.—I understand that in some other districts wood sawyers are put under Act XIII.

There were 39 cases under the Act in the Sadr subdivision in 1921 of which 4 cases were dismissed under Section 203, Criminal Procedure Code, 31 cases struck off, and only 4 cases brought to trial. The reason for the 31 cases having been struck off was due either to the complainant not wanting to prosecute the case, or to the accused having still been at large.

I am in favour of retaining the Act as it gives a moral hold on the coolie.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—Is there no other law which could give that Dibrugarh hold ?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—What about the Indian Contract Act ?

A.—Under the Contract Act you would have to institute a suit in the Civil Court and it may take months and months to know the result. I think it is a question of having Act XIII or nothing at all.

Q.—Do you think the abolition of the Act would tend to give the coolie the market value of his labour ?

A.—Probably a lot of gardens would not pay the bonus which they are at present paying.

Q.—Would it not be optional for the coolies to leave the gardens or remain ?

A.—I suppose the Companies would have no control on a coolie's services, and then Companies would spend less on hospitals and accommodation.

Q.—If they are not given housing and rice concessions would not the coolies demand enhanced wages ?

A.—I am not prepared to answer that question straightway.

Q.—Then the abolition of Act XIII would come in the way of granting bonuses and concessions ?

A.—I think it would.

Q.—How many *ex-tea-garden* coolies are there living on Government land ?

A.—There are large numbers of them.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—Is it your experience that Managers, taking them all round, try to do their best to remedy the coolie's lot in times of economic distress ?

A.—I think a great many Managers in this district are extremely sympathetic.

Q.—Have they complained to you that they found it difficult to do what they would have liked to do ?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—You said that the Agents or the London Board refused to sanction the increase of pay recommended by the Managers of certain gardens ?

A.—Yes, I have given two instances, one was at Nahartoli Tea Estate where the Manager's proposals to increase the pay of the coolies was negatived by the Agents, Messrs. James Binlay and Company. I understand that Mr. Wood, the Superintendent of the Doom-Dooma Circle, proposed about 1919 an increase of pay at or about the same time when Mr. Crowe raised the pay in the Frontier Company. Mr. Wood's proposals were I understand negatived by the Company's London Board. Further all the gardens round Doom-Dooma raised their wages after the riots except Tipphuk which belongs to the Jokai Tea Company, the Agents of which are Messrs. Balmer Lawrie and Company. Some Planters in the Doom-Dooma Circle told me that they were afraid of trouble arising in the Doom-Dooma Circle because the Agents of that Company refused to come into line with the other gardens. They were afraid that if there was a strike at Tipphuk other gardens which had already granted concessions might be affected. Also in the case of the Mathola Tea Estate the Manager told me that he had promised to raise the pay but that he had not received sanction from the Calcutta Agents.

Q.—Are these the only instances out of 126 gardens where Agents refused to grant an increase of pay ?

A.—Yes, as far as I can recollect at the moment.

The Medical examination of coolies in the recruiting districts is voluntary.

NO. 95.—*Mr. NILAMBAR DUTTA, Manager of Udalguri Tea Estate* :—

There are 300 working coolies on my garden. I have 225 acres under tea. My garden was started in 1912. Labour is recruited locally. The present rate of pay for coolies living outside the garden is Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman; those living on the garden are paid Rs. 7 and Rs. 6, respectively. Outside coolies are not under agreement. Most of my coolies inside the garden are under Act XIII agreement. We give a bonus of Rs. 12. Coolies have land for paddy cultivation. About 50 or

Dibrugarh. 60 coolies have land at one *bigha* per head. We sell rice at Rs. 5 a maund. The rate was the same last year. We supplied paddy this year at Rs. 2-8-0 per maund. We increased the rate of wages by Re. 1 in June last because we stopped *ticca* work (both hoeing as well as plucking) on the garden on account of the depression in tea. Coolies do not earn as much in fine plucking as they would in coarse plucking. The task per *hazira* of leaf is 4 to 5 seers; over and above that we pay 6 pies for a seer. For light hoeing at the commencement of the season we allow 25 *nals*. With deep hoeing at the beginning we started with 8 *nals* gradually increasing it to 15. There has been no change in the task. We pay once a month. We never give quarter *haziras*. A *kutchra* house 10' x 10' would cost about Rs. 25; the house will last 3 years. We supply blankets to agreement coolies at cheaper than bazaar rates. I supplied *dhotis* last year when the prices were very high in the bazaar; we deducted the amount in instalments. We give concession rice; men, women and children get 6, 5 and 3 seers a week, respectively.

I have had 5 or 6 cases under Act XIII. I consider Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 *plus* the agreement bonus together with concessions, *e.g.*, medical attendance, housing, is sufficient. A coolie, if he is of a saving disposition, can save a little. Advances under Act XIII are never recovered.

I have had no trouble on my garden. I do not consider it possible or desirable to convert the various concessions received by the coolies into an increase of money wages.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—Why do you use Act XIII?

A.—To bring the coolie back to the garden and not with a view to recovering the money.

Q.—If a coolie wants to go why don't you let him go?

A.—We do not want to lose a coolie easily.

Q.—Do you want your work or do you want the money returned?

A.—We want the work.

Q.—The money therefore is a gift?

A.—Practically so.

Q.—If Act XIII was withdrawn how would you manage?

A.—There would be some difficulty in the management.

Q.—You can take the coolie to the civil court for your money?

A.—That is a very troublesome procedure and not worthwhile.

Q.—You are the Chairman of the Municipal Committee so that you can tell me what the wages of the ordinary unskilled municipal coolie are?

A.—8 annas a day.

Q.—For how much do you get a coolie for private work?

A.—10 to 12 annas.

Mr. McMorrin.—Q.—You say 8 annas is paid for a coolie in the municipal area. Do you house coolies, or give them medical attendance, cheap rice, or any concessions?

A.—None at all.

Q.—For 8 annas the municipal coolies work from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M., I take it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Whereas garden coolies complete their *haziras* in 5 hours?

A.—Yes.

No. 96.—*Mr. P. C. BAGCHI, Pleader* :—

I am engaged on behalf of tea-gardens, and represent some 20 or 25 gardens. I have no garden of my own, but I have a number of shares in an Indian Company.

A coolie earns about 4 annas a day by doing *ticca*. Men and women earn Rs. 7 ^{Dibrugarh.} and Rs. 6 a month, besides holding paddy land at cheap rates and receiving rice at concession rates.

As far as I know, the unrest has not been due to political agitation. It is chiefly due to the high price of cloth, the enhanced rates of foodstuffs and to the depression in the tea market. Last year the coolies generally did not get any *ticca* work. As far as I am aware, wages were not raised on the Indian gardens.

It is not desirable that the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages.

For a maund of rice an ordinary municipal coolie would have to pay Rs. 5. Ten years ago *kazla* rice was sold at about Rs. 4 a maund. On Sundays the coolies of the Chowkidinghi garden work in the town and earn as much as 8 and 10 annas.

There was an attempt at rioting on the Mohakasi garden, but the Manager prevented it I believe by pacifying the coolies. Perhaps it may have been due to the sardars. I simply heard it from the Manager. Presumably it was due to economic causes partly and also to a feeling engendered in the mind of the coolie that since the Manager was drawing the handsome salary of Rs. 1,000 it was desirable that he (the coolie) should get a certain share of profits on the garden. My opinion is that formerly coolies were satisfied with their meagre wants, but nowadays they expect luxuries. Even the temper of the coolie has changed inasmuch as a Manager cannot speak harshly to the coolie. This is all due in my opinion to the growing spirit of independence. Formerly they used to take tea without sugar, but now they do not like to do it if they can afford. Sardars sometimes use *ghee* now as against oil in days gone by. It is almost impossible to get garden coolies as domestic servants.

It is my firm conviction that high pay sometimes tends to less efficiency or to work of a lower standard.

The present unrest is due to the general unrest the world over. It is not peculiar to the tea industry alone. The only pressing necessity would appear to be the supply of cheap cloth. I had a talk with Mr. Woodward, Hoogrijan Tea Estate of the Tingrai Tea Company, and he told me cloth was a pressing necessity for coolies and he imported supplies of cloth through me with the result that his coolies became satisfied. Coolies do spend a little money on liquor and *ganja*. Industrious coolies are well off—at least most of them. For instance one coolie possesses a tea-garden and one *faltu* coolie owns an elephant. I consider Rs. 7 may not be enough to keep a coolie well clothed and in comfort unless he receives concessions in addition. Gardens generally suffer losses on account of rice supplies. Coolies are known to buy fowls and ducks for consumption. A duck may cost Re. 1 and a fowl 6 to 8 annas; at the present moment they cost more. Coolies have been suffering from the economic condition since 1920. Standard cloth as far as I know is supplied by the Hoogrijan Tea Estate. In some Indian garden budgets I have seen letters explaining the curtailment of expenditure. Coolies did not get much money and on some Indian gardens they actually absconded. Out of 200 coolies at Khenduguri Tea Estate not more than 40 or 50 are left on the garden. In my opinion, European gardens are better looked after than Indian gardens.

President:—Q.—Do you believe that agitators have taught the coolies to ask for high wages?

A.—I don't think that agitators have been able to enter the gardens. If they had at all incited coolies to leave the gardens they would surely be required to maintain those coolies. As far as I remember, no bazaars have been closed in this district.

Some coolies take agreements from the Manager for litigation purposes. I have very rarely taken coolies to Court; when I do so it is with the object of warning other coolies against absconding. I take coolies to the civil court. If I apply for warrants against coolies they are never to be found. In the case of civil suits, the coolies' properties are attached and sold. It takes not less than three months for a case to finish in the civil court.

As far as tea-gardens are concerned Act XIII only has an indirect effect on the coolies because in 99 cases out of 100 they are never to be found and the garden Managers suffer heavy losses. My opinion is that Act XIII exercises a moral indirect pressure on the coolies.

DOOM-DOOMA, LAKHIMPUR, 10TH FEBRUARY 1922.

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[MR. WITHERS ABSENT.]

No.9 7.—Dr. J. MONCRIEFF JOLY, M.B., *Medical Officer, Pabbojan Tea Company, Doom-Dooma Tea Company, Tara Tea Company, etc.* :—

I am Medical officer in charge of 10 gardens, *viz.*, the five divisions of the Doom-Dooma Tea Company, the Pabbojan and Dhoedaam divisions of the Pabbojan Tea Company, the Deamooli Tea Company, Rupai Tea Company, and the Tara Tea Company.

I think it is possible and highly desirable to introduce latrines in the barrack system of lines on gardens. I would recommend some system of septic tank. The system we have in the Tara Company is the bucket system of latrines which is satisfactory, as the latrines are being used by the coolies both in the hospital as well as in the barracks. The night soil is removed and put in trenches in the tea and covered up at once; it is removed several times during the day. At Dhoedaam there is a type of septic tank at one of the hospitals which has proved highly satisfactory. There are bucket latrines at another hospital of the same garden where also the system has proved satisfactory. At Pabbojan there are latrines in one set of lines and they are satisfactory. At Hansara I was told that the latrines in the hospital are not used. At the time they were installed the Manager himself did not believe in them, and my opinion is that if the Manager does not evince any enthusiasm in the matter, one can hardly expect the system to prove a success. In my opinion most lines should contain fewer houses and a smaller number of coolies.

I do not find any difficulty in getting doctor babus, but I do find it difficult to get satisfactory men. There is always a percentage of registered men who apply but far more non-registered men who apply but are not qualified. I employ only fully qualified doctor babus.

President :—Q.—Do you find latrines reduce the incidence of *anchylostomiasis* ?

A.—They have on one garden. The hospital ration scale per head for the gardens under my charge is filed for reference of the Committee. I also file a typical indent for medicines of the Doom-Dooma Tea Company. The incidence rate of malaria is very high up here, and it is an extremely serious disease. *Anchylostomiasis* in particular combined with malaria accounts for 90 per cent. of our deaths. The majority of the coolies on their first arrival are found to be infected with malaria. I have not had any cholera cases since I have been here.

I have a routine treatment for anæmia. Once a year I muster the entire labour force on the garden line by line, the Manager and Assistants being present. This takes as a rule five or six days. The coolies are then graded out into three different classes (A), (B) and (T) treatment. (A) coolies go into (A) *chalan*, (B) coolies into (B) *chalan* and (T) coolies are simply placed under treatment without in any way causing interference with their ordinary work. (A) *chalan* coolies are given a dose of anthelmintic once a month and every morning receive a free meal; they get full pay for doing one-third work. (B) *Chalan* coolies get a small meal together with a dose of medicine and receive full pay for two-thirds work. Coolies once put into (A) or (B) *chalans* can only be discharged by me, and I expect to find every week throughout the year fresh coolies put into (A) and (B) *chalan* by the Manager or Assistant Manager of the garden. All coolies on being discharged from hospital automatically go into (A) or (B) *chalans* for light work for at least one fortnight before they return to the garden. All coolies that have had malaria automatically go into (B) *chalan*, as (B) *chalan* coolies get quinine every morning, and that is how the treatment of malaria is followed up. All the gardens are improving under this routine treatment.

The anæmia percentages of the number of coolies seen by me for the five Doom-Dooma gardens are :—

Hansara for 1920	...	...	...	...	14.09%
Hansara for 1919	...	...	...	...	15.2%
Beesakpie Division for 1921	...	...	...	...	9.81%
Beesakpie Division for 1920	...	...	...	...	19.9%
Samdang Division for 1920	...	...	...	...	9.41%
Samdang Division for 1921	...	...	...	...	7.37%
Raidang Division for 1919	...	...	...	...	12.67%
Raidang Division for 1920	...	...	...	...	11.5%
Daimukhia Division for 1920	...	...	...	...	6.72%
Daimukhia Division for 1919	...	...	...	...	9.72%

I consider anything below 10% anæmia very good up here as a high standard is faken. We have had a lot of new coolies from famine districts in a very bad state of health, but the average coolie who comes up is watched as regards his health for the first three years as he generally tends to become anæmic within that period. It is the same with the European. It takes time for one to become acclimatised. Doom-
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In 1919 there was a severe outbreak of influenza on the Doom-Dooma gardens. I submitted quarterly reports for each garden every year. The year 1919 was a particularly trying one for children. The effects of influenza and high cost of foodstuffs and cloth re-acted on them. I advised the giving of free food to non-working children in the morning which is being done on all gardens. I am of opinion that during the rains the higher death-rate is due to increased incidence of malaria.

Certain castes prefer the *bustee* type of lines while others such as the Oriyas prefer the more convivial lines such as the barrack type. The Oriyas like living near one another, because they are fond of their feasts and festivals.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—I understood you to say that the Manager could influence coolies in the way of using latrines. Would it not depend to some extent on the character or idiosyncrasies of the labour force as to the success of his efforts?

A.—I don't think so; I think they would all use them provided the latrines are kept clean.

Q.—Assuming that arrangements are made to keep latrines clean during the time of your inspection, supposing you came unexpectedly, to inspect a garden and found the latrine filthy, what would happen then?

A.—I would simply tell the Manager that he was not keeping his latrines clean.

Q.—Supposing that happened over and over again what would you say to the Manager?

A.—He would perhaps speak to the sweeper.

Q.—How are you going to continue a garden under a system of compulsion in order to maintain the latrines in an adequately clean condition because some Managers have told me that they cannot speak harshly to their people nowadays? It would seem to me that the difficulties of the Manager would be enormously increased if he has to supervise and see that the latrines are clean. I should like to know how it is going to work out in practice.

A.—For this reason I have advocated the introduction of the septic tank.

Q.—Have you any idea as to how that will work from the point of view of cost, because, after all, even tea-gardens have to consider the fact that they live in a world of competition?

A.—I think the septic tank would decrease your cost of production by saving your labour.

Q.—I suppose this is at the back of the minds of those who advocate it but it has still got to be proved?

A.—I think you can prove it on the analogy of the sugar industries where they found that *anchylostomiasis* took such a heavy toll that not only was the use of latrines made compulsory in the lines, but also portable latrines were taken round and if any labourer was found not using those latrines he was punished by Government. The question of compulsion was taken up by the Government as a Government matter in Ceylon. My impression is that the septic tank as employed in the jute mills of Calcutta would be difficult to introduce up here. But the *agua* privy type is very satisfactory and I understand the cost is far from prohibitive, and I know that it has been used with success. The possibilities of the septic tank are very great, and I can assure you that it is the most effective type of latrine. As regards latrines of the other type, the main difficulty is with regard to the disposal of the night soil, and also the inspection of trenches. It must be admitted that the inspection of latrines to a certain extent is difficult but the inspection of trenches is still more difficult. However, I consider that the introduction of the trench system is a step in the right direction.

Q.—Is there any means of illustrating to the coolie the dangers of this form of indiscriminate use of the ground round about his lines in the morning?

A.—I don't think there are any effective means of doing so but you can try to explain the dangers of the disease to the coolie. To start with, he thinks doctors are mad. He cannot understand why you do things for him, unless you only say it is

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dirty. So I think it would be very difficult to educate them up to it. For instance we gave them mosquito nets and explained to them the ravages of malaria. They used the nets for a fortnight and then converted them into *pugrees* and *dhotis*.

Q.—In connection with the treatment of anæmia we have been told elsewhere that under the treatment alone apart from the use of latrines there has been a marked decrease in the incidence of anæmia?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that on the one hand by following out the treatment you are achieving a great reduction; on the other, by the introduction of latrines, you would be preventing the infection?

A.—Yes, but you would not stamp it out entirely.

Q.—Do you find any difficulty in getting coolies to come into hospital?

A.—Among certain castes, *e.g.*, Mundas, the new coolies object to it until they have been on the garden for some time. On the average I should say that the hospitals are popular. I have been over 8 years in India and all my time in the Lakhimpur district.

Taking the average coolie on the whole, I would say that he is well clothed and well-fed. I am satisfied with the water-supply of the gardens under my care. But I would say that there is room for improvement.

My recommendations for sanitation or for a medical staff whenever put forward have generally been accepted except in certain cases on the ground of finance.

I prefer small lines because supervision is better carried out; early cases of disease can be discovered and treated. In the case of illness the coolies often object to take medicines and generally try to hide cases of disease until all their own remedies have proved useless.

No. 98.—MR. C. WOOD, *Superintendent, Doom-Dooma Tea Company* :—

I am Superintendent of the Doom-Dooma Tea Company.

President :—Q.—Would you say that in view of the great rise in prices which has occurred during recent years the remuneration paid to the labour force in this district is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and in a reasonable degree of comfort?

A.—What we are giving now I think is sufficient, taking into consideration all the concessions in the way of free housing, cheap rice, clothing and garden land. But my private opinion is that a man should be paid not less than 5 annas a day, a woman 4 annas and a child in proportion. The present monthly rates are men Rs. 7, women Rs. 6, and Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 for children. Rice is supplied at Rs. 3 a maund. Coolies who do not take rice get Rs. 9 in the case of men and Rs. 8 in the case of women. The last increase in wages was made on 1st November 1920. There was a proposal to raise the wages in 1918 to 5 annas a day in the case of men, 4 annas in the case of women, and 3 annas and 2 annas in the case of children. At first the proposal was made to increase the monthly wages and subsequently it was altered to an increase of the daily wage. As to whether the remuneration of a coolie is sufficient would depend on the amount of *ticca* earned by him.

There has been no unrest in this district amongst tea-garden labour, but there have been strikes. I came to the conclusion that the strikes were due to indifferent rice being supplied to the coolies. This rice was contract rice. Coolies did make complaints about the quality of the rice they were getting, but conditions were very critical at the time owing to the railway strike and it was very difficult to get rice. Marwaris have a happy knack of letting our stocks run low and then supplying inferior rice. At present I have a civil case on hand in connection with rice which I rejected as being unfit for the coolies. Rice cultivation and firewood are two difficult propositions on this side; cultivation is scarce, while to secure firewood coolies have to go a long way off.

Q.—Do you think coolies have had economic grievances of late years?

A.—Not until 1918 when prices went up, especially the price of cloth.

Payments are made monthly. *Ticca* also is paid monthly.

We have never found it necessary to use the unit system. We have not used it on our gardens to any great extent.

Q.—Do you think the average coolie saves any money in a year?

A.—Big families do I think; they earn a lot of *ticca*. I know a man who has about 300 rupees saved up.

We have fixed a standard wage for the district and I think it is essential for the smooth working of the district.

Q.—Was there any opposition to the proposed rise of wages in 1918?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was it among the Managers or were the Managers unanimous in considering it necessary?

A.—There were one or two dissenters.

We provide blankets to all new coolies and to those coolies whom we consider badly off.

We give 3 months' leave before child-birth and three months' after, during which time the mothers could take either Rs. 5 in cash a month or Rs. 1-8-0 a month and free rice which consists of 6 seers a week. Children are inspected monthly, and as a rule the Manager gives the mother 8 annas if the child is in a good condition. We feed a good number of non-working children every day. The loss on rice for the whole Company last year was Rs. 2,88,000. This year the loss is something like Rs. 2,10,000.

I am not prepared to say that it is impossible to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, but I must say that it is undesirable, situated as our gardens are. As regards the giving of rice at Rs. 3 per maund, those who do not want to take it are given a higher wage. There are however very few coolies who do not take rice, and these include a number of *faltus* living in the lines. Any working coolie can get rice if he wants it up to 7 seers a week; women get 6 seers a week. I think the *kayas* lend money to the coolies, but I do not think they lend to as many now as they used to. If, however, *kayas* are found lending money to the coolies, they are liable to be turned off the garden. This is one of the conditions laid down in their lease. If a coolie wants to borrow money he can always come up to the Manager for it, and the Manager would give the money if he considered the coolie a deserving man. Very few coolies do borrow money from the Manager, and the practice is certainly discouraged.

Houses are provided for all coolies, except to *faltus* who live outside the garden. The loss on rice is calculated as the difference between the purchasing price and the selling price.

No special calculation was made when arriving at the figure 50 per cent. which I consider represented the rise in the cost of living. We have always supplied rice in the Doom-Dooma Company at Rs. 3 a maund.

In 1918 there was a suggestion from the Doom-Dooma Circle Sub-Committee, Indian Tea Association, to raise wages and I personally was in favour of it, but the proposal was not carried out for many reasons. The loss on rice was estimated at much more than previous years; the outlook in tea at the time was also very poor, and it was thought advisable to wait a while. We have not done any recruiting this cold weather. We did a fair amount of recruiting last year. About half a dozen newly recruited coolies tried to abscond last year, but they came back. Recruits are always medically examined. I think it would make some difference if Act XIII was abolished. If Government intend taking away the Act, they should certainly give us some other protection.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—So your chief fear if Act XIII is abolished is that the coolies may desert?

A.—No, it is simply that we shall not be able to recover our bonus.

Q.—If the Act was abolished would you still continue to give the bonus?

A.—Yes.

The plucking cost per maund of tea is Rs. 5.

Pregnant women are given a bonus, but that is left to the discretion of the Manager. The agreement bonus is not taken into account when pregnant leave is given.

I file a statement by request giving comparative market rates of foodstuffs, etc., in 1913, 1919 and 1922.

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DOOM-DOOMA TEA COMPANY, LIMITED.

(Incorporated in England.)

DOOM-DOOMA,

ASSAM, 9TH FEBRUARY 1922.

Comparative statement shewing prices of foodstuffs, etc., during 1913, 1919 and 1922.

Articles.	3.	1919.	Increase.	Current rate	Increase over
	Per maund.	Per maund.	Per maund.	Per maund.	Per maund.
1	2	3	4	5	6
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Rice, Nalchitti	5 8 0	13 8 0	8 0 0	7 0 0	1 8 0
„ Una	3 12 0	9 0 0	5 4 0	6 8 0	2 12 0
„ Kazla	3 12 0	8 12 0	5 0 0	6 4 0	2 8 0
Dal, Mosur	4 12 0	12 8 0	7 12 0	8 12 0	4 0 0
„ Arhor	4 12 0	12 8 0	7 12 0	10 0 0	5 4 0
Ghee	60 0 0	87 0 0	27 0 0	85 0 0	25 0 0
Mustard Oil	18 10 0	45 8 0	26 14 0	27 8 0	8 14 0
Sugar	10 8 0	25 0 0	14 8 0	22 8 0	12 0 0
Goor	5 0 0	7 12 0	2 12 0	10 0 0	5 0 0
Flour	6 0 0	12 8 0	6 8 0	15 0 0	9 0 0
Salt	3 2 0	5 0 0	1 14 0	7 8 0	4 6 0
Onions	3 12 0	8 12 0	5 0 0	15 0 0	11 4 0
Spices	20 0 0	40 0 0	20 0 0	30 0 0	10 0 0
Sago	20 0 0	28 8 0	2 8 0	16 0 0	...
Matikalai	5 0 0	7 8 0	2 8 0	5 8 0	0 8 0
Soap (country)	15 0 0	20 0 0	5 0 0	15 0 0	5 0 0
				20 0 0	
Kerosene oil (per gallon)	0 4 0	0 10 0	0 6 0	0 12 0	0 8 0

These are actual prices ascertained yesterday, the 9th February 1922.

C. WOOD,
Superintendent.

No. 99.—Mr. W. E. H. GRAYBURN, M.L.C., Superintendent, Assam Frontier Tea Company, Limited, Talup:—

I am Superintendent of the Assam Frontier Tea Company, Limited. I have been 24 years in the Assam Frontier Company. I have been Superintendent now a year. I was acting Superintendent for 5 years before that. There are ten estates under my supervision. The total labour force is about 13,931. The bulk of my labour are Chota Nagpuris, that is to say, largely the *jungli* type of coolies. We have both lines, which constitute an aggregation of houses, as well as *b stee* areas on which many people have settled down. In my opinion the *busteas* are more popular.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—Do you find that putting them out in the *busteas* improves or injures the health of the labour?

A.—It improves them; it is the form of living that they are used to in their own country. We have a lot of land available for cultivation to anybody who wants to take it up. Coolies are given land for cultivation by the Company and are charged the trifling rent of Rs. 2-8-0 a *poorah*. We have agreements under Act XIII which we give for one year. We have had this short-term agreement system for years.

Q.—Do you think that agreements could be dispensed with?

A.—I should not care to have this changed.

Q.—Why do you advocate the continuance of agreements ?

A.—The coolies come up and ask for them as they want to take them. We give them a bonus for taking the contract.

Q.—Would it be fair to say that these advances taken by the coolies serve to keep them out of the clutches of money-lenders ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—So that to that extent at least it is advantageous to the labour ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You do not charge any interest for this advance ?

A.—Certainly not.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

With the exception of rice which I consider might be converted into a money wage, I think it is impossible to convert the various other concessions into an increase of money wages. As a matter of fact, with regard to rice, it has been our practice to a certain extent to give coolies the option of taking rice or a money equivalent. At the moment 45 per cent. of the labour force are taking the higher rate of wage, and that might roughly be taken to indicate how it has been regarded by the labour. We leave it entirely to the option of the coolies either to take the increased wages or to accept the rice; no pressure is put on them one way or the other.

I have had no experience of any unrest on the gardens under my supervision. There were certain troubles in the Doom-Dooma district, but I was away on leave at the time.

All payments are made by Europeans.

Q.—Are the European Managers or Assistants in charge of groups of labour accessible to the coolies in cases of complaints ?

A.—Always.

Q.—Are there many complaints made against the Indian staff ?

A.—Very seldom.

Q.—Do you think that on the whole the coolies of the Assam Frontier Company are living in reasonable comfort and have the ability to save something from their earnings ?

A.—Certainly. I should say that the same applies to other Companies in this Circle. In addition to the wages coolies have the power of increasing their earnings by *ticca* work. There is no obstacle in the way of earning *ticca* at all. The gardens as a whole are in my opinion healthy for labour. The birth-rate is more than the death-rate; it was 3.63% as against a death-rate of 3.11%. Rice is purchased by me for the whole Company. It is examined before being taken over. For instance every Manager has a sample which he compares with the consignment. If the consignment of rice is defective in quality, it is either returned or rectified. Rice has however got to be brought up to a standard quality; if that is not done, it is returned. Under no circumstances is inferior rice accepted.

Coolies take 3 to 4 hours to complete a *hazira*. They are at liberty to earn *ticca* after that.

We have occasionally received wet rice in wagons and have always repudiated it.

Non-rice takers have been paid Rs. 2 extra since early in 1919. With the exception of Sookerating, where the rate is Rs. 7 for men and Rs. 6 for women, the coolies on other gardens who have been taking rice were not given any extra money. It was about 16 years ago that the Company first decided that it was better to stop coolies from taking rice and that they should be offered Re. 1 extra in lieu thereof. Again in 1919 the sum was raised to Rs. 2 and again in November 1920, it was raised by another rupee bringing it to Rs. 3 per head.

In the opinion of the Doom-Dooma Sub-Committee the rise in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 has been estimated at 50 per cent. This percentage was I think worked out.

If Act XIII was abolished I would not personally continue to give the bonus.

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Non-takers of rice get Rs. 9 for a man and Rs. 8 for a woman a month ; others, with the exception of Sookerating, get Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Rice is supplied at Rs. 3 a maund.

New coolies are not put under agreement until after 3 years' residence on the garden. Some years ago there was some alteration made in Act VI and the spirit of the concession was that we should not put people under agreement for the first 3 years. Coolies who have not been put under agreement for that period have seldom or never absconded, nor did they ask for the bonus during that period. The coolies come and ask for agreements of their own accord.

Q.—Is it the practice of your Company to give building materials to the coolie and ask him to make his own house ?

A.—Yes, in the *bustees*, except in the case of new coolies who have their houses built for them. I am quite satisfied with the huts made by the coolies themselves.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—There are two kinds of coolies, one taking cash and one receiving rice. How are the wages of those coolies calculated ?

A.—Only cash wages are shown in the statement. The loss on rice is shown in another column.

Q.—There has been an order to the effect that losses incurred on rice should be included in the statement ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Could I have an idea as to the area given out to the coolies for cultivation ?

A.—About 8,900 *bighas* are given out on the Company's grant. This does not include large areas held by coolies on Government land.

The figures shown in the statement include the whole labour force.

No. 100.—Mr. J. M. KILBURN, *Superintendent of the Makum Tea Company* :—

I have been 17 years in Tea, three years at Pabbojan and the rest of my time with the Makum (Assam) Tea Company. I have been Superintendent for the last three years.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to keep the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

Although it is possible to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, yet I do not think it is desirable to do so.

My gardens are not unhealthy. The high death-rate has been due to the influenza epidemic.

Our present rate of wages is Rs. 7 for men, Rs. 6 for women and Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 for children. This rate has been in force since 1920. Our rate for *ticca* is 4 annas for task both for outside as well as for garden labour. Outside labourers are allowed to do two tasks only. Coolies living on the garden do one task in hoeing, but as much as they like with regard to plucking. We give *ticca* for hoeing as well. Coolies living on the garden do one task, outside labour do two tasks. The difference is due to the fact that outside labour get no *haziras*. Rice is issued at the concession rate of Rs. 3 a maund. This has been the rate ever since I have been on the garden. We have practically no non-rice takers. In 1921 the plucking cost per maund of green leaf was Re. 1-10-8.

Deep hoeing used to be 15 *na's* ; it has been reduced to 12 (*hazira*) and 10 (*ticca*) in recent years.

A coolie cannot earn as much *ticca* for hoeing as he chooses : there is a limit. There is no limit for plucking ; they can earn as much as they want. They are now allowed one *ticca* in hoeing in addition to the *hazira*.

There are 205 *poorahs* of land within the garden grant held by 296 adults at the rent of 8 annas per holding. This has only been in force for the past year. Coolies are very keen on it themselves and it tends to check disputes.

About 9 per cent. of the male coolies have got land, but in one division there is much more than that. The North Bank have quite a lot; the South Bank not so much. We provide cow-herds free; no deduction from pay is made in that respect. We have very few irrecoverable loans. Doom-
Dooma.

We give 6 months' pregnant leave together with half-pay and concession rice. Most of my coolies are under agreement. We give a bonus of Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 to men and women respectively and do not recover the money.

President:—Q.—Supposing Act XIII was abolished by the Government of India, would you continue to give the bonus?

A.—We would have to in some form or other. I am not in favour of the abolition of Act XIII because it has been a custom and practice with us. It is of no use to us except that it has a moral effect on the coolies. We have seldom run a case under the Act.

New coolies come up as free labourers and occasionally within a few months of their arrival are given agreements. The practice is to give them the agreement a month or two after their arrival. New coolies are not under any obligation to us in consideration of our having paid for their railway fare. Nor is there any guarantee that we would get the benefit of having spent all the money on recruiting. The average sum spent on a coolie for recruiting is something like Rs. 60.

Q.—If you give a coolie Rs. 12 at the beginning of the year you do not require any safeguard I take it?

A.—We have it in Act XIII so far as it goes.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—Are you aware that the Contract Act governs these cases as well as all other cases in India?

A.—I am not aware of it.

Q.—If you have a contract under the ordinary law you can recover the money by having recourse to the Civil Court in the case of an agreement bonus. Would that meet with your desire to have a change?

A.—I am personally not in favour of the change. I would prefer Act XIII.

The Doom-Dooma Sub-Committee estimated the rise in the cost of living between 1913 and the present moment at 50 per cent. They came to that conclusion by an average of the opinions of the various members. Some said 75 per cent., others 45 per cent., and we came to the conclusion that it was 50 per cent. on the average; it varies considerably in different parts of the Circle.

It is a fact that coolies have had grievances of which agitators made capital. For one thing the abnormal rise in the price of cloth afforded some grounds, as also the high cost of foodstuffs.

No. 101.—Mr. A. E. HUNTER, *Pabbojan Tea Company, Limited, Dhoedaam Division.*

I have been 23 years in Tea, the whole of which time has been spent in the service of the Pabbojan Tea Company.

Q.—So far as you were able to ascertain, what conclusion have you come to as regards the trouble of September 1920?

A.—I consider the primary reason was the Dibru-Sadiya Railway strike, and no doubt the general feeling of unrest in the district. The trouble at Dhoedaam was undoubtedly due to outside influence.

The coolies put forward three claims—increased pay, increased rice and agreement bonus, which clearly indicates contamination by agitators.

So far as I have been able to ascertain, there was no complaint on the score of the quality of rice supplied. On the day before the actual trouble occurred the coolies were collected and told that an extra seer of rice would be given weekly, the increase being from 6 and 5 seers to 7 and 6 seers, for men and women, respectively. I was present at the meeting of the Sub-Committee in 1918, and it was my opinion that the coolies' wages should be raised. The Pabbojan Tea Company was the first to suggest the increase of coolies' wages.

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The coolies' wages return for the month of September 1920 shows a decrease in the amount earned but this was entirely due to the fact that the coolies were out on strike for 4 days during that month. Men's wages from March 1913 to March 1921 rose from Rs. 6-4-0 to Rs. 9-0-1; women's wages from Rs. 5-3-8 to Rs. 8-1-10; children's wages from Rs. 3-4-5 to Rs. 4-6-10. Wages for September 1913 were—men Rs. 10-13-11, 1921, Rs. 12-15-7; women's wages for September 1913 were Rs. 10-11-4 and in 1921 for the same period Rs. 12-10-11; children's wages for September 1913 were Rs. 5-12-4 and for the same period in 1921 Rs. 8-0-7. In March 1920, men earned Rs. 8-6-5, women Rs. 8-4-5 and children Rs. 3-7-8; in September 1920, men Rs. 10-10-11, women Rs. 12-7-8 and children Rs. 7-13-1. It shows that there is a distinct rise in 1920 as also in 1921 when higher rates of wages were given. Rice concessions are not included in the above figures. For September 1921 the rice concessions monthly came to Rs. 2-9-6 for men, Rs. 2-15-2 for women and Rs. 1-15-3 for children.

There are two fully equipped hospitals on the estate. We never experience any difficulty in getting coolies to attend.

Suitable latrines are attached to both hospitals. There is a cemetery which is used for all coolies dying on the estate, all castes having separate plots; also a church has been built for the Native Christians.

We have *bustee* lines with neatly trimmed hedges which are greatly appreciated by the coolies.

All coolie lines are regularly swept and kept clean by sweepers. There is a staff of sweepers for every set of lines and we have never found any difficulty in getting these people to do their duties.

Midday meals are given to children free of cost and in addition to this 10 maunds of rice are given free weekly to non-working children.

Four per cent. of the labour force are under 'Treatment' and A and B *chalan*; 75 in A and 75 in B *chalan* out of a working labour force of 2,000.

There are 398 *poorahs* of rice land divided among 380 coolies. Rent is charged at the rate of eight annas a *bigha*. High land is given rent free.

About 90 per cent. of the coolies take rice.

Non-rice takers get a monthly pay of Rs. 9 and Rs. 8, men and women, respectively, and rice takers receive Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 against a previous wage of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. About 1,000 blankets and 500 coats are sold annually.

Blankets are sold at Rs. 2-8-0 against a cost price of Rs. 3-10-0 and coats at Rs. 3-0-0 as against a cost price of Rs. 5-0-0.

Pregnant leave is given for six months during which time the woman is paid Rs. 5 monthly, out of which she can buy concession rice at Rs. 3 per maund.

Our cost of plucking last year was Rs. 5 per maund.

New coolies are never put under agreement until after two years' residence on the garden. After this period it is optional for the coolies to take an agreement. The majority of the coolies however come up for an agreement at the first opportunity. They are generally put under agreement at the expiry of the two years.

Q.—With regard to the strike and riot which took place at Dhoedaam, are you perfectly convinced in your mind that the coolies had no economic grievance?

A.—I certainly think they had none.

Tinsukia:

TINSUKIA, LAKHIMPUR, 14TH FEBRUARY 1922.

[SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.]

No. 102.—Mr. W. H. WOODWARD, *Superintendent of the Tingri Tea Company, Limited*:—

I have been 25 years in Tea; all the time in Lakhimpur, and 12 years with the Tingri Company. I give liberal leave and though my labour force is big I find it necessary to employ *bustee* labour. My coolies work on an average 3 or 4 hours a day for *hazira*. I have 600 acres of paddy land cultivated by the coolies at Rs. 3 a *poorah*. The understanding is that at least one coolie from each house holding land should work in the garden. The land is taken away only if the whole family refuse to work

and this has never been done. I have had no trouble in the garden but outsiders have entered the garden to ask the coolies to strike for higher wages. This was last year when I was at home. I never found out who they were, but they were not of the coolie class.

Between 1913 and 1920 my coolies had got large concessions and opportunities of earning more money. *Ticca* was always available during this time which was not the case before. Up to 1913 we had only a monthly rate—men Rs. 6, women Rs. 5, children Rs. 4 and small children Rs. 3. From 1913-14 we changed this and paid wages monthly or weekly according to the wish of the coolie.

The present monthly rate of wage is man Rs. 7, woman Rs. 6, child Rs. 5, small child Rs. 4. If the coolie is paid monthly it means a daily rate of man 4 annas 3 pies, woman 3 annas 9 pies, child 3 annas, small child 2 annas 5 pies. If the coolie is paid weekly the daily rate is man 5 annas, woman 4 and 1 annas, child 3 annas, small child 2 annas 6 pies. At first many preferred weekly payment but after a time they wanted monthly. At present 30 to 40 per cent. are paid weekly. If they are paid weekly they get a slightly higher wage and this is the case mostly with the women. Nevertheless 70 per cent. of the coolies prefer monthly pay, the chief reason being they have to go less often to collect their pay and they prefer a bigger lump sum. They must give a month's notice if they want a change in payment. Any suggestions I made were accepted by the Board. I consider that a decent living monthly wage is Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7-8 for a woman together with the usual concessions along with rice at a reduced rate when the market is high. I estimate that the cost of living per adult in 1913 was Rs. 4-13 and 1920 Rs. 7-13. This is assuming that rice does not cost more than Rs. 5 a maund. I think that, taking into account all the earnings and concessions, the average coolie gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort.

If a coolie avails himself of all *ticca* he can in a 7-hour day earn double what he is earning now. About 90 per cent. of my adults have paddy land. For a time in 1921 I dispensed with outside labour to economise. My own coolies in that year made about the same as before. At the end of a year there is a certain amount of outstanding advances against the coolies. The present rate of wage is in force from 1st January 1922. I proposed an increase in 1921 but the garden finances would not permit of it. I got up all the head people and explained why it was impossible to raise wages though neighbouring gardens had raised them. The coolies seemed to understand. With my 600 acres of paddy land I consider myself in a very favourable position. There is no Government land available. I recover the rice advances at the end of a month. I do not sell much in cash. The death-rate in 1921 was 1.88 per cent. in Hoogrijan Division and the birth-rate was 3.73. Fifty per cent. of my labour is housed in outside lines on our land but at considerable intervals; hence the low death-rate. In the last two or three years we have had *kutchra* latrines which we are making more durable. The fact remains that coolies do use the latrines; there is no compulsion.

It is easier to start latrines with a new labour force in new lines. I am very much in favour of latrines. They are expensive in my case because of the scattered labour force. We keep sweepers about one to every 20 compartments. The latrines have *kutchra* walls and with a *pucca* basement cost about Rs. 25 per compartment. The walls have to be repaired annually. *Junglis* form the larger portion of my labour force. In a new division started in 1919 nearly all the coolies use the latrines and there is practically no anaemia. I built the latrines, explained their use to the coolies and asked them to use them. There was no coercion. There is a good deal of liquor drunk. They largely brew their own drink. In a sense the consumption of liquor may be taken as an indication of well being. The nearest liquor shop is at Tinsukia 9 miles off.

The average earnings are more than the monthly wage. I raised wages because this benefited the coolies and as other gardens had raised wages I should have found it difficult not to do so. The task in *ticca* was also lowered this cold weather, e.g., pruning 8 bushes for one anna as against 10 before. The light hoe task is 20 to 35 *nals* against 30 to 45 in 1913. The task for the double hoe is 7 to 12 *nals* against 10 to 15. For *hazira* the light pruning task is 30 to 45 bushes; and this takes on the average from 9 A.M. to 1-30 P.M.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort. It was necessary to raise wages to meet the increased cost

Tinsukia. of living. A coolie could earn 10 annas a day if he did *ticca* in addition to the *hazira*. I consider that a rise of Re. 1 a month was necessary. Perhaps this was more with a view to benefit the coolie who was under average efficiency.

In the old Divisions we have still got hookworm. I am in favour of retaining Act XIII because the coolie likes it. In giving my figures for a decent living wage I do not take into account non-working children. My plucking task is 5 seers for a *hazira* as against 6 in 1913. With a reduced task for fine plucking in my garden it is possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice.

No. 103 — Mr. S. W. POWELL, *Manager of the Dekhari Tea Company, Deohall Division* :—

I have been 14 years in Tea, and since 1916 at Deohall. I have been all my time in Lakhimpur district. Since 1913 wages have been increased twice, once in 1918, once in 1921 and my Directors on both occasions agreed to the rise. In 1913 the wages were—men Rs 6, women Rs. 5 and children Rs. 3. In 1918 the daily *hazira* was—men 4 annas, women 4 annas and children 3 and 2 annas. In 1921 the daily wages were—men 5 annas, women 4 annas, children 4 and 3 annas and small children 2 annas. In 1918 the monthly payment was changed to a weekly one. The reason for the rise in 1918 was the increased cost of living. It was necessary. The same was the reason for the rise in 1921. Before 1918 *ticca* was always available throughout the year. Owing to the railway strike on the Assam-Bengal line our supplies ran short but the railway strike had nothing to do with raising our wages. Our garden is 8 miles from the Dibru-Sadiya Railway. The strike was in 1920 on the Dibru-Sadiya Railway. My garden is only served by the Assam-Bengal Railway. My coolies do not go to Tinsukia for their bazaar. I consider that a decent living wage is Rs. 8 for a man, Rs. 6-8 for a woman, assuming that they had to buy rice at bazaar rates. I give a comparative budget showing the difference in the cost of living for an adult per month in 1913 and 1921 :—

	1921.		1913.	
	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.
Rice—25 seers at Rs. 5 per maund ...	3	2 0	3	2 0
<i>Dal</i> —3 seers a month at 4 annas per seer ...	0	12 0	0	7 6
Salt—1½ seers a month at annas 2 a seer ...	0	3 0	0	1 6
Mustard oil—1 seer a month at annas 12 a seer ...	0	12 0	0	6 0
Spices—1 anna per week ...	0	4 0	0	1 0
Vegetables and fish—4 annas per week ...	1	0 0	0	8 0
Tobacco ...	0	4 0	0	2 0

CLOTHING PER YEAR—

Male.

	Rs.	a.	p.			
One coat	3	0	0			
Two pairs <i>dhotis</i> at	6	0	0			
One blanket at	2	0	0	...	...
One umbrella	2	0	0	...	...	1 1 3 0 9 0

Female.

Two jackets	2	8	0			
Two pairs <i>saris</i>	6	8	0			
One blanket	2	0	0			
One umbrella	2	0	0	...	...	1 1 3 0 9 0

I have 20 or 30 coolies past work who are badly off. They get a pension—men Re. 1, women 12 annas a week. In my answer to question 26 (b) the figure for labour and remuneration in 1919 includes a large sum paid as a bonus to recruiting sardars at Rs. 30 per adult coolie. My figures in that answer show the actual expenditure. In 1919 we had 500 six-month coolies from Ranchi. When the market rate

for rice is high we sell rice at Rs. 5 a maund to old and at Rs. 4 to new coolies. The present bazaar rate is Rs. 5-12 a maund. In my garden *ticca* is available throughout the whole year. I find that increased wages have resulted in less work being done by individual workers. Tinsukia.

On this garden we have always resorted to fine plucking. In 1921 the cost for pruning worked out to about Rs. 14 an acre. The task for light pruning is 50 to 63 bushes taking 3½ to 4 hours. I have 400 acres of paddy land held by 420 adults on a rent of 4 annas a *bigha*. Seventy-two of my adult males have cultivation. When I came to the garden in 1916 I wrote off Rs. 7,000 outstanding against the coolies to give them a fresh start. At the end of December 1921 the balance outstanding against my labour force was Rs. 291-10-6 and this includes the price of rice and everything else. I give pregnant leave for 8 months and more if necessary and during that time each pregnant woman gets 10 seers of rice fortnightly free, or 12 annas in cash a week. Newly recruited coolies are not put under agreement for the first 3 years; it has never been the custom. Recently I have had absconders enticed away to new gardens owned by Indians in the Moran district. I lost about 70 to Kenduguri. The garden sent a recruiter up to our bazaar to recruit them. I sent a European to get them back but the coolies were not allowed to leave the garden as the place was picketed by Nepali chowkidars. They were all Gonds recruited in 1919-20 and taken away after being 6 to 9 months with me. As regards Act XIII, I would be prepared to give a bonus at the end of a year's work, but the coolie would object. My short-term coolies were returned in May 1920 after being 6 months on the garden, having arrived in November 1919. They were only engaged for six months; they would not come for longer. I do not believe in the 6 months system. My object was to get a recruiting connection with Ranchi, but I did not succeed.

No. 104.—Mr. A. H. SOWERBY, *Manager of the Itakhooli Tea Company, Ltd.* :—

I have been 32 years in Tea, and since 1913 at Itakhooli. Most of my time I have served in the Doom-Dooma district. My working force is 1,900 and my garden population 2,600. The coolies are paid monthly—men Rs. 8 and Rs. 7 (Rs. 8 to bungalow servants), women Rs. 6, and children Rs. 5-4. In January 1921 I increased the wages of adults and children by 8 annas a month and in April 1921 by 8 annas more. I had intended to raise the wages in 1918 but the other gardens in the Tingri district kept me back and I did not wish to upset coolies of the other gardens. In 1918 I think coolies were earning enough but I wanted to raise their wages to approximate to those in the Doom Dooma district. Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I consider that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort. I consider Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman ample. In addition to the monthly wages, coolies can earn *ticca*; and opportunity for this is freely given. The average wages on the daily working strength were—men Rs. 10-6-8, women Rs. 10-8-10, children Rs. 7-4. This is for September 1921. In addition to this there was a loss on rice equivalent to 15 per cent. on the above wages. My rate for plucking is 5 to 6 seers for a woman and 4 seers for children, depending on the flush in the garden. This would take 3 to 4 hours to complete. My ordinary *ticca* rate is 2 pice a seer on week days and 3 pice on Sundays. *Ticca* is given after the task of 5 or 6 seers is over. My light hoeing task is 35 *nals* which would take 2 to 3 hours; deep hoeing 12 *nals* which would take 3 to 4 hours. My *ticca* light hoeing is 25 *nals* for 4 annas. My coolies hold 136 *bighas* of paddy land inside the grant and 46 *bighas* outside. The distribution is 1 to 2 *bighas* per head among 100 adults on a minimum rent of 4 annas a *bigha*. On the whole my coolies depend for their living on what they earn in the garden. I give 6 months pregnant leave; during that period half-pay, or free rice to those that wish it is given. My coolies take Act XII agreements for which they receive a bonus of—men Rs. 12 and women Rs. 10. I do not think I could get on without the Act. The effect of withdrawal would be to make the coolies dissatisfied. I think it would be a mistake to abolish it. The coolies look on it as a concession. I have not filed many cases against absconders under Act XIII. If the Act was abolished I would still continue to give the bonus. If other gardens not under the labour rules, try to pimp my labour, on abolition of the Act the coolies would have to be allowed to go. It is not possible or desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages as coolies will not understand this.

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I tried to convert the allowance of rice into an increased money wage but the coolies refused to accept it. If I had tried to enforce it I might have lost some of my labour. We have no control over the price of rice in the bazaar and there is not sufficient rice locally to supply my garden. The Marwaris import it, and I make the contracts with them. In the Doom-Dooma district those who do not take rice get higher wages. I offered the coolies a rise of Re. 1 a month if they would stop taking rice from the garden; but the coolies would not agree to this. I have a *kaya's* shop in the garden. I exercise no control over it. There is no condition that he should not sell above market rates. If the shopkeeper charges too much, the coolie has the alternative of going to the bazaar. Coolies sometimes complain against the shopkeeper.

Wages were not raised in Doom Dooma in 1918: there was only a talk about it. My Directors in 1918 wrote me that they were agreeable to raise wages on my garden if Doom-Dooma district did so. I deal direct with my Home Board. In recent years, owing to influenza my garden has been rather unhealthy. I have no difficulty in getting people to go to the hospital. I have started a latrine in connection with my hospital and if it is a success I will extend it to the lines. I have framed typical coolie budgets which I hand over to the Committee. There is no *ticca* for 4 months in the cold weather. I have tried it but people will not hear of it. At the end of 1918 or early in 1919 the Superintendent and Managers of the Doom-Dooma Circle met to discuss the question of increased wages. Mr. Wood, Superintendent of Doom-Dooma, was in favour of increasing wages then. I do not know what decision the Doom-Dooma Sub-Committee came to. My increase in January 1921 and April 1921 did not follow that of the increase in the Doom-Dooma district. I thought independently that the coolies should get more pay. I had no trouble in my garden in the end of 1920 or beginning of 1921 nor was there any trouble in the neighbouring gardens. I did not give a rise with a view to forestalling trouble. I do not know if the Indian Tea Association turned down the proposal of the Doom-Dooma Circle to raise wages. I am $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Tinsukia. The Dibru-Sadiya Railway strike had no effect on my garden. *Ticca* work in the cold weather is optional but the coolies are not willing to do it. My plucking rate in 1921 was Rs. 1.5 per maund of green leaf or Rs. 5.3 per maund of tea.

No. 105.—MR. W. J. A. MACDONALD, *Manager of the Zaloni Tea Estates, Limited*:—

I have been 15 years in Tea the last 12 of which I have spent in Lakhimpur, I was previously in Jorhat district. I have been on my present garden since 1913.

I employ outside labour as I give unlimited leave. Between 1917-1921 there have been 150 deaths and 63 births. Influenza is partly responsible for the large death-rate. In the Zaloni garden some of the men get Rs. 7 and the women Rs. 6 but there are only a few of those left; the others get Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Since 1913 the rate of wages has not increased but the labour force has been given smaller tasks and more *ticca*. I consider that a decent living wage is Rs. 7-8 for a man and Rs. 6-8 for a woman if rice does not rise above Rs. 5 a maund. I should say that whereas a coolie in 1913 could live on Rs. 4-12, he would have required Rs. 7 in 1920. In the cold weather of 1920 there was no *ticca* as I had to work with a reduced budget, but now the coolies can earn as much *ticca* as they like. It takes an average coolie 4 to 5 minutes to do light pruning on a bush. If the task is 50 bushes this would take about 4 hours but the best coolies would take much less. I have not much paddy land in the garden but there is much outside and there is plenty of waste land still available. About 75 per cent. of the adult males have got cultivation.

I find no difficulty in getting coolies to go into hospital. I have no latrines in the lines. I do not stock clothing or blankets but sick coolies get blankets free. Last year I sold paddy to the coolies at an average of Rs. 3 a maund. I make forward contracts. This year the cost will be less, probably Rs. 2-8. Most of my coolies are not under agreement but when they want money they come for agreements. I have many agreement coolies living in the village *bustee*. It would depend on circumstances as to whether I would give the bonus if there was no agreement. I have practically no absconders. If the Act was abolished and if I continued to give a bonus to those who at present take agreements the others who are the majority might be discontented.

In 1922 owing to the reduced price of paddy—probably Rs. 2-8 a maund—the cost of living of the coolie will be less; the price of cloth is coming down; so the position of the coolie is at present improving. I think the coolie would work just as much if the cost of living comes down a bit. There is not much drinking in my garden but a good deal of opium is consumed and I do not think there is any tendency for this to decrease. Pruning is of different kinds—light, heavy and medium. I have tested the time that it takes to do light pruning—for an average coolie about 4 minutes a bush. I have some very good men who can do *hazira* and one *ticca* in 5 hours. A good many of my coolies take opium. Some confirmed opium-eaters say that it costs them 4 to 5 rupees a month to keep them in opium. That might be about 3 *tolas* at about Re. 1-8 a *tola*. Many of the coolies make their own liquor. The nearest liquor shop is 15 miles off but the opium shop at Bordubi Road is much nearer. There has been no interference by agitators with my coolies. I have not altered the rates of wages. I do not charge rent for my grant land. I consider the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

Tinsukia.

SONARI, SIBSAGAR, 16TH FEBRUARY 1922.

(SERJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT).

No. 106.—DR. EUDO S. SMYTHE, M.D., B.Ch., B.A.O., L.M., *Medical Officer, Singlo Tea Company, Lukwah Tea Company, etc.—*

Sonari.

I have been connected with Tea for nearly 22 years. I have been 20 years in the Sibsagar district. I am in charge of seven gardens altogether—four of the Singlo Company and the rest belonging to the Lukwah Company and Nahorhabi Tea Estate.

There are no latrines, except those attached to one or two hospitals.

President :—Q.—Do you think latrines are desirable?

A.—Certainly, if you can get the coolies to use them.

Q.—Have they never been tried here?

A.—Not in this district.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—Do you consider the district a healthy one?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was it always so?

A.—There have been certain years when it has not been so healthy as at present for instance.

Q.—Has there been continual improvement?

A.—I think so.

The great majority of the coolies are infected with hookworm.

Q.—I take it that it has been constantly seen to?

A.—Yes. We have musters every quarter and we pick out all the anæmics and place them under treatment.

Malaria is common but not very bad. I should not call this a very malarious district. We get outbreaks of cholera now and then.

I am satisfied with the water-supply. Most of the lines are built in block form by the garden.

Q.—Where you have a large population in a small area, don't you think it advisable to have latrines?

A.—I certainly think it is advisable, but the great difficulty is to get the coolies to use them. Another difficulty is the supply of sweepers. It is all a question of expense and water-supply. In this district we have got no wells at all. We have to use nothing but tanks. Wells are not practicable here; you dig as much as you like and you will simply get blue clay.

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Q.—Where there are no latrines is there not the difficulty of the ground becoming infected although you treat a large number of cases?

A.—Certainly, and it all depends on the rainfall. When you continually get rain and very little sunshine there is an increase of water sores and anæmia.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—Do you think the physical condition of the coolies suggests that they are not earning sufficient to keep them in reasonable health and comfort?

A.—No.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—Do you think coolies are as well clothed now as they were in 1913?

A.—Possibly not, because the price of cloth has gone up.

Q.—It may be that they have not got enough money to buy sufficient cloth?

A.—Possibly, they may not have as many changes of clothes as formerly.

I have not seen any coolies in rags or anything of that sort.

No. 107.—Mr. A. D. MACFARLANE, *Manager of Borbam Tea Estate.*

I have been 40 years in Tea. I have been in Nowgong and Dibrugarh. I have been 21 years in Sibsagar.

I employ a certain number of *faltu* labourers. I give agreements to coolies who do not live in the lines.

I had a strike on my garden about July 1921 which lasted for two days only. The coolies demanded an increase of pay: they did not say how much they wanted. The wages for men are Rs. 6-8, for women Rs. 5 and Rs. 4, Rs. 3 and Rs. 2 for children according to the age of the child. The rates for men and women have been in force for 20 years.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—In answer to question No. 25 you said that since 1913 prices have gone up from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. And if the wages remained the same, how did you try to better the coolie's condition in view of the rise in prices?

A.—We helped them by reducing the tasks.

Q.—Now take plucking for example: you resorted to fine plucking in 1921. Of course you gave a lower task but you say here in your answer that a coolie could not do a task of fine plucking in the same time as coarse plucking. So far as plucking is concerned, I suppose a coolie did not and could not make the same money.

A.—Yes, it took a little longer to earn the same money. I have altered nothing: everything is the same.

Q.—I do not quite see how the coolie benefited by the reduced task in fine plucking?

A.—He did not benefit.

Q.—As regards plucking, you mean to say that the coolie did not make any more?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did the coolie make more in hoeing?

A.—He did just as much as usual.

Coolies do not want to do 'doubles'. I have tried to make them do 40 *nals* and to pay them for the extra 10, but they do not like it.

Q.—In spite of the fact that living has increased 50 to 75 per cent., I do not see how the coolie got any increase in earnings to meet the high cost of living?

A.—You must remember that by plucking they earned a tremendous amount. In 1921 they certainly earned enough to go on with. They could earn more if they liked to.

Q.—So if the coolie did not earn more, did he reduce his standard of living?

A.—Not much except in the way of cigarettes.

Q.—Do you think he is now as well clothed as he was then?

A.—Speaking for my own coolies, I think they are.

Q.—You say 11.3 per cent. of the adult male coolies have land so that a good many have not got land?

A.—They have got land outside the grant.

Q.—Have you any idea as to how many coolies have not got land either inside or somewhat outside the grant?

A.—I am afraid I do not know.

Q.—How long have the coolies held this land?

A.—For several years: in fact every old coolie on the garden has land one way or the other. My garden is an old established garden.

I sell rice at a fixed rate. The rate for rice was Rs. 5 a maund and paddy Rs. 3 but now paddy is down to Rs. 2-8 and we are selling it at that rate. We make no profit. We have been supplying rice at concession rates ever since I have been at Borbham.

Q.—Well here we have the facts, viz., that you have given this rice concession for many years, coolies have been holding land for many years, tasks have not been reduced and you have not increased the rate of wages, so that I do not quite see how the coolies have been able to maintain the same standard of livelihood?

A.—They do not now earn quite as much as they used to, but they earn just sufficient for their needs.

Most of the coolies are under contract. I still put them under agreement for 3 years if they want it; no force is used. We give advances of Rs. 36 and Rs. 30 for 3-year agreements. I have seen the new Act XIII and I am aware of the conditions as laid down therein. The arrangement whereby I give a coolie a 3-year agreement is mutual. I have never filed a suit against a coolie in all my life and no coolie has filed a suit against me.

The cost per maund of manufactured tea was about Rs. 5. The cost of hoeing has not gone up during the last 7 years. The cost of plucking went up in good years when I had a lot of leaf. The case of pruning is the same. My tasks are always the same. Tasks are much easier now.

I give pregnant leave for 6 months on half-pay, or rice or paddy as an equivalent. We supply clothing and blankets to children and weakly and sick coolies. Last year I got up blankets for the coolies. The cost price worked out to Rs. 5 a blanket and I told the coolies that they could pay me back in small instalments, but they returned the blankets to me. I had eventually to write off the cost of the blankets as 'paid.' As regards clothing, a poor woman with a lot of children certainly does need clothes.

Q.—You say "It is now becoming customary to give opportunities of earning *ticca* in the cold weather." Was that not the case before?

A.—They could earn *ticca* if they liked. With reduced rates in pruning we give it to them.

Q.—Have you got many advances outstanding for rice?

A.—Just for the current months, of course some coolies are behindhand to a greater extent.

Major Fox:—Q.—With regard to the figure about the cost of living which is said to be 50 to 75 per cent., have you worked out any details by which you came to that conclusion?

A.—Some of the gentlemen did. That figure was arrived at in consultation with other planters in the district.

Q.—Would it be fair to say that this figure represents the rise in the cost of living in 1920?

A.—It is very much lower now.

Q.—Would it be fair to say that it has gone down to a figure very much approximating 1913?

A.—Not quite, but the price of rice is certainly lower.

Dr. Williams:—Q.—What is the condition of the coolie to-day as compared with 40 years ago?

A.—Most excellent. He is looked after more than ever he was. Better houses are given, better medical attention, better water-supply—everything.

Q.—Is the health of the coolies better now than it was before?

A.—Very much so. It was quite a usual thing in the old days to have cholera. I lost as many as 60 coolies in 36 hours from cholera in those days. Now there is never anything of that sort except sporadic cases. The water-supply is good now. We have a few cases of dysentery. There is malaria also. We have no latrines. We tried them once with the result that we lost a good many coolies. For one thing we could not get sweepers to clean them, and for another, coolies would not go there. So they just cleared out altogether. This occurred about 30 years ago at Surma.

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Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—What was the price of rice in 1913?

A.—I could not tell you without looking at the books.

Q.—What was the price in 1920?

A.—I think we were paying as much as Rs. 4-8 per maund.

Q.—Could you do without agreements?

A.—I would not care to try it.

Q.—There are plenty of coolies who are not under agreement. Why would you not try it?

A.—Other planters can try it, but I shall not.

Q.—You said just now that you have been supplying blankets and clothing free of cost. I suppose that was from Calcutta and besides that, supplies are got from the *kayas*. How much have you had to pay for the latter?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—You were pleased to say just now that if a coolie has got a family and the children require clothing you give it. Does it mean that they cannot themselves purchase it?

A.—Very likely not. If the husband is not strong or the wife, the children all get food and clothing free. Children who cannot be fed by the parents are fed at the hospital. I have got 40 children in the hospital; they have been kept there ever since 1918.

Q.—Besides the orphan children, how many other children are there who are fed at the hospital?

A.—I do not know.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—You say Rs. 6 for a man and Rs. 5 for a woman is a decent living wage, sufficient to keep them in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little. Is that assuming there is no cultivation, or do they need cultivation in addition?

A.—No, they can live comfortably on that sum. There are sardars and syces who do not want their wives to work and although they only earn Rs. 6 to Rs. 10 they manage on it independent of any *ticca* earnings.

Mr. Das:—Q.—You do not think it necessary that wages should be raised?

A.—Certainly not at present. It is ample. Besides their *haziras*, they can do as much *ticca* as they like.

No. 108:—*Mr. J. S. ELLIOT, Manager, Towkok Division, Assam Company.*

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Would you say that your garden is under-staffed?

A.—I could do with some more. My garden has never been healthy owing to its geographical situation. It is right up under the hills and there is a lot of malaria. Anæmia now is under 5 per cent. I have both lines as well as *bustees*. I have got three sets of *bustee* lines and two sets just the ordinary kind. The *bustees* naturally contain healthier coolies for the reason that those coolies are acclimatised. We have no latrine system, nor have I any experience in that direction. The coolie who suffers from anæmia is not, in my opinion, able to earn as much as a healthy coolie. Every Monday morning I have a muster of *lettra* (i.e., weakly) coolies and I and the doctor babu go and inspect the coolies. Those who are found to have improved from anæmia are given hard work and those who are still anæmic continue on light work and get full pay.

I have had no strikes on my garden. During the last week however we have heard of agitation in the immediate vicinity of the *bustees* alongside us. So far the agitators have not been trying to get at my coolies. Formerly I was paying my coolies on a monthly basis of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women. I changed it to the unit system towards the end of 1920, for the simple reason that we had heard so many people speaking favourably of the unit system. They said that payment was in exact proportion to the amount of work done and the coolies understood what they were receiving and that coolies would and could earn more, knowing that every unit

meant so much more money. The garden would also benefit to the extent of getting more work done. So far I have been disappointed with the system because I find that the coolies are not doing as much work as they used to do. The only explanation I can offer is that the coolies do not require more money. The money is there for them, and I keep urging them but they do not want to earn more. They say 'We earn 4 annas, why should we earn more?' Coolies do 3 *nala* for an anna but I cannot get them to do 15 *nala* for 5 annas. I always got 15 *nala* before and now I am only getting up to 12 *nala*. Generally they do not want to do more than 4 annas work. Sonari.

The increase in the cost of living between 1913 and 1920 is somewhere between 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. It is a rough estimate formed in consultation with planters. I consider Rs. 6 for a man and Rs. 5 for a woman a decent living wage with a possibility of saving a little. I know from experience that it is enough even without the possession of cultivation. My motor boy who has a wife and a child earns Rs. 8 a month. He gets no *ticca* earnings; he may get a few 'tips' whenever he drives anybody. He lives quite comfortably on that sum. His wife, a strong coolie woman, previously worked, but now does no work. In 1913 I was going round the garden one day and I casually met an old Santali and I asked him what it cost him to live. He said, Rs. 4, and then he said 'I have a wife and child, so it would cost Rs. 4-12.' I have got 412 acres of paddy land inside and outside the garden and about 400 coolies cultivate that land. I charge rent at 10 annas a *bigha*. My coolies hold about 250 acres of land inside the garden grant, and about 162 acres outside. We had fine plucking last year. The cost per maund of manufactured tea was Rs. 5. We are selling rice just now at Rs. 5 a maund. In 1921 we were charging more during the rains. We were giving the coolies 7 seers for the rupee as they were earning more money from *ticca*. I have been giving this rice concession for a number of years. We give agreements for 3 years. I believe under the new Act XII coolies are not supposed to be put under agreement for more than one year at a time. But I give my coolies agreements for 3 years, because they want a big sum as bonus money. The coolie probably wants to buy cattle and needs a lump sum of money. The Act has a moral effect on the coolie, and I am in favour of its retention.

I have not run any cases for the last 5 years. In case the Act was abolished I would not continue to give the bonus freely. I would limit it to deserving coolies. At the same time you have got to consider your proprietors and share-holders and they would surely say, 'Why do you give this money without any security?' Of course if a coolie had cultivation on the garden that would be a certain amount of security.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—Would you say that this is a cheap district for food-stuffs?

A.—Comparatively.

Q.—Is there considerable inequality of rates for rice ruling in different parts?

A.—I don't think so.

Q.—I was told in an Indian garden yesterday that rice could be purchased just now on the basis of 12 seers per rupee?

A.—That would only be by coolies going into the villages to get it. In the bazaar they get it at 8 seers.

Q.—That is a fairly high premium for labour to pay if they have to go into the bazaar. Is there any possibility of negotiating direct transactions?

A.—Yes, but I have never heard of coolies getting rice as cheap as 12 seers to the rupee.

Q.—That garden has a large area with a great deal of paddy so that this emphasises the fact that a great deal depends on the condition of different gardens.

Conditions of food supplies have a very important influence in enabling the coolie to meet the cost of living adequately. So that even within the same district it is possible to find gardens so differently situated as to require to differentiate between what applies to one garden and another?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you say, comparing the coolies as you see them at the present time, that they look as healthy and well-fed as they ever looked before?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are they quite as well clothed as they used to be?

A.—In my opinion they look well-clothed.

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Q.—Do they seem to be profuse in ornaments ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Flocks and herds have not decreased in number recently ?

A.—On the other hand they have done very well in this district.

Q.—Would you regard the possession of these things as evidence of well-being ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are clearly of opinion that Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 does provide for men and women a decent living wage which would enable them to live in comfort, and what they may earn in addition to that is something that adds to their well-being, e.g., agreement bonus and *ticca* ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The maintenance of children is not included in the Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 just mentioned ?

A.—Yes, it is sufficient for a family, and besides as encouragement, I give a bonus of Rs. 3 for all children reaching a year, a further Rs. 2 at the end of the second year, and Re. 1 at the end of the third year—total Rs. 6 for all children reaching the age of 3 years. Pregnant women are given 2 annas a day. If children have nothing to live on we always feed them. We have a hotel system. There is no hunger. I have 7 *kayas*' shops and 4 Muhammadan shops. I believe they lend money to the coolies sometimes.

We recruited over 300 coolies last year. Recruits are always medically examined in the Assam Company. I cannot say whether the Company is satisfied with the examination. I personally am dissatisfied with the age classification of the individuals. Otherwise, I think we get a good class of coolies. We give new coolies full pay, also rice and pice weekly, until they are settled, and then they go on just as the others. It takes about 6 months for a new coolie to settle down. On the average new coolies do not take up cultivation during the first 3 years of their stay. I give rice to all those who come for it. Very few however take it. At present I am selling rice at 8 seers—same as the bazaar price. I think about 50 children are fed in the hotel. I could not tell offhand how many coolies were supplied with clothing last year and the year before, but I think the number was not large. If I see a coolie going about in bad clothes, I give him a letter to the hospital and he is supplied with new clothing.

Q.—Was he going about in bad clothes because he was not able to purchase his own clothes ?

A.—Sometimes coolies have children and are unable to supply themselves with it; these are mostly widows with young children.

Q.—Do you think if the agreement system were abolished coolies would abscond ?

A.—Coolies as a rule would not abscond; but there might be a malcontent or two who would take the agreement money on one garden and then move on to another garden and do the same. We purchase rice at wholesale rates and sell it at concession rates. Even if cheaper rice were to be had from the *bustees*, coolies would not care to get it especially in the rains when they find it very difficult to get in their supplies. We import rice from Calcutta. About 5 per cent. of the coolies are indebted to the *kayas*.

We have more leaf than there are labourers to pluck it.

No. 109.—MR. T. H. KNOLLES, *Manager, Borhat Tea Estate, Borhat Tea Company, Limited.*

I have been in Borhat since 1908; before that I was in Golaghat from 1904.

Mr. Dawson :—I consider Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 a decent living wage. I think a man earning Rs. 6 in cash is well off. We have no rice deductions. We sell rice at the concession rate of Rs. 5 a maund to old coolies, or paddy Rs. 3 per maund, and paddy at Rs. 2-8 to new coolies and rice Rs. 3-2 to new coolies. I do not consider the system of rice advances is a good one. Men are paid 4 annas a day, i.e., Rs. 6-8 for 26 working days. We increased wages from Rs. 6 to Rs. 6-8 because we considered it necessary to do so as things became expensive during the war and also because we thought that the system of running the accounts would be facilitated and it would be easier for the coolie to see what he was getting.

Q.—Do you think the coolie is as well clothed now as he was before the war?

A.—No. I don't think he has so many changes of clothing. But then we have all felt it ourselves. I certainly would like to see a coolie have more clothes.

The plucking task has been reduced. The unit system I think does tend to produce indifferent work. We however do not work on the unit system. I do not intend adopting that system because it is rather difficult to supervise. I prefer the idea of expressing the *hazira* as a unit, *viz.*, in annas (if possible) in preference to so many rupees per month in which the rate per day changes according to the number of working days in the month. In dealing with $\frac{1}{2}$ annas, as say, Re. 0-4-6 per day, then the Rs. 7 rate per month is generally used. I favour the *hazira* system and the giving of plenty of *ticca* (the latter at the ordinary rates). Under this system, and if found advisable or necessary, under local conditions, the *hazi a* should be raised, but not the *ticca*. I would like to raise my wages to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 because world conditions point to more pay. Personally I think Rs. 7 for men and Rs. 6 for women would be a decent living wage. I think the men, however, pretty well off and it is the wages of the women I consider should be raised. The main reason for this is that women's clothing is more expensive. It is due largely to the price of clothing that I make the suggestion to raise the wages.

Q.—Supposing a man had a family consisting of his wife and 2 non-working children, in that case would Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 cover the lot?

A.—He would probably have to do a little more *ticca* work. It would also depend a good deal on whether he has any land and whether rice concessions are given him. But supposing that he had no cultivation but was given a rice concession, even then I consider that he would require a little more than Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. He could, however, do a little more *ticca* work to keep the family going. The woman would earn a good deal more than Rs. 5 when out plucking; as a matter of fact I don't think Rs. 5 would be enough for a woman in this instance; she would have to do a little more work unless the husband earned good *ticca* instead.

Agreements are given for one year only and the advances not recovered, but many coolies would like two-year ones.

Q.—Supposing Act XIII were abolished, would you still be inclined to give the bonus to a good working coolie?

A.—Our agreements up here are pretty high—Rs. 12 and Rs. 10—which works out roughly in a calendar year to one rupee a month. If you did away with the Act, I think the coolie would be disappointed. When the Government reduced the term to one year, the coolies asked why they should not be given an agreement for two years if they wanted it. I would not be prepared to continue the bonus if the Act was abolished. The Act has a certain moral effect on the coolies, and after all, only a very small number of law-breakers would be affected by it.

From the coolie point of view, I consider it undesirable that the various concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages; but from the garden point of view it might be desirable. This would be most difficult to arrange satisfactorily.

Q.—You have not considered the possibility of raising wages and giving no paddy or rice?

A.—I have, but that is a very difficult problem. You cannot always be chopping and changing prices according as the market fluctuates. If there is a big local supply of food-stuffs in the bazaar all the year you could stop giving paddy or rice, but if not, then arrangements must be made and the price fixed. The coolie then knows how he is situated. The price of rice and paddy fluctuates and you have got to take that into account. Concession rice is being sold to the coolies since the time I have been in Borhat, *i.e.*, from 1908. The rate for old coolies now is Rs. 3 for paddy and Rs. 5 for rice. New coolies are given paddy at Rs. 2-8 and rice at Rs. 3-2 a maund. Paddy is almost entirely given on this estate as the coolies prefer it for they can make either *usna* or *arroa* rice out of it, which they have been accustomed to eat. We do a lot of recruiting. We spent Rs. 78,004-6-9 on recruiting during the last 5 years. The labour force is the same number as in 1917. In November 1918 we lost 80 working coolies and 33 others from influenza.

We spent on recruiting in—

						Rs.	s.	p.
1917	...	...	...	...	...	6,911	2	2
1918	...	...	...	...	...	1,226	1	2
1919	...	...	...	...	...	38,565	6	0
1920	...	...	...	...	...	26,453	4	3
1921	...	...	...	...	...	4,843	8	6

Sonari.

The labour force in 1917 was 1124; on 31st December 1921, the labour force was 1,106. We have got a large amount of land and our coolies are very well off for rice and paddy. Coolies retire into the *bustees* and sell paddy. During the last 5 years I have lost about 5 per cent. of my coolies by their having settled down on Government land outside the garden. We have got only about 10 to 17 outside coolies. I think the revenue on Government land is 9 annas per *bigha* and one anna in the rupee for local rates. There is a big draw to Government land as the rates are low and there is a lot of land awaiting development not far from the garden.

If a coolie cultivates four *bighas* equal to one *poorah* of land he will get sufficient paddy for himself and his wife for a year. There were 46 deaths in 1921 as against 60 births. The garden is very healthy and popular. The births and deaths from 1916 to 1921 were :—

Year.	Births.	Deaths.
1916	44	41 (Excluding cholera.)
1917	57	33
1918	55	27
1919	48	98 Influenza.
1920	40	59
1921	60	49

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—The development of *bustees* in the vicinity tends to increase the supply of food-stuffs ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And that, I presume, makes the cost of living reasonably low in your district ?

A.—It is low at this time of the year but it is going up gradually because *kayas* are getting into the way of buying and collecting all the paddy. Before, all the rice used to come up from Calcutta, but now there are rice-mills in the district and *kayas* go round collecting paddy with the result that prices are going up. We can purchase paddy from the cultivators direct but that is very difficult and unsatisfactory because it does not lend itself to check, and further there is the prospect of the paddy becoming spoilt; we find it better to buy it from the *kayas* and bring it in. It is a sort of contract which is given to the *kayas*.

Q.—Is there no way of modifying the system ?

The Government carry on agricultural banks, to assist the ryots and to make them independent because they have got to pay high rates of interest. Do you think a co-operative society might assist the cultivator to get out of the hands of the *kaya* ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the tendency of prices since 1920 is to decrease ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The coolies have to pay much more in the local bazaars for their paddy than they would have to pay if they got it from you ? The keeping of garden stock helps to control prices ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But the purpose of the garden in altering the rates is partly to check the market rate and prevent coolies from having to pay outrageous rates ?

A.—Yes, that is certainly one of the objects. If the prices go up abnormally high in the markets, the coolies can always resort to the garden for their supplies. We stock very little rice, but a good deal of paddy. We import a little *arrou* rice from Chittagong and Calcutta. In 1920 we lost Rs. 8,907 on rice. *Kayas* shops are situated within the garden land. I have a lease with them. They have to pay rental for their houses. There are no conditions stated in the lease as regards prices, but if I am displeased with them I can give 3 months' notice.

I have an arrangement with the *kaya* to conform to the official standard of prices prevailing at Dibrugarh plus an allowance for the cost of getting things from there to the garden. The difficulty is to get the official standard. It was printed at one time in the "*Times of Assam*"; then it stopped over some disagreement I understand. Later, occasionally, it has been printed again. My doctor babu goes to the bazaars occasionally to enquire about prices. We are 21 miles from Sonari and there is not much scope for competition. Our geographical situation is unfavourable.

Mr. Withers :—*Q.*—Do you think that an increase of wages would have any effect on recruiting? Sonari.

A.—I think so.

We have recruits medically examined. Medical examination is certainly a difficulty especially in the case of women who object to being examined. We give agreements to new coolies—Rs. 5 for each year up to 3 years. We give it to them as soon as they come in order to set them up and avoid advances. The money is not deducted. We give loans from time to time; they are deducted by easy instalments.

I do not consider that agreements hold back the coolies for one moment. A coolie may take an advance to-day and abscond to-morrow. There is no knowing, but the average coolie always discharges his obligation. I consider the Act has a sort of moral effect on the coolie, but a good coolie does not think about it.

The price of rice is Rs. 5-4 at present and there is every possibility of its rising; it depends a great deal on all-India prices.

Unless you can replace Act XIII by some other equivalent I am in favour of its retention. If you take away the bonus money from a coolie straightway, he would not understand the reason. It does not concern me whether the Act is retained or not, except as regards a few malcontents, but from the coolie's own point of view, I think it is necessary.

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NAZIRA, SIBSAGAR, 17TH FEBRUARY 1922.

(SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA ABSENT.)

No. 110 —*DR. JOHN R. MACNAMARA, F.R.C.S., Principal Medical Officer, Assam Company,*

I have been in Assam 23 years now. I have been 19 years in the Assam Company. Nazira.

I am Principal Medical Officer in charge of the Assam Company's gardens. There is one European doctor in charge at Sonari and another at Moran.

Q.—Are you in favour of the barrack system of lines or the village system?

A.—If you can separate the coolies and let them go out, they can do better, but it must take time for a new coolie to attain that standard. But if they are looked after in the lines they do well.

We have got no latrines. We have never yet tried them though latrines have been discussed a good deal. Major McCombie Young was here and I showed him round the place and he told me that there was no use for small privies and that the septic tank was desirable. The trench system is adopted in Java, and it might be adopted with advantage here. But then the fly question comes up. I believe coolies are getting accustomed to use such latrines. We have 14 gardens and we cannot afford the money to provide septic tanks for so many gardens.

Q.—Do you think if latrines were provided it would have any effect on *anchylostomiasis*?

A.—It would; we could keep the jungle round about clear and that would prevent infection. For instance infection from the soil could be prevented. We treat thousands of cases of *anchylostomiasis* but fortunately we do not get it up to a very bad stage though there is a good deal of it.

Q.—If the ground is infected you have a sort of vicious circle?

A.—Yes, *anchylostomiasis* impairs the efficiency of the labour to a certain extent, but I don't think on our gardens here it does interfere with labour very much.

Q.—We were told in Cachar by a Medical Officer that *anchylostomiasis* diminishes the efficiency of the labour force by at least 50 per cent.

A.—Yes, in certain cases I believe that is the effect.

New coolies are medically examined before they leave the recruiting district, but *cutti* coolies are not examined.

Sardari coolies are segregated. We get both healthy and unhealthy coolies from the recruiting districts. Sardars bring up sometimes a very poor class of coolies and sometimes a good class of coolies. It depends what locality they are recruited from.

Nazira,

The majority of the coolies are not highly infected with disease, but generally their health improves up here and the incidence of disease diminishes as time rolls on. We had a few cases of cholera last year. The water-supply is excellent. I would say that the medical arrangements are gradually improving and this is certainly due both to the Medical Officers and the energies of Managers. We are never short of medicines. Hospital accommodation is improving now. I am quite satisfied with the attention paid to medical questions.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—There seems to be a difference of opinion about the use of latrines and as to the practicability of introducing them. Do you think any good purpose might be served by having a conference of tea-garden Medical Officers on the subject of hookworm with a view to making practical recommendations?

A.—Yes, it would be a very good thing. At the same time you must have the co-operation of labour in a matter of this kind.

On our own gardens one septic tank would not do. The gardens are scattered and we would require 4 or 5 of them so that the cost would be prohibitive. We would require 5 gallons of water per head in a day for the use of the septic tank. We would require a more adequate water-supply than is usually available. It is certainly a matter calling for careful consideration so that the right kind of system may be adopted with due regard to the cost.

Q.—Do you think that some advantage might result through Medical Officers conferring on such matters from time to time?

A.—I think so. I agree that it would be of advantage if Medical Officers met together and considered questions of public health in a sort of organized conference. Government could probably supply the services of an expert if they are interested in improving the health of the gardens. I also agree that such an idea might be suggested for consideration.

Q.—Do you know that a coolie gets sufficient to keep him in comfort?

A.—I do not think he is over-worked at all events.

On the whole, the birth-rate and death-rate are very nearly on a level.

We have experienced no difficulty in getting indoor patients into hospital. A good deal certainly depends on the popularity of the doctor babu. New coolies before coming up undergo a medical examination. I have been satisfied with the medical examination which takes place in the recruiting district. But nowadays I do not see much of the newly recruited coolie because he goes straight on to the garden. *Arcutti* coolies have always been kept here for some days and I always inspected them before sending them to the gardens. If I found any of them unfit I would send them back.

Q.—Would you say that a coolie is as well provided with clothing now as he was 7 or 10 years ago?

A.—At one time, I was just thinking he was not, but that is a point on which I would not like to offer an opinion. My personal opinion, however, is that I do not think he looks very well clothed.

Pregnant leave is given. Women are brought up before me and I am very liberal as regards granting them pregnant leave. I generally grant them a couple of months leave before childbirth and they are given full pay for the period. I should think that pregnant leave is the most liberal concession on the gardens. We used to give a bonus on the birth of a child but we have now dropped that system. The rule was to give the bonus to healthy children when produced for inspection after a certain time and the result was that the really miserable children were neglected while the children who looked quite well were being given the bonus. I have adopted the system of *chalans* on some gardens in the case of weakly coolies, but we do not require it very much here as there is not much anæmia.

A 33 per cent. increase of wages was given to the coolies of the Assam Company in 1920. Previously coolies were getting Rs. 6 and Rs. 5; they now get Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman. This does not include *tiacca*. Most gardens now work on the "unit system" and a coolie gets paid for the work he actually does each day and there is no doubt that he makes more money than he ever did before.

No. 111.—Mr. W. MAXWELL, *General Manager of the Assam Company* :—

Nazra.

I have been connected with the Assam Company for the last 30 years. I have been Superintendent for six years now.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

We work on the unit system which is adopted throughout the district. In hoeing we give three *nals* for one anna and in plucking two pice for one unit of roughly speaking a seer. We pay coolies fortnightly. We changed the system in January 1921. Before that women were earning three annas and men roughly four annas. We now pay five and four annas for men and women; it is the rate adopted on all the Assam Company's gardens. The unit system affords coolies facilities of earning more during the cold weather, and of thereby equalising pay throughout the year. They make more money now than they used to on the old system, but the tendency is to work shorter hours. The unit system has resulted in a decrease of work but at the same time we have lowered the task. When first I came to the Company, 15 or 20 years ago, coolies were doing 20 *nals* deep hoeing for four annas. Now they get six and a half annas for the same amount of work. As regards plucking we used to give eight seers for a task and anything over that was considered as *tscca* for which we paid one and a half pice a seer. We now give two pice a seer for all leaf plucked. A coolie now cannot earn as much by fine plucking in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice. With regard to weighing leaf, we have baskets of a standard size. All our leaf works out to a unit of four maunds which makes one maund of tea. Sometimes we lose, sometimes we make on it. In wet weather we are more likely to lose; in dry weather we may gain. On the average we get for 4 maunds of leaf 1 maund of finished tea. Before the unit system was introduced coolies could not do more than the ordinary *hazira* in the cold weather. They were unable to do any *tscca* work in the cold weather.

The physique of the newly recruited coolies is not quite so good as ten years ago. We used to recruit coolies from the *jungle* areas before, but now we cannot do it.

President :—Q.—Do you think the raising of the monthly wage would be any inducement in getting a superior stamp of coolie?

A.—I don't think so. Most of my coolies are under Act XIII. I give a bonus at the rate of Rs. 12 for one year. We still give three-year agreements. Coolies come and ask for agreements and we give them for whatever period they want. We give a commission of one rupee to sardars who bring coolies for agreements. Coolies would not like the Act abolished. We have never taken coolies to court. As a matter of fact I consider the Act to be no agreement really; it is just a sort of system.

Q.—If the Act was repealed, would you still continue the bonus?

A.—That would have to be considered. I don't think I would give it. I am in favour of retaining the Act.

I consider that a single man would require probably Rs. 6 a month to enable him to live in comfort. A family would probably live on less, perhaps Rs. 5 on the average per head. That must however depend entirely on the price of paddy. As a rule coolies buy their own paddy.

Mr. Withers :—Q.—Under the unit system how do you pay garden sardars. Do they get a fixed wage?

A.—We pay them about Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 a month according to ability.

All orphans are fed by the garden and given clothing. Generally blankets are supplied to new coolies during their first year on the garden at cost price. The coolie would not like Act XIII to be abolished for the simple reason that he gets a lump sum of money as a bonus.

Q.—But you could make a special contract and give him an advance?

A.—We do not give advances except in the way of rice and paddy.

Rice is sold at the concession rate of Rs. 5 a maund all the year round. Coolies pay cash for this rice. We also give rice to those who are ill. This year we have had a very strong non-co operation movement and the method of the agitators has been to induce villagers to supply rice to the coolie at two *dhons* to the rupee which is ridiculous. Six *dhons* to the rupee would come to Rs. 3-3 a maund of rice. Cultivators have been tutored to ask high prices from the coolies.

Nazira.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—Was the suggestion made that the coolies should ask for higher wages in order that they may be able to pay extreme prices to the cultivators?

A.—Yes, I understand that was the case. In my opinion all the recent disturbance in connection with tea-garden labour have been the work of political agitators.

We had latrines in 1916-17, but the coolies would not use them, unless they were kept clean. The latrine system in 1916 consisted of an ordinary house with holes dug in the ground and plastered with lime. It was not a success and the Director of Public Health said he was not in favour of it. He preferred the septic tank. Gardens which are situated away from the river are handicapped for water, but we do not like to put up lines near the river for the simple reason that coolies are inclined to drink the river water and contract cholera. We have had no difficulty with regard to the drinking water supply, but the tanks are not large enough for the septic system. The introduction of the septic tank would involve a considerable outlay, and even then, unless the garden managers were invested with the powers of a third-class Magistrate to force the coolies to use the latrines, it would be no use introducing any system of latrines. We must get people to use latrines willingly; it is no use putting pressure on them.

New coolies are put under agreement after one or two years. They are better looked after on their arrival; they get easier work and are supplied with rice. Coolies with families living on the garden become as settled as old coolies after a year. If they are short of pay we make it up so as to ensure a living wage.

No. 112.—*Mr. W. B. ANDREW, Manager, Nahorhabi Tea Estate.*

I have been 23 years in Tea.

I had a strike for two days on my gardens. On the day before the strike the coolies held a meeting and we heard that they were going on strike on the following days. I went to the lines with my Assistant and the only complaint I had was that paddy was not supplied cheap enough. At the time paddy was offered by the villagers at two or three *dhons* for the rupee. After two days they went back to work. At that time we were not supplying paddy nor were we storing it. In 1921 we sold rice to the coolies by importing it from Calcutta. We sold it at Rs. 4-12 a maund. I think that was the maximum price at which we sold rice. We have practically no rice advances outstanding against the coolies. We wrote off between Rs. 400 and Rs. 500 last year. Our advances are altogether very small. Wages are Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women, respectively; these rates have been in force for years.

The cost of living between 1913 and 1920 has risen by 25 per cent. I should say.

President :—Q.—How did the coolies meet the increased cost of living?

A.—The tasks were lowered. The task for light hoeing is 30 *nals* and 10 to 12 *nals* for deep hoeing. The tasks have been altered from this year. If the soil is very hard the task may be varied, but the usual established rate is 15 *nals* for deep hoeing. The task for plucking used to be 8 seers and over and above that we gave a pice a seer. We had orders in 1921 to pluck very fine. We reduced the task to 6 seers and paid 2 pice a seer over and above that. It takes longer for a coolie to earn as much within a given time in fine plucking than would be the case with coarse plucking. In a good flush of leaf the task takes 4 hours and with an average flush about 5½ hours. We make a deduction for the basket in the weightment of leaf and also for wet leaf. On days of heavy rain a big deduction is made. About 4 maunds of green leaf would make 1 maund of manufactured tea.

Q.—Could you say what was the cost per maund of green leaf or manufactured tea last year?

A.—I could not tell you now.

The cost of plucking has gone up in recent years. The cost of hoeing in recent years has not altered very much; in fact it is about the same. Pruning, however, has gone up very considerably. The ordinary pruning task would be about 60 bushes, and the average coolie would take at least 5 hours to do it.

We put coolies under Act XIII agreement. Most of my coolies are under agreement. We give a bonus of Rs. 10 to a man and Rs. 8 to a woman. Coolies very often come up and ask for an agreement for two years, but I generally give it to them for one year. I would not be inclined to give any advances if the Act was abolished.

Q.—Would they be more inclined to leave the garden if you did not give them the advance? Nezira.

A.—Probably so. Coolies have got about 380 acres of land for cultivation, and in addition to that, they take land from the Assamese as well; to what extent, however, it is very difficult to say. About 70 per cent. of my adult coolies have land inside and outside the grant.

Taking the average coolie, I don't think he is as well clothed now as he was before the war. This is due probably to his not having sufficient money to buy his clothes; but at the same time I consider that he is well off. Perhaps he is not quite so well off as regards clothing. I don't think coolies are badly off as if they were, there would not be so many daily absentees in the garden. There are a good many absentees nowadays. As regards the average coolie I do not consider that an increase in wages would tend to make him work more. I do not think the coolies are hard up at present even with the increased cost of living. We pay wages fortnightly. We do not work on the unit system. I do not consider that the coolies need any concessions at all now. I consider that a man and his wife earning between Rs. 10 and Rs. 11 a month each would be able to maintain 2 non-working children in addition to themselves. All sickly coolies are put on easy work so that they may earn fairly good pay.

Q.—Are you in favour of giving coolies some recreation?

A.—They do have recreation such as hunting deer, etc.

Coolies drink a tremendous lot of *laopani* and they feel happy in doing so.

I estimate the rise in the cost of living between 1920 and 1913 at 25 per cent. At the present time it is higher than in 1913.

Q.—Are the labourers badly clothed?

A.—They are not so well dressed as they used to be 4 or 5 years ago especially the women. They used to get expensive clothes before and I would not say that there is the same smartness now in their dress. In other words they are not so fashionably dressed now. In 1913 the price of paddy was slightly under Rs. 2 a maund. Now it is about Rs. 2 a maund. We place no restriction on coolies to earn *ticca*. As a matter of fact it is very difficult to get them to earn *ticca*.

Q. Would it be fair to assume, therefore, that the earnings of a coolie amply cover the cost of living?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Would you say that Rs. 6 is a living wage even if a coolie had no rice cultivation?

A.—No. If he had facilities for earning *ticca* then I think it would do.

There is a country liquor shop about three-fourths of a mile from the factory. Country liquor shops for recent months have been picketed and closed. Coolies never asked for an increase of pay between 1913 and 1920. Nor do I think it necessary to raise their wages. About 7 or 8 children are fed at the hospital at present. There are probably about 200 coolies not under agreement.

They prefer sitting in the lines. I do not think *laopani* is an expensive luxury to the coolies. We do not employ much *bustee* labour.

Q.—Have you noticed any deterioration in the clothing of the *bustee* labour?

A.—I cannot say exactly. I have seen *bustee* people coming into the bazaar and they are usually dressed up in their best. I do not know how they are dressed in their *bustees*. Clothing has become very expensive of late years and even Europeans have felt the high prices of cloth.

Q.—Don't you think the same argument would apply to the Indian?

A.—Possibly so.

Q.—Am I right in understanding that on your estate coolies have every facility of earning more than they do actually earn?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Is it reasonable to infer that this sufficiently indicates they have enough to meet their requirements?

A.—It is very difficult to say, but the money which they do earn seems to meet their approval and besides they are quite contented. The only discontent which has been bred recently is due to political agitators working outside in the different *bustees*.

Nazira.

Q.—Do you find that a large number of the coolies absent themselves throughout the year, or is it the case only at a particular season?

A.—No, throughout the year. They absent themselves in greater number during the cultivation season.

Q.—Does the fact that you have rice and paddy crops within the garden grant enable them to remain on the garden?

A.—Yes.

We have a lot of coolies under agreement.

Q.—What do you do in the case of those coolies who take an agreement but do not work?

A.—We simply postpone their agreements for months. We put new coolies under agreement after they have been a year on the garden. I, however, have no objection to giving agreements within a year of their arrival.

I think it is beneficial to the coolie to take the agreement immediately he comes up as it enables him to make a start in life. I generally give a new coolie who takes the agreement Rs. 5 the first month and another Rs. 5 the next month. The system is appreciated by the coolies. New coolies come up with a certain amount of utensils which are provided by the agent before they are sent up. Agreements are given for 313 days. We pay coolies half *haziras* if they do half tasks. At the time of giving the next advance to a coolie we generally remit a couple of months of the unexpired term and start afresh. Under the old Act VI this period used to be added on to the fresh agreement, but that is not done now. Sardars are given commission for bringing coolies from their country.

No. 113.—MR. E. W. HUGHES, *Manager, Madoorie Tea Estate* :—

I have been in Tea since 1909, and on my present garden since December 1919.

There are 447 acres under tea. The working population on my garden is 480 coolies—men, women and children. We have the unit system; one anna is the unit. The system was recently introduced with the object of allowing the coolie to earn more money and to do a little more work. The result has been that the coolie earns a little more money, perhaps, but he does not earn as much as he could earn.

President :—Q.—Do you think the unit system is not a success?

A.—I think it is as good as the other system. The coolie undoubtedly has a better time under the unit system because he earns the same money by doing less work. As many units as a coolie does he is paid for. I have been recruiting coolies every year.

Q.—Do you find that the coolies recruited now are as good as 10 years ago?

A.—They have not been as good this year at any rate.

I consider the coolie is as well clothed now as he was before the war. In my opinion he is very well off in every respect. I have had no trouble on my garden up to date. The great majority of the coolies have land for cultivation. We charge rent. In weighing leaf we deduct for the basket and wet leaf, and nothing else.

Supposing a woman brings in 25 pounds of leaf we credit her with 24 and not 26 because it would not then be a commercial proposition, the rate paid for 24 and 25 pounds being the same. We do not write up fractions of an anna because it would complicate the keeping of the account books. The average for light hoeing is about one anna for 7 *nals*. A coolie is not bound to earn any particular amount; he can do what he wants to.

The cost per maund of green leaf last year was about Re. 1-4. Four maunds of green leaf make 1 maund of manufactured tea.

The majority of my coolies are under contract. The agreement bonus is Rs. 12 a year. I give agreements for one year.

Q.—Supposing the Act was abolished, would you still continue to give the bonus?

A.—I would have to consider the question. Coolies can buy paddy from the factory; the price of paddy varies. No appreciable amount of rice or paddy was sold in 1921 although we had a supply at the factory. The reason for this is that coolies do not want to buy it from the factory when they can get it cheaper elsewhere.

We recruited about 50 coolies from the Central Provinces last year, and I have ^{Nazira.} been satisfied with them. They were medically examined before coming up. I think medical examination costs something like Rs. 2 per head. This amount is paid by the Agents.

We put new coolies under agreement after a year's residence on the garden. The agreement is given for so many working days. As regards *khuttia* days, if the coolie is a good worker we excuse him, but if he happens to be lazy then he is not excused. I was in the Surma Valley for 6½ years. I consider the garden I am on now is healthier than the garden on which I served in the Surma Valley. The actual money a man draws is very much the same in the two valleys. Last year was undoubtedly dearer than any year during my experience in Sylhet, but from the coolie's point of view I think the cost of living is generally speaking about the same. Sibagar I think is just as cheap as Sylhet.

I would certainly say that ordinarily the normal coolie gets enough to maintain himself in health and reasonable comfort.

Q.—Supposing an average coolie was taking advantage of the opportunities that you give him of earning money, what do you think he might earn per day on your estate?

A.—Eight annas in the case of men and 6 annas in the case of women.

For deep hoeing we pay an anna for 4 *nals* or 3 *nals*. It would take 3 hours to earn 4 annas at present. Coolies earn 5 annas in 4 hours. Coolies who do not take agreements do not want to bind themselves down to agreements. We introduced the unit system about May last year. Before that we used to pay a monthly rate of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women. I do not know how long that was in force. About 200 acres of rice land are cultivated by coolies. I think the rent is Rs. 4 a *poorah*. It is physically possible for coolies to do 24 *nals* deep hoeing in a day. As a matter of fact they could do 32 *nals* which would take about 7 or 8 hours. Of course that would be on particular soils and would depend on the class of work accepted. When I was in Sylhet the payment for plucking was by the ticket system. At Magura the task was based on the average of the weight of leaf brought in daily. For a 3-anna *hazira* the average task was 20 pounds. The pluckers were given quarter *haziras* for each 5 pounds.

Q.—With regard to the question of payment for leaf, are you not swindling the coolie out of a pound of leaf by writing up 24 when he actually plucked 25 pounds of leaf?

A.—It is merely for the sake of convenience that it is entered up in the books as 24 pounds, the rate paid for 24 and 25 pounds being the same.

Q.—Would it not be as convenient to enter it up as 26?

A.—Yes, but the coolie would then draw more pay than he is entitled to.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—If a coolie is working under the unit system, is his work varied at all during the course of the day? Would a coolie be put on a particular kind of work in the forenoon and on another kind of work in the afternoon?

A.—That very seldom happens. It might happen only in special cases.

NAZIRA, 18TH FEBRUARY 1922.

(PRESIDENT, MR. MC MORRAN AND MR. DAWSON PRESENT.)

No. 114.—MR. J. S. RONALD, *Manager, Galeky Tea Estate, Assam Company* :—

I have been connected with Tea since 1895, and have been all my time in the ^{Nazira.} Assam Company. I am now at Galeky. I was till recently Acting Superintendent of the Assam Company.

The area under tea at Galeky is 1,316 acres and the outturn per acre is 7 maunds 12 seers. The number of working coolies per acre is 1.18. About 300 acres of rice land are cultivated by coolies in the garden grants and about 460 acres on *bustee* land.

The total working population of the garden is—men 960, women 1,018 and children 377—a total of 2,355. This force comprises 10 per cent. of Oriyas and about 15 per cent. Central Provinces people. We have got 2 per cent. of Garos; the

Nazira. rest come from the United Provinces right down to Guntur in the Madras Presidency. We employ about 60 outside labourers; in the rains more are employed, especially when the women come in to pluck and the heavy flushes are on. All these people are *ex-tea-garden* coolies practically. Last year the death-rate was just over 2 per cent. I have had no trouble on the garden.

Rice is supplied at Rs. 5 a maund; paddy at Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3 a maund. In 1921 we supplied as much paddy as the coolies wanted. They are however not keen on taking it and prefer to buy it from the villages. There are not many rice advances outstanding against coolies.

We work on the unit system and pay coolies twice a month. The system was started about a year ago. Before the unit system was introduced the wages were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women, respectively.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—You say that the increase in the cost of living since the war is 15 per cent. You say that coolies with cultivation are not affected to any great extent except with regard to cloth?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When the coolies worked under the old system of *hazira* and *ticca*, was the amount of work that was given out as *ticca* less than the *hazira* so that if a man did *ticca* in hoeing he would receive more?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the hoeing task?

A.—Deep hoeing just now is 3 *nals* for an anna. We used to give no *ticca* for deep hoeing; coolies now earn as much as they like. A coolie is able to do 25 *nals* in deep hoeing, so that he would receive payment at the rate of 3 *nals* to the anna.

Q.—Do many coolies do as much as that?

A.—Probably 30 per cent. of the men earn 8 annas, in other words do 24 *nals*.

Q.—Could a coolie keep up that rate of work for many days in the week?

A.—I think a coolie could keep it up in the following week if the soil is light. A coolie takes 4 hours to do 24 *nals* of deep hoeing.

As regards light hoeing the task varies. Coolies get one anna for 6 *nals*.

Good coolies go out to work early in the morning and finish for the day by 11 or 12 o'clock.

Before the unit system was introduced a man's *hazira* was about 3 annas for 20 *nals* of deep hoeing. This was 3 years ago. Just then the wages both of men and women were raised by Re. 1 on account of the rise in the price of foodstuffs and cloth.

Q.—Are the wages the same now as they were 3 years ago?

A.—No, they are very much increased. The second increase took place in the beginning of last year when the unit system was introduced. We had no political agitation three years ago such as is going on now.

The plucking rate is 2 pice a seer. We were plucking fine last year.

With a reduced task for fine plucking it is possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice. In weighing leaf only the weight of the basket is deducted. When leaf is scarce at the beginning and end of the season, a woman gets 4 annas for going out and bringing in what she can. Four maunds of green leaf would make one maund of tea. Our coolies have a fair amount of grazing land, and we are opening out more land at present. Coolies with buffaloes contribute to the pay of cowherds. We supply on the average 1,500 to 2,000 blankets annually and a certain amount of clothing. Many blankets were taken in the cold weather of last year. If a blanket costs us Rs. 3-8 we would sell it for Rs. 2.

Q.—Do you think that coolies are as well clothed now as they used to be before the war?

A.—I think so.

Q.—Have you any system of feeding children and weakly coolies?

A.—Yes, there is a free meal at the hospital every morning and in the rains there is a free meal for every child and for old people at the tea-house.

Five seers of concession rice are allowed to every man and woman and 3 seers to working children in a week.

We have about 800 coolies under contract. We give a bonus of Re. 1 a month to men and 8 annas to women. The bonus is paid in a lump sum, Rs. 12 and Rs. 6

at the beginning of the contract, and is not recovered. We used to put coolies under agreement for 3 years. New coolies are not put under contract until they have been over a year at least on the garden. Contracts are written on stamped paper.

Q.—Do you think that agreements are necessary?

A.—The coolie likes them.

I have never taken any cases to court.

The standard of work for deep hoeing has had to be lowered somewhat in recent times so that with a lower standard of work it is easier for a coolie to earn a larger sum per day if he cares to do the work. There have been no attempts made to force up the price of rice against the coolies. The only trouble we had was when the bazaars were closed down for one Sunday. Now however rice is coming in freely.

Mr. McMarran :—Q.—We have been told that cultivators were asking a rupee for 2 *dhons* of rice. Have you any experience of that kind?

A.—None. So far as my estate is concerned, there has been no attempt to hold up supplies. I consider that Rs. 6-8 each for a man and woman is a sufficient living wage in addition to concessions such as cheap rice (at Rs. 5 a maund), housing, medical attendance, cheap blankets, free firewood.

Q.—Would Rs. 6-8 be sufficient without any other income, assuming that rice was given at Rs. 5 a maund?

A.—Yes, quite sufficient.

The price of rice at present is 8 seers to the rupee. Paddy costs less and coolies prefer it to rice because they can get out the husk from it for their cattle and fowls and ducks. They can get paddy freely round about the estate. The coolies like to go out a mile or two to barter for a maund of paddy. The present price of paddy is Rs. 2-8 a maund. I consider that barely a maund of paddy would do a coolie for the month in lieu of rice.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

I do not think coolies are doing more work under the unit system than they used to do; they are earning more relatively now.

We charge Rs. 2-8-0 a *poorah* of rice land. One *poorah* gives a coolie 30 maunds of rice.

Q.—Would one coolie have as much as a *poorah* of land?

A.—He might have more: some have as much as 3 *poorahs*. The average however would be a quarter of a *poorah* taking the whole labour force into consideration. That is equivalent to one *bigha* or 7 or 8 maunds of paddy. Coolies have probably about 300 buffaloes, 750 cattle of sorts and also pigs and goats. These constitute sources of revenue in addition to what they earn on the estate.

Q.—Do you think that the economic pressure on the coolie which he may have experienced in regard to foodstuffs has lightened recently?

A.—I think so. The cost of food has come down and the tendency for everything is on the downward grade, except in the case of cloth which is still dear.

Q.—Can you say if the scale of prices is in any way fixed by the action taken in regard to *Bilati* cloth?

A.—Yes, that is my inference. Coolies take both *Bilati* and *Swadeshi* cloth, which we import from Calcutta.

Q.—The price is the consideration with the coolie but the supply that may come into the bazaar may, I take it, be influenced by people who are imbued with political views?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that agitation in favour of *Swadeshi* cloth has tended to put up prices?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You endeavour to break the effect of that so far as your own labour force is concerned by importing cloth in order to sell it at concession rates?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you charge anything for the service you are rendering in bringing it up?

Nazira.

A.—We give the cloth at cost price. The price is a little below the rates at which the *kayas* sell it. A coolie would probably have to pay Rs. 3 for a pair of *dhotis* now. I am not in a position to say how many *dhotis* a coolie would require in a year. Coolies spend much money on drink (*laopani*).

Q.—Is *laopani* a costly thing so far as the coolies are concerned?

A.—It is just a question of the cost of rice. They purchase very little spirituous liquors.

I consider it most undesirable both from the garden as well as the coolie's point of view that the various concessions should be converted into an increase in money wages. The coolie would not understand the conversion and if it was effected he would still expect the concessions. Any changes made in the garden are apt to be looked upon suspiciously by the coolie.

Q.—Did you find the coolies suspicious when the system was changed from the *hazira* to the unit system?

A.—It took them some time to understand it thoroughly, especially the *iunglis*. But they are now quite satisfied.

Q.—What do you think would be a sufficient cash wage if a coolie bought his own rice?

A.—Rupees 6-8.

Q.—Does the coolie sell the produce of his land or does he consume it?

A.—As a rule he consumes it, unless he has got too much.

Q.—Could not the rice concession be converted into cash?

A.—I don't think it could. Conditions here are different to conditions elsewhere.

Q.—Would something not depend on whether you had an adequate supply of rice or not. If supplies of rice were freely available?

A.—Yes, but we never can tell.

Q.—If you have plenty of rice-growing land in the vicinity of the garden and a large supply of rice available for sale, presumably the wages might be increased and the rice concession cut out if you chose to do so?

A.—Yes.

We import very little rice, say about 300 or 600 maunds in a year simply for the purpose of giving it out on Sundays in the hot season to the tea-house people who work on Sundays and cannot get away to the bazaar. As a rule the local supplies are sufficient.

Q.—How do earnings of coolies in September 1920 compare with last year?

A.—The wages, excluding rice concessions, are:—

	September 1920.			September 1921.		
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Men	8	4	4	11	1	11
Women	7	1	9	7	13	7
Children	5	5	11	5	13	1

The Indian staff start as probationers on grades—I, II, III, and IV. Ten per cent. of their pay in grade I goes into the Provident Fund. A *mohurrir* starts on Rs. 12 and rises to Rs. 21. Grade II starts from Rs. 31 and goes up to Rs. 40. A head *mohurrir* gets from Rs. 40 to Rs. 65; head clerks from Rs. 75 to Rs. 100. Deserving servants of the Company get a pension of half-pay. Permanent clerks can only be dismissed by the Superintendent. The head clerk gets a servant allowance. The Company allows him 6 per cent. interest and then increases it to 25 per cent. when he is finally paid up.

No. 115.—Mr. W. D. SMILES, D.S.O., *Superintendent of the Moran Tea Company, Limited.*

I have been 18 years in Tea and 10 years in the Moran Tea Company.

The answers put in by me refer to Sepon Tea Estate.

The area under tea is 914 acres, and the outturn about 8 maunds per acre. The labour force is 748 men, 657 women and 319 children or a total of 1,724. The number of working coolies per acre is very nearly 1½. Fifty per cent. of the coolies have got land for cultivation, of which 45 per cent. is inside the grant and 5 per cent. outside. The rate is one rupee per *poorah*. Coolies hold land inside the grant

on the condition that they work at least 9 months in a year for the garden, otherwise they are liable to be turned out. I have, however, never yet turned out anybody. We employ about 400 outside coolies on the Sepon garden. Nazira.

I make a favour of giving coolies the agreement bonus of Rs. 9 to men and Rs. 6 to women. This is not recovered. I give a new coolie on arrival Rs. 6 to keep him going for the first month.

My coolies consist mostly of Oriyas from Cuttack and of Khorooas from Chota Nagpur and Daltonganj. I also have Bilaspuris and Telegu-speaking people.

The total number of deaths last year was about 56, as far as I know, and births 62.

We have not been supplying rice for the last three years. We are going to do so this year, because of the unrest in the province. At present coolies are making their own arrangements by buying paddy in the villages.

We work on the unit system more or less; it was introduced 12 months ago. Before the new system was introduced the monthly pay was Rs. 6 for men and Rs. 5 for women. Before the war coolies were getting Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 and now they are getting an equivalent of just over Rs. 8 in the case of a man and Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 6-12 in the case of a woman. All coolies are given opportunities of earning *ticca*, but twice during pruning this year I had to stop it because they were doing bad work.

I am convinced that the unit system tends to bad work. The Unit system, however, is a fairer system as the hard working coolie is sufficiently remunerated while the lazy one is penalized through his own indolence. Earnings in my opinion are adequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year. In September and August a good many of the coolies are away cultivating. The wages of carters are never included in the wages returns. The task for deep hoeing is 3 *nals* for an anna. I am thinking of reducing it because we have had no rain. It takes a man to earn 5 annas, or in other words to do 15 *nals*, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours according to the class of work done by him. None of the coolies do 24 *nals*. The work for 5 annas is bad and I do not encourage them to do more, nor are they themselves anxious to do more. On the average they do 15 *nals* as a result of my forcing them to it. The rate for plucking last year was Rs. 7 a maund of tea. We were doing very fine plucking last year and the task was in consequence reduced. Before that plucking used to cost Rs. 3-12 a maund of tea. The women earned quite as much in a given time with fine plucking as was the case with coarser plucking.

I consider Rs. 14-8 which may constitute the earnings of a man and a woman something more than a subsistence allowance. I would call Rs. 5-12 a bare subsistence for a single man. If two or three people live together the bare subsistence allowance would come down.

My answer to question No. 73 is "No". With regard to clothing, I am under-selling the *kaya* by about 4 annas per cloth. At present we are getting cloth from Manchester. I lost on blankets. I sold about 100 blankets this year. I charge Re. 1-8 for each blanket.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—Have you had any experience of non-co-operators trying to close down the bazaars on your gardens?

A.—No.

Q.—Has there been any attempt made to put up the price of rice supplied to your coolies?

A.—I have no direct evidence to that effect. Both coolies and mohurrirs have complained to me though.

Q.—Is it an engineered trouble?

A.—Yes. I think our coolies are treated very well. They have no grievances to put forward. The cost of production has gone up at the present moment. The cost of pruning has gone up for the simple reason that coolies do not do as much work as they used to do 5 or 10 years ago. They finish a task in about $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 hours where it used to take them 5 hours to earn the *hazira*. In the case of minor children we certainly have no system whereby the father comes up and takes the agreement on behalf of the child. But a boy of 8 or 9 years may be put under agreement if he wants it. He would get Rs. 2 as agreement money which we enter in the agreement book, the agreement being for 12 months.

On the whole, I do not think the average coolie is as well clothed now as he was before the war, but the same is also the case with the *sahab*. I consider, however, that the coolie is well fed.

Nazira.

I prefer the unit system. There is accommodation for indoor patients in the hospital and whether coolies avail themselves or not of the hospital accommodation must depend a good deal on the personality of the doctor babu, also whether you are liberal with your hospital expenses. At Sepon the coolies do go into hospital but they do not at Moran.

No. 116.—MR. C. Simkins, *General Manager, Amgoorie Tea Estates, Ltd.*

I have been connected with Tea since 1890, and have been all the time in the same Company.

We have Directors in England and forwarding Agents only in Calcutta.

There are 5 gardens under my charge.

The area under tea for the Amgoorie Division is 1,065 acres. The outturn per acre is eight maunds. The working force is approximately 1½ adults per acre. There are 317 acres of rice land at present cultivated by the coolies of Amgoorie Division within the grant. There is also a certain amount of land sublet by Assamese to coolies outside the grants.

The working population is 501 men, 607 women and 225 children, altogether 1,332, out of a total population of 2,291. The remainder includes many *faltu* coolies who work more or less regularly.

I consider Rs. 9 for a man, and Rs. 8 for a woman sufficient monthly earnings to enable them to live in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving at the present time.

In 1913 a subsistence wage for men and women was Rs. 4-14. In 1920, when I wrote to the Tea Association it rose to Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 8-5 in the case of a woman in consideration of the high cost of cloth. Then again in 1921 it fell to Rs. 6-11-6 for men and women.

Yes, the cost of living has gone down since 1920. Taking into account all the earnings and concessions I consider that the average coolie on my gardens gets enough at present to keep him in health and reasonable comfort.

Rice and paddy are supplied at special rates.

The usual rate for rice is Rs. 5 per maund and when it costs the gardens less they get it for less.

Except in the case of indigent and new coolies requiring special consideration the principle of payment in kind is wrong; it is optional, uncertain and liable to abuse if the management is unscrupulous or careless. I wrote about this once to the local Tea Association, because I thought it tended to pauperise the coolie labour.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—Could these concessions be converted into cash except in the case of rice?

A.—A living wage should allow sufficient margin to meet normal fluctuations in the cost of necessaries, and it is better to allow a fair margin for these fluctuations than to compensate for them by concessions such as clothing and food below market rates; it is better for the labourer who should not be dependent for a living wage on more or less optional concessions by the management. When times were very hard and conditions abnormal, it was necessary to do many things to enable the coolies to feed and clothe themselves, and under similar circumstances it will be necessary again. These included formerly blankets and cloth at concession rates and arranging for supplies at the garden cost and risk.

We still supply blankets at reduced rates including a large number of blankets to orphans and indigent poor class people free of charge, and if the price is more than a coolie can pay, it is reduced proportionately. Poor class indigent people and orphans will of course always require these, whatever rates of pay are in force.

The rate of wages in 1913 for men and women was Rs. 5 and Rs. 4. In 1917 it was raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. In 1920 it was raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women, and children proportionately. I wanted to raise it still further to Rs. 8 and Rs. 7 and my Directors agreed. The Directors left it to me, but I was not supported by the Tea Association the majority of whom were against it.

I did not raise the rate of wages further as I thought it might give rise to friction between my neighbours' and my own gardens.

Q.—Did you think these rises were necessary owing to the cost of living?

A.—Yes, and that was the reason why we gave the increase.

I have also compensated for it by reducing the task and affording more opportunity for *ticca* work.

We have not reduced the plucking tasks but when leaf is short, and the average brought in is less than the ordinary task, the average for the day is taken as the task for that day.

With regard to pruning, coolies could not earn *ticca* before, but I have now initiated a system that enables them to earn *ticca*, the task being reduced.

Generally speaking the actual cash earnings have gone up, and on all work, except plucking, coolies can earn much more for the same amount of work than previously.

Our plucking tasks are an 8-seer average for adults and six pies a seer *ticca*, and coolies have always been able to earn very good money at this work. In deep hoeing an average coolie doing a *hazira* and *ticca* daily would have earned in 1913 Rs. 10-8 a month; for the same amount of work he now earns Rs. 16-4 a month.

I am satisfied that a coolie on my gardens can earn enough if he likes to work for it. Under present conditions, new coolies and indigent poor class coolies require special consideration, i.e., lighter tasks instead of the full tasks. Coolies are put under contract for two years as a rule, occasionally three years. I do not recollect ever taking a case to court.

Q.—Have you any system whereby the father of a child gives an undertaking that his child would work for a certain time?

A. No. We have no system of agreement for minors. We pay Rs. 36 as agreement bonus to men, and Rs. 18 to women for three years.

Q.—Is the coolie, in taking an agreement for three years, under the impression that he has got to work for three years?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Taking the average coolie, would you say that he is as well clothed to-day as he was before the war?

A.—A year ago he certainly was not; it compares much better now.

As regards our system of weighing; it has always been our custom to weigh to the quarter, that is to say, four maunds of leaf would make one maund of tea.

The weight of the basket only is cut, and the leaf under half a seer goes to the garden, and over that to the coolie; if it was over half a seer, he would get the full seer, and if under it, the seer below.

The plucking task is only adjusted at certain times of the year.

We pay at the rate of four maunds of leaf to one maund of tea.

Leaf cost us in 1921 Rs. 1-5-9 per maund. Pregnant women are given a half *hazira* for four months after which a bonus of Rs. 5 is paid.

Q.—If Act XIII was abolished, do you think it would affect the gardens very much?

A.—I think it would; taking the average coolie, if he is discontented and a malcontent, no agreement will keep him, but otherwise a coolie generally recognises the obligation he is under to work out his agreement as a legal obligation, and good men generally work off the agreement honestly.

Coolies like the agreement money because it comes to them in a lump sum, and they can put it to some good use if they care to, e.g., as a deposit in the village for paddy or to buy cattle they would not be able to get otherwise, for many are very improvident and will not try to save whatever they earn.

Q.—If the Act was abolished, would you still continue to give the advance to a deserving coolie?

A. I think I would give it for a time, but gradually the abolition of the Act, and the fact of there being no legal redress would affect us when the coolies come to know about this.

In 1919 we got up a good many recruits, but we stopped recruiting last year because of the crisis in tea. The 1919 lot were very poor physically.

Coolies are medically examined before coming up, and I consider a good many ought not to be passed.

Nazira.

I was not at all pleased with the class recruited in 1920. When I returned from home I had to repatriate a good number.

Q.—Did it pay you to do so?

A.—Yes; only worthless coolies with relatives in their country were repatriated.

We had no trouble with our coolies previously. There was a strike among the coolies on one of our Divisions on Monday last; the coolies returned to work on the Wednesday. We experienced no trouble whatever previously and no complaints came to my knowledge. No concessions were granted as a result of the strike.

On neighbouring concerns there were simultaneous strikes; these also had not experienced trouble before. I believe the strikes were arranged by agitators through the Congress Committees and in conjunction with some of the Indian establishment.

There has been a boycott of bazaars and supplies in many parts of the district by agitators, but our own have not so far been interfered with. Our neighbours have suffered in this respect.

It has been generally reported that the Assamese and other villagers have arranged to give 2 *dhons* of paddy to the rupee only. I have made arrangements for storing paddy and supplying the markets if necessary with paddy at five *dhons* to the rupee.

For some weeks this has proved to be necessary; supplies are now satisfactory again.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—About the rate of plucking, is it not an important thing for the coolies that the rate for plucking should be such as to enable them to earn a decent wage?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Under any system if the rate for plucking is low the coolie may not earn sufficient. Supposing he was to pluck a maund of green leaf, it might be difficult for the coolie to earn a decent wage?

A.—Yes, if the rate was too low.

Q.—But perhaps if you were to pay Re. 1 there would be a chance?

A.—Yes, we pay for *ticos* leaf at Rs. 1-4 a maund; four maunds of leaf at this rate would make one maund of tea; the cost per maund of tea is therefore Rs. 5.

The actual average cost of our leaf for the year 1921 was Rs. 1-5-9 per maund.

I am the Chairman of the Nazira Circle, Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association. The majority of the members of that Circle agreed with my proposal to raise the rates of pay at a meeting held at Nazira on 20th October 1920, but the Assam Branch of the Association disagreed with my proposal and it was ultimately thrown out; of course my views did not apparently accord with those of the majority of the Brahmaputra Valley Planters as represented by the Tea Association.

The majority of the gardens in this Circle refused to be bound down by the decision of the Tea Association and raised the rates of pay. Medical attendance is not necessary for all coolies for all the time, though it may be necessary for every coolie at some time or other.

Q.—Do you think it would be advantageous to the labourer to cut out medical attendance and give him an allowance which is calculated on the cost of the medical service for the whole force?

A.—As things are now it could not be done; medical attendance is a thing which the garden should provide. It is in the interests of both parties that medical attendance should remain a concession, and not be converted into a money wage.

Q.—It is a concession that the garden would not have to pay if outside labour was engaged and therefore it may be taken as a part of the remuneration of labour?

A.—Perhaps, but under the present system of importing labour, the garden must be responsible for the general health, and it is in the garden's interest as well as the coolies' to provide it.

Q.—I suppose you can convert clothing and cheap rice into cash?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If you are going to make a concession of extra wages to the coolies on account of rice, you might fix a particular level below which you would not supply rice, that is to say, instead of supplying it at Rs. 3 a maund, you might say to the coolie:—"You would get so much wages, but you must supply your own rice, say, at Rs. 6 a maund"?

A.—I put the figure at Rs. 5 a maund.

Q.—But you would have to be assured that you had a plentiful supply of rice available in your bazaar?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Supposing there was a scarcity in the bazaar, there might be real hardship to the coolie if he alone was required to purchase it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was the rate of wages Rs. 4 and Rs. 5 under Act VI?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did that rate apply to all coolies irrespective of the time they had been on the garden?

A.—Generally speaking, yes.

President:—Q.—As regards medical attendance, it is in the interest of the garden to keep coolies in good health and see that they are fit to work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—From his own point of view the coolie, I take it, does not regard medical treatment as part of the cash equivalent?

A.—I don't think he does; I think he looks upon it as a right.

CINNAMARA, JOEHAT, 27th FEBRUARY 1922.

Cinnamara.

[MR. FOX ABSENT.]

No 117.—MR. A. L. CARLESS, *General Manager, The East India Tea Company, Limited*:—

I have been 24 years in Tea, and at Duflating for 21 years.

As a rule I put coolies under Act XIII agreement. I did not put coolies under agreement last year. Until last year we had coolies under agreement. We have just started giving agreements again. We give agreements for one year (313 days) in all cases. The total working force is 2,000. I work on the unit system which has been in force for the last 8 years.

The task for deep hoeing is 3 *nals* for an anna and coolies can earn as much as they like. The average coolie earns this time of the year in deep hoeing only 4 to 5 annas because the ground is hard. About 50 per cent. of the coolies earn as much as 5 annas.

The task for plucking leaf is 2 pice a seer. We are plucking finer now than was the case last year. We have no *haziras*. Coolies work on the unit which is one anna for 3 *nals* deep hoeing. If a coolie does 3 *nals* only he gets one anna.

The cost per maund of green leaf last year was Rs. 1-4-0.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Do you find that the cost per acre for hoeing is increasing?

A.—Yes, in this way that we have reduced tasks. Coolies used to do 10 *nals* for an anna in light hoeing; now they do 8 *nals*.

As regards the weightment of leaf we deduct for the basket and in addition for wet leaf. On a wet day if women bring in 6½ pounds they get paid for 6 pounds. My experience is that 4 maunds of green leaf make, if anything, a little less than one maund of tea.

Q.—Do you think the unit system is an improvement, taking it from the point of view of the garden?

A.—No. Many coolies prefer the *hazira* and *ticca* system. Their argument is that they get their *hazira* paid them monthly and *ticca* weekly; if they earn Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 and are paid at the end of the month, they know what to do with that lump sum. On the weekly pay system they get Re. 1-8-0 or Rs. 2 weekly which they are inclined to spend immediately they get it and consequently save nothing.

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A coolie can live comfortably on Rs. 7 a month and save sufficient out of that to buy a goat, to start with, then a cow, and after that a pair of bullocks. For a woman Rs. 6 is sufficient. For a man and his wife with 2 non-working children to support, I think Rs. 13 between them would be sufficient for their needs.

Q.—Do you think the coolie is as well clothed now as he was before the war?

A.—I don't think he is. Perhaps before the war, when cloth was cheaper, he was a little extravagant; now he is careful.

We have both lines and the *bustee* system of houses, but more of the line system. We are just starting a system of latrines. A deep pit is dug in the ground and plastered with lime with a flyproof covering over it. This has been the outcome of the doctor's suggestion on account of hookworm.

The majority of the coolies have got land for cultivation. Pregnant leave is given for a month before and two months after child-birth during which period the mother receives full pay.

Agreements are never given to small children; only to boys from 14 upwards. We give a bonus of Rs. 12 to men, Rs. 10 to women and Rs. 8 to children. Concession paddy is given to anybody who asks for it. At present paddy is being sold at Rs. 2-8-0 a maund.

Q.—What is the ruling principle in fixing your rate for paddy?

A.—I go by the market rate as a rule. The idea is always to let coolies have it cheaper than they can get it outside. I lose up to 8 annas on a maund of paddy. This year I managed to buy it for Rs. 3 and am selling it for Rs. 2-8-0, but coolies are not coming for it freely now.

I have not had any strikes or trouble on my garden.

I consider that the remuneration in money payments, together with the various concessions received by the coolies, is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort.

I do not consider it desirable that any alteration should be made in the way of converting the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

Q.—You say that the coolies were more extravagant before the war. What was the rate of wages before the unit system was adopted?

A.—Rupees 5 and Rs. 4 for men and women. Then of course they got the agreement bonus which was another rupee a month in the case of men.

It takes about 4 years for new coolies to become acclimatised to the garden. We recruited no coolies last year. I am recruiting this year. My sardars went off 3 weeks ago. We recruit from Palamau, Ranchi, Bilaspur and Cuttack. We get a medium class of labour.

Q.—What is the reason for that?

A.—On my garden the soil is very hard which is not an attraction to the ordinary coolie. There are gardens with lighter soils and these are more popular. Of course the sardars tell them the conditions on the various gardens. Good *jungli* coolies are difficult to retain; they generally leave after 4 or 5 years. We have not had many absconders.

Mr. Withers :—Q.—You said that your coolies prefer the monthly wage system to the unit system. Could you tell me why you cannot adopt that system?

A.—Because my Agents prefer my paying weekly.

Q.—Do you know why the Agents prefer it?

A.—They ordered me to work on the unit system and requested that wages be paid weekly.

Q.—Is it a cheaper system?

A.—I don't think so.

President :—Q.—Is any commission paid to sardars under the unit system?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is commission paid to sardars or babus for bringing up coolies to take agreements?

A.—No. As a matter of fact coolies themselves clamour for agreements, and last year we were not able to meet their demands. Last week I gave out that we were prepared to give agreements and the whole labour force turned out.

Agreements are given only for one year. New coolies are not put under Cinnamara agreement.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—It is not absolutely necessary I take it that payments should be made weekly to coolies ?

A.—It is far better for coolies to be paid weekly under the unit system, as they can then keep tally of their earnings more correctly. Previously the coolies earned Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 in a month under the *hasira* and *ticca* system. His *hasiras* were paid monthly and *ticca* weekly, and he was able to keep tally fairly correctly. If paid monthly under the unit system, it is difficult for him to keep a correct tally and he might find that his account did not agree with the pay book. He is apt to think that he has not got what was actually due to him. I should say under the unit system a coolie could keep tally for a week and not more.

Q.—The impression created on my mind is that coolies prefer the monthly payment. Why not try it then ?

A.—Coolies like getting their *ticca* weekly and their *hasiras* monthly.

The majority of my coolies have got rice land, and rent is in some cases charged at the rate of one rupee a *halsa* (i.e., *bigha*.)

The coolies hold about 300 acres of land. Agreements do not tie down coolies to the garden. They may go if they satisfy their liabilities by paying up the agreement money. Every year a certain number go out and take up land in the villages.

Q.—If the agreement system was abolished, how would you stand from the garden point of view ?

A.—We would save about Rs. 18,000 a year.

The loss on paddy sold last year (1921) was roughly about Rs. 2,500.

The Agents of my garden are Messrs. Williamson, Magor and Co. I believe all the gardens belonging to this Agency have adopted the unit system.

Srijut Siva Prasad Barua :—Q.—Is it a fact that Messrs. Williamson, Magor & Co, advised all the gardens to adopt the unit system ?

A.—I think so.

Q.—Do you think that a coolie earns more under the unit system than under the monthly system ?

A.—I think the thrifty ones do, but the lazy do not.

President :—Q.—Was the unit system recommended instead of an increase in wages ?

A.—No. I think under this system you have a better check on the *babus*, and I think it was done so as to allow the coolie to earn as much as he liked.

Mr. Das :—Q.—The difference between the wages of the men and women is due to the women not being physically capable of earning as much as the men, except with regard to plucking ; it is also due to the women not eating as much as the men ?

A.—Yes.

There are 300 acres of land let out to about 1,000 coolies.

There has been unrest round about the villages surrounding my garden and my markets were disturbed, but so far my coolies have not been interfered with and they are quite satisfied at present. Three weeks ago when there was picketing going on, they became frightened and thought that Mr. Gandhi's *Raj* was coming. Now things have quieted down and they have begun to gain a little more confidence. There have been strikes on adjoining gardens.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—To what do you attribute your immunity from strikes ?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—Are your coolies paid better ?

A.—No ; they get the same rates as other gardens in this locality.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—You say the unit system was introduced partly with a view to giving the coolie the opportunity of earning as much as he liked in the cold weather. Under the old system, was it not possible to give *hasira* and *ticca* ?

A.—It was possible, but in those days it was not done. Perhaps the gardens could not afford it.

It used to take a coolie 7 hours to do a task of deep hoeing in the cold weather and they usually did a better class of work. But now the task is lower, the work inferior and they earn more.

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Q.—Is it possible for coolies to earn any *ticca* in the cold weather or not nowadays?

A.—Yes; I do not know of any gardens within a radius of 10 miles working on the *hazira* and *ticca* system.

No. 118.—MR. E. B. SIM *Manager, Katonibari Tea Estate, Jorhat Tea Company*:—

I have been altogether 15 years in Tea. I was in Mangaldai, the Dooars, South Sylhet and Doom-Dooma. I have been in the Jorhat district for about 6½ years now. The Jorhat Tea Company took over the garden in January 1921.

We do not work on the unit system. Our rates are Rs. 7 for men, Rs. 6 for women and Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 for working children.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—How do you calculate the pay for the month of February?

A.—At 24 days.

Q.—What would a coolie woman receive?

A.—She would receive 4 annas a day for 24 days.

Q.—How do you record the wage in the *hazira* book?

A.—It is written down as a *hazira*, $\frac{2}{3}$ *hazira* or half *hazira* as the case may be. The amount in annas is not written.

In the month of February a woman would get Rs. 6 if a full *hazira* task was done.

At present the labour force is sufficient, but there are periods in the year when it is not sufficient. But that does not mean that on the average the coolie has got to work longer. The work simply takes longer to do. If there is less labour, there are chances of giving more *ticca* and of earnings being supplemented. We have not had very many absconders. My working force now has increased compared with 1916. As a rule the death-rate slightly exceeds the birth-rate. But I would not call my garden unhealthy on that account. There is a fair amount of anæmia and we have taken steps to try and check it. Coolies are treated for anæmia. We sell rice at concession rates.

Q.—Do you think it would go to the root of the matter in checking anæmia if latrines are established?

A.—Yes, I do think so. We did nothing in that direction until recently when the question was mooted. We employ doctors and we look to them to make suggestions. I am prepared to advocate the introduction of latrines.

Q.—You speak of cattle fines. Under what circumstances are the fines imposed?

A.—If cattle are found grazing in tea, fines are imposed. Coolies have 4 cowherds and they are supposed to hand their cattle over to these men. But a lot of the coolies like to keep back their cattle during the rains when grass is more luxuriant. Usually the fine is 2 annas to 4 annas, but if the coolie gives a satisfactory excuse, he is not fined at all.

New coolies are given a settling allowance of Rs. 5 on their arrival. We have no system whereby a new coolie is paid a full *hazira* for 6 months irrespective of the work done.

Q.—Do you think that new coolies before they become acclimatised are fit to do the full task?

A.—They manage to do it.

Q.—You say in your answer to question No. 17 that in certain cases labour may have had grievances both economic and personal against the management and this would account for the sporadic outbreaks when agitators got at them. Are you speaking from experience?

A.—No, it is hearsay. I have had no trouble on my garden.

In 1913 the wages were Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women. In 1915 at Katonibari I raised the pay of the old coolies to the level of the new coolies, i.e., from Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. In 1921 the pay of the men was raised to Rs. 6-8-0 and that of the women to Rs. 5-11-0 and in January 1922 it was further raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6.

Q.—With regard to hoeing, taking the cost per acre in 1913 and the actuals for 1921, has the cost increased much?

A.—I don't think it has. The wages were increased but the tasks remained the same. The actual cost per acre of light hoeing in 1920 was about Rs. 3. I don't know the figure for 1913 as I was not in charge. The rate for plucking in 1920 was a little over Rs. 5 for a maund of tea. In 1921 it was very much higher.

Q.—Do you think that increased wages have appreciably increased the cost of working the garden?

A.—I think so. *Hazira* is paid monthly, *ticca* weekly, but we pay weekly to a certain number of coolies who are improvident. *Ticca* is given in the cold weather, though we have not always done so. The *ticca* has appreciably increased in recent years.

Paddy and rice is sold at cost price now except to anæmic coolies who get them at concession rates. I used to make a considerable loss on rice, but now that coolies can afford to buy it I sell it at cost price. There is always a certain wastage which I pay for. I examine the rice before taking it over from the *mahajan* and then have it cleaned. We incurred a loss of about Rs. 11,000 in 1920. Previous to that we were selling rice at Rs. 5 a maund.

Q.—Do you think that the coolies' earnings have increased to such an extent that they can now afford to pay the cost price?

A.—Absolutely.

There are about 200 acres of rice land and rent is charged at the rate of Rs. 6 an acre.

The task for plucking is 8 seers. The plucking task has not been altered during recent years except when leaf has been short and then the task is reduced. The *ticca* rate for plucking is 2 pice for a three pound unit, which is going to be the standard rate on all the gardens belonging to the Jorhat Tea Company. The plucking cost works out roughly to Rs. 4-8-0 per maund of *pucca* tea. We intend shortly to give 2 pice for a seer and half of leaf. Last year my plucking cost me 2 pice a seer, but the estimate was only one pice a seer.

A deduction of 6 pounds is made for the basket by starting the scale at 6 pounds. For leaf we make a further deduction. The average weight of the basket is probably 5 pounds. Supposing a plucker brings in 25 pounds she would be credited with 16 pounds. A woman would get her full *hazira* even when leaf was short; we work it out on the average basis. The agreement money is entered up as pay. Last year the cost for a seer of green leaf was 6.06 pies; this year it would be less. The plucking rate would be Rs. 4-0-0 as against Rs. 5 last year.

The task for deep hoeing used to be 15 *nals*. Now it is 20 *nals* for a one "chop," which is really a medium hoe. The task for light hoeing remains unaltered. There is no limit to *ticca* earnings. I know coolies who can earn one *hazira* and two *ticcas*, that is, 12 annas a day.

We write off as irrecoverable loans about Rs. 400 a year on the average. This figure represents mostly cash advances and rice advances, the latter to pregnant women. Also if a woman has to attend to a child in hospital, she gets a full *hazira* for that day. This has all along been my practice.

Agreements are given for one year since the introduction of Act XII. We give a bonus of Rs. 12 for men and Rs. 8 for women.

Q.—If the Act was abolished, would it make much difference to the garden?

A.—It would make much difference to the coolies who would still want the agreement money.

Q.—Would you give it to them if the Act was abolished?

A.—That is rather a difficult question. We would wait and see.

As a rule we do not find any difficulty in getting coolies to go into hospital as indoor patients.

Q.—Taking the average coolie, would you say that he is as well off for clothes now as he was before the war?

A.—I think he is much better off now than he was before the war. Standard cloth is sold here. Of course there are a certain class of people who are just as badly off as they were before the war.

Provided a coolie works, I would say that taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

It is neither possible nor desirable from the garden or from the coolie point of view to convert concessions into an increase in money wages.

Cinnamara. It is always possible for the coolies of my garden to get access to the Manager when making complaints.

Q.—Do you, as a rule, have a lot of complaints from coolies direct?

A.—I have a lot of Oriyas and it is their custom to bring up a lot of petty complaints.

The working population on the garden is 983 souls. There are 200 acres of land for cultivation divided among most of the working coolies. There is one *kaya's* shop on the garden. The *kaya* lends money to the garden coolies, in this way that the latter pawn their utensils sometimes. The interest charged is 2 annas in the rupee per month, but I discourage this myself as much as possible by giving advances. The giving of advances acts as a check to a certain extent. This pawning takes place with those coolies who are improvident and do not care to work, but on the other hand like to keep themselves going by stealing, selling firewood, etc., and pawning their utensils.

I make no concessions to new coolies. Formerly my predecessor used to give new coolies a rupee more than the old coolies, but I raised the pay of the old coolies to the level of the new coolies, making no distinction between the two.

About 10 coolies absconded in 1921.

Q.—Why did they abscond?

A.—Because they had plenty of money.

The agreement money is paid to the coolies as a bonus and is not recovered. It is in addition to the wages. I think we pay Government Re. 1-8-0 a *bigha* for the land we give coolies. Coolies have to pay much higher rates in the *busteas*. During the first year when new land is broken up for cultivation in the garden the rent is remitted.

Q.—What is the rent charged for a coolie's hut 10' x 12'?

A.—It would be very, very difficult to fix the rent.

Q.—You sold rice at the concession rate of Rs. 5 a maund when it was dear. Could not that rice be distributed to the coolies in the way of increased wages?

A.—Yes, it could have been done, but I don't see the object of it. If we did so, the *kaya* might keep the price over and above what we gave it to the coolies for, and the very fact that we sell it at a low rate tends to keep down the *kaya's* price.

Q.—Could not the concession of medical attendance be converted into cash?

A.—No. I can never imagine a coolie going into hospital and paying for his medicine.

Q.—Does the Government not supply medicines free of cost to the ryots who cannot afford to pay for the medicines?

A.—I believe so.

Q.—Should not tea-gardens also supply medicines free of cost?

A.—Yes, we do so.

Q.—Why look upon it as a concession?

A.—I have no reason to give for that.

Mr. Withers:—Q.—Do you prefer the monthly system or the unit system?

A.—I prefer the monthly system.

Q.—Do you think that labour now is generally adopting a higher standard of living than it did 8 or 10 years ago?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Do you think it is fair that the coolie should earn enough or get opportunities to earn enough in order to meet the higher standard of living?

A.—He is earning more now than he did before, and the more the coolie gets the higher his standard rises.

I was in Sylhet for about 7 months and the Dooars 6 months; the rest of my time in Assam.

President:—Q.—Was Act XIII made use of because it was cheaper to work under it than Act VI?

A.—I don't think so.

Q.—But there were certain obligations imposed by Act VI such as the supply of rice at Rs. 3 and you have got rid of it?

A.—Yes. In Mangaldai we stocked a certain amount of rice but the coolies used to get their supplies at Rs. 2-8-0 a maund in the local bazaar.

Cinnamara. live in families. You hear the argument constantly put forward that "if more wages were paid no more work would be done," that the coolie is content to get along with a mere existence and that he sits in the house idling away his time. I ask "What is the incentive to earn more money? Has any bonus been paid during recent years?" As one looks down the Reports of the 68 Companies of tea-gardens during the prosperous years, one finds that about 45 were earning anything from, say, 15 *per cent.* up to, say, 50 *per cent.* in dividends. The remedy that offers itself to my view is that if you want a man to do more work, you have got to "enlarge his outlook." The higher the man rises in the social scale, the greater his requirements. As we know "the luxuries of one generation become the necessities of the next," and that applies to the coolie. Welfare movements, I think, might do something to give the coolie a larger outlook and to give him an incentive to more work.

With regard to the present wages: I have in some cases seen books; I have often had long friendly chats with various planters, and from enquiry I learn that the average *hazira* for a man is 3 annas 6 pies to 4 annas, for a woman 3 annas to 3 annas 6 pies, for a child 1 anna to 2 annas; but that a man might earn 4 annas extra, a woman 3 annas extra, and during the plucking season more; a boy or girl could earn 1 anna or 2 annas extra. Now these various *Padres* who, as I said, originally came from the depressed classes—and all of them are educated and speak English—seemed to think that the *hazira* should be 6 annas for a man, and 4 annas for a woman, and I was told by residents down country that in Chota Nagpur the men earn 6 annas and women 4 annas and that prices were lower than in Assam, and the cost of living less.

Again, tasks vary according to the different soils—ten to twelve *nals* are required for deep hoeing and fifteen to twenty-five for light hoeing. Occasionally perhaps—I qualify all my statements—sufficient consideration is not given by some men to soils in different districts. For instance, a very senior man said to me about a certain man: "*Padre*, he is asking for trouble; he does not understand the soil of our district and asks for 25 *nals* when it is impossible to do more than 12 a day."

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—Can you give the name of your informant?

A.—No, it would not be fair to him.

Now then coming to grievances—here I would again qualify my statements—most men are doing all they can for their labour, many men would do more, but in some cases they are held up by their Directors and Agents. Many at Home at the present time do not realise the changed conditions in India, and personally I feel that if the Commission can help to open the eyes of the Home Boards they would assist many planters in their difficulties. There is one grievance that has been spoken about, and that is, the coolie in some cases has difficulty in approaching his *sahib*—and on most gardens I believe for a coolie to approach his *sahib* is quite possible, but not on all; hence occasional trouble. The coolie too fears the *babu*, and though the coolie approaches his *sahib*, the *babu* will on occasion have his own back afterwards. I was also told by *Padres* from Ranchi that the Province of Chota Nagpur sent large numbers of coolies to Assam, but that the census returns showed no increase in the population of these people in Assam. I have not been able to verify the figures, but one has read these various resolutions on immigrant labour, and one sees the various black lists, but I must say, after all I have heard, that I doubt the completeness of some of the death-rate returns among the coolie population. I have seen a good number of figures and in some cases found the death-rate exceeded the birth-rate. The great majority of the men of course play fair, but I have heard it at many places from Europeans and Indians that occasionally numbers are put down as absconding instead of, as a Planter expressed it, "Kingdom Come."

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—Have you ever seen any instances yourself?

A.—I found two coolies in my own compound—one dead, the other in a dying condition, whom I sent to the hospital. Of course it is possible these coolies had run away from hospital.

Again, speaking of hospitals I might mention that I took a short medical course in England, also a course in Tropical Hygiene and Sanitation. I have worked in Mission dispensaries, and have seen a number of dispensaries, Government and Mission, on the other side as well as on this side of India, and I must say that in some cases things are not satisfactory. Hospitals are dirty, and there seems to be in some places a want of necessary instruments. As regards sanitation, I have served on the Municipality of a big Indian city, and on the Sub-Committees, and I do think that the high mortality might be reduced by latrine.

The *bustees* are not so bad, but when you see large numbers of people living in lines, the soil round about those lines must be in a terrible condition. I hear the argument constantly used that you cannot teach these people to use latrines. I was in the Quetta Cantonment before the war. There we had some few thousands of these depressed classes employed on the dirty work of the Cantonment and living in lines very similar to those we have here on tea-gardens. At the end of every line there was a latrine and the people there used the latrine or the authorities soon knew the reason why.

Again I think that something could be done such as has been done in other parts of India in educating the people with regard to the causes of disease. For instance, we, in Quetta, got out a large number of posters with regard to tuberculosis, plague and cholera (illustrations shown to the Committee). We plastered these hills in various places. Few of the people could read but a large number look at the pictures and invariably ask those who can read as to what is the meaning of the pictures, and this serves as a means of education.

With regard to agreements, here again I have been told by the Chota Nagpur *Padres* that at the time of recruiting, the coolies are promised land and this serves as a great attraction in getting them up to Assam. I find here that some of the coolies do not realise that at the end of the year they are free. Again I repeat my qualification, the vast majority of men play fair, but here and there you do find a man exercising undue pressure. The bahu, for instance, tells the coolies that they were ill certain days and they have perhaps another month or two to serve.....

Mr. McMorran :—*Q.*—Sir, if this gentleman is going to make these charges I protest. I object to so many general statements of his with all these qualifications?

Witness :—*A.*—I cannot give names, but as I have already said, I qualify my statements.

Mr. McMorran.—*Q.*—You qualify them to the extent of making them useless?

Mr. McMorran to the President (continuing):—We are not going to accept an *ex parte* statement by one who has not come in actual contact with the labour. I protest on the ground that we must have first-hand evidence in qualification of the various general statements put forward by this witness. Most of the statements are not relevant.

President :—I think a good deal is relevant. (*Mr. McMorran here left the room protesting that general statements should not be admitted. The President then put the question to the vote and the remaining members seeing no objection, the witness was allowed to continue his evidence.*)

Witness (continuing):—As I say, I qualify my statements. I have heard some of these things from down country and I have heard many of them up here—in some cases from Europeans and in regard to the others from educated responsible Indians, not from coolies.

I am sorry, gentlemen, to bring up these various things, but I believe there are grievances to put right, and after consultation with my Bishop and other responsible people, I feel it my duty to do so.

There is one other thing I would like to refer to, namely, the "welfare movement." As you know in Bengal and Madras such things have been started. It does help to bring in the "human element." For instance a good deal has been done in regard to the education of *dhais* and midwives and a good deal more can be done, if Government could make a grant for it as is done in some other Provinces in India. Sports and games would make the lives of these people more cheerful and happy. It is the dead monotony that tells on anybody and the more you can keep a man's time and attention occupied in such diversions, the less trouble there would be for Government and the planters. That is all, gentlemen, I have to say.

President.—I think most of what you have said contains a great deal that is of interest and importance.

No. 120.—DR. GEORGE, C. WINCHESTER, M.D., *Medical Officer, Jhanzie Tea Co., Ltd., etc.* :—

I have been 16 years with the Kanan Devan Hills Produce Company, the Jhanzie Company, and 30 years in tea-gardens. There are 20 gardens under my charge.

Cinnamara.

I cannot say off-hand what is the total labour force on the various gardens, but on the average perhaps there are over 1,000 coolies on each garden. There is no latrine system on the gardens.

Q.—Do you think that in congested lines with a large population, latrines are essential?

A.—I think so. With the *bustee* system of lines, it would be impossible to introduce latrines. To begin with it would be difficult to get people to use the latrine and moreover the cost would be prohibitive. I have not definitely made any special recommendations for the introduction of a latrine system because the gardens are pretty healthy. We have not as much hookworm as we used to have in years gone by.

Q.—Is that due to the fact that the lines are not congested?

A.—We are very careful in the matter of this disease. A certain amount of care is taken of the lines and cleanliness is enforced. As soon as the disease makes itself known we tackle it at once.

Dr. Williams.—Q.—What are the diseases causing most trouble on tea-gardens in this district?

A.—Lately we have had more influenza than anything else; also malaria and *anchylostomiasis*. There has been a certain increase within the last few years of cases of tuberculosis. As a rule these cases are isolated.

Q.—Is there any system of keeping births and deaths, e.g., from the 1st of January to the 31st December?

A.—A return of births and deaths is sent to the Deputy Commissioner every month.

Q.—Are the books on the garden kept from the beginning of the year or from the Government inspection day?

A.—They are kept as births and deaths occur. On some gardens births were not written until the children reached a certain age, but that has been stopped now.

In 1921 at	{	Meleng the death-rate was 22.1 per mille.
		Meleng the birth-rate 25.75 per mille.
		Nakachari the death-rate 11.4 per mille.
		Nakachari the birth-rate 21.5 per mille.
		Rajmai the death-rate was 24 per mille.
		Rajmai the birth-rate 33 per mille.

Q.—What is your opinion about the reliability of these statistics?

A.—I can only say that they are absolutely correct.

Q.—What is the worst death-rate you have ever had?

A.—I cannot remember what it was. We have had one garden—Gabru—on the black list owing to influenza. The death-rate on that garden reached 70 per mille. We had 50 deaths in a week. We have very little cholera and dysentery. I am quite satisfied with the water-supply. The majority of the gardens have tanks in this part of the country; there are wells also.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad.—Q.—Are the indents for medicines for all the gardens sent through you?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the expenditure per head on medicine?

A.—I cannot tell you because I do not work that out. I work out the quantity of medicines required for the year and the garden office works out the cost.

Q.—Is it your experience that indents are higher than they ought to be?

A.—There is always more medicine than is required.

Q.—Have you to pass through the *bustees* whenever you go from garden to garden?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it your experience that cases of hookworm are fewer in the *bustees* than in the garden?

A.—You don't see much hookworm in the *bustees*.

Q.—Have you investigated in the villages?

A.—No, but I have on the gardens.

Mr. Dawson.—Q.—I suppose if there is a lot of anæmia, it weakens the labour force?

A.—Undoubtedly.

Q.—If the effect of latrines in congested lines was to lessen anæmia, it may be cheaper in the long run even if the latrine system costs a good deal. Is that possible? Cinnamara.

A.—On some gardens it would be a success, but on others I think it would be a total failure. It may be a good thing to have latrines in congested areas. I have no practical experience however about latrines.

Q.—Do you think the average coolie is as well clothed to-day as he was before the war from your own observation?

A.—I don't think he is.

Q.—In the gardens under your control, are many blankets given either free or at reduced rates?

A.—Yes, on all gardens to weakly people, and at reduced rates to coolies in the majority of the gardens.

Q.—If a coolie has not got sufficient clothing, say, in the rains to be able to change when he gets wet, would that affect his health?

A.—It is possible but a coolie could do without clothing till the wet clothes get dry. For instance, when they come up they have absolutely little or no clothing.

Q.—Take the cold weather for example; if a coolie has not got sufficient clothes he is more liable to pneumonia?

A.—Undoubtedly.

Q.—Do you think it is a good thing for a woman on a rainy day to take out an infant with her?

A.—She cannot help herself. Of course from the point of view of the infant it is better not to subject it to exposure.

We have indoor accommodation in our hospitals and no difficulty has been experienced in getting coolies to become indoor patients. As a matter of fact they come of their own accord in a large number of cases. It is a fact that the Santals hate going into hospital, but it has been an old custom on my gardens, except where the lines are broken up and scattered into little *bustees*.

Q.—Would you say that the success of hospital treatment depends largely on the personality of the doctor babu?

A.—Yes, as also on the Manager. I would not put one without the other.

Q.—Do you think that something depends on making the hospital building itself rather attractive instead of the dingy hole that we have seen in some cases?

A.—Yes, but only if patients are well treated.

Pregnant women are given 3 to 4 months' leave, with half *haziras* as a rule. On one or two gardens full *haziras* are given.

Q.—Are there cases where they do not get *haziras*, the argument being that a particular woman belongs to a well-to-do family?

A.—I do not think so. The general rule is to give half *haziras*.

Taking the gardens under my control, I would say that the birth-rate is about level with the death-rate. Some gardens have higher birth-rates.

As the health of the labour force improves the birth-rate improves. Amongst the Oriyas venereal disease is very common. They suffer a lot from syphilis and that affects the birth-rate to an appreciable extent by bringing about a number of abortions and miscarriages.

Q.—In 1918-19 a lot of Oriyas were recruited on your gardens. Would you call them satisfactory on the whole?

A.—A large number of the labourers were of a very bad quality. They were not up to the usual physique. That was the year before the influenza epidemic.

Q.—Do you think there was room for improvement in the way of rejecting unhealthy recruits in the recruiting districts?

A.—Yes, many ought never to have been sent up. Large numbers arrived in a very emaciated condition.

Q.—Is medical examination in the recruiting district insisted on by all your gardens?

A.—I think so.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—You referred to Oriyas suffering from various diseases. Were they suffering from these diseases before coming up?

Cinnamara.

A.—They arrived with those diseases. Sometimes of course venereal disease is contracted up here by a large number infected.

Dr. Williams:—Q.—Was it recent infection or old infection?

A.—Old infection.

No. 121.—MR. A. MOFFAT, Superintendent, Jhanzi Tea Company:—

I am Superintendent of the Jhanzi Tea Company. I have been about 31 years in the Company and as Superintendent since May 1908. I have been all my time with the Jhanzi Company.

The acreage under tea including the Borpatra Division is about 5,000 acres. The labour force including *faltoo* labour is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per acre. We have retired coolies living on our land and a good many *faltoo* workers who are not on the books. We have been working on the unit system for a year now. But with regard to hoeing and pruning we have been working on the unit for the last three years. We extended the unit to plucking since last year. I prefer the unit system partly because it involves less work in book-keeping. We pay fortnightly irrespective of the month, i.e., every second Saturday, and close books on Thursday. The coolie knows exactly what he earns; as an example of the success of the system, I may refer to the results at the *kaya's* shop. The *kaya* told me that since the introduction of the fortnightly system very few things have been put in pawn by the coolies.

Under the old system coolies never did any *ticca* in the cold weather and that was a disadvantage. I have figures illustrating their present ability to earn money. This is an abstract from the Government return showing the difference between 1914 and 1921. There are 8 typical cases showing that for deep hoeing the good men earned in January 1922 under the unit system Rs. 10, Rs. 11, Rs. 12, and Rs. 13 a month and the inferior men from Rs. 4-14-0 to Rs. 6-15-0. Eighty per cent. may be put as good and 20 per cent. inferior. The Oriya class predominates on my gardens but they are not easily amenable to discipline and are given to thieving.

There was trouble on two gardens in my neighbourhood—Borsilla and Amguri struck work on the 20th of this month, Halwating on the 21st, Seleng on 22nd, Boisahabi on 24th. At Gabru there was a riot on the Friday and the coolies struck work on Saturday, the 25th. The latter is one of the Assam Company gardens. Before the 20th there was no trouble whatsoever. There was never a word and not a grumble about their pay. As to the cause we are not in a position to give very much away about it because it is difficult to get evidence. If there is anything said, the people would be warned and our efforts in getting further evidence would be unsuccessful. But Mr. S. tells me there are two leaders from outside; one is a *darzi* (tailor) and another a villager. Most of our coolies did not know what they were out for. They apparently got orders from outside. Mr. S. told me on Thursday night that he could not give me any further evidence, for reasons already stated. Apparently there is sufficient to show that it was all engineered from outside. This confirms my own information.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Is it your opinion that the presence of the Labour Committee is in any way the cause for an opportunity to strike?

A.—I do think so.

Q.—Can you give any reasons why you think so?

A.—The attention of the coolie was concentrated on the wages question and he was made to understand that the idea of the Commission was to increase his wages, and he was told that by striking and putting pressure he would get an increase straightaway.

President:—Q.—That has not been the result in any other district; it is peculiar to the Sibsagar district?

A.—I understand they have had grievances in other places as well, but now it is certainly not a case of wages. At Gabru the coolies were earning 5 annas a day and were quite contented. When they saw they were getting nothing and were straightened up by the presence of the police on the garden they turned out to work and three days after the strike was over, 124 men out of a hoeing body of 200 actually earned 8 annas. They were actually on the same section and on the same rate. That shows that the coolies could easily have earned more money if they wanted to before the strike and that it was not a matter of wages.

Mr. Dawson :—(Quotes from proceedings of Jorhat Sub-Committee of February 1922.) Have you heard at any time that the Labour Enquiry Committee in any way interfered with the labour force on gardens? Cinnamara.

A.—No.

Q.—Had you any reason to believe that the Committee would interfere with the labour?

A.—I had reason to believe that questions would be put to the labourers.

Q.—Have you heard what questions were put by the Committee either to the Managers or to the coolies?

A.—No.

Q.—Supposing a coolie was casually met by a Member of the Committee and he was asked what pay he was getting, how long his *hazira* took to complete, what work he had been doing?

A.—I don't think questions of that nature would cause any harm, but I think we ought to have been advised that questions would be of that nature.

President :—*Q*.—I think objection to Members of the Committee questioning coolies was taken before the strikes occurred?

A.—I shall give you one of the reasons in regard to questioning coolies. A Superintendent of Police was questioning the coolies of a certain garden and they were telling a parcel of deliberate lies to the Superintendent within the hearing of their own Manager. They were saying that they had to do 20 *nals* when the task was only 12. There is no established morality amongst coolies and they would take every opportunity of making out a case for themselves.

Mr. Dawson :—Speaking for myself, I may tell you that at the time of my visit to various gardens the Manager himself asked me to question his coolies.

Witness :—I have no objection to the proceedings of the Jorhat Sub-Committee of 15th February 1922 and my forwarding letter of February 1922 being placed on the record of the proceedings of the Committee.

I consider Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for a man and woman, respectively, an ample monthly wage provided rice does not cost the coolie more than Rs. 5 a maund. If it costs Rs. 7 a maund, then the wages might not be sufficient.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q*.—In answer to question 15, the Jorhat Sub-Committee states "We do not agree that there has been any widespread feeling of unrest in this district. Grievances crop up in all communities the world over, but apart from political interference there has been nothing but which Managers could have settled in the usual way." It is possible that there were some grievances which Managers in some cases did not settle in the usual way?

A.—Of course, I suppose there are exceptions to every rule, but I am not sure that I have heard of any.

I put my coolies under a one-year agreement and sometimes for more than one year, *e.g.*, when the coolie comes up to me and says he wants to buy a cow. As a rule, we put them under agreement for one year only. I do not know of any cases where coolies were put under agreement for three years. Personally, I discourage even two years' agreements. Minor children are not put under agreement.

Q.—Have you heard of a father signing a form undertaking that his child would work for one year?

A.—I have never heard of it.

If the agreement were abolished, I think we would still have to give the advance. We take the thumb impression on the agreement paper and it has a moral effect on the coolie.

On settled gardens, I don't think the coolies would abscond. I can only recollect having taken one case to court. New coolies are never put under agreement. But if a new coolie happened to fix up a marriage within a year of his arrival, he might, as a special privilege, be allowed an agreement.

The plucking rate in 1921 was on the average Re. 1-2-6 per maund of green leaf. The unit system for plucking has been in force one year now. Under the unit system I think the cost is going to work out more. Our estimate this year is Re. 1-4-0. Under the old system the *hazira* was 8 seers. On the unit system a woman gets two pice a unit. I have known of a woman having drawn Rs. 17-12-0 in one month. The unit system for hoeing has now been in existence three years. Deep hoeing costs a little more under the unit system, and for light hoeing there is

Cinnamara not very much difference. Cost of plucking has increased. Pruning varies very much now. Before the unit system was started the wages were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5; that was from about 1915. Before 1915 the wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4. We give concession rice and I consider it essential. If we had not been giving concession rice during the war, when prices were rising, the shop-keepers would have made it into a profiteering business and prices would have soared. We give concession rice so as to keep down the market prices outside. We give 4 *dhons* to the rupee in the case of paddy and 8 seers to the rupee in the case of rice. We have never on any occasion charged more than Rs. 5 a maund. In fact, we sell it at a lower rate to new coolies.

Q.—Is the average coolie as well clothed to-day as he was before the war?

A.—I think he is. Recently coolies have had opportunities of getting cloth at reasonably cheap rates.

Mr. Withers :—Q.—Have you any objection to putting new coolies under agreement?

A.—I have never thought of the matter, but I don't think I would object. It would be a good thing in the way of giving the new coolie a start.

Q.—Which system do you prefer—the unit or the monthly system?

A.—From the labourer's point of view, I prefer the unit system. As I say a strong man could do more than a weak man and I don't see why he should not be benefited to a greater extent. Under the unit system he does earn more than the weak man.

The present standard of living is I think higher as coolies get far more fish and fowls and ducks now than they used to get.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—When recommending the wages Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women, did you calculate them on the daily expenses of a coolie or merely by guess work?

A.—They were arrived at partly by calculation and partly by actual experience. Two men for instance who had not been three months on the garden, had saved Rs. 11-8-0 between them so that I think our calculation is not very far wrong. It depends very much on the individual coolie himself. You get improvident people who would be hard up with Rs. 12 a month. This is how we arrived at the calculation; we took the amount of rice, *dal* and salt required in a day and added the total together and allowed Rs. 1-8-0 a month for clothing. Of course we started with the presumption that rice was selling at Rs. 5 a maund.

Q.—Are you in favour of the abolition of Act XIII?

A.—I cannot say I am in favour of abolishing it, because it has a certain amount of moral effect which is useful. As far as I can see, it has done no harm and I don't see any reason for causing trouble by taking it away.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—Have you had any experience of political agitation in this neighbourhood?

A.—I have seen a fair amount of it. We had a man a *mochi* by caste—who came into the lines and we dealt pretty strongly with him. We have been policing our bazaar now for the last 6 months and have managed to keep it going without any great trouble. A rival bazaar was started recently and we made the coolies return to the old site. Trouble started some time during the rains.

Q.—How did these coolies get to know that we were making these enquiries?

A.—By outside agitators—the go-betweens. As I say we are investigating now and I am not in a position to give any evidence on that point. Mr. S. is getting on the track, and I cannot tell you anything at this juncture.

Q.—Have you reason to suspect that your babus know anything about politics or the intentions of this Committee?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What view did they take of the matter?

A.—They are more or less sitting on the fence. Some of them have been going away to the villages, but their jobs are too good to throw up lightly.

Q.—Have they been working against the interest of the garden or have they been disturbing the coolies?

A.—I have had no evidence of that on my own gardens, but on other gardens I know the disturbance was traced directly to the head babus.

Q.—Can you give any reasons for such action?

A.—It was purely using the coolie as a tool and causing trouble to the *sahibs*. I have been told that they were trying to get the gardens for themselves.

Q.—Did Mr. Gandhi's visit make any difference to the atmosphere?

A.—I think it was in our favour. Of course Mahomed Ali lost his temper and hammered a few people at a railway station near us.

Q.—So the visit of Mr. Gandhi has proved beneficial whereas the Committee's visit has not proved beneficial?

A.—I think so, locally.

President :—Q.—Did the local Committee ask for European troops?

A.—The order was given on the evening of a conference in Shillong. The Tea Association had nothing to do with it whatever, except being represented at that conference. There was a petition sent in by this neighbourhood signed by 70 planters which had not reached Shillong then.

Q.—Were European troops asked for because danger was apprehended from the Assamese or from a general rising of the coolies on the estates?

A.—It had nothing to do with the coolies but the idea was that if the people saw a regiment of British troops it would show them that the British was after all a real living *Raj*, and the influence of marching a body of European troops through might settle the situation and prevent it hanging on and giving continued trouble.

Q.—Do you think that the march of the Assam Rifles has done any good?

A.—I certainly think so.

Q.—It has not prevented these strikes?

A.—They were unfortunately started two days before the troops arrived in our neighbourhood and, with the assistance of the Deputy Commissioner, the troops were diverted through the gardens.

On their arrival new coolies are segregated for a fortnight and fed separately and for a time they are put on easy work. Some new coolies have been setting a good example to the old ones by earning more money.

No. 122.—MR. B. J. DURANT, *Manager, Borpatra Division, Jhanzie Tea Company, Ltd.* :—

I have been about 17 years in Tea and about a year in the Jhanzie Tea Association. I have been most of my time in the recruiting districts, except for the period I have been in Assam.

My labour force is not sufficient at present. I have been recruiting in recent years. The average coolie on my garden works 6 to 7 hours a day.

My death-rate was considerably in excess of the birth-rate in 1920-21 because we had an epidemic of dysentery which took a heavy toll. My water-supply is good, but I would like to improve it. We have 3 wells and we have the river alongside. We send our cattle to the river, and sometimes when the water in the wells is scanty, the coolies avail themselves of the river supply. We have a good deal of hookworm. Our coolies are housed mostly in lines. I prefer the line system to the *bustee* system if there is no congestion. We have a septic tank installed at the hospital, but coolies do not care to use it, and we have had great difficulty in getting them to use the latrine. There is no latrine system attached to the lines.

It is not the case that we overwork our coolies owing to the shortage of labour and thus undermine their health. Sunday work in 1921 has been the exception rather than the rule. I think I only worked one Sunday in 1921 if I remember aright.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—You say that the sardar may not cut a *hezira* without consulting the Manager (*vide answer to question 10*). In what circumstances is the *hezira* cut?

A.—It is cut if the work is very bad and deliberately done.

Q.—Supposing a coolie did 12 *nals* deep hoxing and you considered it badly done, would he get anything for it?

A.—He would get something for it. If the sardar made the report I would look into the case personally and decide on its merits.

We work on the unit system entirely.

Cinnamara. The sardars draw commissions on the coolies' earnings; it is in addition to their fixed pay. We give the commission to encourage the sardars to get coolies out to work.

In my answer to question 17 for the word "entirely" please substitute the word 'partly'. I said that the causes of the sporadic nature of the troubles that have occurred apart from deliberate political agitation are *entirely* due to coolies not having their grievances immediately attended to sympathetically by the European staff. I might elucidate the point by saying that the *Sahib* may leave things to be dealt with by the *kerani* babu instead of attending to them personally, and in some cases perhaps this may have been the cause of trouble.

As regards deep hoeing the alteration of the task is left to the discretion of the Manager.

The daily rates for a full task are 5 annas, 4 annas and 2 annas; tasks that we cannot give a unit for are paid 5 and 4 annas, e.g., unloading coal.

The unit on my garden is one anna. The units have been so fixed that a man can earn 5 annas a day or more. It would take 6 hours at the outside for an average coolie to do a task of deep hoeing.

Rice at present sells at 4 to 6 seers for a rupee. The country is not very much opened out and rates are raised to any height if there is no supply of rice on the garden. In 1913 rice was sold from 10 to 14 seers to the rupee. The price of cloth to-day is 60 per cent. more than in 1913.

Assuming that rice is selling at not more than Rs. 5 a maund, a coolie would require Rs. 7 a month to keep him in health and reasonable comfort together with a prospect of saving a little. The principle in fixing the rate of rice has been to give it at not more than 2 annas a seer.

The cost per maund of green leaf in 1921 was I think Re. 1-4-0.

Under the old system the coolie used to do *ticca*. For instance if he found he had nothing to do at home after completing his task or on a leave day, he would make a little money by *ticca*.

We have written off about Rs. 3,000 a year as irrecoverable loans which represent rice and cash advances.

Q.—Would it be fair to say that this was written off because the coolies could not pay it back?

A.—Yes.

I have started a weaving establishment. We have got only 2 looms going at present. I started one in the early part of the year and have begun with the second one now. The coolies appreciate buying hand-woven cloth very much.

Coolies are put under contract for one year and the bonus is Rs. 12 and Rs. 10 for men and women respectively. I am in favour of doing away with the agreements. I would personally give the coolies a monthly bonus of Rs. 2 in the case of men and women and Re. 1 in the case of a working child provided of course they worked 24 days in the month. I would give the bonus at the beginning of the month.

Q.—In your covering letter to the answers you say "Also I should like to see free recruiting established." Do you mean to say that anybody could send a sardar and bring up coolies without reference to anybody?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would that not lead to abuses?

A.—It might, but it would not if you had a sardari system just as in the Doocars.

Q.—Do you think you can get on without agreements?

A.—Yes, provided the bonus is given.

The rates for the cloth woven at our factory are:—A *sari* would cost Rs. 4 to Rs. 4-8 but if I find a coolie is hard up and not able to pay for it at that rate I might sell it for Rs. 2; the usual rate however is Rs. 3. *Dhotis* cost me Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-4 but I sell them at Re. 1-8.

The recruiting districts I have been in are Chota Nagpur, Daltonganj, Chajbassa. I have never been to the Central Provinces.

The coolies eat a good deal of fish and fowls.

Q.—In arriving at the figures Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 which you say would be a decent living wage, did you include fish and fowls in the expenses of the coolie?

A.—I worked out no details as regards fish and fowls. I simply put it at that Cinnamara from experience. The coolie cooks his food in oil and I estimated the monthly expenditure on oil at 2 annas to 4 annas. As regards clothes I made a calculation in regard to his outfit, which was provided by the garden. I cannot say how many clothes a coolie would require in a year as that must depend upon himself. Of course in arriving at those figures I put down a certain amount for cloth and a certain amount for other luxuries.

I have a *kaya's* shop on my garden. I do not think he lends money to the coolies. My garden is a new garden and coolies have got a good deal of land for cultivation. I cannot say how much land they have, as no record is kept.

No. 123.—MR. A. PHILLIPSON, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Jorhat* :—

I have now been 13 or 14 years in the service. I know the district fairly well. I have been here for about 10 months now and I was in charge for a time in 1917, and was Subdivisional Officer, Sibsagar, in 1915.

President :—Q.—You have had a number of tea-garden strikes since you have been here?

A.—Yes, for the last 10 months.

Q.—Could you state briefly the chief periods of those strikes?

A.—Strikes have occurred in the district frequently for the last year or two and there has been an epidemic of them at least since May last. My fortnightly confidential reports frequently referred to them. There was a strike at Letekujan (Jorhat) on 28th May 1921; on 13th June 1921 agitators spoke to coolies at Kanu, Bogabag, and Tinglibam; on 30th June 1921 I reported labour disturbances at Dahingeapar, Nayabari and Nagadhuli. There were complaints against the sardar at Dahingeapar for unfair treatment of coolies in the matter of rice weighing. Subsequently at Teok Rajbari (Sibsagar) there were disturbances on account of alleged grievances against the Indian staff. At Borhat the head moharir who was at the bottom of the strike, was dismissed, and the coolies returned to work. At Towkok a strike was apprehended but averted. Khumtai (Sibsagar) coolies were incited to strike. Then again on 9th July 1921 I asked the Subdivisional Officer of Sibsagar to give me a summary of garden disturbances at that time in his subdivision; and I reported to Government disturbances at Teok, Borahi, Borhat, Towkok, Khumtai, Diping, Suntok (serious rioting), Joboka, Banfera, with apprehension of disturbances at Cherraideo, Atkhel, and Mazenga. Again on 30th September 1921 an agitator, since convicted, incited coolies to strike at Bokahula. There was a similar attempt to stir up trouble at Borhat. On the 26th of December 1921 (*vide* fortnightly report) I reported that *ex-tea-garden* coolies had been enlisted as volunteers to disturb labour. In my fortnightly report of the 31st January 1922, I reported eight strikes, but about the time that I despatched this report there were actually 14 at one time.

Q.—The Manager of Kanu garden told us there was a strike on his garden in June 1921. Did anybody go there to enquire into the matter or was it settled?

A.—I do not remember. We have had a large number of strikes in the district and it has been quite impossible to deal with every one of them. If however a strike appears to have been of a peaceful nature, the officials usually did not interfere, but if there is any apprehension of a disturbance it is the business of the local officers to prevent a breach of the peace.

I have on occasion visited gardens where strikes were reported to be a danger to the public peace, and I sometimes found that by speaking to the coolies and explaining to them the simple truth I was successful in getting the coolies to return to their work and in avoiding any disturbance of the public peace. For instance, lately at Gotanga I found that the coolies there were being incited by agitators in the locality and I explained to them the simple truth with the result that they all went back to work. There have been various strikes lately in Sibsagar and Jorhat and I had a report only a couple of days ago to the effect that there were a number of strikes in the Golaghat subdivision and that official interference was unnecessary.

Q.—What do you give as the chief reason for all these strikes?

A.—The coolies invariably say that they want more pay. If you go and question them they say "We want more pay." I have frequently examined the books in the course of my visits to gardens. I noticed that the average earnings of the coolies were

Cinnamara, not particularly bad. But I say frankly a great deal depends on other conditions, whether they cultivate land and how long they take to do their tasks. All these things must be taken into consideration along with their wages.

At Suffry there was a riot. The coolies assembled armed with sticks and *kudalis*. There is a case pending in this connection. At Gabru tea estate the coolies suddenly demanded more pay on pay-day. They threw stones on the tea-house roof and came armed with sticks and made a great deal of noise. I think they committed slight assaults on one or two mohurrirs and there was a certain amount of violence, but nothing very serious occurred. Political agitation was going on all this time.

Q.—What was the cause of the Suntok riot?

A.—I don't think any definite reason was given except that they said they wanted more pay and they also had a grievance against the Indian establishment on the garden. In fact the coolies threatened to murder the Indian staff. I submitted a special report to Government in connection with that occurrence.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—How far would you say that economic reasons are at the bottom of those strikes?

A.—It is an extremely difficult question to answer, but I should say that had all the coolies been quite contented agitators would have had far less influence. On the other hand, had there been no agitation the coolies might have been a little slower to disclose their grievances or to make a great noise about them. I think both causes must be taken together; one re-acts on the other.

President .—Q.—But the noticeable feature of these strikes is that they occur on a whole series of gardens in one neighbourhood?

A.—I should explain that by saying that coolies get to know what is happening in the locality, and I have not the slightest doubt that political agitators have assisted them in this. In fact we have seized papers which showed there was a definite organization throughout the district not only to disturb the garden bazaars with the object of drawing away the coolies from the gardens and speaking to them, but there were papers showing that they intended to get at the labour.

Q.—Do you think conditions are better now? We have seen no outward or visible signs of any unrest during our tour in this district?

A.—Yes, there is a very distinct and marked lull in the non-co-operation movement at the present moment. The turning point was perhaps about the 5th of February. On the 6th February about 80 villages were proclaimed in the gazette notification for additional police and it was clearly made known to the people that if the previous lawless activities continued responsible villages would have to pay the penalty by bearing a share in the cost of the additional police. Soon after we began to realize the cost in many villages. We also made it known that failure to pay land revenue by a certain date would involve the defaulters in the risk of having to bear a share in that cost and soon after a column of the Assam Rifles arrived in the district. People found that they had to pay their land revenue and that brought them to the bazaars and things began to be more normal. At present I have not heard of a single bazaar having closed down. At the end of January or during the beginning of February nearly all the bazaars in the district were interfered with but now conditions are much better. I believe that underground agitation is still going on.

Mr. McVorrin :—Q.—I think I am correct in inferring that the position is due to a combination of economic and political causes and possibly the economic grievances might incline coolies to listen more freely to the suggestions of the agitators?

A.—I think so.

Q.—Is the agitation associated with Mr. Gandhi's name?

A.—Undoubtedly.

Q.—It is extraordinarily difficult to find out how far the economic argument can be traced because we found conditions varying on different gardens?

A.—Yes, I think it is a most difficult question to decide. If I may make a suggestion I should say the only way to do it is to take a considerable number of cases and then go into the coolies' budgets, the income and expenditure, and make a comparison with the coolie's budget in 1913 and 1914. Frankly I do not know whether he is better off though I have seen the wage returns. As I said, it depends on many conditions.

Q.—Have you any means of judging from your own knowledge as to whether the earnings of coolies generally are sufficient to meet the cost of living and also to enable them to save a little? Cinnamara.

A.—I have no definite means of judging, except by looking at the wages returns for the best period of the year and for the worst period. The wages vary from Rs. 5 and Rs. 6 to Rs. 11.

Q.—But I think you rightly stated that one would require to follow out the activities of the coolies.

A.—Yes, that is an important factor.

When I pay official visits to gardens I always ask what other occupations the coolies have and I find that only a certain number actually have other occupations; many of them have cattle.

Q.—For an exact idea of the coolie's well-being you would require to take into consideration these ancillary sources of income in cash, or whether they may be able to supplement the ordinary wages?

A.—Yes, that should be considered.

Q.—You have not yourself attempted to make out a budget with a view to comparing the income?

A.—No.

Mr. Das :—Q.—What do you consider the lowest wage a coolie should be given?

A.—I cannot say. But the lowest paid servant of my establishment, a *paniwala*, gets Rs. 12 a month.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—Might I ask whether the coming of this Committee is an adequate explanation for the series of strikes that have taken place this month in this district?

A.—I don't think so.

Q.—Do you think it has had a very disturbing effect on labour?

A.—Most of the disturbances which occurred here took place long before the Labour Committee was even contemplated.

President :—Q.—I suppose you know that the Committee have been asked by the local Sub-Committee of the Tea Association here not to question coolies and not to interfere with the labour in any way?

A.—I saw a copy of certain minutes and understood that the question had been discussed, but I did not know that they were putting it into effect by definitely asking the Committee not to interfere with the labour.

Q.—I suppose you agree that it is rather difficult to conduct an enquiry if you are not allowed to put questions to persons concerned in the matter?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that is a biased attitude to take up?

A.—I think that this attitude is ill-advised, unless there is actual disturbance on the garden at the time of enquiry.

28TH FEBRUARY 1922.

[MR. FOX ABSENT.]

No. 124.—MR. W. A. B. NICHOLLETT, *Manager, Cinnamara Tea Estate, Jorhat Tea Company.*

I am Manager of the Cinnamara Tea Estate. I have been 24 years in the Jorhat Tea Company and about 18 months in Cinnamara. Before that I was Manager of Seycotta for 10 years. I have been on all the gardens of the Jorhat Company but one.

We have not got the unit system. We work on the *hazira* system, but units are given for *ticca* work. The present system may be termed a modified unit system.

We pay Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women, respectively. The wage for children varies according to their age; it may go down to Rs. 3.

The total acreage under tea at Cinnamara is 1,017 acres. The outturn last year was 8½ maunds. The working population is 1.5 or a coolie and a half per acre.

Cinnamara. We employ some outside labour. I used to employ Assamese, but I now have a good many Bengalee villagers.

There are about 300 acres of rice land cultivated by the coolies. There is plenty more land available. I cut and cleared 37 acres last year for cultivation. I have brought no figures showing the proportion of the labour force under contract. We have not been giving 3-year agreements for some years now. I gave a few when I was on my last garden and had to stop the practice when I was told that it was no in order. I have not been giving them at Cinnamara.

Mr. Dawson:—*Q.*—How is the *hazira* book kept? Is the wage entered in annas or as 1 or $\frac{1}{2}$?

A.—At the present moment it is entered in units.

The task for deep hoeing is 20 *nals*. This is what they are doing at present; it is a kind of deep hoe. The task on the average would take about 5 hours to complete—I should say 6 hours.

Q.—What was the pay in 1915?

A.—I cannot remember, but it was raised two or three times. The wages were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 7 on the 1st January 1922.

Q.—From the garden returns submitted to Government it will be seen that the rate of pay in 1920 was Rs. 6 and Rs. 5, excluding *ticca*. It was raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 7 in January last. Why was the rise given?

A.—It was decided by the Board of Directors to give a rise. I suppose it was considered necessary to raise the pay in January owing to the high cost of living.

Q.—What would a coolie receive if he worked the whole month of 24 days in February?

A.—He would be paid as for 26 days.

Q.—Do you know what that works out to in the month?

A.—No, I have not worked it out.

Q.—We found on one of your gardens that the method of making the entries in the *hazira* book was to enter "3 annas, 4 annas, 4 annas, 3 annas; etc., *i.e.*, Re. 1-6 a week and for February it would work out as Rs. 5-8 for 24 working days. The loss to the coolie woman on the Rs. 6 monthly rate would be 8 annas. Is that your system in the *hazira* book?

A.—I am not writing up *haziras* like that. I am writing it up in units. For instance if a coolie does any *ticca* he would get say one or two units over and above his *hazira*.

Q.—Don't you write the *ticca* down in a separate book?

A.—Yes, that is done.

Q.—Is *ticca* entered up in the *hazira* book at all?

A.—I don't think it is.

Q.—In entering the *hazira* the system I have just described is I understand followed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It is made in order to avoid fractions and thus simplify the accounts?

A.—Yes; a woman would get 5 annas for the last 2 days of the week in order to make it work up to Rs. 6.

President:—But that was not the case in the *hazira* book I examined the other day.

Mr. Dawson:—*Q.*—You say that you enter up 4, 4 and 3 every day. What is your objection to entering up actuals?

A.—I have no objection. The reason why this was done was because we were going to have the unit system and we were told to prepare for it. Then the pay was raised and we found that it could not work out in even annas daily and therefore it was found necessary to follow that method.

Q.—You said just now that for a 24-day month like February a woman would get Rs. 5-8 instead of Rs. 6. Supposing the woman is under agreement for one year, what would the wage be entered down as?

A.—As Rs. 6.

Q.—But as a matter of fact the woman does not get it?

A.—Yes, for one month of the year.

Q.—So that to that extent she is losing?

A.—Yes, in that particular case.

There is much Sunday work in Cinnamara.

The plucking rate is 8 seers for a *hazira*. The *ticca* rate varies from one pice a seer to 2 pice a seer.

Q.—Was there a proposal that the rate should be 2 pice for $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers and the Managers met and said that it could not be done?

A.—I did not attend any such meeting.

We give concession rice. New coolies who have been on the garden for 6 months are given concession rice at Rs. 3 a maund; for the rest of the year they get it at Rs. 5 a maund. After that rice is sold to them at the market rate—of course this is not always the case, as we occasionally give them a concession. For instance if rice was selling in the market at Rs. 6-8 a maund I would give it at Rs. 6. We do make a loss on rice and paddy. I cannot give the loss for 1921 as I have not come prepared.

I have had no trouble on my garden. My birth-rate does not exceed my death-rate at present.

Q.—Is the garden unhealthy?

A.—I think it is a healthy garden.

There is a certain amount of hookworm, but not a great deal.

Q.—You say that wages have been increased. Can you say if the cost of working the garden has increased taking hoeing for example?

A.—Yes.

Children are put under agreement. In the case of children under 16 years, names or entries are put in the cash book, but in the case of children of 16 years and above, it is written up in the cash book and in the agreement book.

Any coolie can get concession rice provided I consider he is deserving of it. When I consider it no longer necessary, it is taken off.

Q.—Has your labour force decreased in the last 5 years?

A.—I cannot give you a direct answer, but I should not think it has decreased much. It may have decreased a little in 1918 owing to the influenza epidemic.

Q.—You say that the hoeing task is 20 *nals*?

A.—Yes, it is a *chop* hoe; it is not a double hoe.

Q.—The coolie gets an anna for 5 *nals*?

A.—Yes, that is the unit which he would get after his *hazira*.

Q.—We were told at Bokahula that it takes an average coolie 6 hours to do his task. I suppose the soil at Cinnamara is the same as at Bokahula?

A.—Most of Cinnamara is very light loamy soil. Bokahula is perhaps more sandy in places, and sand packs hard.

Q.—Can you give us the estimated cost of plucking last year?

A.—I have not brought the figures with me.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

I do not consider it possible and desirable to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages. As a matter of fact I think it ought not to be done. I think it would be disadvantageous to the coolie to make such a conversion.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—May I know why it is not in the interests of the coolie that he should be given these concessions in cash?

A.—I think he likes the concessions and as concessions he looks forward to them. He would probably get them in any case.

Q.—Don't you think the coolie would be more pleased if the concessions are given to him in the shape of so many rupees in a year?

A.—I cannot answer that because I cannot put myself in his place. What I have said is from my own point of view.

Q.—You have been getting some coolies from the *bustees* to work on your garden. Can you say what they are paid?

A.—We have stopped outside labour now. They used to be paid 5 annas about two years ago for 20 *nals*.

Cinnamara. Q.—Your present labour force I take it is enough to do the whole work of the garden?

A.—I have some villagers also who are Bengalees.

Q.—What do you pay these people?

A.—They get practically the same pay as the ordinary coolies, that is to say, Rs. 6 and Rs. 7; they are generally paid weekly.

A certain number of coolies have absconded during the last five years but I would not say that the number is large. They might have been enticed away perhaps owing to the proximity of a large town where they can get work as servants. The political situation also partly accounts for a certain number of absconders. Some of the men who absconded were under agreement but we never bothered about instituting cases against them. I have never prosecuted any one.

Q.—If Act XIII was abolished would it affect your labour force?

A.—Well, the Act is useful because it has a moral effect on the coolie, and moreover the coolie himself would not like to do without the bonus. I am in favour of retaining Act XIII.

New coolies are not put under contract until they have been 2 years on the garden. After that if they come up of their own accord and ask for the bonus, they are put under agreement for one year. The bonus is Rs. 12.

Q.—Do you find that new coolies are more liable to abscond than old coolies?

A.—They get home-sick and may abscond. Old settled coolies do not abscond except in cases where a woman is concerned.

Q.—Why are you in favour of retaining Act XIII?

A.—For one thing it is entirely to the interest of the coolie to retain the Act, and from the garden point of view it is a good thing. It gives the coolie to understand that he is not at liberty to throw up his work and clear off. He has got to work for the party who has engaged him. Morally he must be bound in some way.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—You have had no trouble on the garden. Is it a fact that your Superintendent asked that the Assam Rifles should march through your garden?

A.—Not that I know of.

Sardars get no commission for bringing up coolies to take the agreement.

The garden did fairly well in recruiting last year. This year we have recruited about 30 new coolies up to date. The influenza epidemic of 1918-19 affected recruiting a good deal.

Q.—Do you think that every labourer should work every day?

A.—I work 365 days in the year. At any rate I am perfectly certain that no coolie does work the full period of his agreement.

Q.—Has it been brought to your notice that latrines would be useful in the case of hookworm?

A.—Yes, by my Medical Officer and my Superintendent. We are taking a latrine system in hand. Moulds are being constructed for concrete blocks. The matter has been under consideration for a year. I received final orders about two months ago.

The total population on the garden would be roughly a coolie and a half per acre. My estimate for this year is Rs. 2,34,000, which is a little more than last year's estimate.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—Is it correct to say that four-fifths of that sum go to the coolies?

A.—I could not tell you; part of it goes in paying the coolie as this estimate is for the total expenditure on the garden.

Sardars get commission on *ticca* work.

No. 125.—MR. D. SLIMMON, *Superintendent of the Jorhat Tea Company* :—

I have been 36 years in the Jorhat Tea Company, and have been Superintendent for 3 years. I have been on most gardens of the Jorhat Tea Company. The total acreage under tea is 10,000 acres. The outturn last year was 73,460 maunds. The

working population is about a coolie and a half per acre. The figures I have given Cinnamara are for the 7 gardens of the Company which lie in the Jorhat subdivision. There are in all 13 gardens belonging to the Company.

The working force per acre is 1.36 coolies or 1.47 including working children. There are 1,510 acres of land held by coolies within the garden grants and about 600 acres outside. These figures represent the Jorhat gardens only.

President:—*Q.*—What is the number of men and women under agreement?

A.—I am afraid I have not got those figures.

Q.—Have you any idea of the percentage of the working force under contract?

A.—Not less than 75 per cent.

Q.—Are contracts given to new coolies?

A.—In going into the matter I found that the custom varies on different gardens. Some gardens give agreements almost immediately after the arrival of new coolies; others about a year after; others 2 years after. In one case I found that the coolies were not given agreements until after 3 years. Contracts now are mostly given for one year, but in certain cases where advances are asked for the purpose of a marriage or for buying land or cattle, agreements are given for 2 years. Coolies are told that the Government order is one year, but they want the money. In the case of new coolies contracts are given for one year only. In one case a Manager told me that he had been putting coolies under agreement for 3 years. The rate of advance is Rs. 12 for men and Rs. 6 for women for one year's agreement. In the case of 2 years, the agreement money is double; for 3 years it is treble. The money is always paid in cash, except in the case of long-term agreements where the coolies may have been given an outfit and a set of utensils the cost of which is deducted from the bonus money. The actuals which the coolies get are somewhere about Rs. 6 or Rs. 7 after deducting the cost of bedding, cash advances for rice and various other things.

Q.—But surely cash advances ought to be entered in the agreement?

A.—It is all put down as bonus to new coolies. Advances are made to the coolies later on for the whole year, probably for 2 years and sometimes for 3 years. I do not approve of that practice.

Q.—A new coolie is supposed to have an outfit when he comes up which is according to a certain scale. What is the outfit?

A.—It is laid down in the Labour Association rules—2 blankets, 2 *dhotis*, 2 coats, one set of cooking utensils, and the cost is put against each coolie at present as Rs. 15-8 in the case of all coolies over the age of 12. Individually the cost is Rs. 10.

Q.—If a new coolie gives an agreement for 3 years on arrival it should not be necessary, I take it, for him to be given an outfit. He ought to be given the money in cash?

A.—Well, it is not an agreement.

Q.—It must be an agreement if it is drawn up on stamped paper. Does the ignorant coolie believe that he is bound to the garden for 3 years?

A.—It is very difficult to say. I can only imagine that he considers it a sort of custom that he should remain on the garden for 3 years.

Mr. Dawson:—*Q.*—Were you in Kharikatia garden of your Company?

A.—Yes, for 12 years.

Q.—Would it be correct to say that the agreement system you have been asked about is an inheritance of your own practice at Kharikatia?

A.—Apparently.

Q.—When you were in Kharikatia, did you give agreements to minor children?

A.—No.

Q.—Is that done at present?

A.—I could not say.

Q.—You might take my word for it that it is done now. I was shown a little black book which showed that minor children were put under agreement for 313 days.

A.—Of course it is not uncommon for children to get advances. When I say advances, I mean that they come up and ask for an advance at certain times of the year for festivals, etc., and they get the money which, instead of being treated as an advance, is put down as a bonus.

Cinnamara.

Q.—You are a member of the Jorhat Sub-Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You were present at the meeting of the 15th February last ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—One of the points put forward in the Sub-Committee's meeting is— to quote it word for word.—

“ Regarding the proposed visits to individual gardens the Committee was strongly of opinion that these should be confined to the examination of books, lines, etc., and that no personal enquiries be made from coolies, or the labour in any way interfered with

I call attention to the expression “ the labour in any way interfered with.” This is a letter from Mr. Moffat, forwarding the above minutes. He says “ I expect you reserve the right of calling for additional evidence.” Do you agree with Mr. Moffat ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Two witnesses, the *Padre* and Dr. Bradley, volunteered to give evidence before this Committee. Did you at any time write letters to them intimidating them from giving evidence here ?

A.—I wrote to them saying that they should not give evidence. I suggested to Dr. Bradley—“ suggested ” was the word I used—that it might probably be better that he should not give evidence.

Q.—Can you give any reason why you wrote that letter ?

A.—I did it out of kindness to Dr. Bradley.

Q.—Is it not right that the Committee should be helped by witnesses ?

A.—Not by Dr. Bradley.

Q.—Why ?

A.—Because he does not know anything at all about the coolies. He does not know their language and cannot ask them any questions. He takes no interest in the coolies and what opinion could he have given ?

Q.—At any rate the Committee might have heard him, and it would have afforded the Committee an opportunity of judging for themselves ?

A.—I defer to your opinion, but I still hold that I did it out of kindness to Dr. Bradley.

Q.—You suggested to the *Padre* that he should not give evidence ?

A.—I deny that *in toto*. What I did say to the *Padre* was in connection with his having spoken to some members of the Committee at Shillong before the Committee started on their tour. I told him that it was very wrong of him to bias the minds of members of the Committee and that if he had anything to put forward he should have done so before the Committee as a whole.

Q.—Don't you think it would have been more courteous to the Committee if those witnesses were allowed to appear before the Committee ?

A.—That point of view did not appear to me. My desire was to give the Committee every information and I think you will agree that the Committee have had a number of witnesses from here to sufficiently represent the conditions prevailing. For instance Dr. Foster is a man of very great experience. Unfortunately he is unable to give evidence being detained at Calcutta. He knows the coolie inside out and is also up-to-date in arrangements regarding the septic system of latrines, sanitation and so forth. Dr. Bradley has absolutely no experience in such matters.

President :—Q.—But has Dr. Bradley not had experience of Asiatic labour ?

A.—I believe he has. But I don't see how it is going to assist him very much in tea-garden labour. My idea was to place before the Committee first class evidence such as would emanate from Dr. Foster. He would tell you about everything far better than this man could.

President :—Of course we do not know what he would have actually said.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—What is your general principle in giving concession rice to coolies ?

A.—Broadly speaking the new coolies, the thriftless and poorer coolies get rice concessions at Rs. 3 a maund.

Q.—Don't you encourage the thriftless in that way ?

A.—No.

Q.—But the good hard working coolie gets concession rice at a higher rate—Cinnamara. usually how much?

A.—Usually about Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 2-12 for paddy and Rs. 5 for rice.

Q.—Sometimes you have been selling rice to coolies at over Rs. 6?

A.—Perhaps in isolated cases, but not in recent years.

Before 1915 the wages for the Jorhat gardens were Rs. 4 and Rs. 5. They were later on in 1916 raised to Rs. 5 and Rs. 6. Then again in 1920 they were raised to Rs. 5-12 and Rs. 6-8 and finally on the 1st of November 1921 the wages were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 7 for women and men respectively. We raised the wages for the same reason as in other parts of the world, namely, increased cost of living and also owing to the increased standard of living demanded. Of course latterly it was simply to meet the higher standard of living.

Q.—Do you think that the coolie's standard of living has gone up since 1913?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that is a good thing?

A.—I do.

Q.—What is your system in the Jorhat gardens in writing up *hazira* books?

A.—One garden I believe wrote them up in units; others in *haziras*.

Q.—Take the wage of Rs. 6; how is that written up in the *hazira* books?

A.—As 4 annas each day.

Q.—Take Rs. 7; how is that written up?

A.—I think it is all through written down as Re. 0-4-4.

It is the general practice on the gardens to write up the pies also.

Q.—Are you sure of that? I may tell you that on one of your gardens it is not done?

A.—It is a general order.

Q.—Did you not issue an order either verbal or written to your Managers not to write up fractions?

A.—No.

Q.—In one garden I found the *haziras* mixed up, the result being in the case of a woman that instead of getting a monthly wage of Rs. 6 she got Rs. 5-15 for a full month's work.

A.—That of course was very wrong and it is up to the Manager to look into it.

Q.—Can you tell me why instead of writing up in units of work done, the system is adopted of writing up in complete annas of varying amounts so as to avoid fractions?

A.—On some gardens the actuals are written up; on others they are not. Different people have different ideas.

Q.—Now taking Bokahula as an example since 1913 has the task for light hoeing increased or decreased?

A.—The position of Bokahula is different from other gardens, but I know that during the war the task was lower than it had been the years before.

Q.—Since 1913 the wages have risen so that it would be natural to expect an increased cost of working assuming that the task had not been increased?

A.—On the Bokahula garden 40 per cent. of the *ticca* work is done by village people and their rate has neither increased nor decreased. I know that nearly half the leaf is plucked by village people.

Q.—In 1913 at Bokahula your light hoe worked out to Rs. 2-7 an acre. In 1922 your estimate is Rs. 2-8 which seems to be a very small rise if the tasks have not really been increased along with the increase in wages?

A.—It is a question of how much is done in *hazira* and how much *ticca*. In 1913 the pay was Rs. 5 and the rate was 35 *nals*.

Q.—But I am taking your actuals?

A.—As I say at that time the garden was very much dependent on outside labour.

Q.—What is your rate for plucking?

A.—Our rates for plucking like other gardens vary. At the beginning of the season in March and April it is a full *hazira* for whatever is brought in. In May

Cinnamara very often the rate begins at 5 seers and 6 seers. After the 15th May *ticca* comes in except in the case of unpruned tea when *ticca* is not given. Then from June usually the *hazira* is raised up to 8 seers but if the leaf happens to be short it is not.

Q.—I found on one of your gardens that was not the case. The task was not reduced even if there was a shortage of leaf.

A.—That is very unusual.

Q.—I was told by the Manager that he had no orders to do it?

A.—That is not so.

Q.—Supposing a coolie woman has a sick child in hospital and she cannot go to work but is required to look after the child. Do you give the woman any allowance?

A.—As a rule, yes. If the people were well off they may not get the allowance, but as a rule they do receive it.

Q.—I found one case where a woman was absent for 17 days in hospital attending a sick child and she got no allowance?

A.—Did you enquire into the circumstances of the case?

Q.—No.

A.—It is always given in deserving cases only.

Three months' leave with full pay is given to pregnant women, and in addition a bonus of Rs. 10 during the year for every child born. More leave is given on the recommendation of the Medical Officer.

Q.—May I take it that your usual plucking rate is 2 pice a seer?

A.—This year I propose to make it 2 pice during the plucking season for 3 pounds, but I have left it to the discretion of Managers either to continue on last year's rates or to adopt the unit system.

President :—**Q.**—What would be the saving per maund?

A.—There would be no saving.

Q.—What does your plucking rate per maund of green leaf work out to on the average?

A.—About Rs. 4-8 per maund of tea if they make a full crop, otherwise if the crop is shorter the expenses go up.

Q.—What was the estimate last year?

A.—About Rs. 4-4 I think. It is a little more this year because the wages have been increased slightly.

Mr. Dawson :—**Q.**—In your estimate for one of the gardens I notice that the plucking estimate rate for 1922 is Re. 1-1 per maund or 5-10 pies a seer; in 1921 it cost 5-52 pies. So it is going to be cheaper this year I take it?

A.—Probably, it all depends on the crop.

Q.—Have you done much recruiting within the last 5 years?

A.—Yes, a considerable amount.

Q.—Is it the case that the majority of those new recruits have died?

A.—No, that would be a very sweeping statement to make.

Q.—What proportion would you put down?

A.—It is very difficult to answer without going closer into the matter. Of the coolies we got in the famine year we repatriated over 400 to their own country under instructions of the Tea Districts Labour Association. We gave them blankets and clothes and Rs. 5 each and sent them back.

Q.—Were these unsuitable people?

A.—Yes, they were beggars. Many of them who came up did not want to work; they simply started their old trade, *viz.*, of begging.

There have been strikes on many of our gardens. In connection with the Bokahula strike an agitator was caught while in the act of preaching in the lines and convicted. He told the Manager in the morning through a deputation that it was Gandhi's order that the coolies were not to work until they received Rs. 15 and Rs. 12 a month.

Q.—Did you ask for the Assam Rifles to march through Cinnamara garden ?

Cinnamara.

A.—No.

Kharikatia tea estate was on the black list on account of the high death-rate in 1913. The Civil Surgeon inspected the garden and drew attention to the presence of hookworm and anæmia.

Q.—Have you taken any steps towards improving hookworm and anæmia ?

A.—Yes, by better supervision and treatment. We have no system of latrines in the lines.

Q.—Do you believe in latrines ?

A.—Yes, I have recently given orders for the construction of latrines in the hospital and round the tea-house, but not in the lines so far.

Q.—After the Committee was appointed ?

A.—I don't think it had any connection with the Committee because we had latrines in our Golaghat gardens last year and I was anxious to introduce them here.

Q.—Do you think that latrines in compact blocks might help to decrease hookworm ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you prepared to spend money on that ?

A.—Yes, but you have got to go step by step with the coolie. We have tried the system of trench latrines before and I have tried various things. You will perhaps agree that one can lead the coolie but not drive him lest he be driven out of the garden entirely.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, would you say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In connection with improving the sanitation of the gardens, you are conscious of the difficulty of making rapid changes ?

A.—Very conscious.

Q.—You might easily precipitate trouble with the labour especially at a time like this if you act hastily ?

A.—Undoubtedly.

Q.—Then you must also have the co-operation of your Medical Officer in order to accomplish that ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—You have had experience I think of people who talk a good deal but do not do very much in connection with such matters ?

A.—Unfortunately I have, and that is one of my difficulties.

Q.—You get an atmosphere of prejudice created by irresponsible talk which does not really convey what it is to have a healthy labour force ?

A.—That is so.

Q.—Questions were asked of you about the Assam Rifles marching through the gardens. They went to the Cinnamara bazaar but not to the Cinnamara lines. Did they go there at your request ?

A.—No.

Q.—You know the difficulty of getting coolies to conform to rule ?

A.—I am very sensible of that from past experience.

Q.—You have no particular legal authority to impose your will on them ?

A.—None.

Q.—It must therefore be done by moral suasion ?

A.—Yes, also by the consent of the coolies.

Q.—So that it is not unreasonable that you should proceed somewhat carefully in introducing these things ?

A.—Yes, you must proceed very carefully and educate the coolie.

Q.—When you begin by introducing latrines in connection with the hospital and perhaps with congested lines, you are going as far as it is reasonable to go as a first step ?

Cinnamara.

A.—Yes, as a first step the hospital latrines have been suggested by Dr. Foster.

Q.—So that you are acting really in concert with the advice of one of your Medical Officers ?

A.—Yes, so much so that you have got to act on the practical steps suggested by your doctor.

President :—Q.—You have only begun quite recently to introduce any system of latrines ?

A.—Yes. In Jorhat I have been trying to introduce a system of latrines after the Golaghat gardens and I sent our Medical Officer Dr. Bradley to Golaghat several times but we could not see things exactly in the same light. When he returned I had plans made out and I said that these would have to be acted upon, and he was made to work on a set principle.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—I suppose, Mr. Slimmon, it is your experience that you cannot get your men to do things just as you want them to be done. The difficulty is that you may have good ideas and then what is the use of good ideas when you have not got the support of the executive. The only thing you can do, in these circumstances, I take it, is to continue to press your ideas and to get rid of any unsatisfactory instruments ?

A.—Quite so.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—You employ outside village labourers on your gardens. How are they paid ?

A.—They are paid exactly the same as the coolies living on the garden. The *ticca* rate however differs slightly because the village people are not given any concessions such as housing, sanitation, medical attendance, etc.

Q.—Is it correct to say that the villagers are paid higher wages than the coolies on the garden because they get no concessions from you ?

A.—That is true to a certain extent, though not altogether.

Q.—What is the plucking rate allowed to a coolie on the garden and to an outsider ?

A.—The villager gets 25 per cent. more; in hoeing, not quite so much; as a rule the same.

Q.—Besides the 400 coolies that were repatriated, did any coolies abscond from your garden ?

A.—Yes, a number absconded.

Q.—How many absconded say within the past 5 years ?

A.—I have not got the figures by me, but I should say the number is not unusual.

Q.—Could any reason be assigned for their having absconded ?

A.—No, it is very difficult to assign any reason.

Q.—Was it the impression that the coolies could not make both ends meet by continuing to serve on the gardens ?

A.—Not at all; I am perfectly convinced that the conditions were infinitely better at the time they absconded than was the case when they first came to the garden. The majority of the coolies who absconded came from the East Coast I think.

Q.—Were these coolies at the time of their absconding under agreement ?

A.—No.

Q.—Have any coolies who took agreements absconded ?

A.—That is a difficult question to answer. I shall have to go into the whole matter in detail, but my personal idea is that it does not make any difference in their absconding.

Q.—In your experience have there been many prosecutions under Act XIII ?

A.—Practically none.

Q.—So that if the Act were abolished it would not affect the labour force at all ?

A.—Yes, unless we had something else to go on with. Suppose the sections of the Indian Penal Code remained as they are, then Act XIII might be withdrawn, but until our system of recruitment is altered it would be a dangerous proceeding. What I mean is this that at present we have got an Act which lays down how we shall recruit and what we shall do. If this Act was swept away and we were allowed to

recruit in the same manner as the Dooars then I should be in favour of the Act being swept away. In the case of the Dooars the driving force is the sardar. Take away the Act and allow us to recruit in the same way as the Dooars and give us about 10 years to make the change, and I am perfectly sure that it would be beneficial both to the coolie and Assam in general. I am not in favour of abolishing the Act until the conditions of recruitment are changed. I do not consider it possible or desirable from either the coolie's or garden point of view that present concessions should be converted into an increase in money wages.

No rent is charged for the land on which a coolie's hut is built.

Q.—Is it a fact that in the recruiting districts the residents of the villages are given houses free by the *malguzars*?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Are you aware that in Assam itself these coolies generally build their own houses outside the garden areas?

A.—I am aware of that, but I think that is not a prevalent custom.

Q.—Are coolies capable of constructing their own huts?

A.—Some are; others are not.

Q.—Have they not got houses in their own country?

A.—Some have hovels.

Q.—Regarding hospital charges, what do you think is the cost of medicines on your gardens for one year?

A.—I have just received an indent which is supposed to be for 6 months and it is over Re. 15,000 for the 7 gardens in the district and this figure does not include quinine, alcohol, lint, cotton, oils and other things.

Q.—What is the population affected by that indent?

A.—15,000.

Q.—Are you aware that Government provides medicines free of cost to those who cannot afford to pay them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Don't you think that poor coolies should be entitled to free medicines either from the Government or the Tea management?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Therefore the coolie who requires medicines would get it free without paying for it?

A.—Government have no dispensaries provided for indigenous coolies dependent on tea-gardens. The question is whether the coolies would get it from the Government.

Q.—Are there villages for which Government have not provided any dispensaries?

A.—I am unable to say. The dispensaries here are few and far between.

Q.—Is that not due to the population being very thin? On your gardens the population being dense, dispensaries would appear to be indispensable?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think the coolies like being doled out their kitchen food, their pregnant leave or things of that kind by way of concessions?

A.—I think coolies are very much dependent on these concessions.

Q.—Is it the case that they cannot earn enough to make ends meet?

A.—No.

Q.—Then why do you say that they depend on these concessions?

A.—I think it is inherent in the coolie to have somebody to look after him.

Q.—Then who do you think looks after him in his own country?

A.—I am afraid in many cases coolies are not looked after at all. They have just got to take their chance.

Q.—Is it because a coolie cannot live in his own country that he comes to this place?

A.—That is the prevalent reason. It applies, I think, universally. People are pushed out for better earnings.

Q.—So that the coolie is not an exception to the general rule?

A.—No.

Cinnamara. Q.—Do you think that if the various allowances made to the coolies by way of pregnant leave, rice, etc., were converted into cash and given them, it would be welcomed?

A.—No, because it is a duty which we will never be able to get rid of.

Q.—Does it stand to reason that a healthy coolie's wage should be reduced because of an unhealthy coolie companion?

A.—No.

Q.—Then why should a strong coolie be made to suffer in respect of his wages on account of the weak coolies?

A.—I take it that is the case the world over. You take for instance welfare people who are out for giving charity and we are simply giving it in charity to the coolies after the same manner.

Q.—But a coolie who earns 4 to 6 annas a day is not expected to give anything in charity. What I say is that Companies could afford to keep dispensaries and the strong coolie who requires no medicines should get the full value of his labour. Don't you agree?

A.—Of course the aim of the Company is to see that he does get the full value of his labour.

Q.—Then is it not looked upon as a concession?

A.—It is called a concession, but I think it is a part of his remuneration.

Q.—It is deducted from his pay, is it not?

A.—No.

Q.—How does it become a part of his remuneration?

A.—It is given by the Company.

Q.—It is given to the weaklings so that their health is maintained? Coolies differ in physique and if you are going to make all the coolies equal as regards earnings the weaklings are bound to suffer. Is it not reasonable to expect that the strong coolie who works harder and longer than the weak coolie should get more pay than the latter?

A.—How are you going to arrive at that? Men are not born equal.

Q.—How are the unit systems worked?

A.—Well, we help those people who are down on their luck in the same way as you would do with any community in the world.

Q.—Does the coolie look upon this medical attendance as a concession at all?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Withers :—Q.—With reference to the agreements for 3 years which were given to certain coolies without the advances, would you say that these instances were due to a lack of loyalty amongst your staff?

A.—I would put them down to carelessness.

Q.—Do you know what are the wages paid to labour employed outside the gardens?

A.—We pay outside labourers who come to work for us 5 and 6 annas. If I employ Assamese labour to work in my bungalow I pay 5 annas a day.

Dr. Williams :—Q.—What is the total annual expenditure on the gardens?

A.—I cannot give you that information now.

Q.—Was the Cinnamara bazaar interfered with definitely by political agitators?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the visit of Mr. Gandhi increased the agitation or did it decrease the agitation?

A.—I think his visit had a salutary effect in consequence of his speech at the Dibrugarh Club. I would however say that this agitation is beyond Mr. Gandhi's control.

Q.—So then so far as his visit was concerned, it produced a good effect?

A.—I think it did no harm. He told the Congress people that this agitation on tea-gardens must cease.

Q.—Do you think the coming of this Committee has been the cause of the disturbance of the labour?

A.—I think the Committee undoubtedly gave a handle to the non-co-operators ^{Cinnamara.} working against us and I think they are making use of this as a sort of lever to engineer strikes. This has been made very patent to me by one or two gardens. We sent out one or two people from our gardens to one of the gardens that were on strike, to convince my people that no increase in wages was given on the other garden. They were told that this Committee of Enquiry was out to increase their wages and that this was the time for them to strike for at least two days if they at all wanted to get an increase.

President :—*Q.*—How many coolies were repatriated ?

A.—About 400.

Q.—Why were they sent up from the recruiting districts ?

A.—That is a question—"Why". I represented the matter very strongly to the Tea Districts Labour Association, not only that we fed the coolies and kept them going for 3 years but that we would still have kept them if they showed any inclination to work.

Q.—Do you think that such a class of coolies was sent up because the wages in Assam were not sufficient to attract a better class ?

A.—No. These people went so far as to bribe the sardar to take them to the depôt. The fault lay undoubtedly with the Agents there and the Tea Districts Labour Association.

Q.—It used to be stated that the distance to Assam was so great, the prospect of return so small and the wages given so insufficient that the coolies would not come to Assam while they preferred to go to the Dooars. Have these reasons ever been put forward by the recruiting agents ?

A.—The Dooars have experienced trouble as much as we have. I think the wages given here are far in excess of what they get in their country. Of course recruiting is more favourable in a famine year, because conditions are so bad in their country that they are forced to go out. But when there is a bumper crop they are able to fill their bellies and to feel comfortable. Recruiting is greater in famine years.

For instance last year was a good year and the recruiting figures were very much less. We are finding difficulty this year except in places where crops are not so good.

Q.—Given a good year, that is to say, a good average crop, is it difficult to recruit because the inducements are not sufficient ?

A.—I would not put it that way. I would put it down to the unwillingness of the coolie. A coolie has to leave his friends and country and stay up here for many years.

Q.—A coolie, as a rule, does not leave his country so long as the conditions in his country are congenial to him ?

A.—That I take it is the case the world over.

Q.—But he does not go unless it is a bad year ?

A.—Unless he is more or less pushed to it.

Q.—Do you think putting coolies under 3 years or 939 days' agreement on arrival is likely to have a prejudicial effect on recruiting ?

A.—It is difficult to say.

Q.—It is said that agreements under Act VI did have that effect ?

A.—Of course Act VI was a severe agreement, but this form—Act XIII—is more or less a shadow. It is only the power behind the shadow that makes it worth having at all.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—What is "the power behind the shadow" ?

A.—The mere fact that they make an agreement.

Q.—Do you mean putting the thumb impression ?

A.—It amounts to that. Morally he has given his word that he would stay on the garden for the 3 years.

Q.—Was this explained to him ?

A.—I do not know.

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Cinnamara.

President :—*Q.*—Under Act VI agreements for more than one year had to be executed before the Magistrate, but now they can be executed for 3 years or 939 days without anybody knowing anything about it.

A.—Well, the one is a legal instrument, while the other is not.

Q.—You consider it illegal ?

A.—Yes, it is not worth the paper it is written on. I would call this agreement stupid.

Mr. Withers :—*Q.*—Why do you have them ?

A.—I do not know myself. Many people have no papers. In fact so far as I know it is merely done in the agreement book as regards half the gardens.

President :—*Q.*—You do not think the existence of this agreement exercises any prejudicial effect on recruiting in the recruiting districts ? Do you think the coolies know that they would be put under agreement as soon as they come up ?

A.—I would not like to say one way or another. I do not think it exercises any prejudicial effect.

I have in a few cases given new coolies the agreement so as to enable them to settle down, and I am satisfied that it was appreciated by the coolies. I have been giving them a few rupees to start with on their arrival and then later on I would give them the balance.

Q.—Do sardars in the recruiting districts hold out inducements to coolies to come to Assam by over-stating or exaggerating the conditions obtaining here ?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—You give the sardars a commission on the number of coolies they bring ?

A.—Yes, of Rs. 10 to Rs. 20.

Q.—So that it would be natural for the sardar to exaggerate the conditions ?

A.—Perhaps.

We pay sardars commission on overtime work. I think the coolie wants to work as easy as he can, and until you raise the standard of his living, you cannot get him to do any more work.

GOLAGHAT, 3RD MARCH 1922.

Golaghat.

No. 123.—*Mr. A. D. Jones, Manager of Nahorjan Tea Estate, Nahorjan Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been 10 years altogether in the Nahorjan Tea Company except for a period of 4 years when I was at Home. I have been 21 years in Tea. Previous to my joining Nahorjan, I was with the Rajmai Tea Company in the Golaghat subdivision.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—You spent Rs. 76,505 in recruiting between 1916-1920 and you have an increase of 358 in consequence. You say the *unsatisfactory* result is entirely due to the poor class of coolie recruited during 1918-1919 a large proportion of whom died before reaching the garden. Also the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 accounted to a large extent for the unsatisfactory result. Now you say there has been an increase in 1921 as compared with 1916 ?

A.—What I mentioned in the answer is the actual increase in 1921 over 1916.

Q.—Would you call it unsatisfactory ?

A.—Yes, from the point of view that the coolies we got up early in 1919-1920 were very, very poor physically. They were in a very bad condition. I think those coolies came up because of the hard times in their own country. They came up in poor health and the influenza epidemic carried away a heavy toll.

Q.—I suppose in famine years coolies are obtained more easily than in normal years ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think you can get up good coolies in a year of good crops in the Golaghat recruiting districts?

A.—Yes, with good sardars it is possible.

There was a disturbance on my garden in September 1920; it was the work of a few malcontents among the coolies. This disturbance followed immediately after the Doom-Dooma riots.

Q.—What was the disturbance due to?

A.—The men on my garden had been put on to pluck—a task which they very seldom have to do. This work is uncongenial to them; they prefer to do hoeing. About 3-30 p.m. they had finished a number and the mohurrir in charge wanted to put them on to another number, and the coolies were dilly-dallying. My Assistant went across and made them do the work. Subsequently when the gong went, they refused to weigh the leaf. My Assistant took the small basket from a man and poured the leaf from it into the big basket. He put this big basket on the man's head and told him to proceed to the factory and have his leaf weighed. The lot of them refused to go and remained there for an hour or more. The coolies however were tutored by an absconder who had arrived from Doom-Dooma a few days previously and this was the whole cause of the trouble.

On my return from long leave in 1919 I became aware of a certain amount of dissatisfaction among the coolies owing to economic conditions. I relieved the situation in many ways. For instance, I gave them a bigger concession in buying factory paddy. I made it easier for them to earn *ticca*, and in several ways I made things better for them.

Previous to September 1918 the wages were Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women. After that I raised them to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5. Then the unit system was adopted in January 1921 and this has given the coolies an opportunity of increasing their monthly wage by 8 annas in the case of men and 12 annas in the case of women.

Q.—How far did they avail themselves of that opportunity?

A.—Before, the wages were Rs. 6 a month for a man whether he worked 25, 26 or 27 days in the month. I altered them so that he was paid 4 annas for every task he did, and if he worked a 26-day month he got Rs. 6-8 and a woman Rs. 5-11.

I consider Rs. 8 for a man and Rs. 7 for a woman a decent living wage assuming that paddy was selling from Rs. 3-4 to Rs. 3-8 a maund. If it was selling at a higher rate they would require a little more.

Q.—You say in your answer to question No. 25: "Bazaar prices have increased about 35% since 1913 but in this garden where the coolies have the opportunity of buying 1 maund of *dhan* per month at from Rs. 3 to Rs. 3-4, also stores brought in bulk from Calcutta at bed-rock prices such as *dul*, salt, sugar, matches, etc., the increase in the cost of living is not more than 10%." That is interesting. Did you buy stores wholesale from Calcutta?

A.—Yes, I did so in 1921. I did so to help the coolie along because the local shopkeepers had raised their prices to an enormous extent.

Q.—You say in your answer to question 35: "To a certain extent the unit system has been adopted on this garden. The system is as follows: A man is paid 4 annas for every task completed during the month so that in a 25-working day month he can earn Rs. 6-4, in a 26-working day month Rs. 6-8 and in a 27-day month Rs. 6-12 for the regular task set. A man is paid for half or full *hazira*. A hoeing man is allowed to earn as much as he chooses provided the quality of his work is up to standard. *Ticca* hoeing may be shut down if climate conditions are not suitable, i.e., during heavy rain but this has seldom to be done....." You fix a *hazira*?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How, then, does your unit system come in exactly?

A.—They are paid for every task over the *hazira*. Under the other system they might do 25 tasks and get Rs. 6 and 26 tasks and get Rs. 6. Immediately they finish their ordinary task they get 6 *nals* of light hoeing for an anna. I have adopted the unit system only to that extent in the *ticca* work. My usual rate for plucking in the season is 6 seers for a *hazira*, and *ticca* 2 pice a seer over the 6 seers as against 1½ pice a seer before the war.

Q.—To what extent have your coolies got cultivation? You say here "to a small extent inside the grant and to a large extent outside—roughly 50 acres by about 50 coolies inside the grant."

Golaghat. A.—I have only got about 50 to 60 acres of good rice land in the garden grant. They hold land to a large extent outside. About 50% of the adult coolies have got land either inside or outside the grant. I have just applied for a big grant of 500 acres for rice cultivation.

In 1920 Rs. 872-15-3 was written off as irrecoverable and in 1919 Rs. 925-11-6. In previous years the average was about Rs. 500. It is our custom to look into the coolies' advances every year, and any advance which has accumulated during the year against a coolie through no particular fault of his is written off and the reason explained to the coolie.

As regards pregnant leave before birth, half *hasira* is given from the time the Medical Officer recommends it, and light and suitable work is arranged for pregnant women. After birth 4 months' leave on full pay is given to all mothers and this in many cases is extended to 5 and sometimes to 6 months if recommended by the Medical Officer or Manager. This has been the practice only since 1919. Previous to that a bonus of Rs. 5 was given when a child was born and Rs. 10 later on if the child was well looked after and not neglected by the mother. A mother does not need to go out to work on the average for 5 months.

During 1920 an average of 15 weakly coolies and 130 children were fed daily by the garden. Families apply for their children to be fed. I find out how many there are in the family. I might feed the children of one family for one month, and then feed another family the next month. The Medical Officer very frequently inspects the children on my garden and makes his recommendation as to who should be fed and who should not.

We sell paddy only. I have never sold at above Rs. 3-4 a maund. But previous to 1919 when I was away at Home it was sold at Rs. 3-10 to men and Rs. 3-8 to women. No restriction is imposed with regard to these concessions, except when the coolies deliberately stay away from work.

I have what I call my weekly payment coolies. Men get 6 annas a week and so much rice. They get paddy if they want it at Rs. 2 a maund. They are improvident people whom you cannot persuade to work and that is why they are put on the weekly payment list. I then have an opportunity of seeing their work for a week and of finding out more about them. They get the balance of their pay at the end of the month with the rest of the coolies.

Q.—Supposing you have a good working coolie who makes a decent wage. Do you say to him 'You are making money, why should I give you concession rice'?

A.—Never.

Q.—What is your argument for that? Why do you give it to the man who is earning a decent wage?

A.—Because I find the man who is earning a decent wage is the best man and the man I want; so I give it to him.

My allowance of paddy to adults is one maund a month. Children not up to adult work get a wage of Rs. 4. We give coolies agreements. A man gets Rs. 13 and a woman Rs. 10 for 313 completed tasks. We have no formal agreement or printed form. We simply enter it up in the book.

Q.—Supposing a woman got Rs. 10 to do 313 days of work on let us say the 1st of June 1921, and on the same date in the following year you find that she had not completed the required number of tasks. What would you do?

A.—The names are put up before me with the number of completed tasks. I go into the matter and judge on the merits of the case.

I do not recover the advance; it is a bonus. I do not give 3-year agreements. New coolies are usually given agreements during the first year they are on the garden. I put them on the weekly payment list when they arrive on the garden and transfer them to the monthly payment list as soon as they show signs that they are fit and willing to do the usual garden tasks.

I adopted the unit system as regards the men doing *ticca*. I thought it would encourage them to do more work and earn more pay. I was always in favour of the unit system as over and above the tasks they are given an opportunity of earning, say, 5 or 6 annas if they like.

I cannot say what was the cost per maund of green leaf in 1921.

I consider that the wages which a tea-garden coolie gets are sufficient to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little.

I think it is neither possible nor desirable either from the coolie's or the garden's point of view to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages. If I gave in detail my reasons for this opinion it would take a volume, but in brief, the chief factor against the suggestion is that the bulk of the coolies must be "cared for." I cannot think how else to put it. If the coolies were given "consolidated" pay and left to look after themselves in respect of food supplies, medical attendance, housing, etc., I am certain the result would be disastrous for the coolies. Golaghat.

Q.—When getting coolies up from the recruiting districts in filling up the form do you ask for medical inspection?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were those coolies with whom you were dissatisfied in 1919 medically examined before they came up?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that in spite of that inspection you thought that some people were sent up who were not physically fit to undertake work on a tea estate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that seems to call for some reform in the method of examining coolies before they leave the recruiting districts?

A.—Under the conditions existing then it would have been necessary.

Q.—Of course you recognise that there is a certain responsibility on the gardens who send down their sardars to select coolies. In sending down these sardars, do you specially instruct them to see that no coolies who were physically unfit are brought up?

A.—No, because most sardars recruit their relations and friends and it would probably mean that an old mother or an invalid father would have to be left behind which of course is not practicable. If they bring up their relations as they usually do, I would not say that they should leave behind a delicate brother or an aged parent.

We got up about 1,000 coolies in 1919. A great many died through the influenza epidemic and also before they reached the garden.

Coolies have about 100 acres of rice land inside the grant. Land which is suitable for rice cultivation is not suitable for tea plantation.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—Why did the Medical Officer in 1919 recommend the feeding of children and weakly coolies at garden cost?

A.—Because they were not being properly looked after by the parents.

Q.—Were they under-fed by the parents?

A.—They were neglected and therefore under-fed.

Q.—It is because parents cannot afford to feed them?

A.—In the majority of cases—No.

Q.—What happens when it rains on a particular day and the coolie cannot finish his task? Is he given a *hazira* for the whole day or is he required to complete the task the following day?

A.—In my experience there has been seldom a day on which a coolie could not complete his daily task except early in the rains. During the heavy rains of course the coolie is allowed to go to his house on a rainy day and the *hazira* is written up. The coolie would not be required to complete his task the next day.

Q.—If it rains steadily for 8 hours and a coolie gets completely wet and is unable to do any work within one hour of the rain commencing, would he be given a *hazira* for the whole day?

A.—If it is absolutely on account of climatic conditions, he would receive the *hazira*.

Q.—How often does it happen in the year?

A.—Four or five times.

90 per cent. of the coolies are under agreement. If the agreements were not given, yet they would stay on. The agreement is not a binding force on them.

Q.—Would it matter if the agreement system was abolished?

A.—Yes, because the coolies would miss the lump sum which they receive as bonus money. Most of the coolies are improvident and cannot save, but if they receive a lump sum, they would be able to save something.

Coliaghat. Q.—It is immaterial from the coolie's point of view whether the agreement is taken or not inasmuch as he gets the advance ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Therefore the execution of the agreement is unnecessary ?

A.—No.

Q.—Is it from the management's point of view that it is necessary ?

A.—Yes, for the benefit of the coolie. I must say that I do not think for a moment that the agreement keeps the coolie on the estate, but I say that the lump sum which the coolie receives is beneficial to him. Of course the agreement is required from my point of view. I am not prepared to answer from the coolie's point of view.

We recruited in 1919 because there was a project for extension of the tea cultivation. We considered it advisable to get as many coolies as possible in that year.

Coolies are never called up to take agreements; they come up voluntarily.

Q.—Do they come to sign the agreement or to take the money ?

A.—To take the money.

Q.—I suppose if you don't give the coolies this agreement bonus, they would resort to the money-lender or *kaya*.

A.—Yes, if they were in need of money, but I do not think it would be necessary.

Q.—You simply say to them "You work for a year and we give you so much." You do not give the money out of charity ?

A.—No, we give the money not out of charity, but because they agree to work on the garden.

President:—Q.—I suppose in 1919 the policy was to extend tea cultivation during the boom when the slump was not foreseen ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was it the Directors who got up this large labour force ?

A.—It was arranged before I took over charge. It resulted in a very unsatisfactory class being got up and a heavy mortality.

Mr. Withers:—Q.—The agreement bonus which is given to new coolies is the same in the case of the old coolies I take it ?

A.—Yes.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—Would you think it fair to say that the arrangement whereby you give an advance to a coolie in exchange for an undertaking by him to serve the garden for a year, was one that is beneficial ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are prepared to pay something more to any coolie who promises to do a year's work for you. If a coolie is not prepared to do that you do not give him the bonus of Rs. 12 or Rs. 10 ?

A.—No.

Q.—But it is advantageous from your point of view to be assured of the work of the coolie for, say, 313 days as it gives a certain assurance of stability and continuity ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It is not an unusual thing in agricultural operations to have undertakings of that kind by workers ?

A.—No.

President:—Q.—Were 3-year agreements under Act XIII ever taken on your garden ?

A.—Never.

No. 127. **Mr. C. INGRAM, Manager, Rungajaun Division, Rungajaun Tea Company, Limited:**—

My total male population on Rungajaun division is 1,187 and the working strength 797. The difference consists of very old men, most of them retired, and also some young men who have not been working on the garden. Whenever these people

work, they are put on *ticca*, and their earnings are not included in the *hazira* book. As Golaghat. a matter of fact they are paid separately in cash. Very few of these people do work; last year none of them did any work.

We do not employ outside labour as a rule, except for a little building work in the cold weather. Practically all the work is done by the garden labour.

In 1918-19 I spent Rs. 68,483 on recruiting. The class of coolie recruited in that year was not up to the usual standard; I should say the coolies were very much famine-stricken. We recruited 229 coolies in 1918-19 and many of these people are still on the garden.

President :—*Q.*—What do you estimate as the annual wastage of the labour force due to various causes including absconders, people going into the *bustees*, deaths, etc. ?

A.—I think anything approaching 10% and occasionally more in unhealthy years.

First class labour is more difficult to get owing to greater demand for good labour and the poorer class of coolie has got to be employed, the result being that we do not get the same amount of work done by such coolies.

Q.—Do you think that if the rate of pay was raised, you would get a better class of coolie ?

A.—I do not for a moment think so.

Q.—Do you think the attractions are sufficient to obtain a good class of coolie ?

A.—Yes. I don't think that would have any effect on recruiting.

Sardars get Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 fixed pay; then they draw commission on the total earnings of the coolies at 2 pice per rupee. They make up to Rs. 8 and Rs. 10 in the cold weather and over in the plucking season.

Q.—Is it ever necessary to make up the pay to Rs. 8 because they do not draw enough commission on the work ?

A.—Yes, when a sardar has only a small lot of coolies to supervise.

Very little *ticca* is done in the cold weather. In my experience I have never found the coolies very keen on the unit system. We still work partly on the unit. This cold weather I have given increased *haziras* on the unit, but it practically means a reduced task.

I increased the pay of the coolies last year by 8 annas and this year by about nearly a rupee working partly on the unit system.

The men are drawing Rs. 7-5 a month and the women up to Rs. 6-8. The daily *hazira* rate is Re. 0-4-6 to Re. 0-3-6 for men, Re. 0-3-0 to Re. 0-3-6 for women and Re. 0-3-0 to Re. 0-2-6 for children. The rise in pay since 1913 is one rupee a month plus extra *ticca* work done on the unit system. We have had the unit system for many years, off and on.

The task for plucking leaf is 4 to 6 seers and full *hazira* is paid at the beginning and end of the season. I reduced the task for fine plucking 2 seers last year. The *ticca* rate for plucking is 2 pice a seer. It is the general rate in this district.

I give contracts under Act XIII and an advance of Rs. 12 to men and Rs. 8 to women which is not recovered. We give new coolies a bonus of Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 simply to afford a start before they draw their pay. They get the agreement later. Up to the year 1920 we gave agreements for 930 days, and new coolies were put under agreement for that period. They were given the bonus, but actually it did not constitute an agreement. From about the end of 1920 we discontinued the practice of giving agreements for 930 days owing to the change in the Act. I certainly consider that my coolies did not like it. They preferred to get Rs. 20 or Rs. 30 in a lump sum. My former rate for deep hoeing was Rs. 5 an acre; now it works out to Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 for the current year. The estimate last year was Rs. 5-4 and the actual cost Rs. 5-12-9. The estimated plucking cost was Rs. 4 a maund of tea, and the actual cost Rs. 4-13, and this year the estimate is Rs. 5.

There are more absconders in the Woka division than in the Rungajau division, and the reason for that is a poorer class of labour, and the coolies are not so well settled. But although they are a poorer class, they are capable of earning a decent living wage, being physically fit. They abscond principally through private reasons; this is more often the case with the Sambalpur people. About 35 coolies absconded from the Woka division last year. In 1919 the Woka division garden was put on the black list owing to famine-stricken coolies having been brought up in 1918-19.

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Q.—Would it not have paid you to repatriate a good many?

A.—That is very difficult to say, probably half the family were first class workers and the other half or a small proportion sickly people. It would have meant losing the good workers also. We try to do our very best for these weak sickly people and look after them in the hope that they may become fit once again.

The fixed daily task for deeping hoeing is 12 *nals* for which a man gets 4 annas.

We have the unit system; a daily task is given which gives *haziras* of four and a half annas for men and three and a half annas for women. We expect every man practically to do 12 *nals*; with the reduced task and unit system he can earn more.

I consider Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 for men and women a decent living wage, assuming that *dhan* was selling at about Rs. 3 a maund.

It is hardly possible and not desirable either from the point of view of the coolie or the garden to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages but for the general information of the public I estimate concessions given to coolies, e.g., free housing, medical attendance, clothing, garden land, free grazing, would be equivalent to Rs. 3 a month; this does not take into account loss on rice.

We sold about 3,000 maunds of paddy last year. Act XIII is used simply because it acts as a moral binding on the coolie.

Sardars get a commission of Rs. 10 per head on recruiting.

My coolies own a large number of cattle and buffaloes for ploughing their rice land.

My garden is an old settled garden with a large area of rice land.

No. 128.—Mr. R. J. P. GILMORE, *Manager, Dooria Tea Company* :—

I have been 22 years in Tea and at Dooria since the beginning of 1916. Before that I was in the Bishnath district.

I work on the unit system. I first adopted and started the "unit system" on my garden—Borpukhuri—in the Bishnath district. Coolies were paid in cash weekly.

The unit system was an adaptation from the token or ticket system which was in vogue on some of the gardens in that district.

I was permitted by the Agents to adopt the unit system in preference to the token system.

The unit was one anna.

We give agreements for 626 days. The bonus is for men—Rs. 12 a year, and for women and big boys and girls—Rs. 6. These bonuses are not recovered.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—In your agreement papers on the printed form, the monthly wage is shown as Rs. 5 for a man and Rs. 4 for a woman, although the garden works on the unit system. I think you told me that this was simply a survival of the previous practice?

A.—That is so.

Q.—In the last two years you have given no agreements for 3 years and the reason was that the garden was not in a financial position to pay such a large bonus. I would like to ask whether you intend, when the garden is better off, to continue or resume the 3-year agreements?

A.—That would depend on the financial position of the garden. Of course we would give it *only* if the coolies wish it, and if the garden itself is in a financial position.

Q.—When a coolie takes an agreement for 3 years, is he under the impression that he has got to remain on the garden and work on it for 3 years?

A.—Yes.

In 1918-19 I recruited a good many coolies who were of a most unsatisfactory type. They were of poor physique, and in many cases, it took about a year to nurse them up to a healthy standard. I have been particularly unfortunate in having had a good deal of *kala-azar* on my garden and for three years Government stopped recruiting for the Dooria division. The result is that in some ways now I have lost touch with the recruiting districts.

Q.—I looked at one of your sardars' certificates and found the entry 'nil' Colaghat, against the item about medical inspection?

A.—I can give you the reason for that. Under the sardari system of recruiting new coolies are generally brought up in families and it may so happen that if a family comes into the depôt, and if one or two members of that family are not medically fit, it must necessarily mean keeping back the whole family as these coolies never like to separate themselves from the family group. We have known of cases where the whole family has been held up simply because of one member of that family being physically unfit, while the remaining members of the family are quite fit. It is on account of this difficulty that we do not insist on medical inspection.

We give new coolies 4 annas and 3 annas daily to men and women respectively until they become acclimatised and are able to do the full task. This is in addition to their food which is given free twice a day.

Q.—Can you give us some idea of your losses on account of *kala-azar*?

A.—The hypothecated losses on account of *kala-azar* are between £40,000 and £50,000 sterling or in other words, £10 to £50 per acre. About 270 coolies died from *kala-azar* between the years 1916 and 1921 (December). Roughly speaking, there have been 500 cases of *kala-azar*, of whom 270 died. At the present moment there are 7 cases.

Q.—Now you are more or less clear of it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What *haziras* do you pay *kala-azar* people?

A.—They are paid full *haziras*—men 4 annas a day, women 3 annas a day. On the day of treatment, they get double *hazira*. Over and above that, they are fed free.

Q.—You have had to burn down 371 double houses?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you pay your doctor *babu* for looking after your *kala-azar* cases?

A.—Rs. 100 a month and allowances.

Before the unit system came into force, the wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 for men and women respectively. I consider the unit system an undoubted success, both from my point of view as well as from the point of view of the coolie. From the coolie point of view I certainly think he gets better pay and better concessions such as paddy land. From our point of view, we get more work and we pay for it. We give very little rice or paddy.

We feed the children of the whole labour force gratis. The reason for so doing is that we believe that recruiting will become more and more difficult and it will pay us to feed up the younger generation.

There is a much bigger demand in India for labour in industries other than tea, and the financial position of tea is such that tea cannot afford to pay the higher rates of pay offered by other industries.

The same stamp of labour is not now available, as other industries being in a position to pay much higher rates of pay, can command the best class of labour, and tea has more or less to take the sweepings.

Q.—Would you say that the standard of living among the coolies has gone up?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that a coolie is as well clothed nowadays as before the war?

A.—No.

In deep hoeing, with a task of 3 *nals* per anna, it would take an average coolie on average conditions of soil, about 4 to 5 hours to do a *hazira* task. Of course I expect coolies to do first class work and I am prepared to pay for it. The tasks are adjusted accordingly.

About 48 per cent. of the adult coolies have got land, and about 172 acres in the garden grant are held by them. I have had very little trouble in getting my coolies to go into hospital as indoor patients. In-patients are paid and fed during the time they are in hospital. We encourage this simply with a view to accelerating the coolie's recovery by inducing him to go into hospital and place himself under treatment. It certainly pays us to do so, as otherwise if they do not go into hospital, it may probably take them a fortnight or a month to recoup and this must certainly mean a loss to us in the long run. We also pay a coolie man's wife a sustenance allowance for looking after him in hospital. My Directors have sympathised with me in

Colaghat. connection with this *kala-azar* scourge, and have left me with a free hand and the result is that I am practically free from *kala-azar*. We have a good deal of anæmia at Buthlon, but we are taking steps to eradicate it by systematic treatment. We have latrines attached to all the hospitals. *Kala-azar* first started in the *bustees* long before 1913 and was only diagnosed in 1916. As a matter of fact *kala-azar* has been noticeable since 1913.

Mr. McMorran:—*Q.*—You say *kala-azar* has been noticeable since 1913. Has anything been done to treat cases in the *bustees*?

A.—We have treated and cured many *bustee* cases free of charge purely from a humanitarian point of view. We had a small hospital for this purpose, but at the present moment, Government have a dispensary within about 4 miles of the garden. *Kala-azar* is very bad in the surrounding *bustees*.

Q.—Is there any indication as to how it got into your garden? Was it brought in from the surrounding country?

A.—I cannot say definitely. It was mostly epidemic in the old coolie lines.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I consider that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

President:—*Q.*—Contracts for one year under Act VI had to be verified by the Inspector of Labourers when he visited the estate and contracts for 3 years or more had to be executed in the presence of the Magistrate or Inspector of Labourers. What was the idea, when it was decided to do away with local contracts entirely?

A.—I have had very little Act VI labour to work and in consequence know very little of the Act and I do not consider that I am in a position to express an opinion on this point.

Q.—Do you think it was to facilitate recruitment?

A.—I could not say.

Q.—After the local contracts under the Act were disallowed, do you think it was a breach of faith to put coolies under contract for 939 days under Act XIII of 1859 without any of the restrictions imposed under Act VI?

A.—I do not consider it a breach of faith to put coolies under contract for 939 days under Act XIII.

It is entirely optional with a coolie as to whether he will take an agreement or not, either for 313 or 939 days,—the bulk of my coolies more or less demand 939 days and I have had very considerable trouble due to the financial position of the garden in reducing the length of agreement.

Q.—The practice of putting coolies under these long terms of agreement has persisted up to date?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think the coolie is in a worse position than he was under Act VI when the contracts had to be verified by the Magistrate?

A.—I cannot say as I have had no experience of Act VI.

Q.—How long have you been in Tea?

A.—Twenty-two years. I mean to say I have not had any very large experience of Act VI. I have always worked under Act XIII.

Q.—Why did you prefer Act XIII when Act VI was in force?

A.—I had to conform to the views of my Agents.

New coolies are not put under agreement until they have become acclimatised, that is to say, not before 2 or 3 years.

Q.—Do you think it is right to put coolies under long-term agreements on unhealthy gardens?

A.—In our case I am sure that had we stopped giving agreements to our coolies during the time of the epidemic of *kala-azar* we should have lost a large number of families by absconders and incidentally broadcasted *kala-azar* throughout the province. Financially it might have paid the Company to thus have lost many of its *kala-azar* families, but any financial saving in this direction would have been most strongly condemned by the Directors and management of the Company.

It is optional to the coolie to take the agreement. We put no pressure on him.

We give no commission to sardars.

Q.—How do you calculate the *khutia* days?

A.—They are deducted sometimes, but supposing a man has a few days more to work off his agreement and wants to be put under a fresh agreement, we do not then out for *khutias*. We do not put minor children under agreement. We give big boys and girls a bonus, and after a year or two they are at liberty to take adult agreements.

No. 129.—MR. A. LOCKET, *Manager, Borsapori Tea Estate, Jorhat Tea Company* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea. I have been with the Jorhat Company since December 1921. I have been on the Borsapori garden 8 years now. The garden has only recently been taken over by the Jorhat Company.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—In 1913 the wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 and the daily wage in 1921 was 4 annas for a man and 3½ annas for a woman. It still remains at that figure. Do you think that is enough?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do you enter up the *hazira* book?

A.—We enter up 1 for 4 annas and alongside it the amount of *ticca* in annas. We are gradually introducing the unit system. For some time we entered "4," "4," "4," but we have now abandoned that practice. As we are gradually going into the unit system I am going to write up whatever the coolie does for the day. The present system of 4 and 3½ annas is based on a daily wage being calculated on the number of working days per month. We pay outside labour 4 annas both to men as well as women and 2 pice a seer for leaf all through the year. We sell paddy, the present rate of which is Rs. 3 a maund. We have sold paddy up to Rs. 3-8 a maund; we never went beyond that figure.

The average coolie would certainly attempt to do less work for the higher pay under an increased rate except of course in the case of a first-class coolie. We introduced the unit system with the object of trying to get the average coolie to earn more throughout the year. Under the present *hazira* and *ticca* system the coolie does a very small amount of *ticca* during the cold season.

Q.—Does the unit system mean higher pay?

A.—Yes; in adjusting the rates it does come to a little more, that is to say, for 8 annas they work a little less. It is just a little bit to the coolie's advantage.

The estimate for plucking in 1922 works out to about Rs. 4-4 a maund of *pucca* tea. On our gardens it comes to 3½ to 3¾ maunds of leaf to one maund of tea. The plucking estimate for a maund of green leaf would probably come to about Re. 1-3-6. The actual cost per maund of green leaf in 1921 was very nearly Re. 1-3. This is speaking from memory. The estimate for light hoeing in 1922 is Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 2-12 per acre.

Q.—How does that compare with the actual for 1921?

A.—I have not got those figures by me. On one division it was Rs. 2-12 and in another it was Rs. 3. Under the unit system light hoeing will cost us a little more, but that will be a negligible amount. Sardars will be paid a commission under this system. I used to pay commission on the old system.

We have about 600 *bighas* of land cultivated by about 500 coolies inside the grant.

We generally give agreements for one year and occasionally for two years only to old coolies when they desire it. We pay a bonus of Rs. 12 for a man and Rs. 6 a woman. We have no 3-year agreements.

Q.—Do you put children under agreement?

A.—I give them a bonus.

Q.—It is written down in the book?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You give old settled coolies two-year agreements. What does a coolie understand by that? Does he understand that he is supposed to remain on the garden and work for 626 days?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Supposing the Act was abolished would you still give the bonus?

A.—Yes, I would. As a matter of fact it would not alter conditions at all in our case if agreements were abolished.

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Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I consider that, provided he works regularly, his wages are enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

I consider Rs. 6 a decent living wage for a man and Rs. 5 for a woman, under the conditions of the garden. This is, of course, in the case of a man working together with his wife and one child. In the case of a single man I think he would require other concessions to keep him in comfort, such as rice in larger amount from the garden. He would be paid weekly. He is specially looked after by being put into the hotel in case he does not look after himself. In this case he is fed at much greater expense to the garden.

I do not consider that the average coolie is as well clothed to-day as he was before the war.

It is perhaps possible to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, but I certainly do not think it desirable to do so.

Khan Sahib :—Q.—How many people are fed at your hotel every day ?

A.—The number varies very much according to the time of the year. At the present time I have about 45 orphan children and about 40 adults, and I have about 280 small (non-working) children.

Q.—Why are these people fed ?

A.—Because they are coolies who for one reason or another are unable to support themselves and to keep themselves in comfort. In many cases coolies are unable to make adequate provision for themselves without being assisted because their knowledge of the local conditions in the bazaars is limited. Many of them require medical supervision and are therefore put into the hotels to be medically supervised daily. Many of them require special concessions in the way of light work so as to be able to do the full *hazira*. Many are paid for no work at all, and others are paid full for half work only.

The labour force is 1,623—men, women and children.

Mr. Withers :—Q.—Do you prefer the unit system or the monthly wage system ?

A.—My experience of the unit system is limited, but from what I see of it, I must say that I prefer the unit system.

President :—Q.—And why ?

A.—For one thing a larger proportion of coolies can be easily induced to earn more money ; for another it would assist the garden to get more work done, and incidentally assist coolies in obtaining higher remuneration in a month.

My experience is that the average coolie would certainly attempt to do less work if he is given higher pay under an increased rate.

Q.—But although he gets more pay under the unit system, he does not do less work ?

A.—I distinguish between monthly rate of pay for given tasks, and total monthly earnings at the same rate of tasks. The unit system is found to increase the latter in keeping with individual coolies' capabilities.

Q.—Do you think the advantage of the unit system consists in that ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that there is no use raising the monthly wage because you consider the coolie would do less work ?

A.—Yes. It is to our advantage to get extra work done even though we may be required to pay slightly more for it.

Q.—What inducements are held out to coolies in the recruiting districts ? Are coolies told what rate of pay they would receive, and are the advantages of the unit system explained to them ?

A.—The particular system obtaining on the garden is written on the recruiter's question sheet and sent out to him.

Q.—Do you think the average coolie in the recruiting district would understand ?

A.—But the sardar does, I think, explain everything to the coolies ; he is carefully instructed to do so.

Q.—Is it the allurements offered to recruits in the way of high pay and rice land, etc., that brings up the coolies to Assam, or is it because coolies are in an utter state of starvation that they come to Assam ?

A.—All the coolies who come up to Assam do not come up through starvation.

We recruited about 420 coolies in 1918-19. They were not unsatisfactory as a Golaghat class, but I must say they were not in a good condition. We still have a good many of them left on the garden. We suffered many losses during the first year of their recruitment. They belonged to a most undesirable caste from the Bankura district. We recruited these coolies because we were opening out a new garden in those days and we wanted more labour.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—In spite of your having recruited in 1918-19, the labour force which in 1916-17 comprised 1,740 coolies has now come down to 1,632. What is the reason for that?

A.—We have a very large number of coolies who have moved out to the *bustees*. They were gradually taken off the books. There has been a considerable exodus of coolies from this part of the district for many years and that accounts for the decrease in our labour force.

Q.—What do you reckon the annual percentage of wastage from various causes?

A.—About 7½ per cent., but when we had pneumonia and influenza, it went up to 12½ per cent.

Q.—Have you had to be contented with a lower standard of work?

A.—In certain cases that has been the case.

No. 130.—*Mr. G. BRADDOCK, Superintendent, Brahmaputra Tea Company, Negheriting* :—

I have been 31 years in Tea and all the time with the Brahmaputra Tea Company.

My daily rates of wages are 4 annas and 3 annas to men and women respectively. In 1913 they were 3 annas to men and 2½ annas to women. The rates were raised to 4 annas, in the case of men in 1920, and 3 annas in the case of women in 1921.

I have been supplying paddy at Rs. 2 a maund ever since I have been with the Company. I have always supplied paddy at that rate. Every coolie takes paddy. Some coolies take and sell it at higher rates as they recognise that as a part of their wages.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—Is that the reason why the wages look rather low?

A.—The cash rates might be rather low, but if you take into consideration the low price of paddy, it easily makes up for it. Two years ago I offered to give coolies Rs. 2 a month as an equivalent, but they refused it.

Q.—I suppose they have become accustomed to it and did not like the change?

A.—That is so.

The amount of paddy which the coolies receive every month is 1½ maunds for a man, one maund for a woman, and a child receives it in proportion according to age. Paddy taken is not paid for in cash; it is cut out of their pay at the end of the month.

I consider Rs. 6 for a man and Rs. 5 for a woman a decent living monthly wage, provided paddy does not rise above Rs. 4 a maund.

The tasks for hoeing have not actually been altered. We are really not very particular about the task, as we have a huge labour force. My labour force is 3,167 men, 3,303 women, and 1,567 children; in all 8,037 souls and the acreage is 4,829. Until last year the average yield per acre was about 10 maunds. Now it is 5 maunds. The task for light hoeing is 10 *nals* for an anna. Few do more than 4 annas work. I have hundreds of people who are cultivating on their own, and in July and August the leave list is simply enormous. The average soil is moderate in three divisions and light in the fourth. The usual rate for deep hoeing at present is 3 *nals* for one anna or 12 *nals* for a *hazira*. We get a moderate hoe, and having a large labour force, we improve it by trenching later. The average coolie would take about 3 hours to do a task of deep hoeing. We are not importing coolies at present, but we hope to recruit again. There are 4,600 *bighas* of garden land cultivated by the coolies. It is quite a common practice for an Assamese to hand land over to the

Golaghat. coolie who cultivates it and receives half a share in the yield. We give half pay for 3 months to pregnant women.

				Rs.
In 1917 the loss on paddy was	...	...	...	42,000
In 1918 ditto	..	...	...	22,000
In 1919 ditto	...	...	...	64,000
In 1920 ditto	...	...	...	1,40,000
In 1921 ditto	...	...	...	1,60,000

On the Brahmaputra Tea Company's gardens the agreement between the coolie and myself is mutual. I give him a bonus of Rs. 30 for three years. This is only for men, On the other three Divisions the women get agreements.

Under the mutual agreement, if a coolie does not wish to serve his full term, he has got to return me the bonus for that part of the term. I introduced this mutual agreement, and at first wanted to bring it into line with the agreement which is ordinarily entered into by Assistants just out from Home. They are put under three years' agreement and if they break that contract, they are penalised for it. The Government of course would not hear of it. It is now a civil contract simply between the coolie and myself.

President :—*Q.*—Would you enforce it in the Civil Court ?

A.—I would not go to Court.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—Do you have many absconders ?

A.—There may perhaps be about 12 absconders in a year, and these are generally cases of boys running away with girls.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie I certainly think that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities. As a matter of fact I have scores and scores of coolies on my gardens with Rs. 500. This is particularly the case with the Muhammadan and Kurmi coolies who number about 500 and come mostly from Hazaribagh. The men are excellent, but the women do not want to work much. We got 30 or 40 of this class last year but none this year.

I would be very delighted to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages, but the coolies would not like it.

We feed only sick people. No children are fed.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—*Q.*—You spoke of the high losses incurred on paddy. May I know how that is calculated ? Was it not the case that when your cash wages were low, paddy had to be advanced to the coolies ?

A.—It is looked upon now as a part of the coolie's wage.

Q.—Was the loss due to the fact that you had to advance paddy at a cheap rate to the coolies because you were paying them less wages ?

A.—No, it was due to the policy of keeping the coolies in good health.

Q.—But was the advance of paddy a part of the coolie's wage ?

A.—You may consider it so.

No. 131.—*Mr. A. G. PATTON, I.C.S., Subdivisional Officer* :—

I have been a little over 6 years in the Service. I have been 3 years in Golaghat, except for one cold weather.

President :—*Q.*—I think you have prepared a statement which you may perhaps wish to place before the Committee ?

A.—Yes. This is my statement :—

There have been no serious labour disturbances since I came to this subdivision three years ago. Apart from the recent strikes due to political reasons, I can only recall four occurrences of minor importance which necessitated official intervention on gardens.

Of these the first was at Negeriting immediately after my arrival here ; a number of coolies came into Golaghat with a trivial complaint, and I enquired and found no legitimate grievances at all. The women wanted agreements which they had never had on that garden, and the men wanted an increased bonus. The Superintendent apprehended trouble on pay-day, and police were sent to the garden and no breach of

the peace occurred. Subsequently the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police went down and the leaders were bound down under Section 107, Criminal Procedure Code, and removed to Jorhat Jail; no further trouble ensued, and the Superintendent believed it was a put up job from outside.

The second occurred at Socklatinga Tea Estate during my absence on special duty, when Mr. Rhodes was in charge of the subdivision. A breach of the peace was only averted by his going out immediately and dispersing the coolies with police, and trying and removing the ring leaders. I learned subsequently that in this case also the grievance was imaginary and was due to the weakness of a former Manager who had advanced money to an ill-behaved lot of coolies from his own pocket, and when they found the new Manager would not repeat his predecessor's mistakes they caused trouble.

The other two incidents immediately followed on the Doom-Dooma riots and one at least was probably an echo of these as one of the ring leaders had recently returned from that locality. One was at Nahorjan and one at Rangamati Tea Estate, the Assistant on the former garden and the Manager on the latter being hit with a stick and the coolies going on strike for a day. I went out to both places, and listened to the coolies, but by the time I arrived work had been resumed and they had nothing to say about pay, which I found satisfactory on both gardens; that topic had been raised at Nahorjan to the Manager, but the origin of the Rangamati episode was trouble between a compounder and one of the Santali women, in which the Manager, after enquiry, had decided in favour of the compounder.

In only one case was the management of a garden severely censured and that was after an inspection by Mr. Rhodes of a new garden in a very jungly area, Bhukial; here the sanitary arrangements were so bad and the coolies were allowed to live in such a squalid manner that the death-rate, always high on a new garden, rose to the enormous figure of 40 per cent. By the time the garden was first inspected, however, the Manager at fault had been dismissed, and under the new Manager, the death-rate has come down to normal. The conditions of the coolies have been much improved and new lines erected.

Within the last six weeks I have been called out to strikes at Borkathani, Moheema and Rangajan Tea Estates; in no case have I found the stories of low pay substantiated by the books, and these strikes, as well as those which have occurred, to my knowledge on North Gorunga, Hautley, Betiani, Khumtai, Borjan, Rungagora, Dholaguri, Morangi and Numaligarh Tea Estates, have obviously been fomented by political agitators, the same demands for Rs. 15 and Rs. 12 being put forward in all cases; in all cases the coolies have returned to work without securing any concessions and only in the case of Numaligarh did they strike for more than two days.

I have never had any complaints made to me in the course of my inspections of gardens and though I can see the welfare of the coolies is more considered on some gardens than on others, it is impossible to expect uniform conditions everywhere, especially in view of the poor financial conditions of some gardens, and I do not think that the labour force is badly treated on even the worst run garden in this subdivision.

NOWGONG, 8TH MARCH 1922.

Nowgong.

[MR. FOX, DR. WILLIAMS, MR. DAS AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA, ABSENT.]

No. 132.—Dr. J. DODDS-PRICE, *Medical Officer, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Limited* :—

Mr. Dawson :—I have been 30 years in this district. I have ten estates under my charge. Generally speaking I would say that the district is healthy as far as the tea-gardens are concerned. Hookworm in this district is negligible now, but when I first came here, it was extremely bad.

Q.—How would you account for its disappearance?

A.—To begin with, we used to hold regular musters. We used to make lists of those people who were infected and we dosed them with medicine constantly. We were never very successful with latrines, the reason being that we had no money to introduce latrines on a scientific system. We had the ordinary *kutch* type of latrines. Moreover, in those days the class of coolie was hopeless. They never co-operated. The present-day type of coolie is much better in that respect.

Nowgong. Q.—What do you think of the possibility of latrines in compact lines proving a success?

A.—Unless it is done on a really scientific basis I think it is far better to let things alone.

The majority of the hospitals have bed-pans. There are no latrines. I believe in being very liberal in the grant of confinement leave and the gardens trust me. I give as much as 5 or 6 months' leave. I am however only in favour of giving long leave after birth. The granting of leave for any length of time before birth is to my mind not desirable, as I consider that a pregnant woman, provided she is healthy, is all the better of some work up to the time of her confinement. Of course there may be exceptions when it may be necessary to give one month's leave before birth. But, generally speaking, pregnant women are capable of doing light work until about three or four days before childbirth. The water-supply on the gardens is good. Every garden has its *paniwallas*. There is very little dysentery or bowel trouble on my gardens, and cholera we rarely see. *Kala-azar* is reappearing, but we are fighting it. Formerly the death-rate was 95% from this disease; now it should be 95% recovery. We treat *kala-azar* cases with injections which not only cure but check the transmission of the disease, but unfortunately many of the *bustees* are full of *kala-azar*. When I was Civil Surgeon of Nowgong in the years 1916 to 1920, Government did a lot to eradicate the disease in the *bustees* and they are still continuing to take steps in the matter, but supervision is required.

Q.—When you were Civil Surgeon can you tell me how the health of the *bustee-wallas* compared with that of the garden coolies?

A.—That is a difficult question to answer. In some instances the health of the *bustee-wallas* was decidedly bad. They suffered much more from influenza than the garden coolies and cholera was often very prevalent among them. Even hookworm was comparatively bad in the *bustees* as proved by my experience as Medical Officer of the Jail.

Q.—What is the rainfall of the district?

A.—It varies tremendously—from an average of 50 inches at Kondoli a year to 100 inches a year at Udmari.

Q.—Do coolies work in the rain during plucking time?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do they often get wet?

A.—Yes, but wetting does not affect the coolies provided the temperature is high. The time they get pneumonia is the cold weather, due very often to exposure when they are drunk.

Q.—Have the coolies got sufficient clothing to meet the effect of being drenched?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many pieces of cloth would a coolie require for a year's use?

A.—I think three complete changes would be sufficient.

President :—Q.—During the epidemic of *kala-azar* in 1893-94 the people cleared out of their villages I suppose?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So that if the villages become unhealthy the villagers are able to go away and change the site?

A.—Yes, but they ought not be allowed to, for in this way, the disease is disseminated; all affected areas should be notified.

Q.—But on a tea-garden the coolie cannot leave the garden?

A.—That is so, unless he runs away, and many did in the height of the epidemic—1893 to 1900.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—Would you say that the average coolie is as well clothed to-day as he was before the war in the way of surplus clothes and changes?

A.—I have not gone into that question. To my mind he appears to be well clothed now.

President :—Q.—During our inspection yesterday we found two cases in one of which a pregnant woman received 8 annas at the end of the month. The woman is supposed to get half pay, but Rs. 2-8-0 was cut on account of rice advances including the rice advances for the month during which she was on pregnant leave. Do you think that is right?

A.—Presumably she got enough to feed herself. On some gardens it is the rule Nowgong. in addition to giving rice to give a minimum of Re. 1 over and above that.

Q.—But where it is less than a rupee, you do not think it is sufficient I take it?

A.—Yes.

No. 133.—Mr. A. CHRYSTALL, *Manager of Amluckie Tea Estate, Amluckie Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been connected with Tea since 1889 and have been all the time in Cachar and Nowgong. I have been at Amluckie since 1899, except for a period of 2 years when I was away in France during the war.

The total population of my two Divisions is 3,024 souls, of whom 256 are infants : of the remainder, 869 are men, 823 women and 1,076 children. Three hundred and sixty men and 364 women are under agreement.

A large proportion of my labour force is housed in *bustee* surroundings; a small proportion in lines.

Mr. McMorran :—Q.—That is possible because you have a very large grant?

A.—Yes, consisting of some land suitable for tea and a lot of low-lying land suitable for *dhan khet* cultivation, and I have allotted portions suitable for coolies' settlements. My coolies thus have a fair amount of cultivation. Inside the grant 740 coolies including women hold leases for 2,160 *bighas*, i.e., equal to 102% of the agreement coolies, but all the agreement coolies do not hold land. The total adult male population holding land is 43%. The majority of the agreement coolies, however, have rice land.

Q.—Is your garden a healthy one for labour?

A.—Well, before I went to France I think my garden ranked amongst the healthiest of the Assam gardens.

Q.—I presume a labour force must be healthy to be able to show a big birth-rate of healthy children?

A.—Yes, the birth-rate on my garden ranks amongst the highest of the Assam gardens.

Q.—In your answer to question No. 18, you ask on what figures the Committee bases the enhanced cost of living. Do you mean to say that 1913 may not necessarily represent an average pre-war year?

A.—Undoubtedly not. For instance the present year is favourable for *dhan*, whereas 1920 was not favourable. So that a comparison between 1913 and 1920 for the purposes of this enquiry is not necessarily a fair basis for the industry. Of course I am basing this statement only on the cost of rice.

We work on the unit system. With regard to wages, we had a meeting of this Sub-Committee (rice was then 5 seers per rupee) and made a recommendation that all Managers should, during the cold weather months, when *dhan* and rice were dear, pay coolies an average daily wage of 4 annas 6 pies for men and 4 annas for women for daily tasks. I have been paying my coolies at these rates. But for the past few weeks, rice and *dhan* have become considerably cheaper and I would feel perfectly justified in going back to the former rates. At all events I think the coolies are entitled to the present rates. The task for deep hoeing varies according to the soil. Where the soil is in good tilth the coolie gets a pice a *nal*. On some harder soils where restricted cultivation had been imposed, owing to financial considerations, the coolie had to be given 2½ pice a *nal* to ensure good work and an adequate wage. As regards light hoeing for ordinary soils coolies get one anna for 8 *nals* for the first 32 *nals*, and after that, one anna for every 6 *nals*. The cost per maund of green leaf in 1921 was Re. 1-4. In 1919, 7,655 maunds of tea cost Rs. 25,839 for plucking. In 1921, 5,041 maunds of tea cost Rs. 25,020. In 1919 we plucked leaf for 2,600 maunds more tea for practically the same cost. A maund of tea in 1919 cost Rs. 3-6-3 for plucking; in 1921 it cost Rs. 5. Our agreement bonus is Rs. 10 to a man and Rs. 8 to a woman. In order to protect myself I give them the bonus and write it up in the cash book as an advance. The advance is never recovered from the coolie unless he absconds. Also nearly all the children in the garden get bonuses if they come up and ask for it.

Q.—Then you don't regard these as Act XIII agreements?

A.—No.

Nowgong. Q.—Are they included in the number of agreements specified?

A.—They are not included in the agreements taken by the adults. The real reason why these little children come up and ask for the agreement advance is because their parents are too lazy to provide them with clothes and the children take the initiative themselves.

Q.—What obligation rests on those children who receive the advance?

A.—No obligation whatever. There is no legal claim on them; they can do as they choose.

Q.—Have you any cases of *kala-azar* on your garden?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What action have you taken with regard to this?

A.—Well, I have implicit confidence in my Medical Officer. I leave the matter entirely in his hands.

Q.—Had you any cases of burning down houses infected by *kala-azar*?

A.—Formerly we used to adopt that plan, but of recent years we have abandoned it. This practice is based on the recommendations of the Medical Officer.

Q.—Do you notice any difference in the health of the coolies living in the *bustees* as compared with the lines?

A.—There is no perceptible difference.

Q.—Do you think your coolies are as well clothed to-day as they were before the war?

A.—I think so.

Q.—In the matter of clothing, what is the tendency of prices just now?

A.—I think the tendency is to decrease.

Q.—Have you any actual figures of the cost of cloth to show whether it is going up or coming down?

A.—No.

Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, I would say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities.

I do not consider it desirable either in the interest of the coolie or of the garden itself, to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

Coolies supplement their earnings by selling the produce of their *dhan khets*, vegetable gardens, etc.

President:—Q.—Did you bring any cases under Act XIII?

A.—Yes; as far as I can recollect I brought 3 cases.

Q.—The Deputy Commissioner's register shows 22?

A.—He may be correct. I may have applied for warrants for 22 coolies.

Q.—But when you apply for a warrant you institute a case don't you?

A.—Taking it in that light, yes.

Q.—In two cases the coolies were sentenced to 3 months' rigorous imprisonment, with the option of returning to finish their agreements.

Was that after they had served their terms of imprisonment?

A.—No, my recollection is that they were told to return to the garden to complete the agreement, and having failed to do so, they were sentenced to imprisonment. Failure to return to the garden occurred in the case of one coolie, who was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment, whereas the other coolie returned to the garden.

Q.—Is it legal to order a coolie to return to work on a garden after he has served a term of imprisonment under Act XIII?

A.—I do not know: but in this particular case the man expressed a desire to the Magistrate, of returning to the garden and the balance of his sentence was condoned.

It was our practice formerly to give 2-year and 3-year agreements, but we discontinued it on the very day the Act was passed.

Q.—How many persons have been put under agreement this year from the 1st of January 1922?

A.—I have not got the figures with me here.

Children, as I said, are given a bonus of anything between Rs. 3 and Rs. 8 according to the ability of the child to perform a task. Their names are written up in the agreement book. Nowgong.

With regard to the price of *dhan* within the last two months, it has been sold at Rs. 3 a maund. We began the unit system in 1919. It was then based on 4 annas in the case of a man and 3 annas 6 pies in the case of a woman. Some time during the past rains, owing to scarcity and dearness of rice which was then 5 seers per rupee, I thought it advisable to increase my rates to 4 annas and 4 annas 6 pies. Before 1919 the wages were Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 for men and women, respectively. Formerly under Act VI the wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 4 for men and women, respectively, with the condition that rice had to be supplied at Rs. 3 a maund. We started finer plucking last year. Finer plucking has undoubtedly increased the cost of plucking. All women do not work the whole day during the plucking season. Some work for 7 or 8 hours; others 5 hours only. Generally the women go out to work about 8 to 9-30, some at 10 o'clock in the morning. The forenoon leaf is weighed in on the garden about noon and the afternoon leaf at the factory; women come in at any time from 3 to 4-30 P.M., according to the distance their village is from the factory.

Q.—Supposing a woman came back at 12 o'clock and did not go back, would she get any *hazira* for that day?

A.—Yes, a half *hazira*; but if she plucked a full task by 12 o'clock, she would be paid a full *hazira*. Of course, at present when plucking has just been started there is no fixed task. The woman is supposed to work for the whole day. But if a woman came back after 4 hours' work she would only get a half *hazira*.

In the last 5 years we spent about Rs. 70,000 on recruiting, and I have been satisfied with the results.

I have had no trouble on my garden. I have said in my answer to question No. 15: "I do not believe there was any widespread feeling of unrest prior to this year and I do not think, where coolies were well paid and looked after, any trouble would have manifested itself, but for the work of agitators."

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—Does that not imply that where coolies are not well paid and well looked after, there is a possibility of trouble?

A.—Since writing that I have changed my opinion. I should like to say instead that I have gained information from gardens to the effect that trouble has manifested itself in other districts. At that time my opinion was that with a well-treated labour force there would be little chance of a rising. Later experience shows me that it is possible to have such trouble, but I have not had any personal knowledge of it. In spite of the agitation there has been trouble only on one garden in the Nowgong district.

Q.—In your answer to question No. 17(a) you say: 'The economic conditions were the only grievance'?

A.—Of course, like us all, the coolies felt the pinch, everything having gone up in price.

Q.—But there is a difference between you and the coolies?

A.—Each feels the pinch in his own way.

Q.—You say there has been a certain amount of economic grievance?

A.—I should say that the economic conditions, e.g., in 1921, were certainly not as favourable as they were in some previous years.

As regards plucking, a considerable proportion of the coolies plucked their task by 12 o'clock earning 3 annas 6 pies by that time, that is to say, they actually did 3½ hours' work.

Q.—Supposing you had given the same task in 1921, as in previous years, how many hours would it take a woman to do it?

A.—It is impossible to say; perhaps a third longer or in other words 4½ hours. She would require a much longer time to pluck the same quantity.

Q.—For 25 pounds of actual leaf a woman gets credit for 9 seers or 18 pounds. What is the 7 pounds deducted for?

A.—For factory wastage, loss on manufacture, and other items.

Q.—I will put it in another way. What is the extent of your surplus approximately?

A.—On this rate of plucking, viz., Re. 1-4-0 a maund, there is no surplus.

Nowgong.

Q.—But formerly you used to get a surplus?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Up to what percentage?

A.—I have not got the exact figures here, but we had a surplus.

Q.—Do you think by the system of deductions there is a danger, if it is not carefully watched, that a coolie may be “done”?

A.—There is a possibility of it.

I do not give any rice advances and have never done so all my time in tea.

Q.—Do you think it is a bad system to give rice and cash advances and to deduct all at the end of the month?

A.—Certainly. It may result in impoverishing the coolie and involving him in debt.

No. 134.—Mr. R. J. RAMSAY, *Manager, Jiajuri Tea Estate, Patrakhola Tea Company, Limited* :—

I have been 23 years in Tea and 14 years at Jiajuri.

The rate of wages on my garden is 4 annas 3 pies for men and 3 annas 6 pies for women. We have been paying our coolies weekly for the last five years although the contract under Act XIII stipulates for a monthly wage which was Rs. 6-8 and Rs. 5 about the end of last year. The rates were raised to Rs. 7 and Rs. 6 about the end of January last to keep in line with the neighbouring gardens.

President :—Q.—How do you calculate the wages for a month like February? Does a coolie get Rs. 7 or Rs. 6 if he or she works 24 days in February?

A.—No.

Q.—And why not? If the amount is actually written in the contract that the coolie would receive so much a month, I do not see why he should not be given the full wage?

A.—It would be awkward as we are paying weekly, and in payment of a reduced rate for the first week of the following month there would no doubt be trouble.

Q.—So that in a short month the coolie does not get his full monthly wage even if he works every day?

A.—No.

Q.—About the provision in the garden budget for the remuneration of labour your written answer says that the amount given in 1919 is Rs. 86,053, and the number of coolies 630, but the actual amount paid to coolies was only Rs. 44,480-7-3. How do you account for the balance?

A.—Strictly speaking the first set of figures was not wholly for the remuneration of labour; they included other items such as establishment, coal, stores transit, and so on.

Q.—Is that the general practice?

A.—Yes, so far as I know.

Q.—So that the answer to that question is rather misleading?

A.—Yes, the whole ought to have been written down as local expenditure.

Q.—You do not give much *ticca* in the cold weather?

A.—I give as much *ticca* as the coolies desire, but the fact of the matter is that they do not want it as they have a fair amount of cultivation. About 20% of the labour force hold Government land. We sell practically no *dhan* to the coolies, but we keep a stock of *dhan* in case it is needed by the coolies. Coolies pay cash for their *dhan*. I have no advances outstanding against coolies on account of the purchase of *dhan*. Coolies are put under agreement for 313 days and given a bonus of Rs. 10 and Rs. 12 which is not recovered. New coolies are never put under agreement when they first come up. We used to give 3-year agreements but the practice has now been discontinued.

Q.—Do you give agreements to children?

A.—Yes, if they belong to a good family they may be given a bonus which is not recoverable.

I do not employ much outside labour although I am not very well off for labour. I have not been recruiting for the last 2 years. I have only this year sent off 30 sardars and I do not know what the results are likely to be.

Q.—Do you feed any children at the hotel?

A.—Yes, at times when necessary; not always.

I am in favour of retaining Act XIII. For instance it is necessary in the case of a new coolie who may abscond soon after his arrival, especially if he be a single man. Through the Act we might have a little power over him; so also in the case of an old coolie. The retention of the Act is to the interest of the new coolie himself as he would get a bonus perhaps within a month or two on his first arrival, and about 80% to 90% of the coolies have come up voluntarily for the agreement about a month or two after their arrival.

Q.—Do you put children under agreement?

A.—They are not put under agreement, but are required to affix their thumb impression. Of course the bonus is given them because their parents wish it. The amount of the advance to children varies: it may be Rs. 5 or Rs. 6, but it is never less than Rs. 5. The lowest age is 10 years. Agreements are only taken for one year, and the bonus is given only on the condition that they work for 313 days.

The rates of 4 annas for men and 3 annas 3 pies for women have been in force for 5 years and have only during the past 3 or 4 months been raised to 4 annas 3 pies and 3 annas 6 pies.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—In your answer to question No. 20 you say “When necessary measures have been suggested and if not always sanctioned have generally been approved by the Agents.” What does the expression ‘if not always sanctioned have generally been approved’ mean?

A.—It means that they have been thought of favourably on paper only.

Q.—Have you ever asked for anything during the past 5 years with a view to improving the prospects of the coolies?

A.—Not so far as I remember.

Q.—Apparently you have asked for something which has not always been sanctioned though generally approved. Was that for a rise of pay?

A.—I asked for a rise of pay for the Indian establishment. At that time it was not approved owing to the bad state of the industry, but it has been since. The wages of the coolies were raised after previous sanction.

Q.—Would you say that the average coolie is as well clothed now as he was before the war?

A.—Yes: I think he has a sufficient number of changes.

Q.—You say it takes a woman 5 hours on the average to do a plucking task. Have you made any alteration since 1913 in your tasks for deep and light hoeing?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say ‘There has been no alteration, as on account of extra hoeing in of green manures and cultivation during the rains, and also changes in climatic conditions the soil has become more friable all over the garden.’ May I take it that you have not altered your task?

A.—If you take light hoeing separately then my answer is ‘Yes, I have’ because I never do over 30 *nals* now. Before it used to be 35 *nals*. Deep hoeing depends on the weather entirely.

Q.—I suppose there has always been an alteration at different times according to the season?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you stick to the statement that there has been no alteration?

A.—Only an alteration as regards light hoeing.

Q.—As regards *ticca* hoeing you say the coolie can earn more than before the war as no limit is now given?

A.—Yes, a limit was imposed up to the year 1919. In the cold weather they are allowed *ticca* hoeing.

No. 135.—Mr. J. C. HIGGINS, C.I.E., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong:—

President:—Q.—How long have you been in Nowgong?

A.—Since May 1920.

Nowgong. Q.—Have you had much trouble in tea-gardens in this district in consequence of the agitation?

A.—No; very little.

Q.—There has been one strike in tea-gardens. Was that connected in any way with the agitation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what way?

A.—The agitators had a meeting within a couple of miles of the garden a few days before (it was just after the Chargola exodus) and instigated the coolies to demand 8 annas a day for men and 6 annas a day for women. That was in May 1921.

Q.—Were the agitators from Sylhet?

A.—They were Nowgong agitators.

Q.—How did they know about the Chargola exodus?

A.—Because the leaders read the papers. The day the coolies went on strike was the 30th of May. The meeting took place about 10 days earlier.

Q.—Did they remain on strike long?

A.—About 24 hours, and then went back to work.

Q.—Has there been no other trouble on any other gardens?

A.—Not that I know of. But there has been a good deal of agitation in this district, though probably less in than other districts.

Q.—You were attacked at Jamunamukh?

A.—They threw stones at the train, but I do not know whether they intended to hit me.

Q.—Were many agitators arrested in connection with the Jamunamukh affair?

A.—About 40 or 50; that was quite recently.

Q.—Has there been any serious trouble before?

A.—No. There was a mob of 6,000 people in Nowgong, one day in December last, but they were fairly tractable and gave no trouble. They were Assamese.

Q.—I understand you have a written statement. Will you please read it out to the Committee?

WRITTEN STATEMENT.

Unrest on tea-gardens during 1921-22.

There has been only one instance in this district. In May 1921, shortly after the Chargola exodus, 1,200 coolies of the Sagunbari and Kondoli gardens of the Kondoli Division of the Salolah Tea Company struck work for one day. The Superintendent of Police and I went straight to the garden with 20 armed police, and the strikers returned to work. The strike was caused by political agitators, who had recently held a meeting and urged the coolies to demand 8 annas and 6 annas per day for men, and women respectively. I inspected the gardens shortly after the strike and found that the coolies had no real cause for complaint, and were easily able to carry out tasks sufficient to enable them to earn the above amounts in a day. But the Manager told me that he had only allowed the coolies "doubles" a few days before the strike began, and the fact that their earning capacity was temporarily limited may have had something to do with the strike, though I am not prepared to say definitely that it had. In my opinion, the strike was mainly due to political agitation. The strikers were mainly, if not entirely, Uriya coolies.

Reasons for absence of trouble on Nowgong tea-gardens.

(1) The gardens are favourably situated. They lie along the foot of the Mikir Hills range, and the neighbouring villages consist chiefly of ex-garden coolies, Miki's, Lalungs, Kacharis, etc. These primitive peoples are not particularly interested in politics or non-co-operation.

(2) Managers have taken every precaution to keep agitators out of their gardens, and have taken prompt action against them whenever they appeared.

(3) Coolies are well off and contented. There is plenty of land available for rice cultivation on or near most of the gardens and jungle is everywhere available, for firewood, building materials, shikar, etc. Wages may possibly be lower than

in some other districts. But most gardens are not over-stocked with coolies, with the result that the coolie can almost invariably get as much work as he is willing to do, and his earning capacity is not limited. Newsgang.

(4) I have throughout done my best to prevent non-co-operators getting into touch with the coolies. After the Sylhet exodus, I wrote and spoke to the leading agitators in the district, pointing out the disastrous effects to the whole community of such an exodus, and threatening immediate and drastic action in the event of any attempt to tamper with garden labour. Since then, the few attempts that have been made have been promptly dealt with, either by the Managers or by me. Recently the hands of some of the Managers have been strengthened, where necessary, by their appointment as Special Inspectors of Police, with selected men from the garden staff and labour force as special police officers under them. The occasion was the closing of the *hatts*, and the threat of attempts to close garden *hatts*, with the attendant possibility of looting and lawlessness generally.

Mr. McMorran:—Q.—You have sometimes made reports to Government about the conditions of tea-garden labour I take it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What was the general conclusion as regards the enquiries in the district?

A.—Exactly what I have just said, *viz.*, that the coolie is well off in this district and that he has very little to complain of.

Q.—Is it your experience that the tea-garden coolies have the opportunity of earning enough?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The statements as submitted to Government by you indicated what the capacity for earning was?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And from that you came to the conclusion that in this district the coolies were well off?

A.—Yes.

President:—Q.—Have you made any enquiries when inspecting gardens about the indebtedness of the coolies?

A.—No, not particularly.

Q.—Do you know if any coolies are very much in debt on the estates?

A.—I know that in some estates they are indebted for rice taken, also for advances. The amounts are considerable.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—I think you are aware that the prices of the necessaries of life have increased of late?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And that there is a marked increase in these things as compared with the prices of 1913?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you hold that the wages of the coolies have risen in the same proportion?

A.—No. I have said the same thing in the Government report. At the same time I also said that a coolie could earn more than a living wage.

Q.—Therefore the coolie had cause to complain because his wages had not risen in proportion to the prices of foodstuffs?

A.—I think the whole community has that cause.

Q.—Of course they may have personal grievances on some gardens and not on others. I suppose those whose incomes are higher than the coolies' have less cause to complain of the rise of prices than the coolies themselves?

A.—Possibly.

Q.—When the margin of savings is very small—I am talking of an average man of the middle class?

A.—They have more intelligence and are more easily able to understand.

Q.—All the same they feel the pinch. But these poor people with whom the margin of profit is very small, could not bear it?

A.—I would not say that they could not bear it. The coolie is still able to maintain himself, but there is a field for the agitator to work upon.

Nowgong. *Mr. Dawson:—Q.—*This is the register of complaints. In 1920-21 from the 1st of July 1920 to the 30th June 1921 you have had 76 cases and from the 1st of July 1921 up to date you have had 69 cases. I noticed one case here where the Manager of a certain garden in this district got a warrant issued against one who you say was obviously under age. Is that an isolated case, or is that the only case you remember?

*A.—*No, possibly in 5% or one in 20 cases you would find a boy or girl who was anything between 12 and 18 years. Eighteen is the legal age at which a coolie can enter into an agreement. I have never seen a case as far as I know of a child under 12 being put under contract.

*Q.—*In this case this boy was obviously under age or he must have been distinctly under 18 and was therefore discharged?

*A.—*Yes.

*Q.—*Do you think that warrants should not have been issued against such people?

*A.—*I discharged them because the practice to my mind was illegal. They were incapable of entering into contract being under age.

*Q.—*Do you give the coolie, as a rule, the alternative of going back to the garden if the case is proved?

*A.—*No. I usually ask them if they will go back, and if not, I sentence them. If the circumstances seem to indicate that the coolie should be given the alternative, then I give it to him. I give a weakly coolie the alternative of paying back the money. In the case of failure the usual sentence is 3 months.

*President:—Q.—*Do you think that 3 months' rigorous imprisonment is excessive in the case of coolies recruited locally?

*A.—*No.

*Q.—*What was the advance given to those coolies?

*A.—*I do not know.

*Q.—*I suppose they got some advance?

*A.—*Yes, or else they would not have been liable to conviction.

*Q.—*Do you find many new coolies put under agreement in this district on arrival?

*A.—*The practice varies in different gardens, but I think a good many are.

*Q.—*Do you think that most of the new coolies are put under contract?

*A.—*I do not know. I think in a good number of cases they are, but I am not certain.

*Q.—*Do new coolies receive a substantial bonus or just Rs. 2 or Rs. 3.

*A.—*I cannot say.

*Q.—*You have got to examine the agreement register?

*A.—*Yes. I am not prepared to speak from memory. I have not inspected gardens for 10 months now.

*Q.—*Do you think the practice of inspections should be continued?

*A.—*I think it ought to be continued.

*Q.—*Do you think once in 2 years is sufficient or do you think it is necessary to inspect every year?

*A.—*I should say once in two years is sufficient.

*Q.—*Do you think, if inspection is to be continued, that general instructions ought to be issued to inspecting officers?

*A.—*I think it would be useful because in some cases inspecting officers do not know what to look for.

*Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—Q.—*I could not understand the procedure that is adopted in these cases under Act XIII. When a complaint is made and the accused appears is he given the option of going back to the garden or repaying the advance?

*A.—*That is left to the discretion of the court.

*Q.—*Does the court not give the accused the alternative of paying the remainder of the agreement money and going away wherever he likes?

*A.—*No, not always. The court can do as it thinks fit.

Q.—Was it given in any of the cases mentioned ?

A.—The right was exercised in one case. I cannot say, speaking from memory, in how many cases altogether. I know that the option was offered in more than one case, but there are not many such cases.

Q.—When these cases are put up before the court is the Agreement Register produced in evidence ?

A.—Yes. When I try the case I always call for it. The usual practice is to file the agreement with the complaint and then the Agreement Register is produced at the hearing, and, as a rule, corroborated by the evidence of the man who paid the advance.

Q.—I wanted to know this because there have been some statements made in regard to it. The register has got evidential value ?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—In 5 of those Act XIII cases 3 months' rigorous imprisonment was the sentence passed. The coolies were in jail from July 7th to August 12th. They were then released and ordered to work off 271 days in one case, 279 in another and 313 days in each of the 3 other cases. Would you say that that was legal ?

A.—No, I am prepared to admit that it was illegal. The proper procedure should have been to refer the matter to the Local Government to get them released. I took the responsibility of releasing them immediately because it was advantageous to the State, the employer and the coolie. The coolies requested to be released; they said they preferred the garden to the jail. I know of another case in which a man said that the deep hoeing was harder in the jail than it was in the tea-garden and wanted to go back.

No. 136.—Mr. G. STEWART, *Manager, Kellyden Tea Estate, Chabwa Tea Company* :—

I have been in Tea since 1905 and all the time in the Chabwa Tea Company. I have been at Kellyden all the time except for a period of one year.

Mr. Dawson :—Q.—In the last 5 years you spent about Rs. 70,000 on recruiting but the net result is a decrease of 76 in your labour force. Could you give any reasons for that ?

A.—Take the year of the famine. We got up about 350 or 400 short term coolies; it cost a great deal of money and they all went away involving us in a heavy loss.

Q.—Your labour force is insufficient to run the garden ?

A.—Yes, without outside help.

Q.—And you propose to do recruiting ?

A.—I am recruiting now.

Q.—What were your wages in 1913 ?

A.—Rupees 5 and Rs. 6.

Q.—Has that been raised ?

A.—Yes, in March 1920 to 4 annas and 3 annas 6 pies a day. It is now a weekly wage.

Q.—Now take a man who used to get Rs. 6 a month, that is to say, working all the working days he would get Rs. 72 a year for his monthly wage. Now under this system of 4 annas a day—the weekly payment system—he gets Rs. 78 a year as against Rs. 72 excluding *ticca*, that is to say, he has had a rise of 8 annas a month ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How long were the wages of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 in force ?

A.—Since about 1908. Before that it was Rs. 4 and Rs. 5.

Q.—When it was Rs. 4 and Rs. 5 do you remember if there were many Act VI coolies on the garden ?

A.—There were a great many Act VI coolies then. They got Rs. 5 (women) and Rs. 6 (men) with full pay till they were acclimatized.

Q.—The Act VI coolie in the fourth year of his agreement got Rs. 6 and he also got rice at Rs. 3 a maund. When you gave Rs. 6 in 1908 after the Act was abolished, did he still continue to get rice at Rs. 3 a maund ?

A.—No.

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Q.—Would it then be fair to say that to that extent he was not so well off?

A.—I would not say that because he must have been some time on the garden and probably had a little cultivation, and was able to earn more *ticca*.

President:—Q.—But the new coolies were worse off having no cultivation and property?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you say that that continued up till 1920 when you raised the wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the coolie felt the rise in the cost of living?

A.—Honestly I cannot say so of my garden. The coolies, as far as I am able to see, are as well dressed as—in fact better than—they were in previous years. Also the standard of health has distinctly improved.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—You say between 1913 and 1920 the cost of living went up about 75%. More *ticca* was earned especially in leaf plucking and hoeing?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say that a decent living wage for a coolie is Rs. 7 (men), and Rs. 6 (women). You have got a large quantity of land—1,100 *bighas* of land inside the grant cultivated by about 400 coolies. The rent is 2 to 4 annas a *bigha*. For the first two or three years the land is given out rent free?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you altered your tasks for light hoeing and deep hoeing since 1913?

A.—If the ground becomes hard it is reduced. It is a matter of the weather in the cold season and the jungle in the rains.

In *ticca* they get the same money for less work but the *hazira* work is about the same.

We are required to write off a fair number of irrecoverable advances. In the last 5 years we have been writing off, taking a fair average, about Rs. 1,000 a year; this is talking from memory. I cannot give the exact sum outstanding against the coolies as advances, but I should say roughly it is about Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000. Of course this represents advances given to buy cattle, clothes or anything like that, but not for rice.

Q.—Was it necessary for them to take those advances to buy clothes because they had not enough money left out of their earnings?

A.—I could not say. Sometimes they might have gone sick and received short pay.

We give very little leave before child-birth, unless the coolie insists on it, but after child-birth the women get from 4 to 6 months, and are at liberty to go and feed in the hospital any time they like. They get Rs. 3 at child-birth and Rs. 2 at the end of the year. While a mother is on 4 months' leave, she has got to come to hospital if she wants to get her food free.

President:—Q.—But suppose for the first few days the woman is not able to go?

A.—In that case she gets this Rs. 3.

Q.—Is that sum given as an advance?

A.—No, it is not recovered.

The highest rate at which I sold rice is Rs. 5 a maund.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—As regards the contract, would you say that it is the fact that the coolie knows that he is liable to be imprisoned that makes him carry out his contract?

A.—I would not say that. A man comes up of his own accord for the agreement and knows that he is taking it for a year, but in the meantime he might have a quarrel with any of his relations and, agreement or no agreement, he would clear away to some other relations or people in the village, but knowing that he can be got back by warrant, he stays on.

Q.—Could you do without the Act?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you think coolies would abscond if you did away with the Act?

A.—I would not say they would abscond, but I am inclined to think that outsiders, like *kayas*, would get hold of them and use them.

Q.—Have you run many cases under Act XIII?

A.—Last year there were a few cases.

Q.—Do you put new coolies under agreement at once?

A.—Yes, as soon as they come up. We give them an advance of Rs. 4.

Q.—Why do you give them only Rs. 4?

A.—Because we do not know how long they are going to stay, but after six or seven months they get the balance.

In the agreement we enter up Rs. 4 as the first instalment of the advance. We had 5 cases under Act XIII and the sentence passed was 3 months' rigorous imprisonment. The coolies remained in jail for a certain time and they were ordered to go back. Of course they went back of their own accord. Non-co-operators had induced them to go to jail.

Children are put under agreement and given advances ranging from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8. The minimum age is 6 years. We write up their names in the agreement book to keep accounts square, and they are given to understand that they will have to work with us for 313 days. This system has been in force for ages. I know that I have no redress if they abscond. We do not recover agreement advances.

Rice is never charged at more than Rs. 5 per maund. We have sold rice at 10 seers to the rupee and *dhan* 14 seers to the rupee. Of course the coolies take very little *dhan* from me as they buy it in the villages. During the last 5 years I have been giving out blankets and clothes to those who could not afford to buy them. I usually distribute about 200 blankets in a year.

Q.—Am I to understand that there are 200 coolies in your garden who cannot afford to purchase blankets?

A.—No, the blankets are used for the hospital. Of course those who can afford to buy the blankets get them at a reduced rate.

Coolies who do not have any cultivation would find it difficult to pull on unless they do *ticca* work. We have a certain number of coolies who do not and will not work. These have got to be kept going with a subsistence allowance. They are also fed in the hospital.

Talking from memory the losses on rice, *dhan* and cloth in 1919 amounted to something like 8,000 or 9,000 rupees. I cannot give the exact figure. I cannot give the figures for 1920 and 1921 from memory. The strength of my labour force is about 1,100.

All non-working children can get a free meal twice daily if they wish. At present, I feed 8. All indoor patients are fed free of charge.

No. 137.—Mr. W. MELDRUM, Manager, Salolah Division, Salolah Tea Company, Limited:—

I have been 16 years in the Salolah Tea Company. I have been in charge of the Salolah Division from the end of October 1921. We do not work on the unit system. My wages are Rs. 6 and Rs. 7. *Ticca* over and above the *hazira* is given at so many *nals* for hoeing and so many seers for plucking. We pay our coolies monthly.

President:—Q.—What do you think of the unit system?

A.—I prefer it to the other system because the coolie understands how much he has to get and it would also reduce the necessity of advancing rice and *dhan*.

Q.—Does not the unit system require more supervision?

A.—I do not think so; the coolie would assist in that I think.

We pay commission to sardars for *ticca* work in addition to their monthly wage.

We raised our wages last in December 1920. Before, they were Rs. 5 and Rs. 6.

Q.—What was the reason for having raised the wages?

A.—There was a meeting and it was stated that the wages were possibly low and we all decided to raise them. That was on account of the increased cost of living. The wages were Rs. 5 and Rs. 6 from 1901 up to December 1920.

We give Act XIII agreements. To coolies in whom we have confidence and trust we give contracts for more than one year. There is no written contract. Children

Nowgong. are not put under contract. We put new coolies under agreement and give them a bonus of Rs. 10. They receive Rs. 3 at the time of taking the agreement and the rest is deposited and handed out periodically. I have not done much recruiting during the last two years. There was a lot of recruiting done in 1919. We have this year sent out 61 sardars. So far we have not been successful. It is difficult to get coolies. The people say that they are well off in their own country and that they do not find it necessary to leave their country. We pay a commission of Rs. 50 to sardars for good Ranchi people and Rs. 25 for people from Cuttack. A sardar would not get his commission at this rate if he brought up a lot of coolies. Up to date 11 new coolies have been recruited. We are supplying rice just now at Rs. 5 a maund because we bought it at Rs. 6-14-0. We are now buying rice at Rs. 4-10, so that next month we hope to sell it at a reduced rate. Rice advances are deducted from the pay of the coolies at the end of the month. My advances on account of rice are very heavy. We have not introduced the system of paying cash for rice at the time of issue at Salonah. I think about Rs. 18,000 lies outstanding against the coolies on account of rice advances. The task for leaf is 2 pice a seer. The task is 6 seers and we give 2 pice a seer over that in the height of the season. We have not started plucking yet. Just now we are paying *haziras* without a fixed task.

Q.—Is it a time-scale?

A.—Yes, if a woman went out for 3 or 4 hours she would get a half *hazira*.

The rate for deep hoeing is 14 *nals* for a *hazira*. The *ticca* rate used to be one *anaa* for 3 *nals*; it has come down now owing to the drought. The task for light hoeing is 30 *nals* at the beginning of the season in the case of men and 20 in the case of women and 20 *nals* for *ticca*. The cost of light hoeing in 1920 before the wages were raised was Rs. 2-12-0. Last year it was estimated at Rs. 3-8-0 per acre and this year Rs. 3-12-0.

We give 3 months' pregnant leave on half pay after child-birth. Advances are deducted from that. We deduct the cost of rice advanced during the month and also sometimes portion of the previous advance. We have no minimum rate. The loss on rice during the last 5 years has been Rs. 60,685 and this figure has been included in my answer to question 26 (b).

There are 1,500 *bighas* of paddy land.

Q.—Why is it necessary to advance so much when you have got such a quantity of paddy land?

A.—The land is badly situated and some of the coolies sell a good deal of rice if they can get a good price for it. I am not certain who buys rice, perhaps the *kaya* does in many cases. I do not think coolies are much indebted to their fellow coolies. I think they are chiefly indebted to the garden.

Q.—You say that there is nothing repugnant to the coolie about agreements any more than it is repugnant to yourself to execute an agreement with the Company. Do you mean to say that the coolie does not object to the agreement any more than you object?

A.—Well, I cannot be sent to jail if I broke the agreement.

I think it would be a great mistake to abolish Act XIII. I am in favour of its retention. It would act as a deterrent in the case of malcontent coolies who would go off from one garden and take an advance on another garden only to leave soon after for other gardens with the intention of doing the same thing.

SHILLONG, 20TH MARCH 1922.

Shillong.

(MR. FOX, MR. WITHERS, MR. DAS, AND SRIJUT SIVA PRASAD BARUA, ABSENT)

No. 138.—Mr. A. G. CRESSWELL, *Manager, Rampur Tea Estate, Limited, Cachar* :—

Mr. Dawson.—Q.—How long have you been in Tea?

A.—About 30 years, all the time at Rampore.

Q.—Would you mind giving us your experience of non-co-operation and about coolies leaving your garden?

A.—In my answers to the *questionnaire*, I have stated :—

“ I noticed no unrest until the non-co-operation movement started, since when ignorant coolies have doubtless been subjected to bad advice from those opposed to Government and tea-garden Managers. It has been unfortunate that this garden should be situated so close to Barkhola bazaar, where the non-co-operation movement may be said to have met with exceptionally strong support.”

This is in answer to question No. 15. Then in answer to question No. 16, I said “ I attribute disturbances on tea-gardens as being practically entirely caused by agitators. My own experience has been as follows :—

I recruited during famine years some 375 Oris Pan Tantie coolies. It is true, unfortunately, there were among them a few men, who had perhaps known somewhat better days, and had seen something of the world say in Rangoon and elsewhere. The agitators, for months, were preaching to these people just outside the garden and in the bazaars. In June, when these coolies went to Barkhola bazaar to get their weekly rice, which they were receiving at about Re. 1-8 per maund below cost price, the agitators succeeded in forcing the rice contractor not to open his godown three times by proclaiming a *haral*. They then finding the coolies were upset at getting no rice, advised them to strike for 8 annas per day, and if not given it to leave the garden in a body. The coolies left the garden; they were fed by non-co-operators at Barkhola bazaar, and were then housed by members of the ‘*Khilafat*’ Society.”

As to whether agitators have made capital of any grievances which the coolies might have had, I would quote my answer to question No. 17 in reply to this question I said :—

“ Coolies have not generally complained, but they have doubtless felt the effects of increased prices, especially in connection with cloth,—caused by non-co-operators destroying and boycotting imported cloth while the supply of *d-shi* cloth was so short as to allow of higher prices being demanded. In my opinion, without prejudice, in view of semi-sedition openly preached, the resolution passed in public congress at Sylhet, continually being advised not to work for the white man, it is indeed strange that coolies have given so little trouble.”

Q.—What are your wages at present ?

A.—Well, formerly I was paying four-anna *haziras*, but now in order to come into line with the general wish, I have reduced my tasks in order to allow of my coolies receiving 20 to 25 % more than formerly for doing the same task.

Q.—You say your rates are four annas for men, three annas for women and two annas six pies for children. You say the rates have been increased since 1913 by 12 %.

A.—Well, I do not think that that would be the exact figure. I meant to say that it was raised by ‘about’ that percentage. Formerly we used to pay three and a half annas to men, and for the women the *hazira* used to be calculated at Rs. 5 a month which really did not work out to three annas.

Q.—Up to when was that the case ?

A.—I do not remember exactly, but I should say till about 1909 when I altered it to four annas and three annas.

It was my intention from 1st December this year that the coolies should receive 20 to 25 % more than they formerly received, whether it was done by reducing the task or by giving them an extra 20 % for doing the same task. That was my intention. I must also say in fairness, that formerly I had always given my coolies rice at concession rates, and have been rather free with the amount of rice I gave my coolies. Since December the non-co-operators have boycotted me to such an extent that I have been required to pay say Rs. 7 for a maund of rice which would actually be worth Rs. 5 a maund. I discussed the matter with my coolies and they expressed themselves as being perfectly willing and consented to my proposal of stopping the grant of rice in consideration of an extra anna more per day. My position is a little different from others. Having been 30 years on the garden naturally I know everybody very intimately.

Q.—If you will look at your answer to question No. 41 You say “ I consider the coolies on this garden are entitled to a small increase in pay for doing the same amount of work, and that with this they will then work about the same number of hours. If, however, the pay be increased beyond, say 20 % they will do less work ”?

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A.—I have since thought 20 to 25 % is reasonable. But I maintain that if their pay be increased by more than 20 to 25% they will do less work.

Q.—You say that the coolies are entitled to a small increase in pay. How long have you been of that opinion?

A.—For some time.

Q.—For about two or three years?

A.—Yes, I may say certainly for two years. In my last report to my Managing Agents, written possibly a year ago, I alluded to the fact that, in my opinion, some small increase in pay was necessary for the coolies.

Q.—Who are your Managing Agents?

A.—Messrs. Kilburn & Co.

Q.—What reply did they give you?

A.—They replied that I had full permission to do anything I considered advisable in such a matter.

Q.—How is it that, if you thought about it two years ago, you are only taking steps now?

A.—I would perhaps correct the expression "two years ago." My report would have been made say in March 1921, *i.e.*, twelve months ago. However, I may say conscientiously even before that we had very dear rice—in fact exceptionally dear—and all the coolies were receiving rice at very big concession rates. The prices of all commodities in my district invariably tend to rise with the price of rice. If rice goes up to Rs. 9 a maund, every other commodity more or less follows suit.

Q.—You say that if the pay is increased beyond, say, 20 % or according to what you have just said—from 20 to 25 %—the coolies will do less work. Have you any particular reason for making that statement? You have not tried to increase it beyond that amount, I presume?

A.—No, but I have found, from experience, that when coolies are easily able to earn more money, and very often when *ticca* is very plentiful, for some little time after that the coolies slack off and apparently show very little desire to earn more than just a nominal sum. In fact they frequently like to go into the *busteas* instead of working on the garden.

Q.—Would you agree that if you increase the wages in proportion to the increased cost of living, the coolie would do the same amount of work?

A.—The tendency of late years on my garden has been that the coolie wishes to have rather more of an easy time than formerly. Therefore I am not prepared to say that if I increase the wages in proportion to the increased cost of living he would either do more or less work. He would do about the same I think—probably rather less. As I say the tendency is the better he is paid the less he wishes actually to work.

Q.—Do you think that the coolie's standard of living has gone up since 1913, or of recent years? Do you think that he is living better now?

A.—The coolies on my garden live pretty well.

Q.—Would you say that the average coolie to-day is as well clothed as he was, say, in 1913, or before the war?

A.—Certainly not to-day. In the first place he cannot obtain cloth.

Q.—Would you put it in another way? Would you say he has not got money to buy cloth at the present price?

A.—Yes, I should say so.

Q.—Your answer to question No. 24 about a decent living wage is:—

"With concessions as at present on this garden, men Rs. 7-8-0 to Rs. 8-8-0, women Rs. 6-8-0 to Rs. 7-0-0. A good deal depends on the *jat* of the coolie."

Would you like to amplify the last sentence, *viz.*, "A good deal depends on the *jat* of the coolie"?

A.—Yes. A good *jungli* coolie can easily earn more money if he wishes to, and requires it. The poor *jat* of coolie—the Norwesters, generally known as 'yellow bellies'—are contented often to half-starve themselves, and they do not seem to require to put, either into their stomachs or on their backs, anything like the same amount of money that others do.

Q.—Your answer to question No. 25 about the difference in the cost of living ^{millions} between 1913 and now is:—

“ Actual increase to coolies on this garden was about 55 % as they were helped by concessions. At the present time rice is about Rs. 4-4-0 against Rs. 5-4-0 this time last year.”

A.— I am afraid I must alter that. The present price of rice is Rs. 5-0-0 as against Rs. 5-4-0 this time last year.

Q.— You probably wrote this answer in January last when the price of rice was Rs. 4-4-0 ?

A.— Yes, in December 1921.

Q.— So that rice is tending to rise ?

A.— Yes, in my particular district ; I am unacquainted with conditions in other districts. In my particular district we have the hills immediately up against the garden. There is no cultivation behind us and very little in front of us. Hence the supply of *dhan* and rice is generally on the short side.

Q.— You must have read in the papers the other day that the restrictions as to the export of rice have been removed. Is it possible that this might raise the prices ?

A.— No. I generally have to import Rangoon rice, unless there is a bumper crop.

Q.— Do you think that the increased duty on cotton goods would raise the price of cloth ?

A.— Not to any great extent.

Q.— With reference to question No. 45 about leaf-weighing, as a rule, do you have a surplus ?

A.— In the early part of the year there is none. Probably about July or August a surplus is obtained. On wet days there may be none ; perhaps it may be a loss. But speaking generally, it is the endeavour, say from July to October, more or less to obtain a small surplus each day.

Q.— At the end of the season what do you find, as a rule ?

A.— At the end of the season my accounts balance. It works out to four maunds of green leaf to one maund of tea.

Q.— You have reduced the rate for plucking from 20 to 14 pounds—I suppose you mean in the height of the season ?

A.— The answer to that is : In the beginning of the season we pay the coolies on the average of the task. At Rampore we pay coolies on the average of the amount of leaf brought in. For instance, say, the average coolie brings in only 8 pounds, that is taken as the average for the fixed 3 annas or whatever the rate may be. If a woman brings in 9 or 10 pounds she gets over that amount. On some gardens perhaps it is not the custom, but it is the custom with me.

Q.— You say that a woman on the average, would take four to four and a half hours to do a plucking task.

A.— Yes, that is so when leaf is reasonably plentiful.

Q.— Now for plucking without a task, say, at the beginning or perhaps at the end of the season, there is no fixed task, I suppose ?

A.— We reduce the task at the end of the season. If we have been giving fourteen pounds, it comes down to ten pounds, and then probably in November when leaf gets scarcer, it comes down another pound or two. Generally speaking, at the end of the year we endeavour to have a task of some sort. At the beginning of the year there is no task.

Q.— And now what happens at the beginning of the year ? If a woman goes out, say, at nine o'clock in the morning, when does she come back ?

A.— Women go out at 7-30 or 8 and come back at 11 o'clock ; then go back at 2 P.M. or 2-30 P.M. ; my coolies particularly like to return late in the evening because they are blessed with many children who require to be fed and washed and looked after in the middle of the day ; hence the coolies like to work late in the evening and have some leisure in the middle of the day.

Q.— At present at the beginning of the season a woman gets a *hazira*. Supposing she only did one *bela* ?

A.— There would be some reason for her doing only one *bela*. At any rate if she did only that, she would certainly be spoken to.

Shillong. Q.—I suppose she would not get full pay?

A.—If she had some particular duty to do or had worked well in the forenoon and brought in a reasonable amount of leaf, she would get a full *hazira*, but it would not be encouraged.

Q.—Your task for light hoeing, on the average, is 25 to 23 *nals* and you have got no real deep hoeing—you call it a medium hoe?

A.—Yes. I have two or three gardens, on one of which, a *tila* garden, they are doing 12 *nals*; and on another garden they are doing 16 *nals*.

My rates for hoeing have not altered since 1913, but the hoeing is apt to get worse. It takes a coolie 4 to 4½ hours to do the task.

Q.—Your task for *ticca* hoeing is about the same as in 1913?

A.—Yes. My coolies have agreed with me that for the slight increase of pay which I have given them they will work at *ticca* for the same rates as at *hazira* work.

Q.—Formerly your *ticca* was paid at 20% higher than your task work. What about now?

A.—My coolies are agreeable, in consideration of the increase, say of 25% to work *ticca* at the same rate, that is to say, instead of having a separate plot where they may go off to make *ticca*, they wish to be allowed to go on working on the place where they are working for task and will receive the same pay from extra work.

Q.—Does that not slightly minimise the effect of giving them this concession?

A.—Yes, it does; they thoroughly understand the position. They are not new coolies.

Q.—You have got 116 acres of paddy land within the garden grant, and many coolies have got land outside the garden. Your rice land is of excellent quality and you charge Rs. 3 a *kear*—that is a large *kear* of 112 *nals* square. About 40% of your male coolies have got land, either outside or inside the grant?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In answer to question No. 64 which is: "On an average how much do you write off annually as irrecoverable?", you say: "Rs. 4,286-12-5 in 1920 alone." That is fairly large, considering your labour force?

A.—Well, in 1920 our loss on rice was Rs. 14,000; irrecoverable advances are written off every week or month. There were 375 coolies who were receiving rice at Rs. 4 to Rs. 4-8, when the purchasing price to the garden was at times up to Rs. 9. This amount which was lost last year was written off in connection with the number of coolies that left the garden. They had concessions up to June.

President:—Q.—Do you mean to say that you lost 375 coolies and they did not come back?

A.—Yes. They were advised to leave by the non-co-operators, and I have not yet received one back.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—This money which you wrote off was partly on account of the coolies having left you?

A.—Yes, and partly on account of free gifts to poor coolies. My custom, however, is to start at the beginning of the year with a clean sheet.

Q.—Your experience of indoor patients is that coolies do not go into hospital without considerable pressure from the management and they also sometimes absolutely refuse?

A.—That is my experience.

Q.—About clothing and blankets, you say that you supply clothing free at times but only to those who are deserving but poor?

A.—Yes.

Q.—During the war you have been stocking cloth for sale to the coolies at concession rates?

A.—Yes, in 1917; I may say that it is the wish of the coolies that I should do so. I came in contact with Sir Thomas Smith of the Muir Mills at Cawnpore and he told me that they could cater for my requirements at cheaper rates than I was getting. I have since been in communication with them and have received price lists, but I am sorry to say that I can see no saving in purchasing from them.

Q.—Generally speaking, since 1913 have you sold much clothing to coolies at concession rates?

A.—I should say just about the average amount that we formerly sold. Formerly we used to give blankets. Of course the blankets this year have fallen in price considerably, but a couple of years ago they were very expensive, and when they were so very expensive, one did not encourage coolies to take as many as one does now.

Q.—When the blankets were expensive, did the average coolie find it rather difficult to pay for them?

A.—Well, I think last cold weather, when we were feeling the effects of the slump in tea, a large number of coolies found it difficult. These were coolies who had little or no connection outside the garden. Those who had any connection outside the garden were, more or less, I should say, encouraged to go out and work in the *bustees*. These coolies, I might say, fended for themselves. But the ordinary coolie who perhaps had been on the garden five or six years, would have felt it.

Q.—Have you sold any *dhotis* and *saris* during the last 7 years?

A.—Yes, but very few, hardly worth mentioning. I must, however, say that we got up bales and bales of *markin* cloth which really amounted to the same thing, and we sold it to the coolie at actual cost price.

Q.—You give as much leave as a pregnant woman likes to take. Sick pay is only given to those who need it. No bonus is given?

A.—No, that is my practice to suit the class of labour I have to deal with.

Q.—In a good many gardens half-pay or full pay is given for 3 months, and in some cases a bonus is given, while in others it is not. Do you believe that that is a sound thing to do?

A.—Personally, I am the Manager of a small garden and I know everybody on it. I see the coolies every day and follow their mode of living; hence I accordingly judge for myself as to their poverty or otherwise. If I think a particular coolie deserves a bonus I give it to him. Then again with regard to pregnant women, we have a parade of them occasionally, and I see to their welfare. As I say mine is a small garden and I am able to do this without any difficulty.

Q.—The loss on rice in 1920 was Rs. 14,000. What was the highest rate at which you sold concession rice to the coolies?

A.—Rupees 5-4 a maund.

Q.—Did it often go beyond Rs. 5?

A.—I should say up to about June, July, there was very little rice taken, but after that rice cost us Rs. 9. We were, that year, expecting to do quite well as far as prices for our tea were concerned, and money was reasonably plentiful, and we were able to give plenty of money for extra work in every way. The old coolies more or less were informed that there was money going and that they should make a point of earning as much as possible. Hence I charged, I think, my old coolies up to Rs. 5-4 a maund and the new coolies that year received it at Rs. 4.

Q.—May I take it that the average rate to old coolies was Rs. 5-4?

A.—No; the average rate would have been rather less than that.

Q.—Your allowance is 10 seers to a man, 5 to 6 seers to a woman, and the allowance to children varies?

A.—On my garden the custom formerly was to supply rice which we purchased from Calcutta. We used to get *Kazla* No. 1 or No. 2, and the coolie would take, say, ten seers which after being sifted and winnowed, would come to about eight seers of clean rice. The custom also was to regulate the amount of rice according to the amount of work done by a coolie. A decent coolie may take 10 seers for 4 weeks and then he may have nothing extra for 2 or 3 days before the month is out. As far as rice is concerned, I believe that the coolie is not like a sporting dog that works better on an empty stomach.

Q.—In 1921 did you give out concession rice?

A.—Not to old coolies.

Q.—Did you receive any instructions from your Agents to make as little loss as possible in concession rice in 1921?

A.—When the non-co-operators broke up the bazaars in Cachar, the Agents in Calcutta—I deal with three Agency houses—particularly drew attention to the fact that owing to these *harrals* it might be that rice would rise up to a very high figure

Shilong. Hence so many bags of rice were despatched and a very heavy loss was made on this rice. To one garden 500 maunds were consigned. On this garden, which is near Barkhola bazaar, the non-co-operators, with the intention of causing a loss to the garden, succeeded in persuading the coolies that Rangoon rice was not suitable for them, and this consignment of 500 maunds had to be disposed of at considerable loss.

President :—*Q.*—Do you think that Rangoon rice is unsuitable?

A.—The practice with me is to supply *dal* with Rangoon rice, and as long as that is done, the coolies like it.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—In paying for concession rice, did the coolies pay in cash or was it written up and deducted at the end of the month from the coolies' wages?

A.—It was cut from their pay.

Our payments formerly were monthly. Last year it was fortnightly, and now it is weekly.

Q.—Do you think the system of making the coolie pay cash for his rice is better than that of writing it up and deducting the money at the end of the month?

A.—Formerly my coolies preferred to have it cut from their pay. When I altered the system, there was great grumbling. The rice now is purchased from the shop which I maintain and where it is sold at current prices, *i.e.*, the prices ruling in the district, and just now rice sells at 8 seers for the rupee. My coolies, however, expect that they should get it at 10 seers for the rupee.

Q.—You say your practice is not to put newly recruited coolies under agreement for about two years?

A.—Yes. But sometimes new coolies, when they hear of old coolies taking agreements, wish to do the same, but as they cost Rs. 140 to Rs. 150 now-a-days to recruit, one generally hopes that they will work for another year or more before they demand to be put under agreement. Unfortunately they are very insistent, and one has very often to give way and allow them the money which is really a bonus.

Q.—Supposing Act XIII was repealed, would you continue to give the bonus?

A.—Perhaps. I recently said :—

“If the whole of these advances have not always been actually recovered or even a part of the sum it is immaterial to the point. That is in connection with the present procedure of giving advances. The coolies on almost all gardens demand these advances and carry out their contracts because they know there is some sort of liability. In these days of trouble and serious unrest, matters may be quite different if there is no liability and so, generally, I consider that we should strongly oppose the withdrawal of the Act as we now have it.”

That is in connection with the withdrawal of Act XIII.

Q.—I am assuming that the Act is repealed by the Legislative Assembly. What do you think would happen about the bonus and advances?

A.—Well, the coolie will demand the continuing of the bonus no doubt. I do not myself give bonuses to women, but when I stopped it in 1893 I agreed that women directly or indirectly should not be losers.

Q.—How did you arrange that?

A.—It was done by arranging a certain amount of *ticca* work for them; then those who failed to have sufficient for their requirements for the weekly bazaar, would always find facilities provided for obtaining them—and of course at that time, rice concessions came largely into the matter. Personally, if the Act is done away with, I shall endeavour, as far as I am concerned, if I am in the country, to see that my coolie gets the amount which he formerly received in the form of slightly increased pay, rather than by way of a lump sum.

Q.—You do not put women under contract then?

A.—No. Only men are put under agreement and given a bonus of Rs. 10. This is only in the case of Rampore. But on the other gardens, which are not so popular, I give the women agreements.

Q.—What would be your answer to the question whether the remuneration in money payments, together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort?

A.—My answer is 'Yes', but they will leave a very little margin, and in consideration of the enhanced prices and conditions as we find them to-day, I consider that on my garden in order to bring this about I should give a slightly increased remuneration per unit of energy expended.

Q.—And as regards the conversion of these various concessions just mentioned ^{Shihong.} into an increase of money wages, what have you to say?

A.—The concessions vary so much on various gardens. My personal opinion is that the granting of these concessions tends to keep me on friendly terms with my coolies. They know that these are concessions.

President :—Q.—Do you mean the rice concession?

A.—Well, I have arranged with many people to do away with the rice concession, but there are so many other concessions. I presume you mean by 'concessions' all concessions such as sick pay, blankets at cheap rates, housing, medical attendance, and everything else.

Q.—These concessions were all compulsory under Act VI?

A.—Yes, a good many of them were.

Q.—Do you think the coolie is worse off than he was under Act VI, especially with regard to his rice concession which was given at Rs. 3?

A.—Well, it depends on what he is being paid. I am of course speaking for myself. Formerly under Act VI when he had his rice at Rs. 3 on many gardens, we did not cut him down to the daily allowance. He was allowed to take 8 seers a week and he got that at the rate of Rs. 3 a maund. But I consider he is no better off with 4-anna *haziras* as against the wage allowed by Act VI, if he has to pay Rs. 5 to Rs. 5-8 for his rice. Personally, I do not think it desirable to convert the various concessions into an increase of money wages.

Q.—Do you think reducing tasks is a satisfactory way of dealing with the wage question?

A.—No.

Q.—The general tendency has been to reduce tasks rather than increase wages?

A.—Lately it has been so. Of course, I am speaking from hearsay only.

Q.—Why are the tasks reduced?

A.—In order to enable the coolie to get more money.

Q.—But would it not be more satisfactory if the coolie's wages were increased instead of his task being decreased?

A.—Personally I consider it so, but it is a matter of opinion.

Q.—The reduction of tasks rather lends itself, does it not, to unfair treatment sometimes?

A.—No, I do not see that it should, but there again it is a matter of opinion.

Q.—That is to say, if the task is really reduced. What is the present indebtedness of the coolies on account of rice advances on your gardens?

A.—Nothing.

Q.—Is that because you have taken to weekly payment?

A.—We start with a clean sheet every year.

The figures I have given in my answer to the question 23(d) are actuals. These particulars were written by me about the 14th December last, so I did not know exactly what amount I should be paying. The amount estimated for December has been added to the actuals up to the end of November. For instance, say, the actual expenditure up to the end of November is Rs. 60,000, I estimate that it will be Rs. 64,000 for the year including December.

The actual expenditure for the year would not be more than Rs. 25 difference from the figure I have given.

Q.—Do these figures represent the sum actually paid as wages to the coolies, or do they include other items?

A.—They would, of course, include the loss on rice, but beyond that nothing else. It is the actual coolie expenditure. It is the actual wages expenditure which includes loss on rice, provisions of pay to sick and pregnant people. They would not include the cost of buildings, etc., or such items as freight, etc.

Q.—For 1921, I suppose the actuals will be considerably less because a number of coolies left the garden in July?

A.—Yes, I must say also that during the months of January, February, March and April, and probably May, old coolies were allowed to go and work in the *bustees*, in consequence of the fact that we were faced with a loss of about a lakh of rupees and

Shillong. it was necessary if possible to keep down expenditure. If they could earn money outside we encouraged it. I employed them on Local Board work and on any other kind of work which I was able to secure for them.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—If you will look at the wages earned by the daily working strength in September of 1921, you will see that they rose as circumstances had improved, so that when the tide had turned, the average earned by the coolies was Rs. 10-3 for men, Rs. 8-8-10 for women and Rs. 5-7-6 for children, showing a considerable increase over 1913, when the men only received Rs. 8-5-4, the women Rs. 7-5 and the children Rs. 7-15-3.

A.—In July of 1921, when we saw more hope of the industry pulling through, we were only too pleased to let the coolie have as much as we could give him, so that he actually received a considerable increase in earnings, say, for September as compared to what he was getting formerly.

Q.—With regard to indoor patients is it only the coolies who go into the hospital as indoor patients, who get half *haziras*?

A.—No. Those who live in their houses and come to hospital for treatment get the allowance, provided they are really unfit.

Q.—You say that you give women agreements on the gardens which are not so popular as Rampore. Agreements, I take it, are to give you a hold over the coolies?

A.—No. At Rampore there are certain reasons. The *jat* of coolie at Rampore is, as a rule, exceptionally prolific in the matter of having families. Hence in the case of women it often led to disputes between the doctor *habu* and myself, as to whether the woman was fit or unfit for work, with the result that agreements to women were eventually given up. On the other gardens I have more *jungli* coolies who are a better class and the women do not want to take leave for eighteen months or two years. They wish to work as much as possible and are generally agreeable to do a lot of hoeing, if necessary. At Rampore the women do not do any hoeing.

Mr. McMorran :—*Q.*—You indicated that your garden is unfavourably situated for rice so that these conditions of dear rice which are prevailing even now are not necessarily general conditions?

A.—Certainly not.

Q.—In fact we have heard lately of *dhan* being available for anything between Rs. 2 and Rs. 3 a maund.

You were speaking of the unfavourable conditions in the industry. How did that affect your garden particularly? Did you actually make a loss in working in any year?

A.—Yes, in 1920.

Q.—So that it was under the influence of losses that you were encouraging your labour to work outside the garden at the beginning of 1921 at a time when it seemed that you might incur a loss again in the next year?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That was the general experience in Cachar and Sylhet in 1920, I take it?

A.—I believe it was so.

Q.—What was the magnitude of the loss that your garden suffered in 1920? Can you give the figure?

A.—I do not know, but I can give you some idea. When the accounts were closed the estimated amount of loss was Rs. 1,03,000.

Q.—I suppose when conditions improved in 1921, you encouraged the labourers to come back and work on the garden?

A.—Yes, about the month of May the labourers naturally came back. When it came to July we were very glad to have them. Of course there is no continuous work for these people in the *bustees*, and the 375 coolies who left are still round about the garden.

Q.—You told us that they were subsidised?

A.—The non-co-operators have personally told me that they were tired of them and would like them to come back.

Q.—Do you know if they are still fed by them?

A.—I very much doubt it.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—Q.—Were the 375 coolies who left your garden ^{Shillong.} new coolies?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And the number of coolies stated in your answer is besides these 375 coolies?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And therefore the loss of Rs. 14,000 in 1921 was incurred on the 1,400 people?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You just now remarked that if the coolie's wage was increased by more than 20% to 25% he does less work?

A.—I did not commit myself to say he does. In my opinion, I say, he will do less work.

Q.—You say your tasks were reduced in 1921?

A.—Yes; and the same rates still continue. That was done by me in order, more or less, to fall into line. I have not increased the wages openly or definitely, but I considered that the coolie should receive somewhat more money. Therefore I reduced the tasks. For instance where they were doing 20 *nals* of hoeing, I reduced it to sixteen *nals*, but my coolies having been accustomed to do 20 *nals* looked upon it as a point of honour that they should go on doing it, so that for doing 20 *nals* they will receive one anna more.

Q.—Am I to understand that the result is that they are earning one anna more per man than was the case before?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How far is your garden from Silchar?

A.—Eight miles.

Q.—*Dhan* and other things are brought by train to Silchar?

A.—Not much *dhan* is brought into the district. All the *dhan* goes out of the district. Rice is only brought in when it is dear.

Q.—As regards the prices of rice and *dhan* there would, I take it, only be that difference between the prices at Silchar and on your garden which is covered by the freight?

A.—The Silchar bazaar is generally a little cheaper than the Rampore bazaar. At Silchar the difference would probably be 6 annas. But a reference to the *Assam Gazette* would always give the figures. I cannot state it off-hand.

Q.—Do you think the prices given in the *Assam Gazette* are correct?

A.—Generally speaking they are correct.

Q.—Was any concession in the shape of cheap rice given both to old and new coolies in 1917, 1918 and 1919?

A.—I cannot tell you off-hand. I have a rice book which I have kept carefully for 25 years but without reference to it my memory does not carry me to the exact figure. During the first year of the war, 1915, I think we had exceptionally cheap rice which was being sold at Rs. 2-4 and Rs. 2-8 a maund. The next year it ran up, I think, to about Rs. 4-12.

Q.—In Chargoла because of the wages having been raised, the agreements were done away with. Is that so?

A.—The Manager of one of the large gardens in Chargoла, I understand, at a meeting, said that concessions had been done away with, but I have no recollection whether he definitely alluded to agreements.

Q.—Did he mean all the concessions?

A.—I cannot answer that.

Q.—I was not able to understand your remark about the allowance to coolies not being reduced to the jail level. Do you mean to say that the coolies eat more than the jail prisoners?

A.—I do not say that they do eat more. I mean that naturally in jail they would not be given more than was considered actually necessary, whereas the coolie particularly objects to the housewife measuring out his rice. He likes to see a little left over in his plate to be given to his dog, cow or cat; he likes to be a little lordly.

President :—Q.—What is the objection to converting the rice concession into a cash wage?

A.—I do not know what the objection is. I have had to do it now because the people have boycotted me to such an extent, but my coolies would really prefer

Shillong. to go on with their rise concession. But unfortunately at the present moment, I am not in a position to do it. I anticipate that I shall have to import rice if it becomes dear. In fact I have established a shop for that purpose in case rice should become dear. In my district the price of rice rose to Rs. 9 a maund. As a matter of fact I have sold it to many people outside the garden at Rs. 9 during times of floods, and famine.

Q.—Would it be impossible to convert the rice concession into a cash wage?

A.—It would be very intricate. It rises and falls so much that I think it would lead to grumbling amongst the coolies.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—There is one point I should like to ask. Mr. Crawford delivered a speech the other day at a meeting of the Tea Association, and there was one point in his speech which I could not understand. It was something about a misunderstanding in connection with rates. Could you throw any light on that?

A.—Yes, the coolies of an adjoining garden to mine—Khoreal—struck work. They put in a petition to the Deputy Commissioner, and one of their points was that they wished to receive the same pay as the Rampore coolies. I also received a letter from one of the leading political societies in Silchar, explaining to me the reason for the coolies striking, and cautioning me that unless I brought pressure to bear on the Manager of that garden they would also stir up trouble with my coolies. The concession of giving the Khoreal coolies at that time the same pay as Rampore, would have meant no loss to Khoreal, but the coolies afterwards withdrew this supposed grievance, saying that they wanted Khoreal tasks and Rampore pay which was rather another matter. The coolies at Rampore, having been under continuous management for a long time, had possibly settled down into doing rather higher tasks than the Khoreal coolies on which garden there have been many changes of Managers, and this generally tends to lower the standard on a garden. The result was that, in order to assist my coolies to get a little more and also not to discourage the Khoreal coolies, I reduced my task to the same level as Khoreal. There were also one or two other Managers in probable disagreement with me who may have made comments on the raising of pay above the level of the district, but you will find that at least one garden had always paid the men at Rs. 8, whereas we paid Rs. 6-8 and Rs. 7, and the tasks had also been slightly reduced by them.

SHILLONG, 21ST MARCH 1922.

(PRESIDENT, MR. FOX, MR. WITHERS, AND MR. DAS, ABSENT.)

No. 139.—MR. J. A. MILLIGAN, I.C.S., *Chairman, Assam Labour Board*:—

I have been 18½ years in the Indian Civil Service and since December 1920 Chairman of the Assam Labour Board.

Before 1919, coolies from the United Provinces were not medically examined in the recruiting districts unless the local agents so decided, or the garden Managers specifically asked. In February 1919, Mr. Lewer, Superintendent of the Tea Districts Labour Association in the United Provinces, ordered all coolies to be medically examined, and in December 1919 Messrs. Begg Dunlop and Co., Secretaries of the Association, passed orders that all recruits in all recruiting districts should be medically examined whether Managers asked for this or not, and the present practice is that all coolies are medically examined whether the Managers have requested this or not in the written instructions sent with sardars. In some places examination is by the Civil Surgeon but in most large recruiting districts the Association has its own medical agents who are paid a fixed salary. Where an outside doctor like the Civil Surgeon is employed, he is paid a fee on the number of persons examined. The majority of those rejected are rejected on sight, without a formal examination.

Mr. Kirkham, Supervisor of the Assam Labour Board in the Central Provinces, United Provinces and South India, was of opinion that many of the coolies sent up in 1918-19 should never have been passed. He said that many had not been medically examined at all. His opinion was that in 1918-19, the local agents failed adequately to protect the Assam tea industry, inasmuch as they sent up people who should never have been sent up. The reason why good *jungli* coolies are not obtained in larger numbers for tea-gardens is that recruiting is

being done in the wrong places. There are still many good *junglis* available and the question of opening recruiting centres in new areas is under consideration. Coolies who go to the jute mills and other industries nearer their homes go for short terms and I do not think that the Assam tea-gardens could offer terms high enough to attract them as permanent settlers. Shillong.

Many people of the class that formerly emigrated to Assam now find they can go away for 6 and 8 months (to jute mills, the new docks at Vizagapatam, Tata's and other works, the coal-mines and Calcutta) and leave their families at home. Formerly the Mundas, owing to their custom of subdivision of land in the family, used to be driven to emigrate to Assam but now they can go to various industries for 6 or 8 months and leave their families on the land. This, however, will in all probability be merely a temporary phase, as in India population always presses hard on the means of subsistence. The good crops of last season were followed by an unusually large number of marriages. This does not apply so much to the *jungli* type as to those who are getting somewhat civilised. By tapping new fields, I think *junglis* will be obtainable on the terms which the tea industry can offer.

Some of the coolies who left in the Chargola exodus have returned to Chargola. I cannot say how many; the number is not large. Others have gone to other gardens in the Assam Valley changing their description.

Calcutta is the big competitor of Assam at present. Unskilled labourers when they go there have to work about 9 hours a day and they earn about one anna per hour. When they acquire some degree of skill they earn more.

Sufficient care is not bestowed sometimes by Managers in filling up the column in the sardar's instructions as to the wages which are obtainable in the garden. For example, in some gardens in Lakhimpur, where wages have been raised, the old wages are still shown. There are also cases of over-statement of the wage, the potential *ticca* earnings being apparently included.

I would like to say something about the physique of the coolies recruited now-a-days. Formerly coolies were sent up by contractors who picked out the best, and the Manager in his turn picked out those whom he thought best. Now-a-days sardars recruit families, and often there are one or two members of inferior physique among them. With sardari recruiting it is in general the inferior type that emigrates to Assam. Those of better physique go as short-term coolies to Calcutta or other places. Most of the coolies do not like working in the mines unless where there is surface work to be done. There have been very good crops this year; many marriages, and therefore a hope of restoring the population that suffered from influenza and famine; thus the outlook for emigration is hopeful.

The selection of recruiting sardars is not so careful as it might be. There are too many complaints from Managers of the riff-raff of the bazaar being sent up to Assam. The Agents of the Tea Districts Labour Association are required to see personally all coolies that are sent up and are supposed to reject all undesirable recruits. It is desirable that a recruiting sardar should have relatives in the recruiting districts and that he should not have been so long away that he has lost touch with his district.

In the case of a family being sent up if some members are unfit for labour, they are sent up as dependents, but if unfit to travel they are not allowed to go and in that case it is possible that the whole family may decline to go. Colonel Kennedy has been appointed as Travelling Inspector for the Tea Districts Labour Association. His chief duties will be to exercise close supervision over local agents and to act as *liaison* officer between the garden Managers and the local agents.

The other day I came on a case in a garden in Sylhet where I found several undesirable coolies in a new batch recently arrived. I told the Manager to represent the matter to the Secretaries of the Tea Districts Labour Association and have them repatriated. Messrs. Begg Dunlop and Company have agreed to bear the cost of repatriation and to refund the commission. These coolies had presumably been passed by the local agent and had also been medically examined.

I should advise gardens to recruit only the labour which is suitable for them and they should not take advantage of famine or other similar conditions to rush up a large number of coolies many of whom may die or abscond.

Down to 1915 during the *arcutti* days the Surma Valley was able to recruit cheaply from the United Provinces. The Surma Valley got special facilities for recruiting in the United Provinces, as it had undertaken early to give up Act VI. The contractors in the *arcutti* days got a high price for good *jungli* labourers but coolies from the United Provinces were cheap.

Shillong. The Tea Districts Labour Association, for the purpose of calculating commission and providing the outfit, classifies as adults those who are 12 years of age and over. Anyone over 12 pays full fare on the Railways. The rates of commission are adults Rs. 15, and those between 4 and 11, Rs. 7-8-0. The rule of the Association is that the age and classification by the Agents' doctors should be regarded as final. The present working of the system is not altogether satisfactory.

I have travelled to some extent in recruiting districts. As regards the class of people who emigrate because it is their only means of gaining a livelihood, I think that in most places in Assam they are better off than in their own country. I say *most* places because I have not visited all gardens in Assam. The type that comes to Assam from the United Provinces is the landless agricultural labourer. In his country he has a fluctuating income. If the harvest is bad, his position is precarious. It is true that he can find employment in odd jobs, such as serving for others, cutting firewood or fodder. I have not been sufficiently in the interior of the Central Provinces to be an authority on the economic condition of the labourer there. I have no definite idea of how much a United Provinces labourer can earn in his own country as the amount fluctuates during the year.

Evidence continued on 24th March 1922.

(MR. WITHERS, MR. FOX AND MR. DAS, ABSENT.)

The medical officers employed by the recruiting agents are Indians with medical qualifications. I do not know exactly what those medical qualifications are, but I believe they are at least equal to those of the average tea-garden doctor babu. The opinion of the agency medical officer as to the age of the recruit is final. This is a recent rule. If the agent disagrees with the doctor's opinion as to the physical fitness of the recruit, the doctor's opinion is final, but I have known of a case where the agent overruled the opinion of the doctor as to fitness. The agent explained that he was unaware of the rule as to the doctor's opinion being final. The practice of the agent overruling the doctor has been stopped. Presumably the agent's object was to earn as much commission for the Tea Districts Labour Association as he thought legitimate.

Where the garden Manager takes a personal interest in the welfare of his labour force, coolies are happy and contented, and such gardens have no difficulty in getting labour. When I said, in my previous day's evidence, that Chargola coolies who had gone to gardens in Assam had changed their description, I meant that they would not admit that they had been in the Chargola Valley. It is only by inference that one can conclude that they had been in Chargola. I gathered this information in two gardens in Darrang and one garden in Golaghat.

Mr. Dawson:—Q.—Have any enquiries been made in the recruiting districts as to what Chargola coolies returned after the exodus?

A.—I believe that the Tea Districts Labour Association did so and deputed a European to enquire, but I have not seen his report.

The Assam Labour Board, soon after the exodus, made enquiries in the Central Provinces, the United Provinces and South India, with a view to seeing how many of the coolies who had left Chargola could be traced. There was a letter from the Central Provinces Government to the Assam Government to the effect that many Chargola coolies were anxious to return to Assam. On making enquiries I found that there was nothing in it. I enquired if any particular batch could be found. The answer was in the negative. That letter simply boiled down general opinions expressed by District Officers in the recruiting districts. I doubt if Messrs. Begg Dunlop and Co., Secretaries of the Tea Districts Labour Association, would produce before the Committee the report written by the gentleman who made the enquiries on their behalf, as it was, I believe, confidential, and they are not in a position to prove all the statements that may be made therein. I hear that the report said that work had been found in the home districts for many of the coolies and that they were not likely to return. I believe my informant was Mr. Crawford of Messrs. James Finlay and Co. It is said that many of the coolies got employment under Zetindars in their own country. I think that the name of the gentleman who made the enquiries was Mr. Gilroy. Some Chargola coolies said to me that some of them only got 2½ annas a day in the garden. They showed me some brass tickets for half and quarter *haziras*.

President :—*Q.*—Do you think that the primary cause of discontent was ^{Shillong} inadequate pay and that the non-co-operation movement only gave an impetus to the discontent and consequent exodus from the Chergola Valley ?

A.—I could not tell you as I never visited the Chergola Valley until after the exodus.

Q.—Did the local enquiries made by the officer of the Tea Districts Labour Association go to support that view ?

A.—I could not tell you. As far as my information goes, there was no allusion to the pay received on the garden. The coolies I believe were well provided for after going home and did not need to return.

Q.—Do you consider 3 annas 9 pies and 3 annas a sufficient daily wage ?

A.—In some recruiting districts it is more than the ordinary rate of wage for the class of people who emigrate. I was informed last year in some places that 2 annas was the local rate for coolies at the time.

Q.—Do you think the wage mentioned is quite sufficient to attract them from their country ?

A.—When people come to the point of emigrating through poverty they do not ask questions about the wages in Assam. They do so in order to get a new home and a fresh start in life. The chief attraction is the prospect of land which is held out to them.

Q.—I suppose they are told by the sardars that they would get extravagant wages ?

A.—That is true sometimes, but every effort is made to stop it. It is the business of the local agent to tell the coolies the conditions of the particular garden to which they may be going.

Q.—I think you have got figures in this book (Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook) about the recruitment of labour for a number of years ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do these figures apply to Assam and the Dooars as well ?

A.—I think I am right in saying that it is only within the last year or two that the Tea Districts Labour Association has recruited for the Dooars. They started at a place called Lohardaga not far from Ranchi.

Q.—As regards the figures for 1918-19, in that year 45,112 sardars were accredited and they recruited 172,096½ adults. What is the reason for the boom in recruiting in that year ?

A.—I have always been told that those were famine days in the United Provinces and a very large number of these people came from the United Provinces.

Q.—Yes, but why were they required in Assam ? Why were arrangements made to get such large numbers ?

A.—I understand there had been some depression in Assam and recruiting in the previous year had not been high and also there had been influenza which had reduced the labour force, and the gardens, in general, I believe were short of labour, so they took advantage of this year to replenish their labour forces. I have the opinions of other people on the subject, but I am afraid, as I was not in touch with Assam in those days, it is rather difficult for me to give my own personal opinion.

Q.—The figures for six years are given and the figure for this particular year was about equal to that of the three previous years and the two subsequent years. What was the reason for bringing up such a large number of coolies to Assam ?

A.—I suppose there was a demand for them.

Q.—But why ?

A.—May I read a note of Mr. Kirkham, my Supervisor, on the subject ?

Q.—Yes.

A.—He says :—

" I will briefly touch on the happenings of 1918-19. The finances of the Association had run perilously low in 1917-18 when they nearly closed down. The previous year's recruiting had been inadequate and in 1917-18 only 13,000 adults were sent up. A wave of influenza passed over the gardens taking a very heavy toll and bringing matters to a climax. Fortunately for all concerned 1918-19 dawned brightly for the tea industry. Influenza in the recruiting districts was followed by widespread scarcity

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and the anticipations of a busy recruiting year were handsomely realised. A large number of sardars came down and by the end of the season about 172,000 adults had been recruited. Replenishment both of the plantations and of the Association's finances was the watchword well in the forefront. It is no exaggeration to say that some thousands of emaciated and otherwise unsuitable coolies who would not have ordinarily been sent, were despatched."

Q.—Is it a fact that the majority of these people should never have been sent to Assam ?

A.—It is a fact that a great many should not have been sent, I believe ; but I am not in a position to say whether the majority of them should not have been sent up. There is no doubt that the evidence I have had tends to show that a great many were sent who should never have been sent.

Q.—Is it a fact that large numbers of them died on the way ?

A.—I have been told so.

Q.—And that some of them had to be carried to the gardens and that they died on the gardens like flies ?

A.—Well, I have heard such statements but actually I have not seen it.

Q.—Who was responsible for sending up such people ?

A.—The local agents of the Tea Districts Labour Association.

Q.—Do you think they were to blame ?

A.—Certainly, the local agents cannot be held blameless in the matter. They had no business to pass people who were not fit.

Q.—A great many were not medically examined ?

A.—The examination was optional at that time and it was only in the following season that the Tea Districts Labour Association made it compulsory.

Q.—As a result of what happened, I suppose, that year ?

A.—Very likely.

Q.—It resulted in a heavy mortality, and I suppose considerable scandal ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—A great deal has been said about concessions. Are you aware that most of these concessions were compulsory under Act VI, for instance, house accommodation, water-supply, sanitary arrangements, rice at Rs. 3 a maund, hospital accommodation and medical attendance ?

A.—Yes, most of these things, if not all, were provided for in Act VI, and penalties were attached under sections 189 and 190 of the Act.

Q.—Do you think that the coolie was placed in a worse position by the abolition of Act VI which at any rate secured for him rice at Rs. 3 a maund and also all the concessions mentioned ?

A.—I find it somewhat difficult to answer that because I have no direct experience.

Q.—You will admit that Act VI gave the labourers security against illegal long-term contracts, especially in the case of minors ?

A.—Contracts were made in terms of Act VI and as such they could not be illegal.

Q.—I mean to say that a minor under 16 could not be put under contract.

A.—That is so.

Q.—Do you consider it a breach of faith to put coolies on arrival under long-terms of contract, e.g., 626, 939 days and so on ?

A.—Well, not altogether, as some gardens state in the sardars' question sheets that this is their practice.

Q.—I was going to add "in view of the increased facilities of recruiting given after the repeal of sections 118 and 121 of Act VI" ?

A.—I understand that the use of Act XIII was definitely contemplated by Government for this purpose when Act VI was done away with.

Q.—I do not think Government contemplated the use to which Act XIII would be put. Otherwise, what was the object of withdrawing sections 118 and 121 which provided for local labour contracts to be verified on the garden in the case of one year

contracts, and, if for more than one year, to be executed before the Magistrate. If ^{Shillong.} contracts for a longer period for indefinite terms expressed in days were allowed to be executed on the gardens without any supervision, what was the object of it?

A.—It was reported that Act VI labour contracts were one of the chief obstacles to recruiting, i.e., the compulsory execution of the contract there and then in the district.

Q.—Then do you think it is safe to assume that Government did not realise that long-term contracts for 939 days, and so on, would be entered on under Act XIII?

A.—I am afraid I have got no evidence one way or the other. I have never seen it in any official document, except that there is a definite provision in Act XIII providing for tea-garden labour.

Q.—What is the section?

A.—In Act XIII there is a clause or a ruling covering the case of coolies working on tea-gardens.

Q.—There may be a ruling by the High Court?

A.—Yes: it is a ruling, not a clause; that is my mistake.

Q.—I think you said that local labour contracts under Act VI were withdrawn in order to facilitate recruiting?

A.—I believe that was the reason. The 1906 report laid stress on the desirability of getting rid of this local labour contract and this was done, in 1915 for the Assam Valley.

Q.—Would you say that the misuse of Act XIII has nullified that?

A.—I have not had any evidence of the misuse of Act XIII personally. I have never known of any case myself of oppression under Act XIII.

Q.—Have you inspected any of the Emigration offices in Assam?

A.—No. I do not think I am entitled to.

Q.—You do not know much about the working of Act XIII?

A.—No.

Q.—Can you explain why Act XIII became so popular. Was it cheaper or did it involve less Government intervention while putting the labourers under long-term contracts?

A.—The only signs of popularity I have seen have been on the part of coolies who were anxious to take such agreements.

Q.—Do you think a coolie voluntarily enters into a 939-day agreement on arrival?

A.—There is the inducement of the advance.

Q.—Do you know that the advances given to new coolies are simply in the nature of *khoraki*, i.e., Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 at the outside?

A.—I am not aware of that. I have nothing to do with inspecting garden management. I merely look at the conditions under which coolies live on the gardens.

Q.—Do you imagine that a new coolie on arrival would be given Rs. 20 or Rs. 30 when he executes a 939-day agreement?

A.—That is a question of fact. I have never actually seen new coolies being put under agreement, so I do not know what the practice is.

Q.—Are you aware that sentences of 3 months' rigorous imprisonment are not uncommon under Act XIII, and that coolies under a sentence of imprisonment in jail are illegally sent back to the garden from jail to work off their contracts on the application of the Manager or his agent, following the old procedure under section 202 of Act VI?

A.—No. As regards the first part of the question, I have heard that sentences as high as 3 months have been imposed but I saw some of the figures of the Assam Government showing that out of 270,000 odd garden coolies under contract, some 60 people have been convicted in the past year.

Q.—It did not give the number of cases instituted?

A.—Yes, about 1,600. It was in reply to a reference by the Government of India and a copy was sent to me for information.

Q.—Did the Assam Government state that long-term contracts were illegally entered into?

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A.—To the best of my recollection that was not mentioned.

Q.—Do you think that they were probably unaware of the fact?

A.—I suppose so, as a contract for longer than one year is not a legal contract.

Q.—They would have mentioned it if they had only known of it?

A.—I am not in a position to answer that question.

Q.—You have had 9 years' experience in the Dooars as a District Magistrate?

A.—Yes, in various capacities.

Q.—Why is it necessary to have a penal Act in Assam if no penal Act is in force in the Dooars?

A.—The Dooars were opened out with free labour and always have had free labour. The Dooars were more accessible than Assam.

Q.—And so it was never found necessary to have a penal Act in force?

A.—Yes, because they have always been able to get labour more cheaply there.

Q.—Have they ever asked for the introduction of Act XIII?

A.—Not to my knowledge.

Q.—You will admit, I think, that the Dooars were as inaccessible as Assam for many years?

A.—To a certain extent.

Q.—So that the question of inaccessibility has nothing to do with the question of the necessity for the penal contract?

A.—All except the outlying gardens are more accessible to the recruiting districts.

Q.—But for many years there was no railway in the Dooars?

A.—That is true. It is also true to say that the development of the remote parts of the Dooars has proceeded *pari passu* with the advance of the railway. In the remote parts very few gardens existed before the railway came in.

Q.—But there are railways now in most parts of Assam?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why do you consider these legal props necessary for the support of the tea industry in Assam?

A.—I have not expressed this opinion.

Q.—Do you consider them necessary?

A.—The fact that less than half the coolies in Assam are under these agreements seems to suggest that they are not in every case necessary.

Q.—How do you know?

A.—I took the figures which I referred to from the Assam Government's recent letter to the Government of India.

Q.—How do the Dooars labour rules compare with the Assam labour rules?

A.—They are not so scrupulously observed as the Assam rules. They aim at achieving the same object but with less success.

Q.—Do they impose greater restrictions?

A.—The general principle is that if the coolies of another garden come to your garden you pay for them or turn them out. It is not very scrupulously observed, I am afraid, in some places.

Q.—Do you think the labour rules would be a sufficient protection to the employer in the absence of penal labour legislation such as Act XIII provides?

A.—My experience of the labour rules in the Dooars suggests that they are not very much protection to the employer. A certain number of men adhere loyally, but there are certain others who do not.

Q.—The same would be the case everywhere?

A.—Yes. They are not a very efficient substitute at all events.

Q.—Anyhow the Dooars people get on quite well without any penal legislation?

A.—They are very hard up for labour just now and they are clamouring.

Q.—Are they clamouring for penal legislation?

A.—No, not for penal legislation, but for labour.

Mr. Dawson :—*Q.*—Colonel Kennedy says :—“If possible, it would be better ^{Shillong.} to do without Act XIII.” He also says :—“My opinion is that new coolies should not be put under Act XIII”. This is Colonel Kennedy’s letter. Generally speaking would you agree with the views expressed in that letter ?

A.—Of course Colonel Kennedy spent his service in Assam. He was speaking from his experience as a district officer when he inspected many gardens. I mean to say he had behind him a tremendous lot of experience to base his own opinion on, whereas I have hardly gone beyond the stage of enquiry yet, and for me to contradict his opinion in any way or even to presume to endorse it will be only going beyond my experience.

Q.—I was looking through the Hailakandi cases and came across two or three cases by certain gardens applying for warrants against absconding coolies. They had taken agreements for 99 days in May 1920 and the advance they got was Rs. 4 each. The Magistrate issued warrants; they were arrested and released on bail. On the date fixed they did not appear but the Manager sent a letter saying that the coolies were now working satisfactorily. That is a case where the Magistrate follows a wrong procedure and so also the Manager ?

A.—Yes.

Mr. McMorran :—*Q.*—I wonder if Mr. Milligan could give any information dealing with the prospects of recruitment for tea-gardens in the future on the basis of his experience and the enquiries made by him.

A.—Well, at present we are considering the shifting of some old centres to new places and the local information which I have gathered suggests that there is still a large field to be exploited and I am not at all pessimistic as to the prospects, especially with regard to the *jungli* type of coolie who are most in demand. One is apt to think that Chota Nagpur is ‘played out’ but when you look back 20 years you see the same thing was said then, *viz.*, that Chota Nagpur was exhausted. It revived again. So it is unwise to predict too much about that. I certainly think it would be a good thing if those gardens which have United Provinces connections would try to acquire better connections elsewhere. They would get a better class of coolie. With the exception of the Kols of Mirzapur and North Rewa the United Provinces labourer is not very suitable for Assam.

Srijut Siva Prasad Barua :—*Q.*—Before the coolies are sent up to Assam from the recruiting districts do the local agents explain the system of working to them ?

A.—An attempt was made last year to send local agents round to learn more about the working of tea-gardens so as to be in a position to explain this. Previous to that many of them were never on tea-gardens and they can only explain what is put in the sardar’s question sheet. That of course they do, but beyond that they have no knowledge. I strongly advocate the sending of every local agent for a certain time to the tea areas to acquire the necessary knowledge.

Q.—Coolies come with the idea that they will have to work on the tea-gardens I take it ?

A.—They are all recruited by sardars whose business it is to tell them where he is taking them and the local agent sees that the sardars do tell them. If the sardars have deceived them in the matter of pay, it is the local agent’s business to correct that misapprehension and to tell them what is the actual fact. Of course the sardars benefit directly by the numbers they recruit and they naturally tend to magnify the prospects as much as possible.

Q.—Most sardars recruit their relatives and friends, I suppose ?

A.—That is the basic idea of sardari recruiting, but the law does not require that they shall confine themselves to their relations, except that they are to recruit from a definite locality and the smaller that locality is made the better it is for the preservation of the true character of sardari recruitment. The local agents sometimes get general instructions from Managers to the effect that they want relatives and fellow villagers of the sardars and not strangers.

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad :—*Q.*—Have you any idea as to how much the coolies earn in the Central Provinces in a day ?

A.—I have not been all over the Central Provinces and have got no official figures on the subject.

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Q.—You mentioned 2 annas a day as an actual wage. For whom was that?

A.—For men. Last year that figure was quoted to me at Raipur and other places as being the wages they were getting locally. Most of the coolies come from the Feudatory States, and these are the type of coolies most wanted.

[*Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad showed witness some printed figures wherein it appeared that the earnings of Central Provinces coolies were 4 annas a day.*]

Witness:—Q.—Were these agricultural coolies?

Khan Sahib Wali Muhammad:—A.—No. Agricultural coolies get more than that.

Mr. Milligan:—The earnings of agricultural coolies fluctuate throughout the year, and persons earning a steady 4 annas a day would not, in general, emigrate.

Q.—As regards those who want to come to Assam, is it within your knowledge that such people are told that they will get anything between Rs. 10 and Rs. 15, men and women?

A.—It is not within my knowledge, but as I say the sarjar is capable of saying anything merely to attract the coolie. But that is where the local agent comes in and it is his duty to correct such impressions.

Written statement submitted by MR. MILLIGAN subsequent to his oral evidence.

The impression I have gathered from perusing the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 and other papers is that the repeal of Chapter III and of Sections 118 to 121 of Act VI and the prohibition of labour contracts in the recruiting districts by notifications under Section 91 of the Act were not done by way of concessions to the tea industry but as remedies for a bad state of affairs and that the use of Act XIII on an extended scale was definitely anticipated. From this standpoint it does not appear to be a breach of faith to place newly imported coolies under agreement, though, in my opinion, it is bad policy to do so. As no agreement for a longer period than one year is now legal under Act XII it is most objectionable to put new coolies on longer agreements which they believe to be binding under Act XIII. The case of old coolies is somewhat different. Many of them have grown accustomed to working on long agreements and to the substantial bonus which usually accrues to them on signing a new agreement; and such coolies resent attempts to shorten the period of agreement and correspondingly reduce the bonus. Even if Act XIII were abolished I believe a number of gardens would be compelled by their coolies to continue the agreement system notwithstanding that such agreements would be legally valueless; and left to himself the coolie would in general loyally work out such agreements.

I stated in my oral evidence that I know very little about the working of Act XIII. If, however, the Act were used generally as a means of oppression, I would have been aware of it. The blame for cases of mal-administration of the Act lies primarily on such Magistrates as misapply or misconstrue its provisions. In this connection, I may say that it seems to me probable that no Magistrate's court in the whole of India, except perhaps the United Provinces, is supplied with a fully corrected and annotated copy of Act VI. The new Assam and Bengal Emigration Manuals will shortly be issued and will, I expect, be quickly followed by similar manuals in all other provinces.

I am of opinion that if Act XIII is abolished and the making of contracts of any kind with new coolies is prohibited some additional freedom in recruiting might reasonably be conceded with the object of reducing the expense of importing labour. I am not prepared to say at present how far the existing restrictions may safely be relaxed. The question would have to be carefully examined from every point of view. All other industries in India enjoy complete freedom in recruiting and if labour in Assam is to be made absolutely free, it seems reasonable to suggest that in recruiting Assam should be allowed to enjoy such a measure of freedom as will allow cheaper importation of labour while it prevents the recurrence of the old evils associated with the *arcutti* system. In my opinion there are available supplies of a better class of labour than much of what is now being recruited; but the present system makes it difficult to establish new connections, and I also believe that many labourers who at present go elsewhere would come to Assam if the recruiting restrictions imposed under Act VI were relaxed sufficiently to allow employers to get in touch with them.

The question of wages is a very important one from the recruiting standpoint. Shillong.
 The standard wage on many gardens very inadequately represents the real earnings of labourers, and it is very difficult to forecast *ticca* earnings, as the amount of work to be done on a garden is not unlimited as might be the case in a coal-mine or a factory. The larger the number of coolies on a garden who earn *ticca*, the smaller the amount of *ticca* available for each coolie must become. The unit system has the same limitation. In all agricultural operations where wages bear a direct relation to the amount of work done there is the same restriction of the earning power of the labourer even in the busiest seasons. On a tea-garden the coolie enjoys the privilege of earning a steady income all the year round which other forms of agricultural employment do not offer. Outside Assam the standard wage paid on the gardens is usually mistaken for the coolie's total earnings and the amount of work required to earn that wage is not known. Those who study Act VI get the idea that the coolie has a nine hour day for the bare wage. The clearest statement of wages on a tea-garden I ever encountered was a formula used by a Dooars Manager when recruiting in Ranchi. His custom was to give a four-hour morning task and a three-hour double in the afternoon, and he told all recruits "*Char gunta kam char anna paisa ; sath gunta kam ath anna paisa ; aisa roz roz milega*" (For four hours' work, 4 annas ; for seven hours' work, 7 annas ; you will get this daily). It would be a great help to recruiting if some cut-and-dried formula could be found to describe accurately the potential earnings of coolies on Assam gardens.

In attempting to arrive at an economic wage two questions have to be answered and the answers define the limits within which the attempt must be confined, namely, (1) what wage can the Industry afford to pay without becoming unremunerative and unattractive to capital, and (2) what wage is necessary to get and keep an adequate labour force. The answers to these questions vary enormously from district to district, and even from garden to garden in the same locality. The answer to question (1) could be stated with some degree of exactitude in most places ; there is a maximum cost of production of a pound of tea on every garden which with a normal market must impose an absolute limit on wages payable if the garden is not to be shut down. It is not so easy to arrive at the answer to question (2) as many considerations, such as the condition of life of the coolies before emigration, competition in recruitment giving the coolies a choice of employments, the standard of living of different labourers, and classes of labour, enter into the problem. I am of opinion that in general the tea-garden coolies of Assam are better off than they were before they emigrated and that the remuneration offered them is sufficient to maintain them in health and reasonable comfort ; in some recruiting districts and with some classes of labour, however, the wages offered by tea are insufficient to compete with other industries. I do not consider it necessary from a recruiting point of view for tea to attempt to outbid its competitors in the labour market, as the agricultural life will always attract many who are not to be lured from their customary mode of living by tempting wages ; but in all cases where the earnings are below the level of health and reasonable comfort, they should be brought up to that level or else the labour should be free to go elsewhere.

J. A. MILLIGAN.

APPENDIX.

Dated Shillong, the 30th November 1921.

From—J. A. Dawson, Esq., I.C.S., Secretary Assam Labour Enquiry Committee,

To—The Managers of Tea-gardens in ^{Assam Valley}
^{Surma Valley}

On behalf of the Committee appointed to enquire into the conditions of tea-garden labour in Assam, I have the honour to append a list of questions, and should be glad if you would answer them as far as they relate to gardens under your control. Should you not be in a position to supply all the information asked for, the Committee would still be glad to be favoured with replies on those points on which you may be able to enlighten them. They would welcome any other facts or statistics illustrative of the economic conditions under which tea-garden coolies in Assam live and opinions as to whether any, and if so, what, remedial measures are required.

2. The terms of reference are:—

To enquire into conditions of coolie labour on tea-gardens in Assam and in particular—

- (i) to enquire whether the remuneration in money payments together with the concessions received by the coolies in the way of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., is sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and reasonable comfort;
- (ii) to enquire whether it is possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the abovementioned concessions should be converted into an increase of money wages; and to make any recommendation which seems desirable for improving the conditions of labour.

3. The Committee regret that there has been some delay in framing the questions, but feel sure that you will, in the interests of the tea industry, treat the matter as urgent and will send the answers—it will suffice to quote the numbers of the questions—as soon as possible to the Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, Shillong. I may say that the Committee intend to examine witnesses at convenient centres, and also to visit typical tea-gardens. If you would like to give evidence before the Committee, this fact may be communicated to the Secretary. The tour programme will be sent out as soon it is finally settled. Provisionally, it is intended to visit Darrang in December, Sylhet and Cachar in January, and Sibsagar, Nowgong and Lakhimpur in February.

QUESTIONS.

I.—Labour Force.

1. What is the working population living on the garden—men, women, and children? Can you give the approximate percentage of the different classes of coolies in your garden—Oriyas, Santals, etc.?

2. How many coolies, not residing on the garden, do you usually employ—men, women, and children? Are they employed throughout the year or usually at a particular season?

3. What is the acreage of tea under cultivation and the average yield per acre? Is your labour force sufficient? If all your coolies worked 8 hours a day, how many approximately would you require to work your garden?

4. If you employ outside labour, would it be possible to have all the work done by your coolies residing in the garden? If so, can you give any reason why this is not done?

5. (a) What is the explanation of the difference between the total labour force on the books and the average daily working strength, which is in some cases considerable?

(b) How many hours' work is done per week on the average in a normal year by (1) your best coolies, (2) your average coolies, in (a) busy season and (b) slack season?

6. (a) How much have you spent in recruiting during the last five years? Trace the increase in your labour force as a result of recruiting.

(b) If the increase appears to be in commensurate with the expenditure, how do you explain the unsatisfactory nett results?

(c) In the circumstances stated in (b), would it, in your opinion, have been more profitable to spend the bulk of the money devoted to recruiting on the coolies you already hold? If so, in what directions?

(d) If little or no recruiting has been done, can you explain how you have managed to maintain an adequate labour force with so little recruiting?

(e) Is it a fact that some gardens are more popular with labour than others? If so, please state what you consider to be the most important factors of such popularity?

7. Leaving out of consideration times of cholera and influenza epidemics, how does the birth-rate in your garden compare with the death-rate?

8. Is the type of coolie recruited at the present day as good as ten years ago? If inferior, in what respect?

II.—Organisation and Discipline.

9. State briefly but as fully as possible the customary duties of manager, assistants, and Indian staff on your garden.

10. What are the duties, powers and privileges of sardars and line chaukidars on your garden? On what principle are they selected? Are they popular in general with the labour force?

11. Have there been cases of abuse of power on the part of your staff (all grades) in your experience? Have these been common? What is the best way to avoid such abuses?

12. Do you consider it essential that the European staff on a garden should be thoroughly conversant with some vernacular understood by the coolies? In your experience is this always the case?

13. Do you have a system of fines? If so, what is it, i.e., who have the power to fine and on what principles are they allowed to do so?

14. It is said that in some gardens everything is done for the old settled coolie and that on other gardens everything is done for the new coolie. Is it possible so to arrange matters as to keep the old coolies contented while in no way discouraging the new? If so, how is it done?

15. Is it a fact that there has been a widespread feeling of unrest among tea-garden labour during the past few years? If so, to what do you attribute it? State your own experience. Were you aware of a feeling of unrest apart from any caused by the efforts of political agitators and do you think that without these efforts the unrest would have manifested itself?

16. To what extent do you attribute recent disturbances among tea-garden labour to the incitement of agitators? If possible, give your own experience.

17. Have coolies had any real grievances—economic or personal of which agitators could make capital? If not, how do you account for the sporadic nature of the troubles that have occurred?

18. During the past few years of enhanced cost of living (1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920) has the remuneration of the staff, European and Indian, and of the labour force increased? If so, please give details. If not, were any other steps taken to mitigate the hardship of the increased cost of living?

19. What dividends did your garden or Company pay during the abovementioned five years?

20. Have you on any occasion during the past five years suggested to your agents or directors any measures for ameliorating the lot of your labour force? If so, with what results?

III.—Wages.

21. What is your system of payment, daily or monthly? What is the daily rate of wages (*hasira*) paid to men, women, and children living in the garden for a full task? If payment is according to a monthly rate, what is it for men, women, and children? If the daily or monthly rates have changed since 1913, please give details.

22. If different rates from above are given in the case of labour living outside the lines, please state them.

23. Have the cash earnings of coolies for work done on the garden increased since 1913? Can you give any figures to show the difference? The figures should include regular *hasiras* and also *ticca* earnings, (i.e., additional pay for work over and above the standard task).

24. What do you consider a decent living monthly wage for a working coolie—man and woman—not a mere subsistence allowance, but a wage that would suffice to keep them in health and reasonable comfort with a possibility of saving a little ?

25. Can you give any idea of the extent of difference in the cost of living in 1913 and 1920 ?

26. (a) Taking into account all the earnings and concessions received by an average coolie, would you say that he gets enough to keep him in health and reasonable comfort with the present price of necessities ?

(b) Please state the total sanctioned provision for remuneration of labour in your garden budget year by year for 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921 and side by side with these figures please give the strength of your labour force in the same years.

(c) Please give in tabular form the actual earnings of a number of your best working coolies—men, women, and children—month by month for a year showing number of days' work done,—total *hazira* earned and total *ticca* earned—for the years abovementioned.

(d) Please state the average daily number turning out to work on your garden (1) during the period July to September inclusive and (2) during the period December to February inclusive. Also the average number of coolies who earned *ticca* during these periods. The figures should be for the years 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921.

27. Can you give any idea of the indebtedness of coolies in your garden either to the garden or to outside *mahajans* ? Can you give any idea of how many of your coolies are free of debt either to the garden or to the *mahajans* ?

28. Can you say to what extent coolies in your garden remit money to their home districts ?

29. To what extent do your coolies save money to buy cattle, buffaloes, land and the like ? Do any of them lend money to other coolies.

30. Are payments made daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly for regular task work ? What would the coolies prefer ? When are *ticca* payments made ?

31. Are payments made in cash or in tickets ? If the latter, does the garden cash the tickets or the shopkeeper ? Is there any reason to believe that the latter does not pay the coolie the full value of the tickets ?

32. If rice or *dhan* is issued, is the cost or any part of it recovered ? Please describe your system in detail.

33. Do you think the fixing of a standard wage is feasible for the district, for the sub-district, or for a group of gardens ?

34. (a) Do you favour the idea of a provident fund for your Indian staff ?

(b) Do you favour the idea of giving coolies a bonus proportionate to the prosperity of the garden year by year ? If so, what form should it take ?

35. Does the unit system exist in your garden, *i.e.*, a system of remuneration based on small units of work, the coolies being paid in terms of multiples of such unit. If you have such a unit system, describe it. Is the coolie allowed to earn as much or as little as he chooses, both in busy and slack season, or is there a limit ? Under the unit system does the coolie tend to sacrifice quality to quantity ? If the unit system is not in force in your garden, would you be in favour of its introduction ?

36. Is it the case that earnings are inadequate in the cold weather as compared with the rest of the year ? Can this be remedied ?

37. Are wages paid into the hands of the coolies by the Manager or Assistant Manager ?

Is this an invariable rule in your garden ?

38. In the case of your garden to what extent do coolies supplement their regular and *ticca* earnings by cultivation of paddy or other crops, sale of firewood, milk, fodder or vegetables, by rearing cattle, by hiring carts, or in other ways such as working on Government or Local Board roads ?

39. In the case of a coolie living with his wife and children would you say, as a general rule, that his own total earnings are sufficient to maintain himself and his family in health and reasonable comfort ?

40. Is it your experience that increased wages encourage labourers to work substantially longer hours ?

41. How far do you think it true that any appreciable rise in the rate of wages would result in the coolie not earning more from the garden but in his doing less work for the same pay ?

IV.—Tasks.

42. What is the task for plucking? Does it differ at different times of the year? Has it altered in recent years, say from 1913? If so, how? How many hours does it take the average woman to do the task?

43. Has fine plucking altered the task? With a reduced task for fine plucking is it possible for a coolie to earn as much in a given time as was the case when coarser plucking was the practice?

44. What is the *ticca* rate for plucking and how does it compare with the rate before the war? Granted that there is leaf to pluck, can a coolie earn as much *ticca* as he or she chooses or is there a limit? Can a coolie earn as much by *ticca* plucking now as during the war boom in tea?

45. In weighing leaf what deduction is made for the basket? Is the deduction always the same? What other deductions are made, *e.g.*, for wet or stalky leaf or for factory charges? Suppose a plucker brings in 25 pounds of *actual* leaf in a basket weighing 5 pounds, the leaf being perfectly dry, for what weight of leaf will she get credit in your garden?

46. Is leaf weighment made in presence of the Manager or Assistant Manager? Is this the invariable rule?

47. What is the task for (a) light hoeing, (b) deep hoeing? Has it altered in recent years, say from 1913? If so, how?

48. Does the hoeing task differ at various times of the year or for different soils in the garden? How many hours does it take the average man to do the work?

49. What is the *ticca* rate for hoeing and how does it compare with the rate before the war? Can a coolie earn as much *ticca* in hoeing as she chooses, or is there a limit? Can he earn as much now by *ticca* hoeing as he could before the war?

50. How are hoeing measurements made? By a *nal* rod or by so many *galis* (rows) of bushes? Are the results identical? How many feet in your garden *nal*?

51. To what extent and in what circumstances are fractional *haziras* given in your garden?

V.—Concessions.

52. (a) To what extent have coolies in your garden got land for cultivation of paddy or other crops (1) within the garden grant, (2) outside? In the case of (1) can you say what amount of land is so held and by how many adult coolies? On what conditions do the coolies hold land inside the grant; if not on rent-free terms, what is the rate of rent? Are they liable to be turned out of their land, and for what reasons?

(b) What percentage of the adult male coolies in the garden have got land for cultivation either inside or outside the grant?

53. Is it your experience that coolies living in the garden who hold land inside or outside the estate do a reasonable amount of garden work, either by themselves or by other family members?

54. Have you still got land within the estate which the coolies could take up for cultivation? If so, is there any desire to take it up? If not, why not?

55. Is it your experience that new coolies are keen on taking up land for cultivation or only coolies who have been settled in the garden for some time?

56. Do you give facilities to new coolies to cultivate, or do you prefer to give this privilege only to those who have been for some time on the garden?

57. Is there much Government waste land in the neighbourhood of your garden suitable for cultivation which your coolies could take up?

58. Can you give any idea as to what extent coolies in your garden hold land outside the estate and whether as direct tenants of Government or as sub-tenants of others?

59. Does the coolie as a rule sell the produce of his land in the open market or to other coolies, or does he keep it chiefly for his own consumption?

60. Is the coolie in your garden allowed leave freely to cultivate his land or are restrictions placed?

61. Are the coolies housed in lines or houses built at garden expense? Or are they allowed to build their own houses? In the latter case, thus the garden supply materials and pay the coolies for a reasonable time while building them? Can you

give any idea of the money value of free housing? Do they prefer to build their own houses or to live in the houses built by the garden? Have they a plot for growing vegetables, etc.?

62. Is there free grazing land available in the garden? If so, does the garden provide cowherds?

63. Apart from agreement advances, does the garden lend money to the coolies for miscellaneous purposes? Is interest charged? How are the loans recovered? Does the borrower mortgage his cattle or any thing? If he takes the money to buy cattle, do you consider the cattle garden property until the advance is repaid?

64. Are many of these loans irrecoverable? On an average how much do you write off annually as irrecoverable?

65. Do the coolies have any difficulty in finding fuel within the estate? If so, is any help given to them?

66. On the occasion of festive days like the *Durga Pujas*, is anything given to the coolies?

67. Have you accommodation for in-door patients in your hospital and is it much used?

68. Do you supply clothing or blankets free or at a reduced rates, and in what cases?

69. What pregnant sick leave is given before and after birth? What sick pay, if any, is given during that time? Is any bonus given on the birth of a child? Are any arrangements made for nursing?

70. In the case of children or weakly coolies unable to work, are free meals or sick *haziras* given? In the case of the latter, what amounts? If men or women fall below *par* and are unable to earn sufficient to keep them in good health, do you do anything to assist them such as by feeding them till they are fit for work?

71. Have you a garden school and would you call it a success? If, in the past, you have had such a school which has now ceased to exist, can you give the reason for its abolition?

72. (a) When rice is dear, is it your practice to sell it to the coolies at concession rates? Taking the last 5 years or any other suitable period, what has been your loss by making this concession? What is your guiding principle in fixing the rate at which you sell rice to the coolie or have you a fixed rate? If you have a fixed rate, what is it?

(b) Is this concession of cheap rice granted over and above the full rates of pay, or do those who avail themselves of the cheap rice concession get less pay than those who do not? How much concession rice may a working coolie—man, woman, or child—purchase per week?

73. Is it possible and desirable that the indirect remuneration represented by the various concessions in the shape of free housing, medical attendance, cheap rice, clothing, garden land, etc., should be converted into an increase of money wages? The question may be considered from the points of view both of the garden and the coolie.

VI.—Contract.

74. (a) Do you put coolies in your garden under Act-XIII agreement? If so, what advance is given to men and women? Do you recover the advances? Do you put newly-recruited coolies under agreement as soon as they come up from their country?

(b) Has the amending Act XII of 1920 which restricts the term of agreement to one year, altered the amount you give as advance? How has your garden practice been altered as the result of this Act?

75. Do you think it necessary to put the coolie under contract at all? Probably many coolies put themselves under contract in order to get the advance. Would you be willing to make the present advances if the coolie was not put under contract? Would you be willing to give the coolie the money as a bonus at the expiry of a year's work?

76. Do you think the coolie would be more content if he was not under contract?

77. Do you file many cases under Act XIII against absconding coolies? If so, do they usually go back to the garden, refund the advance, or go to jail?

78. If it is the practice in your garden not to put coolies under contract, do you find that this is satisfactory? And do many coolies abscond?

VII.—General.

79. Is there a shop in the garden from which coolies can get supplies and are prices controlled by the management? Have the coolies any complaints against the shops?

80. Is it the custom to hold muster parade before the coolies go out to work in the morning? Is this necessary?

81. Do the coolies in your garden spend much money on liquor or on opium? In recent years the price of these commodities has increased, do you think that this has led to a decrease in consumption among your coolies? Where there has been an increase of wages, is there any reason to believe that much of this has gone in liquor or in opium? In the case of the heavy drinker or confirmed opium-eater, have these habits caused diminished earnings among these classes?

82. Is there any co-operative society in your garden where coolies can get goods at reasonable prices? Do you think there is any prospect of success if this is tried?

83. Do you think the coolie has more time to devote to his own pursuits at the present day than he used to have? Can you explain why?

84. In the case of disputes in your garden among the coolies themselves, do they prefer settlement by the manager to going to court?

85. What is your opinion about giving pensions to coolies who have done long and faithful service?

J. A. DAWSON,

Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

30th November 1921.

SHILLONG : Printed and published by H. H. KING, Superintendent, Assam Government Press.
(L. S. G.) No. 8-100-24-11-1922.

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