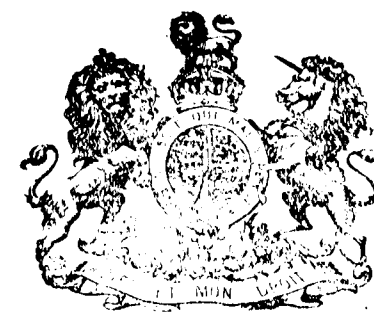


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REPORT

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE,

1921-22.



SHILLONG :

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1922.

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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM.

Governor in Council.

**Resolution on the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry
Committee, 1922.**

*Extract from the Proceedings of the Governor of Assam in Council in the Finance
Department, No. 6405F., dated Shillong, the 9th October 1922.*

READ—

The Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

R E S O L U T I O N.

THE Resolution which is printed at the beginning of the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee gives the reasons which led to the appointment of the Committee, and also the terms of reference. The latter were purposely drawn on wide lines. Answers were invited to two specific questions; and in addition the members were asked to make any recommendations which seemed desirable for improving the conditions of labour on the tea gardens. Paragraph 4 of the Report names seven of the nine members who actually served on the Committee. The other two were the President, the Hon'ble Mr. J. C. Arbuthnott, C.I.E., who in the course of a long and distinguished service had had experience of labour conditions in every tea district in the province, and the Secretary, Mr. J. A. Dawson, who had held charge of tea districts in both the Assam Valley and the Surma Valley.

2. Seven of the nine members of the Committee have signed the Report, their number including three of the five members who are directly interested in tea. Messrs. McMorran and Fox have, however, written what they have preferred to describe as a minority Report which is appended to the main document. They answer the two questions put to the Committee in the same way as do the majority, except that their finding on the first is unqualified. They take exception, however, to the manner in which the enquiries were conducted, and in particular to the lack of opportunities afforded to the Committee as a whole of discussing the evidence recorded, the information obtained by the groups of members who visited individual tea gardens, and the draft Report itself. In deciding the weight to be attached to such criticisms the Government are bound to remember the magnitude of the task set the Committee, and the extent to which ill-health or the pressing claims of their ordinary avocations in a time of stress prevented some of the members, Mr. Fox being unfortunately one, from attending all the meetings both in the tea districts and in Shillong. Nor is it clear to Government how, in the time available and with communications so defective as they are, information could have been collected, and what the majority call "the evidence of the eye" obtained, by any expedient other than the deputation of parties of the Committee to visit particular gardens. Such a procedure is not unusual when enquiries are necessary over a wide area, and if Mr. McMorran and Mr. Fox, who both took part in these visits, found little or nothing amiss, while other observers were occasionally moved to adverse comment, the Government do not think that that circumstance affords sufficient ground for discarding everything but the results of joint investigation and discussion. The Governor in Council regrets that veiled criticisms upon the Secretary's work should appear in the last paragraph of the minority Report, being assured that any suggestion that that officer withheld information from the Committee is without reasonable foundation. For the rest, the minority members have usefully drawn attention to certain clerical mistakes in the majority Report which have now been corrected. Their substantive criticisms will be discussed in due course, as will the one important question on which the majority and the minority differ

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essentially. But the Governor in Council does not understand that the two dissenting members desire that their Report should be regarded as a complete answer to the reference made to the Committee. His Excellency in Council understands that their rejection of their colleagues' Report is qualified rather than absolute, and trusts that he does them no injustice in assuming that they agree generally with the majority except where their disagreement is expressed. On this assumption His Excellency in Council is glad to find how few the points of essential difference are.

3. It will be convenient in reviewing the Report to follow its general sequence. The introductory chapter gives a clear account of the matters into which the Committee enquired, and of the manner in which their enquiries were conducted. It sets out the special difficulties experienced owing to the political situation; and the Governor in Council congratulates the members of the Committee on having performed their task as thoroughly as they did without giving any foundation for the apprehension expressed by one Sub-Committee that their investigations would accentuate labour troubles. The reasons given for discarding any idea of recording the formal evidence of coolie witnesses are frankly stated, and the Government of Assam accept them as sufficient. They also accept the claim that the enquiry was conducted from the standpoint of the coolie's well-being. At the same time the judicial character of the Report is shown by the fact that it never fails to make full allowance for the difficulties which handicapped the employers during a period of depression. The Governor in Council notes with pleasure the acknowledgment of the assistance rendered by garden managers to the Committee, and indeed was confident that such assistance would be forthcoming.

4. The second chapter which deals with strikes and disturbances on tea gardens is so complete as to render review superfluous. The causes of the disturbances have been analysed with exceeding fairness. The Committee are satisfied that, when owing to the financial crisis economies in working had perforce to be effected, every effort was made to prevent the labourers from suffering in consequence; and the Governor in Council unreservedly accepts their conclusions that the unrest was due to a combination of economic and political conditions, and that the existence of economic grievances rendered coolies more ready to listen to the exhortations and incitements of non-co-operators and other agitators of whose mischievous activities sufficient proof has reached them. This is not challenged by the authors of the minority Report, and it is the view which the Government of Assam have all along held. The question whether the economic grievances of the coolies might not have been lessened by more liberal treatment during the preceding years of prosperity will be discussed later. It is noteworthy that after the Chargola exodus the rates of wages in the gardens most affected were materially raised. But it may be said in passing that the number of labourers who, owing to sickness or incapacity, earned the remarkably low wages noted in paragraph 20 of the Report was very small.

5. The third chapter is concerned with what are styled 'concessions' in the terms of reference to the Committee. These might perhaps have been more accurately described as benefits or privileges enjoyed by the labourer over and above the wage paid to him for his labour. As is pointed out in paragraph 55, until the labour-districts provisions of Act VI of 1901 were withdrawn, most of these benefits were secured by law to labourers contracting under the Act, the supply of rice at the statutory rate of three rupees a maund being a condition entered in the contract. The Governor in Council cannot agree with the suggestion made in the minority Report that this chapter minimises the benefits or belittles the expenditure which they involve. On the contrary His Excellency in Council considers that the question of the extent to which these benefits represent an actual addition to the wages paid has been handled in a thoroughly judicial manner, and readily accepts the important conclusions of the majority set forth in paragraphs 70-72 of the Report. The Committee, majority and minority alike, are agreed that it would be both impracticable and undesirable from the point of view of the labourer as well as of the garden to convert into a money equivalent the various benefits direct and indirect which the labourer now receives; and though such conversion would certainly not be without advantages, political and administrative, the Governor in Council feels that he must accept the answer to the first part of the second question put to the Committee. The minority members demur to the statement made in paragraph 57 of the Report, that the coolie does not, any more than would the policeman or the sepoy, regard money spent on hospitals, medicine and doctors as part of his pay. Such a view might fairly be regarded as unreasonable in the case of educated people, but with the classes of public servant mentioned, as with the garden coolie, custom is more dominant

than reason. But the conclusion that the coolie does in fact take for granted the provision of medical comforts implies no want of recognition either of the efforts made by the Industry, with little regard to cost, to improve the health of the labour force; or of the positive and demonstrable advantages to the labourer. The criticism by the same two members of paragraph 70 seems to overlook what is said in the suggestive paragraph 129 of the Report.

6. In Chapter IV the Committee have treated exhaustively and with the most anxious care the vital question of wages. They lay stress on the fact that it is not the rate of wage that matters so much as the joint earnings of a family of coolies, and in paragraph 83 they point out that there may be adequate compensations for low earnings. They then discuss tasks and systems of payment, but for the most part wisely content themselves with pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of the different systems.

7. The writers of the minority Report in answering the first question put to the Committee are of opinion that at the present time the remuneration in money payments, together with the various concessions received, is sufficient to maintain the coolies in health and reasonable comfort. The majority, while agreeing that this is generally the case, do so with reservations, and their views are stated in paragraph 128 in terms which bear witness to the scrupulous care with which they considered the problem. The Government of Assam agree that the question admits of no short and easy answer. The various factors mentioned by the Committee must be given due weight. But they welcome the valuable detailed analysis of the wages paid in each subdivision of the planting districts which precedes the general findings. They agree that the method adopted by the Committee was the only possible way of arriving at an accurate appreciation of the situation, and they accept without hesitation the findings as to the adequacy or inadequacy of the wages given in each subdivision. On points of detail the dissenting members seem to dispute the accuracy of certain figures in paragraphs 117 and 118. All that need be said is that the rates of pay in the Langla Company are astonishingly low on paper whatever may be the real explanation; while the Governor in Council understands that the fact that the coolies of the Patrakhola Estate were on strike for several days in March 1922 was not brought to the notice of the Committee. It is clear that in particular areas wages should be higher than they are; and the Government of Assam commend the cases instanced by the Committee to the earnest attention of the Tea Industry.

8. The Government cannot differ from the broad conclusions to which the majority of the Committee have come, that the rise in prices has exceeded the rise in wages, or their inference in paragraph 128 that the coolie's standard of living must in consequence have been lowered of recent years. That the upward movement of prices usually outpaces wages is well known. But in this instance the Government of Assam feel that the employer would have done wisely to take advantage of the fat years, and to have raised wages before the coolie began to feel the pinch of the lean years. They have not overlooked what has been urged in paragraph 8 of the minority Report about the pressure of taxation on the Industry. But they believe that to some extent the troubles of last year would have been averted had a more enlightened policy been adopted while conditions still permitted. The Governor in Council shares the hope expressed that the Tea Industry will before long be in a position to enable the coolie to regain if not to raise the standard which he had attained when the cost of living was less. He is glad to learn from paragraph 98 of the Report that many estates have already found it possible to raise wages, and agrees that justice to the employers required the inclusion in the wage statistics of the figures for March last.

9. Paragraph 129 formulates the practical suggestions of the Committee. They advise that the district Sub-Committees should recommend what they consider to be a decent monthly or daily rate of wage, which is not to be a mere subsistence allowance, but a wage that will suffice to keep the labourer in health and reasonable comfort with the possibility of saving a little. Few would quarrel with the interpretation placed on these terms in paragraph 96 of the Report. They consider moreover that this should be a wage which the average coolie can earn in a reasonable time, and that in fixing it no regard should be paid to *ticca* earnings by which it may be supplemented. The Government accept these recommendations. They of course recognise that economic factors must have full play. It is not possible to insist on all gardens in the same area having identical standards of task or wage. But what the Government desire is that the Sub-Committees should be authorised to propose a standard rate for their districts, and to bring to the notice of Agents and Directors and the

Association any refusal on the part of individual concerns to fall in with their suggestions. His Excellency in Council believes with the Committee that managers are a reasonable and fair-minded body of men, and is convinced that the Sub-Committees are in the best position to say what is a fair task for a decent living wage.

10. The same paragraph contains the answer to the objection taken in the minority Report that the expression 'working overtime' has not been defined. To sum up the Governor in Council is definitely of opinion that the standard wage for the standard task, on the performance of which, as the Committee observe elsewhere, employers might reasonably insist, should apart from *ticca* earnings be sufficient to provide the labourer of average capacity and industry with wholesome food, sufficient clothes and a little money over. It may be difficult to devise a task which an old and experienced coolie could not perform in less than the six hours which may be taken as a reasonable working day; on the other hand the average coolie will take longer than the three or four hours suggested in the minority Report to earn the standard wage. With the recommendation that the rate of wages should be fixed on the assumption that a coolie has no cultivation or other subsidiary means of livelihood the Governor in Council also agrees. It remains to notice the contention advanced by many managers that increased wages will only mean less work for the same or more pay. This may be true in the case of lazy coolies who would in no circumstances attempt to do more than earn a bare subsistence. In this connection the remarks in paragraph 184 are relevant. But the Industry could not have flourished as it has done if its labour force was universally lethargic. There is evidence that many coolies desire to attain a certain standard of comfort, and the object should be to stimulate their output by encouraging that desire. If, as the Government believe, the coolie has had to abandon the standard of living to which he was recently becoming accustomed, it may be hoped that the desire to regain it will make him work. The suggestion that coolies should receive a bonus proportionate to the prosperity of the garden was rejected by the Committee as impracticable and unprofitable; and the Governor in Council agrees that the proposal presumes a measure of intelligence and thrift at present lacking in the labour force generally.

11. The present Committee have prepared some interesting budgets of personal expenditure, which will doubtless attract the attention of students of economic questions; and they arrive diffidently at the conclusion that the cost of living for the adult coolie has risen by about 40 per cent. since 1914. The Government incline to the opinion that this if anything probably understates the rise in the cost of living of recent years. The remark of the minority members that the coolie is not singular in feeling the stress of adverse economic conditions is obviously true; but the Government agree with the majority in holding that some line of distinction must in fairness be drawn between those who had a large margin of saving and the tea-garden labourer whose margin for saving or for petty luxuries was insignificant and in many cases non-existent.

12. The scope of the Committee's enquiries was confined to Assam, but in paragraphs 1, 31 and 127 they touch upon the question of the relative prosperity of the labourer upon the gardens and in his own home. The Governor in Council will not here review in detail the reasons which led to the provisional conclusion in November 1921 that "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". The Committee of 1906, after visiting both recruiting and labour districts and examining numerous witnesses from both, formed the impression that the ordinary labourer in Assam is certainly better off than he would be in the "back tracts of the down-country districts which he has left behind", and this Government are in possession of numerous and weighty opinions since that date to the same effect. But the broad fact is that with the development of communications and the spread of intelligence recruitment from distant provinces for the tea gardens of Assam could not possibly have been maintained simply on a basis of misrepresentation. The returning coolies' accounts of the prospects offered by foreign service must have been satisfactory for fresh recruits from the same neighbourhood to be forthcoming.

13. This question of the adequacy of the wage paid is no new one. The Government have never ceased to acknowledge and to discharge definite responsibilities in connection with the earnings of coolies. Indeed previous to 1908 the law itself fixed minimum wages for labourer under contract under Act VI of 1901. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906, to whose Report frequent references are made in the present Report, devoted much attention to the rate of wages. They observed:—"In the recruiting districts people only consider the actual Act wage

Practically nothing is known about the coolies being able to earn extra money for overtime, and the fact that wages in Assam have stagnated while down-country they have almost everywhere risen is held to be a strong argument for raising the pay of the coolie. The planter on the other hand sees that the coolie is comfortably off, his work is not heavy and he earns extra pay at certain seasons of the year." The Committee of 1906 went on to say that the evidence which they had recorded in the recruiting districts showed that in many parts from which Assam used to draw its labour the wage then offered was no attraction to the labourer. They stated plainly that it was of no use saying that the planter provides the coolie with extras which should count in lieu of wages, because such amenities were not considered and would not be considered by the person who was being asked to emigrate. They added that unless the Industry was prepared to offer an increased wage it would find that many of its recruiting grounds would become drier year by year. They did not argue that the coolie did not do fairly well for himself on what he got, but they held definitely that unless the money inducements held out to him were improved he would be less and less ready to leave his country, and they added that this fact must be recognised by the Industry if it hoped to attract labour to Assam. These weighty observations were made sixteen years ago. They were not buried in the pages of a blue book, for the more important recommendations of the Committee were extracted and sent to every tea garden manager then in the province. In view of the findings of the present Committee, which are based on recorded earnings over a series of years, the Governor in Council is forced to conclude that sufficient attention was not paid to the recommendations of the earlier Committee.

14. Chapter V deals with the working of Act XIII of 1859. The question of the retention of the Act or its abrogation so far as garden labour is concerned is the one important point on which the majority and the minority Reports differ essentially. The minority members question the correctness of the Committee's action in enquiring into a matter which was not specifically referred to them. But, quite apart from the formal reference which was made while the Committee were sitting, it cannot seriously be denied that, as stated in paragraph 138 of the Report, the matter of Act XIII contracts has an intimate concern with wages. It clearly has an intimate concern also with the conditions of labour on tea gardens, and thus falls within the third of the terms of reference to the Committee. The questionnaire, to the form of which the minority writers take exception, was framed, it is true, before the Committee actually assembled. This was done to save time. But the questionnaire was in the hands of each member from the beginning: it comprises definite questions about the working of Act XIII, and if any members thought those questions irrelevant, that was the time to take formal exception to their inclusion.

15. The chapter begins by describing the changes made in Act XIII of 1859 by the amending Act of 1920, and reviews the recommendations of the Committee of 1906. Next comes a criticism of the working of the Act in the various districts of the province, based on an examination, covering several pages of the Report, of the records of cases which came before the courts. The two minority members consider that this examination should have been conducted by the Committee as a whole, which, had time allowed, would undoubtedly have been the obvious course. They point out quite rightly that the number of complaints of non-fulfilment of contracts is only a minute proportion of the total number executed, and that the percentage of persons under contract sentenced to imprisonment is infinitesimal. The Government of Assam accept their inference that on the whole the Act has been worked considerably and has not borne heavily on the labourer. The comprehensive review given in the Report needs to be read with close attention if its real significance is to be appreciated. By no means all the cases mentioned are open to criticism. At the same time the records examined show clearly that there are instances of harshness and that abuses do occur. It has been found that at least in some districts contracts continue to be executed for a longer period than the amended Act permits, and it is startling to learn that one influential company pays a commission on contracts executed. The advance given, which is an essential element of a contract under Act XIII, is sometimes inadequate, and some magistrates have failed to realise that such contracts should not be enforced as a matter of course. Cases of minors being placed under contract have also come to light. Lastly there can be no doubt that the practice of unlawful arrest has not disappeared. For some of these abuses of the Act the Governor in Council holds that magistrates must share the blame with employers.

16. The Committee's reference to discharge certificates may not be generally understood without some amplification. A coolie whose contract under Act VI of 1901 had determined was legally entitled to have his contract endorsed to that effect, or to receive a discharge certificate from his employer, or in the employer's default from the Inspector of Labourers. On the other hand while the contract endured the employer had the right of private arrest; but the conditions which safeguarded the coolie were in practice not always observed. In actual fact a tea garden labourer twenty years ago, whether under contract or not, found it almost impossible, unless he was in possession of a certificate or *chit* from his late employer, to cross a ferry or to obtain a ticket for a journey by rail or steamer. In 1903 and again in 1907 the Government issued orders that when a coolie applied for the grant of a discharge certificate or for permission to leave the garden where he had been employed, the proceedings should ordinarily take the form of an enquiry to ascertain whether he was entitled to a discharge certificate or whether the garden had any claim to his services. Further, if no report was received by the date fixed or if it appeared that the coolie was not under contract under Act VI of 1901, a discharge certificate was to be given. In other cases an order was to be passed to the effect that there was nothing to show that the coolie was not free to leave the garden, and a copy of this order was to be given to him. With the withdrawal of sections 195 and 196 in January 1908 private arrest became illegal, but the provisions of the law requiring the grant of discharge certificates, and therefore the instructions for dealing with applications for them continued in force. The Governor in Council regrets to find that in some cases magistrates have misapprehended these instructions, and have wrongly held that the fact that a labourer is pecuniarily indebted to a garden is sufficient cause for refusing him a certificate. Conditions have materially altered in recent years, but it is plain that private arrest, which is illegal, is still not unknown. Whatever be the facts of the particular case which is questioned in paragraph 15 of the minority Report, the evidence of the witness quoted in paragraph 161 of the majority Report is an admission of the survival of the practice. It is probable that the taking back to the garden of a coolie who has accepted an advance and broken his contract to labour is not regarded by him as an injustice; and indeed that persuasion is often sufficient. But breaches of the law do occur and these must cease.

17. The practice of placing newly imported labourers under contract immediately on their arrival on the garden is rightly condemned by the Committee. The increased recruiting facilities described in paragraphs 167 and 168 were given on the understanding that only free labourers would be recruited. There has been a literal fulfilment of this condition in so far that Act VI of 1901 has not been used, but the Committee of 1906, who are quoted in paragraph 179 of the present Report, strongly deprecated the demanding of contracts even under Act XIII from intending emigrants in the recruiting districts. The Government of Assam cannot but hold that the placing of new immigrants under such contracts immediately on their arrival on the garden is a breach of the spirit if not of the letter of the understanding made with the Governments in whose territories recruiting is conducted, and this opinion will be brought prominently to the notice of district officers. The fact that leading companies in the Lakhimpur district do not find it necessary to put new coolies under contract disposes of the plea that managers cannot keep labourers imported at great expense without the hold given them by Act XIII.

18. The records examined by the Committee have been again examined on behalf of this Government. Detailed comment would be out of place here, but two observations must be made. It must, in fairness to all parties, be stated that the action of the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong in cancelling the unexpired portion of the sentences of certain coolies sentenced to imprisonment and sending them back to complete their contracts was not taken as the result of any suggestion made by the garden authorities. The Deputy Commissioner complied with requests made to him by the coolies themselves, though his action was unwarranted by law. It hardly affords ground for the suggestion in paragraph 180 of the Report that the Act does not even secure finality. Secondly, with respect to the observations in paragraph 155 about the increase in 1920-21 in the number of cases instituted, it must not be forgotten that there had been in the two preceding years a very large importation of new coolies.

19. The arguments for and against the retention of the Act are set forth carefully in paragraphs 172-180 of the Report. The Assam Administration has on various occasions expressed the view that the Act has on the whole worked satisfactorily and is not unfair, and has stated that no instances of the abuse or misuse of its provisions

have come to notice. The Governor in Council on the information then before him accepted this view as recently as February last. The Act is not unpopular with the labourer, and the advances given are greatly valued. And, grave as are the instances of abuse which the special enquiry has now disclosed, these must still be viewed in their right numerical proportion, which the anxious consideration given to them by the Committee may to some extent have had the effect of disturbing. The Governor in Council does not believe that these abuses are universal or even wide-spread. But that they do occur is undoubted, and there can be no certainty that they will not recur. Nor is this all. The bad effects on recruitment of the existence of a penal contract of any kind have long been recognised; and though the concluding lines of paragraph 168 seem to the Government of Assam to take a more gloomy view of the future of recruitment than the premises warrant, they nevertheless convey a warning which is not to be disregarded. The Report brings out clearly the absence in the case of Act XIII contracts of the safeguards provided for contracts under Act VI. The arguments in paragraph 166 regarding the effect of penal contracts on the wages have great force; and, whatever other factors enter into the comparison, the figures given in paragraphs 170 and 171 regarding the relative frequency of riot cases in Assam and in free labour areas are remarkable. In view of all these considerations the Governor in Council accepts the recommendation of the majority of the Committee that the time has come when in the interests of the Industry and of the labourers alike the Act should cease to apply to tea gardens in Assam. The majority of the witnesses examined are opposed to the withdrawal of the Act, but the evidence recorded by the Committee shows no general apprehension on the part of managers about it. When opinions were last invited on the question at the end of 1921 the Surma Valley Branch, Indian Tea Association, while holding that the Act had worked satisfactorily, and that the benefits which it entailed were much appreciated by coolies, were of opinion that if it had to be repealed the present restrictions on recruitment imposed by Act VI of 1901 should simultaneously be withdrawn and a system of free recruitment introduced. With this suggestion the Governor in Council is in complete sympathy, and any proposals which may be put forward to make recruiting easier and cheaper without reviving the evils of the old system of so-called free recruiting will be sympathetically examined.

20. In Chapter VI of the Report the Committee have made some most valuable suggestions for promoting the general welfare and contentment of the labourer. These the Governor in Council confidently commends to the attention of the Tea Industry. Whether or not a system of indenture unfavourably affects the death-rate, the placing of new immigrants under contract immediately on arrival on the garden has already been condemned for other reasons. Regarding the comments in paragraph 181 on the death-rate and the birth-rate in the Darrang and Nowgong districts, the Government of Assam are not satisfied that the administration of Act XIII is responsible for the statistics of births and deaths to which the Committee have called attention. The Government have read with satisfaction the Committee's interesting account of the measures taken to combat disease upon the tea gardens and desire to pay a tribute to the work of the medical officers. They are confident that the remarks about conservancy systems will receive the attention which they merit. A strong recommendation on this subject has recently been addressed to the Indian Tea Association by the Assam Branch of the British Medical Association, the great majority of whose members are tea-garden medical officers. It is satisfactory to note that leave and allowances to pregnant women are being more liberally granted. This is a matter to which the special attention of the Branch Associations was recently invited. The paragraphs on the treatment of new coolies and the advantages of leisure and recreation will be read with interest. The comparative failure of garden schools must in fairness be ascribed to the indifference of the labourers themselves.

21. After a review of labour legislation from 1906 onwards, Chapter VII discusses recruitment with particular reference to the abnormal importations of 1918-19. The Governor in Council endorses the Committee's condemnation of the disservice rendered to the Industry by the ill-considered action of recruiting agents. It is satisfactory to find that the medical examination of intending emigrants is now universal. The Government have already issued special instructions for the guidance of inspecting officers much on the lines of the remarks in paragraph 207 of the Report, and the vital statistics are now compiled for the twelve months from July 1st to June 30th. The form of wage returns was recently revised, but will be again examined in the light of the suggestions made in paragraph 208.

22. The Report ends by drawing attention to some matters of supreme importance to the Industry. The Government of Assam believe that it does no more than justice in attributing the comparative steadiness of the garden labour force in recent

disturbed times largely to the sympathetic attitude of managers. Again and again in the Report are reasons shown for holding that on the personality of the manager depends in a great measure the attractiveness of a garden, or the reverse. The Committee point out how important it is that the manager or his assistant should personally fix tasks and supervise weighments of leaf and issues of rice. They have also shown how disturbances have resulted from managers having acted inconsiderately, or having failed or having from ignorance of the vernacular been unable to listen personally to grievances, real or fancied, against the subordinate staff. The prominence given to such cases in the Report shows how unusual they are: and the Government have no hesitation in recording their own belief that most managers are genuinely anxious for the welfare of their coolies, and well fitted to play that part which the Committee assign to them of the coolie's "best advocate or adviser". The Committee are anxious that suggestions, whether of individual managers or of Sub-Committees, for ameliorating the lot of the labourer should be regarded by the Managing Agents and Directors as having been made with knowledge and authority; and they and the Government both welcome the indications of a growing tendency in this direction. Lastly, the Committee refer to the competition which confronts the Industry. They recognise that there are economic limits to the wage-bill which it can pay, but they wisely remind employers that the garden coolie has begun to be moved, if yet but vaguely, by the same awakening and aspirations as the rest of the world of labour. The Governor in Council, as must every well-wisher of the great Industry to which the province owes so much, trusts that these words will go home; and that up to the full limits of the economic capacity of the Industry effort will be made to meet the changing conditions of the present day.

23. Finally, the Governor in Council desires to express his acknowledgments to the President and Members of the Committee for the admirable manner in which at no slight sacrifice of comfort or convenience they have discharged their onerous duty. His Excellency in Council believes that the Report which is now published will command respect by reason of its thoroughness and the moderation of its language: and be received with a large measure of assent. It is certain to remain for many years to come an authoritative pronouncement on the difficult questions with which it deals.

By order of the Government of Assam,

A. J. LAINÉ,

Second Secretary to the Government of Assam.



REPORT

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| (5) Mr. B. H. Blackwell, 50 and 51, Broad Street, Oxford. | (12) Messrs. Welldon and Wesley Limited, 28, Essex Street, London, W. C. |
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| (2) M. M. Friedländer & Sohn 21, Carlstrasse Berlin. | (4) Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. |

SHILLONG.

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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,

Mr. J. A. Dawson, I.C.S., *Member and Secretary.*

Members.

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

CHAP. I.
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.

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 20th 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 out 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.

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.

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. McMorran 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

CHAP. I
PARAS. 7-9.

rival markets with the obvious intention of creating discontent and unrest among 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. CHAP. I
PARAS. 9-10.

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.

CHAPTER II.

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 Raidang, 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 Raidang. 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 *hat* at Bara Hapjan. 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 mohurrirs 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 price, 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 maintenance 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-Monabari, 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.

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.

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.

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 Ranchi 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 Christeson 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."

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
Dullabcherra ...	931	374	755	2,060	371	139	258	768	
Singlacherra...	715	415	626	1,756	215	209	137	561	
Maguracherra ...	276	455	249	980	211	310	129	650	
Kekragool ...	833	222	674	1,729	377	133	372	881	
Goombhiracherra ...	482	193	273	948	440	140	319	899	
Oliviacherra ...	621	173	629	1,423	469	100	540	1,109	
Chargola ...	835	256	548	1,639	329	185	286	800	

Tea gardens.	Total number of coolies in the garden on the 1st May 1921.			Total of columns 2 to 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
Anipur ...	260	312	257	829	150	160	187	497	
Tarvincherra ...	72	121	158	351	5	11	13	29	
Kalacherra ...	178	307	161	646	45	20	8	73	
Kalinagar ...	175	331	95	601	127	141	67	335	
Mukamcherra ...	1,154	120	616	1,890	597	80	200	877	
Lalcherra ...	488	448	480	1,416	251	194	188	633	
Longai Tea Estate ...	455	302	296	1,053	...	129	21	150	
Adamtila Tea Estate ...	527	263	124	914	4	90	15	109	
Lalkhira and Sunakhira Tea Estate.	...	700	232	932	...	228	34	262	
Baitakhal Tea Estate ...	461	99	100	660	7	10	4	21	
Eraligool „ „ ...	466	239	368	1,073	117	8	20	145	
Total ...	8,718	5,020	6,512	20,250	3,715	2,286	2,798	8,799	

[illegible]

CHAP. II. The *Communiqué* issued by Government on 5th June 1921 regarding the exodus of 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 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....."

29. The following table shows the earnings, calculated on the average daily working strength, on six typical gardens in the Chargola 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 3	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 3	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 1
Women ...	5 6 4	6 0 7	5 5 7
Children ...	3 9 6	3 7 3	4 7 1
Mukamcherra—			
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 15 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 Oliviacherra 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 Mukamcherra 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 *bhatkhana* 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 *bhatkhana* 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 *bhatkhana*. 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 employees 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.

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 Poojahs 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.

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 weighment. 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	4-8	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 over-drive 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.

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

Suntok riot
in Sibesagar
district.

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.

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.

42. Two Members of the Committee visited this garden and found that in the cold weather of 1920-21 opportunities for *tacca* 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.
	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 14 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:—

"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?"

Opinions of
Managers
and others
on the cause
of unrest on
tea gardens.

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 *tioca* 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 :—

“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.”

Mr. Phillipson, Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, in reply to the question how far 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 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 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 26th 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.

46. It is probable that secret propaganda had been carried on for some time in 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 on 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

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 Santok 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.

CHAPTER III.
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.

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 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 *tolas*. It is repugnant for them to live in a common

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 *kutcha* 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 *kutcha* 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.

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 ...	2,063	2,479	14,750	44,314	1,217	7,697	18,030	54,490
Hailakandi ...	2,203	1,819	5,325	13,435	289	1,643	7,817	16,897
North Sylhet ...	181	194	905	1,604	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	4,903	5,438	661	3,235	6,114	9,423
Kamrup Sadr ...	55	129	381	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	5,370
Jorhat ...	635	1,628	5,663	16,602	1,573	9,968	7,871	28,198
Sibsagar ...	2,170	6,261	9,129	14,422	2,186	16,196	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	1,336	...	...	1,327	2,458
Total ...	15,847	29,393	100,728	1,58,906	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 626 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*.

Samanbagh (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 mapped 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 CHAP. III 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 Grazing. 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 Fuel. 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 Loans to cattle, for marriage expenses and similar purposes. This is apart from the coolies. 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, Rice concess- 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 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	10,88,386
Sylhet ...	Paddy ...	...	...
	Rice ... 218,090	11,40,543	13,93,218
Kamrup ...	Paddy ... 2,084	4,674	6,891
	Rice ...	...	...
Darrang ...	Paddy ... 37,954	1,81,741	1,80,594
	Rice ... 16,695	1,01,170	1,44,993
Nowgong ...	Paddy ... 10,164	84,194	43,302
	Rice ... 36,729	1,96,598	2,71,364
Sibsagar ...	Paddy ... 93,310	3,28,731	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	8,66,184
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

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-Dooma 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 Bhubrihat 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.

Clothing 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. Rholes, 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 necessities 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 dearth 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.

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.

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.

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Modified unit
system.

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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Low earnings
and high
earnings how
far an indi-
cation of
favourable
conditions.

Hoeing
tasks.

Plucking.

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 bazar. 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

CHAP. IV. 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 necessities. 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.—44½ 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 (Lakhimpur).—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 necessities—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 27½ 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):—

"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

Cost of living at the present time.

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 headquarters 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 decimals 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	6½	6½	8·2	4·87	6
Karimganj ...	9½	8½	8½	8½	7½	9	12½	6½	6½	6½	8·2	4·87	7
Habiganj ...	9½	8½	7½	7½	7½	8½	11½	6½	6½	6½	8	5	7
South Sylhet ...	9½	8½	7½	7½	7½	8½	11½	6½	6½	6½	7·9	5·13	7
Cachar Sadr ...	11½	9½	9	8½	7½	9½	12½	7½	6½	7½	8·8	4·35	7½
Hailakandi ...	11½	9½	8½	8	7½	8½	12½	6½	6½	7½	8·5	4·70	8½
Tezpur Sadr ...	11	8½	8½	7½	7½	8½	11½	7½	6½	6½	8·2	4·87	8
Mangaldai ...	13	10½	7½	7½	8	9½	12½	7½	6½	6½	8·9	4·40	7
Kamrup ...	10	8½	8	8½	8	8½	10	6½	6½	6	7·9	5·06	6½
Nowgong ...	11½	9½	7½	7½	6	8½	11½	7	6½	6½	8·3	4·81	7
Dibrugarh ...	9½	8	7½	6½	7	7½	8½	6½	6	6	7·1	5·03	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	6½	6½	8·5	4·70	8½
Jorhat ...	11½	9½	7½	6½	7	8	8½	7	6½	6½	7·6	5·27	7
Golaghat ...	11½	8½	7½	6½	7½	7½	8½	7	6½	6½	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 run 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	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Sylhet	1·318	2·402	3·745	4·286	3·020	2·036	2·592	3·06	2·861	2·88	2·287	2·672	4·872	5·195	4·7	3·268
Cachar	1·569	2·656	3·833	4·734	3·546	2·633	2·967	3·419	2·853	2·714	2·328	2·511	4·357	4·932	4·449	3·524
Nowgong	2·142	3·428	5·763	5·464	1·343	3·827	2·074	3·953	3·689	3·391	2·743	3·058	4·802	5·305	4·895	4·086
Lakhimpur	3·223	3·17	3·631	4·734	3·902	3·086	3·503	4·171	3·707	3·817	3·157	3·271	4·878	5·268	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	3·46	3·025	3·831	4·464	5·141	5·07	5·081	4·386	3·118	6·07	7·505	6·06	3·612	5·067		
Cachar	3·738	3·6	3·607	4·283	4·614	4·496	5·175	4·848	3·137	5·874	7·299	5·41	3·5	4·864		
Nowgong	4·103	3·064	3·438	4·228	5·457	5·391	5·109	4·51	3·587	5·626	7·905	6·78	4·002	5·202		
Lakhimpur	3·639	3·846	4·008	5·148	5·201	6·279	5·693	5·168	4·489	6·745	7·968	8·00	4·089	5·868		

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.

§3. 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 prices 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	105	120	123	134	138
Tea-garden ditto	106	103	106	117	120	101	96	90	96	95

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.

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 *bijhas* 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 Re. 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 necessities. 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

local planters, a resolution in favour of raising wages by Re. 1 a month was passed by a very large majority. Managers were inclined to think that the high price of rice and cloth demanded a rise in wages. The gardens in the Dibrugarh and Panitola groups are fairly well off for land for cultivation, and rice concessions are liberal. In the Panitola Circle a decent living wage is stated to be Rs. 8 for men and Rs. 7 for women, provided the usual concessions of rice at reduced rates are given. This, however, does not include *ticca* earnings which considerably add to the labourer's comfort and ability to save. In the Dibrugarh district, a decent living wage is stated to be Rs. 7 for men and Rs. 6 for women, with concession rice at reduced rates; some managers add that this wage requires to be supplemented by *ticca* earnings in the busy season.

103. In the Tinsukia district, there has also been a rise in wages. The Manager of the Deohall Division of the Dikorai Company, increased wages in 1918 from Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 per mensem by giving a daily rate of 4 annas to men and women; again in 1921 men got a further rise to 5 annas a day. The reason for the rise given in both years was the increased cost of living. The Manager of the Hoogrijan Division of the Tingri Tea Company realised the necessity for an increase in 1921, but owing to the financial position, this could not be granted till 1st January 1922. The Manager of the Itakhoolie Tea Company realised in 1918 that a rise was desirable, but "the district kept him back." He had no desire to upset labour on other gardens. In 1921 wages were raised on two occasions. The reason was the increased cost of living. In the Tinsukia district, Managers state that a decent living wage is Rs. 8 or Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 6 for a woman. Some would add concession rice when the market rate is high. Many of the gardens have a considerable area of land for rice cultivation.

104. The wage returns for Lakhimpur Sadr indicate that since 1914 there has been a considerable rise in earnings.

LAKHIMPUR 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	6 9 0	4 14 7	2 15 9	...	...	...
1906	6 14 9	5 0 2	3 1 3	8 8 8	6 9 10	3 13 11
1907	7 0 0	5 5 8	3 3 3	8 8 2	6 14 10	3 15 10
1908	6 15 2	5 5 11	3 3 7	8 11 11	7 3 0	4 2 2
1909	6 11 2	4 15 6	3 0 3	8 8 8	6 14 6	3 15 7
1910	6 13 6	5 2 6	3 1 10	8 14 4	7 1 3	4 1 4
1911	6 14 6	5 5 2	3 7 9	10 0 8	7 4 8	4 8 2
1912	7 14 7	5 5 11	3 4 0	10 10 9	7 7 1	4 3 6
1913	7 4 4	5 12 4	3 10 2	9 7 0	7 11 4	4 9 8
1914	7 7 5	5 12 7	3 7 10	9 8 2	7 5 4	4 5 5
1915	7 4 5	5 9 7	3 5 6	9 9 5	7 15 10	4 8 0
1916	7 4 2	6 3 5	3 4 1	10 6 4	7 11 2	4 5 8
1917	5 11 1	6 2 5	3 11 3	7 11 8	8 5 10	4 12 1
1918	7 9 4	6 2 5	2 12 7	10 6 1	8 12 4	4 9 4
1919	7 12 0	6 6 10	3 11 11	10 8 1	9 1 5	5 3 7
1920	7 12 7	7 1 9	4 1 8	11 14 1	9 9 1	5 14 8
1921	8 7 9	7 12 7	4 5 3	10 11 6	9 7 9	5 10 5
1922	8 4 8	7 1 7	4 5 6	10 8 3	9 11 7	5 11 2
September 1921	8 15 5	8 0 5	4 13 6	11 4 5	11 1 6	6 7 7
March 1922	7 9 11	6 2 8	3 13 5	9 12 1	8 5 8	4 14 9
Family earnings (on average daily working strength).				1914 ...	18 2 4	
Percentage of rise in family earnings				1922 ...	21 15 2	
				...	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.

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 Dejoor 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 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 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 0	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 9	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 12 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 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 3	3 13 0	2 4 8	...	...	...
1906	5 5 5	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 7 2	5 8 7	3 10 7
1908	4 15 4	4 2 11	2 9 6	6 11 8	5 9 6	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 5	4 6 9	2 12 8	6 3 11	5 12 8	3 12 1
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	5 13 4	4 15 8	2 12 2	7 7 11	6 9 0	3 9 9
1914	5 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 6
1916	5 11 3	7 5 10	3 3 3	7 10 8	7 7 5	4 2 7
1917	7 11 10	5 13 0	3 2 8	10 1 7	7 9 1	4 4 7
1918	6 0 10	5 15 3	3 3 8	7 8 1	7 10 4	4 1 6
1919	5 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 5 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 2	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
1922 18 15 8
Percentage of rise in family earnings ... 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 2 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	6 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 11 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 3

	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.

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. 30 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. Hoeing tasks are said to be much the same as before, but an inferior standard of work is said to be accepted. The rate for *ticca* 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 0	6 13 4	3 10 8
1915 ...	6 3 6	5 1 3	2 14 10	7 13 9	6 10 8	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 11	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:—

	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	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.

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 *kazira* 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 16 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 5
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 :—

	Havira 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 6	8 0 0	8 5 0	9 6 0	10 2 9	9 4 0	9 5 5
Women ...	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 6	4 13 0	4 11 0	5 1 6	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 :—

GOLAGHAT.

Average calculated on the figures for September and March, of monthly cash wages including *ticca*, diet, rations, subsistence allowance and bonus per head.

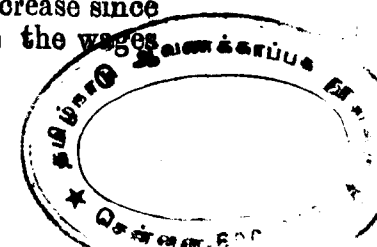
Year.	Of total number on books.			Of average daily working strength.		
	Men.	Women.	Children.	Men.	Women.	Children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1905 ...	5 11 3	3 9 1	2 0 11	...	...	...
1906 ...	5 2 8	3 12 6	2 9 6	6 11 4	5 1 9	3 6 4
1907 ...	5 6 8	3 14 11	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 13 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 7 11	4 2 11

	Rs. 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 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	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 11 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
1915	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 11 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 11
1920	6 4 3	5 7 0	2 11 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 21 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. 1,46 coolies owe Rs. 12,765 to the estate for rice, cloth and miscellaneous advances. The labour force consists of 882 men and 833 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 6 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	4 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 18 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
Rs. a. p.						
Family earnings (on average daily working strength).						
1914						
1922						
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 Chargola 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 *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 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.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
	0 6 0	0 4 6	0 4 0	0 3 6	0 3 0	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. Sultani-cherra 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.	March 1922.
	Rs. a. p.	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.	March 1922.
	Rs. a. p.	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 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 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

					Rx. a. p.
Family earnings (on average daily working strength).	{	1914	..	...	13 11 7
		1922	...	...	15 8 10
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 hours, 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.

8. 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.	Rs. 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
1922 ...	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 Malnicherrah, 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 ...	3	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.	Children.
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 0	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	
Percentage of rise in family earnings				{ 1922	16 8 0	
				...	12 per cent.	

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the average 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 pices 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 pices 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 3 pices to 3 annas. Hingajia (Chargola Tea Association) in 1919 increased men's wages from 3 annas 6 pices 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. Shamsbernagar (Lungla Tea Company) raised women's rates from 2 annas 3 pices 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 Balisra 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 pices 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.
Kanihatti	0 3 0	0 2 3
Shamsbernagar	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 Kanibhatti 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 Doloi 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

		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 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 0	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 8	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
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)						Rs. a. p.
						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 Bhubrihat 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 pie as against 3 pounds for one pie before the war. A plucking or hoeing task is said to take about six hours. There are about 650 acres rent-free land held by 83 per cent. of the labourers out of a labour force of 833 men and 1,128 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. 20,708 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.

Septhinjuri.—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 :—

1913.	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	0 3 0
Lalkhira	0 4 0	0 4 0
Longai Division	0 4 0	0 3 0

Since 1913, men's *haziras* 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 *haziras* 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 496 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 24 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 6 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 13 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 6 3

	1914	1922	Percentage of rise in family earnings
Family earnings (on average daily working strength)	13 7 7	15 14 1	18 per cent.

NOTE.—The figures for any particular year are the averages 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 Bhubrightat, are adequate. The following are the wage returns for Bhubrightat :—

—	1920.		1921.		1922.
	March.	September.	March.	September.	March.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Men	Rs. a. p. 10 7 10	Rs. a. p. 10 2 11	Rs. a. p. 9 8 8	Rs. a. p. 8 10 0	Rs. a. p. 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 Lengai 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.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	Estimate for 1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Pies.	Pies.	Pies.	Pies.	Pies.	Pies.
4.54	4.42	4.44	4.53	5.52	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>)	Rs. a. p. 2 9 8 (<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
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	
Lakhimpur Sadr	18 2 4	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
Golaghat	14 0 11	17 7 4	25
Nowgong	16 11 9	18 8 10	11
Cachar	18 13 6	15 0 4	9
Hailakandi	13 11 7	15 8 10	14
North Sylhet	13 0 4	14 2 10	9
Habiganj	14 12 1	16 8 9	12
South Sylhet	13 15 0	15 13 8	13
Karimganj	13 7 7	15 14 1	18

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 $\frac{1}{8}$ and condiments of various kinds $\frac{2}{8}$. The monthly quantities, in seers, are approximately:—rice 23, *dal* 3 $\frac{1}{2}$, vegetables 6, salt 1, mustard oil 1, and condiments about $\frac{3}{4}$. 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.

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).	53	108	62·64	3 4 0 (at Rs. 5-3 per maund).
<i>Dal</i>	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).	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	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 ...	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	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).	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	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 ...	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	150	3·60	0 3 0.
Total	5 3 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 necessities. 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-Commit-
tees should
recommend
rates of wa-
g e s.

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.

A few answers may be quoted :—

Manager of *Sephinjuri* :—"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 *Malmicherra* :—"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 *Chattopore* :—"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 Shamsheernagar :—"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 Jiajui :—"This is well known and proved not only among such people in India but also at home."
Manager of Rungajann :—"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 Kannu :—"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.	September. 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>Maguracherre.</i> —					
Men ...	7 6 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 3	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 0	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

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 necessities. 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 necessities 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.

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.

Findings of the Labour Enquiry Committee in 1906 on the working of Act XIII.

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.

Administra-
tion of the
Act at the
present time.

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 21st 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 8 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 25th 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 Dejoa 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 23rd 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 until 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 $3\frac{1}{2}$ 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 28 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 14th March 1921, with 83 days to be worked off. 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.—*Rangapara 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.—*Ghoiralli 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.—*Ghoiralli 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 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 *hajrat*. 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 re-
fusal to issue
warrants
against ab-
sconders in
their home
district.

In April 1921, the Manager, *Thakurbari Tea Estate*, lodged three complaints; in one case the contract was for 626 days, and in two cases for 939 days. The absconders 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 cool-
ies and
of applica-
tions 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.
1900	430	139	38	.....
1901	336	102	36	.....
1902-3	492	228	64	.....
1903-4	568	274	63	.....
1904-5	599	209	45	.....
1905-6	686	273	70	7
1906-7	808	390	66	10
1907-8	1,158	523	74	32
1908-9	974	474	52	57
1909-10	813	352	49	72
1910-11	823	402	49	77
1911-12	928	391	103	85
1912-13	983	441	45	74
1913-14	1,192	370	111	114
1914-15	1,228	321	90	187
1915-16	780	289	39	170
1916-17	668	187	40	200
1917-18	701	188	19	255
1918-19	532	168	19	198
1919-20	912	222	22	296
1920-21	1,604	278	63	216

Relative
proportion of
cases under
Act XIII
and under
Act VI prior
to its repeal.

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 con- Results of
tracts for a period exceeding one year are still not uncommon in some districts in spite enquiries on
of the amended Act. Agreements are frequently given to minors and new coolies are gardens as to
often put under contract immediately on arrival on the garden. The following notes the working
indicate how the Act is worked on some gardens. 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.

Naharoli (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.

Hunuwai (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 626 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.

Khuntai (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 1921. 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.

Borjar 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.

Salomah (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 623 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.

Rangamati (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 623 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 623-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.

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 *ticca* 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 1903 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 Dooars Committee in their report (paragraph 46) state that one of the chief merits of the Dooars' 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 (1879-1921) 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 61,726. 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.

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.

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'

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.	Diarrhoea.	Dysentery.	Malaria fever.	Anæmia of coolies or anchylostomiasis.	Respiratory diseases.	Feliceaser.	Influenza.	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	1,655	2,395	...	...	4,095	15,145	22.9
1905-06	670,963	2,057	1,607	2,843	2,429	1,499	1,938	...	...	3,735	16,103	24.0
1906-07	680,772	1,164	1,628	2,769	2,204	1,668	1,805	...	...	3,760	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	2,905	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	2,612	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	2,565	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	2,510	3,189	...	...	7,266	21,061	28.2
1918-19	1,012,716	5,268	2,617	4,145	3,380	2,361	6,310	47	28,852	9,146	62,176	61.4
1919-20	1,097,600	993	2,875	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	5,000	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	23.04	32.16
1913	...	26.66	25.47	33.06
1914	...	24.54	21.93	32.94
1915	...	26.27	26.47	30.86
1916	...	25.15	30.96	30.52
1917	...	31.10	30.41	31.35
1918	...	35.41	55.23	31.98
1919	...	31.58	33.82	30.52
1920	...	25.89	31.54	31.63

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.

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 :—

"...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, I.M.S., in the Doars 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 Doon-Doona 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.

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

High mortality in 1918-19.

Deaths from dysentery, diarrhoea and anæmia.

Births.

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

Aversion of
coolies to
in-door treat-
ment in hos-
pital.

Kala-azar

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 hypotheccated 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 Gala-ghat, 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. Now-a-days 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 Re. 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. Dolds-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." Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Darrang are the tea districts where mortality from these diseases is highest.

Miscella-
neous
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.

Pensions.

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.

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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. P. 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 ...	...	...	...	...	45,044	17,689	62,733
1901 ...	...	...	...	...	19,887	6,336	26,223
1902-03	...	...	...	...	20,199	6,485	26,684
1903-04	...	...	...	...	17,769	4,393	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	58,869
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	19,407
1918-19	...	...	...	...	135,028	87,143	222,171
1919-20	...	...	...	...	65,163	36,626	101,789
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

than usual of local labour owing to economic conditions in Assam, and a general disposition on the part of Managers to carry on without increasing the labour force more than was absolutely necessary in view of the probable difficulty of disposing of the tea crop.

1918-19.—The number was the highest for many years and was chiefly due to scarcity in the recruiting districts and the stoppage of the abnormal war demand for labour. Also influenza in the labour districts had depleted the labour force; again, the number of immigrants was comparatively small during the later years of the war and this induced employers to import large numbers to make good the loss. The mortality in transit in this year was abnormally high. The number of deaths was 1,485 against 7 in the preceding year, of which 665 were due to cholera. Conditions in the recruiting districts pre-disposed immigrants to disease; hence outbreaks of cholera and influenza.

1919-20.—The falling off was partly due to the fact of the abnormal recruiting in the previous year, but, even so, the number was large. In this year deaths in transit fell to 133, which was comparatively high but allowance has to be made for the after-effects of influenza and scarcity.

1920-21.—Recruiting was on a very small scale.

Comments on
recruiting in
1918-19.

204. Many Managers have expressed their unqualified dissatisfaction with the class of coolies recruited in 1918-19. In that season influenza was epidemic in the recruiting districts, and in some areas there had been a failure of crops. The result was that large numbers of emigrants were sent up in an enfeebled state of health and physically quite unfit for tea-garden work. This accounts for the heavy mortality *en route* and was largely responsible for the high death-rate in the gardens in that year. Many of the survivors were unable to earn a decent living wage. The basic idea of sardari recruiting is the recruitment of families and not of single individuals. It is frequently the case that one or two adult members in a family may be unfit for tea-garden work. Under normal conditions, however, it is only reasonable that they should be allowed to accompany the others. If the local recruiting agent declined to pass them, the whole family might refuse to emigrate. Conditions in 1918-19 were, however, exceptional. On this subject, the evidence of Mr. Milligan, the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, merits careful perusal. In his opinion, the local agents of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association were responsible for the bad results and cannot be held blameless for passing numbers of unfit coolies. The fact that medical examination was not at that time compulsory aggravated the situation. The Committee consider that the local agents, in so far as they failed to exercise proper supervision over recruiting, rendered a great disservice to the tea industry.

205. One of the reasons given in the Reports on Immigrant Labour for the decrease in the number of emigrants in 1916-17 and 1917-18 is that the policy of gardens was to curtail expenditure owing to the difficulty in disposing of accumulated stocks of tea. If this is true, it is difficult to understand how in 1918-19 when the rate of exchange was unfavourable and when the market was flooded with immense stocks of tea gardens were able to be so lavish in their recruiting expenditure. In the following year also, in spite of a still more unfavourable exchange, more than 100,000 individuals were recruited. A reference is invited to Mr. McMorran's note in the Appendix on the financial position of the tea industry during the years 1919-21. In one or two districts between 1918 and 1920, proposals were afoot to open new tea-gardens, and doubtless much of the subscribed capital was spent on the recruitment of labour. The Committee believe, however, that the majority of the importations were on account of old gardens which had been in existence for years, but some of which contemplated further extensions of cultivation. Some of the estates in South Sylhet lost many labourers by desertions into Independent Tipperah. Throughout the province, deaths by influenza and cholera in 1918-19 had, it is true, depleted the labour force and in 1917-18, comparatively few coolies had been imported. It was therefore, only natural to expect that recruiting in 1918-19 would exceed the normal figure. In the absence of complete information as regards the requirements and policy of the tea industry, the Committee are not in a position to say whether these reasons are sufficient to account for the extraordinary number of immigrants imported in those years which constitutes an absolute record. They desire, however, to point to one result which followed.

When the financial position of the tea industry became critical, not only had all ideas of further extensions to be abandoned, but some gardens, in their inability to pay the wage-bill of an increased labour force, were obliged to dispense with the services of immigrants who left the estates and drifted elsewhere in search of employment. The case of the Pertabgurih Tea Estate in Bishmath which was visited by Members of the Committee in December 1921 is an instance.

Present im-
provement in
recruiting con-
ditions.

206. The Chairman of the Assam Labour Board has stated that conditions with regard to recruitment have much improved. All emigrants are now medically examined. Local agents are bound to accept as final the opinion of the Medical

Officer as to the age and physical fitness of the recruits. The possibility of exploiting new recruiting grounds is said to warrant the expectation of better results in future. There are still, however, instances of batches of unsuitable recruits being sent up to gardens. Only close supervision on the part of local agents can check the recruitment of bazaar waifs and strays. At the same time, a great responsibility rests with the tea industry. To quote Mr. Milligan:—

"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."

To sum up, the Committee are of opinion that the industry was badly served in the matter of the importation of large numbers of unfit and diseased coolies in the year 1918-19. It is devoutly to be hoped that compulsory and thorough medical examination and stricter supervision over local agents will prevent a recurrence of the disastrous recruiting experiences of 1918-19.

207. The Committee agree that ordinary inspections of tea-gardens by junior and inexperienced Government officials are not of much value, and that, as a rule, the Deputy Commissioner is unable to devote much time to inspection work of this kind. The general relaxation of control which followed on the abolition of Act VI inclined officers to regard these biennial inspections as a matter of routine. Inspections of unhealthy gardens by Civil Surgeons produce a good effect as they are directed to special points in connection with health and sanitation. The Committee are of opinion that if ordinary inspections are to be continued it will be necessary to issue instructions for the guidance of inspecting officers. They have been struck with the meagreness of detail which is a characteristic feature of ordinary inspection reports. Their utility would be considerably enhanced if they contained more information with regard to wages and the general conditions of labour. On more than one garden, Members have found the wage returns inaccurately compiled. The inspecting officer might occasionally check the accuracy of the figures. Returns showing low cash earnings often convey a wrong impression. A reasonable explanation may lie in the fact that the labourers have a considerable area of rice land; or it may be the case that they are underpaid. The general indebtedness of the labour force to the estate is an important point and should not be overlooked. Had inspections been less perfunctory, irregularities in the working of Act XIII would have been noticed and probably rectified. Mortality statistics, especially as regards the deaths of children, might receive greater attention. The treatment of anaemia, the assistance given to pregnant women, and conservancy arrangements provide suitable subjects for comment. The Committee are of opinion that it would be a mistake to discontinue inspections.

Inspection of
tea gardens.

208. The Committee believe that vital statistics are usually compiled with reference to the calendar year. In the case of tea-gardens the practice obtains of taking the figure for the varying period between two dates of inspection. It is more than doubtful whether, under this system, the average death or birth-rate for the period of 12 months can be accurately calculated. The practice may explain why certain gardens have been erroneously classed as unhealthy in Statement XI of the Resolution on Immigrant Labour for 1920-21; also the apparent inexactitude of the figures which are arithmetically wrong in the absence of any explanation. The Committee recommend that vital statistics in future should be for the calendar year.

Suggestion
as to forms
and returns.

Mention has already been made of the inaccurate compilation of wage returns. This is largely due to the incorrect inclusion—or occasional omission—of certain items. Sometimes the earnings of coolies from outside villages who do occasional work in the garden and whose names are not borne on the books as regular workers are wrongly shown in the wage returns. Since 1921, Managers are at liberty to show in a separate column or note the loss incurred by the garden on rice sold to coolies. Instances have occurred where this loss has been included in column 9 or 10 of the wage return which shows the average wages per head. Such information should be kept distinct. The Committee recommend that column 6 which shows "extras (*ticca*, diet, rations, subsistence allowance)" should be sub-divided and that *ticca* cash earnings should be shown in a separate column. In some cases it was found impossible to reconcile the figures shown in the returns as "Extras" with figures given in the cashbook.

209. The general reply to question No. 20 is that during the previous five years, suggestions made by Managers to Agents or Directors for ameliorating the lot of the labour force, have met with a favourable response. There is also oral evidence to the same effect. On the other hand some witnesses have criticised the policy of Agency Houses in refusing to sanction an increase of wages in cases where managers urged that it was necessary. The Commissioner of the Surma Valley has stated that his impression at

Responsibilities of
Agency
Houses and
Managing
Directors.

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 estate 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. ARBUTHNOTT.
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 18th 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 Monabarrie, 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 63 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 181 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 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 (*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 *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 weightment 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 *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, 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 *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?

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 Charga 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 Charga 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 Aniporo, Mookhamcherra and Dafacherra have left their gardens and are being fed by Government in Karinganj 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.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Cachar :—</i>								
Men	46	42	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.*

Percentage of average daily working strength to total number on the books—concl.

	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>Karinganj :—</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	78
<i>Habiganj :—</i>								
Men	80	76	74	60*	75	79	78	73
Women	74	69	70	67	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 68.

<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

Provincial Averages.

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 8 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
Cachar—				
Men ...	...	80	80	80
Women ...	...	68	77	72.5
Children ...	...	67	74	70.5
Hailakandi—				
Men ...	...	74	74	74
Women ...	...	61	66	63.5
Children ...	...	50	59	54.5
North Sylhet—				
Men ...	...	73	76	74.5
Women ...	...	70	72	71
Children ...	...	62	67	64.5
Karimganj—				
Men ...	...	73	68	70.5
Women ...	...	63	68	65.5
Children ...	...	60	65	62.5
South Sylhet—				
Men ...	...	78	81	79.5
Women ...	...	71	76	73.5
Children ...	...	69	66	67.5
Habiganj—				
Men ...	...	75	71	73
Women ...	...	83	80	81.5
Children ...	...	60	68	64.5
Darrang Sadr—				
Men ...	...	82	80	81
Women ...	...	77	76	76.5
Children ...	...	75	74	74.5
Mangaldai—				
Men ...	...	80	78	79
Women ...	...	80	78	79
Children ...	...	71	67	69
Nowgong—				
Men ...	...	78	74	76
Women ...	...	73	72	72.5
Children ...	...	70	83	76.5
Jorhat—				
Men ...	...	81	82	81.5
Women ...	...	78	78	78
Children ...	...	80	90	85
Sibsagar—				
Men ...	...	81	77	79
Women ...	...	76	74	75
Children ...	...	77	85	81
Golaghat—				
Men ...	...	84	82	83
Women ...	...	78	81	79.5
Children ...	...	79	73	76.5
Lakhimpur Sadr—				
Men ...	...	79	73	76.5
Women ...	...	72	74	73
Children ...	...	75	78	76
North Lakhimpur—				
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 2/3½ 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 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 1918 was 117 million pounds it was 129 million pounds at 31st December 1919 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.
Food—		
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 (ghee)	0 4 0	0 2 0
Other necessities—		
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
Miscellaneous—		
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	8 13 4

APPENDIX VIII(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.	Monthly Income.	Yearly Income.
Income.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Pay or wages drawing from garden ...	1 at Rs. 6, 2 at Rs. 5 and 1 at Rs. 3.	228
2. Ticca, etc.	say Rs. 2	24
3. Agreement bonus ... ..	.....	27
4. Value of crops grown after deducting value of seed Rs. 2 (Dhan, 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 Gur	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
Betelnut, 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. Clothes—Blankets 4 (1 new at Rs. 5), 3 are 2 year old cost Rs. 10-8 present value is Rs. 5-4.	...	...	...	...	10 4 0
Dhotis 4-2 at Rs. 2 and 2 at Rs. 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
Shawls 2 (1 at Rs. 3-8 and 1 at Rs. 2).	...	...	...	...	5 8 0
Small or sori Khoynshya 1 ...	...	...	...	...	0 12 0
Jackets 2 (1 at Rs. 3 and 1 at Rs. 2-4).	...	...	...	...	5 4 0
Children's clothes	...	...	Household utensils.	...	3 0 0
3. Household utensils—					
Botova 1 (old of last 2½ years...)	value Rs. 3.	was 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
Kerahi 3 (old of last 2½ years	Rs. 5 ...	Rs. 2-8 ...	S. D. O. ...	...	2 8 0
Batti 5 (, of 4 years ...	" 8-8 ...	" 4-4 ...	...	...	4 4 0
Thala 3 (, of 3 " ...	" 10-8 ...	" 5-4 ...	...	...	5 4 0
Ghati 3 (, of 2 " ...	" 3-12 ...	" 1-14 ...	...	...	1 14 0
Kaloo (Brass) of 2½ " ...	" 9-14 ...	" 4-15 ...	...	...	4 15 0
4. Raw materials and implements—					
Kadallie 1 (old cost was Re. 1-8	...	cost 12 annas	...	...	0 12 0
Dan 1 (new) cost was Re. 1-8	...	" Re. 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
Kotaries 2 (old cost was Rs. 3	...	" " 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
Kuthar 1 (Rs. 3)	...	" " 1-8	...	...	1 8 0
Cost of making plough ...	...	...	...	...	1 8 0
5. Land Revenue—					
Purchase of cattle Rs. 50, but become old.	Present value say Rs. 30.	...	...	...	30 0 0
Total	...	...	...	...	422 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 but not exceptional and as old as 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
2. Pay or wages...	179 3 9	Pulses ...	4 0 0
House, medical attendance, medicines all given free by the Company and not calculated.		Vegetables ...	1 2 0
		Milk and <i>ghee</i> ...	22 8 0
		B.—Other Household expenses—	
		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
	251 3 9		200 5 9

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 4 0
		Kerosene oil ...	0 10 0
		Clothes, etc. ...	7 8 0
		Opium, <i>ganja</i> , liquor ...	2 8 0
		Rent on rice land ...	3 12 0
	54 0 0		48 8 0
		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>ticca</i> ...	9 11 0	Salt ½ sr. ...	0 3 0
Cultivation of ½ acre rice land ...	5 4 0	Oil ½ 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
	41 5 6		36 4 0
		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>ghee</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).

KAMRUP DISTRICT.—MANDAKATA TEA ESTATE.

A family consisting of 3 members—Father, mother and a son, aged 17 years. All work.

Income.		Rs.	Expenditure.		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		3	0	0
Pay	...	36	Fish		3	0	0
Ticca	...	12	Pulses		9	0	0
(c) Son	...	30	Vegetables		1	8	0
Ticca	...	Nil					
Total		186	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			Total		148	8	0

The family lives hand-to-mouth. There is no saving.

APPENDIX VIII (g).

KAMRUP 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.		Rs.	Expenditure.		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 8 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		183	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.		Rs.	a.	p.	Expenditure.		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.e., 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
					Other household expenses—				
					Betel-nut		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
					C.—Miscellaneous—				
					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.		Rs.	a.	p.	Expenditure.		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.e., 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 (gur)		0	10	0
					Other household expenses—				
					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
					C.—Miscellaneous—				
					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 VIII (j).

JONHAT 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.	Rs. a. p.
Wages—		A.— <i>Dhan</i> (rice) ...
Man Rs. 5 and Re. 1 bonus ...	6 0 0	Salt ...
Woman at Rs. 4-8 and annas 13 bonus.	5 5 0	Spices ...
Average <i>ticca</i> Rs 3 ...	3 0 0	Mustard oil ...
Value of crops grown—		Cocoonut oil ...
From <i>dhan</i> ...	3 4 0	Fish or flesh ...
„ millet ...	0 12 0	Pulses ...
„ tobacco ...	0 4 0	Vegetables ...
„ vegetables ...	0 4 0	Betel-nut ...
Int. rest on money lent out ...	2 8 0	Kerosene oil ...
		Tobacco ...
		Clothes ...
		Household utensils ...
		Ceremonies ...
		Rent ...
		Cost of cattle (estimated to cost originally Rs. 70 to last 10 years).
Total ...	21 5 0	Total ...

This family was from Berhampur, 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.

Wages.—Rupees 276-2-0.—Annual earnings as could be found from garden register and given by members—	Rs. a. p.
<i>Viz.</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 ...	291 2 0

Items of expenditure—Annual.

A.—Food.—	
Rice, Rs. 216-0-0; purchased paddy for Rs. 18-0-0 monthly at 3½ <i>dons</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.

B.—Other household expenses—	Rs. a. p.
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 <i>dhotis</i> ...	5 4 0
One 6 cubit <i>dhoti</i> ...	1 10 0
Two <i>saris</i> ...	5 4 0
Two blankets, ordinary ...	5 0 0
One drill coat ...	4 2 0
Liquor (a) Rs. 18 ...	...
Ganja (b) Rs. 3 ...	...
Household utensils ...	2 4 0
Two earthen jugs ...	0 6 0
One brass plate ...	1 14 0
C.—Miscellaneous—	
Festivals and entertainments, Rs. 6 rough calculation ...	6 0 0
Other expenses ...	3 0 0
Purchased flesh ...	3 0 0
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.

Items of income—Annual—	Rs. a. p.
Paddy cultivation of 80 <i>dangaris</i> yielding 240 <i>dons</i> at 3 <i>dons</i> 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
(1) Male ...	42 6 0
(2) Female ...	38 10 0
(3) Mother ...	45 0 0
(4) <i>Ticca</i> ...	69 12 0
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
(1) 4 <i>saris</i> ...	10 0 0
(2) <i>Dhotis</i> ...	3 8 0
(3) One female <i>kurta</i> ...	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) Re. 1 purchase of cigarettes.	4 0 0
Total expenditure Rs. ...	315 4 0

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

Income.		Expenditure.	
	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
Total ...	395 0 0	Spices ...	3 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.

Receipts.		Expenditure.	
	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 ...	11 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 ...	24 0 0
Blankets ...	5 0 0	Milk ...	9 12 0
Bed bag ...	1 0 0	<i>Gur</i> ...	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 ...	21 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
		<i>Gur</i> ...	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 ...	223 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	...	...
Wages	...	286 0 0	Salt	...	260 0 0
Advance	...	42 0 0	Oil	...	8 2 0
Bonus	...	20 0 0	Spices	...	26 0 0
Baskets	...	48 0 0	Fish	...	4 14 0
House repairs	...	2 8 0	Pulses	...	9 12 0
Medical	...	5 0 0	Vegetables	...	26 0 0
Bad bags	...	0 12 0	Milk	...	13 0 0
House	...	8 0 0	Gur	...	22 12 0
			Kerosene	...	26 0 0
			Tobacco	...	3 4 0
			Liquor	...	8 2 0
			Interest	...	Nil
			House repairs	...	12 0 0
			Medical	...	2 8 0
			Festivities	...	5 0 0
			Clothes	...	10 0 0
			Bed bags	...	52 0 0
			Utensils	...	0 12 0
			Blanket	...	2 0 0
					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	...	18 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).

SHANSHANAGAR 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 chira	...	...	...	0	10	0
Milk	...	...	...	0	1	9
Tobacco	...	...	...	0	1	6
Sundries	...	...	...	0	4	3
Total	...	...	...	3	10	5
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 Saris	...	...	...	9	0	0
2 Jhulas	...	...	...	2	0	0
6 Dhotis for children	...	...	...	6	12	0
Total	...	...	...	46	4	0

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 chira	...	...	...	0	10	6
Milk	...	...	...	0	2	0
Tobacco	...	...	...	0	1	3
Sundries	...	...	...	0	6	0
Total	...	...	...	3	11	9
Clothes, annually—						
3 Dhotis	...	...	...	7	8	0
3 Gamchas	...	...	...	2	10	0
1 Coat	...	...	...	2	4	0
3 Saris	...	...	...	9	0	0
3 Jhulas	...	...	...	1	8	0
Blankets	...	...	...	4	0	9
Dhotis and coat for children	...	...	...	4	0	0
Total	...	...	...	30	14	9

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.
Boy or girl—8 ch. } daily = 13 seers weekly.

	Rs.	a.	p.
This is 17 maunds for a year at Rs. 5 a maund	85	0	0
Mustard oil, 4 chattaek (weekly) 12 seers at Rs. 30 a maund	9	0	0
Salt, 4 chattaek " " Rs. 4-10 "	1	7	6
Dal, 1 chattaek (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
	113	8	6

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
	24	0	0
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
Less expenditure for a year	18-0-0 × 12 = Rs. 216-0-0		
	Rs. 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
	43	15	0

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
2 <i>dhotis</i>	4	0	0
1 coat	3	0	0
	7	0	0

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
* 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.

Foodstuffs—

	Rs.	a.	p.
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

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
3 <i>saris</i>	7	8	0
2 jackets	3	0	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. 6 × 12 =	72 0 0
Less expenditure	50 1 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.

Foodstuffs—

	Rs.	a.	p.
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

Clothes—

	Rs.	a.	p.
3 <i>saris</i>	4	8	0
2 jackets	2	0	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. 5 × 12 =	60 0 0
Less expenditure	38 7 3
* Net saving	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	3 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
Totaleco	0 4 0	0 2 0

Clothing per year—

	Rs. a. p.		Rs. a. p.
1 coat	3 0 0		
2 pairs dhotis	6 0 0		
1 blanket	2 0 0	1 1 3	0 9 0
1 umbrella	2 0 0		
Total	13 0 0	7 6 3	5 5 0

APPENDIX IX (h).

Mr. G. 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—½ 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
Cocoonut 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(i).

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 (11).	Adults over 18 years.	Adolescents (12-18).	Children (11).		Adults over 18 years.	Adolescents (12-18).	Children (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 3	0 2½	0 1½	5 10	4 3½	2 13	0 2 0 per sr.	0 5 6	0 4 0	0 2 9
4	Salt	0 ½	0 ¾	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 1½	0 2¼	0 1½	1 ½	12 3½	8 1½	0 12 0 „	1 0 9	0 12 0	0 8 0
6	Onions and garlic	0 1½	0 ¾	0 ½	0 2½	0 17	0 11	0 3 0 „	0 7 6	0 5 9	0 3 9
7	Turmeric	0 ½	0 ¾	0 ½	0 1½	0 2¼	0 1	0 8 0 „	0 0 6	0 0 3	0 0 3
8	Tamarind	0 ½	0 1½	0 ¾	0 3½	0 1½	0 3½	not sold.	...	...	...
9	Chillies	0 ½	0 1½	0 ¾	0 7½	0 4½	0 3½	1 8 0 per sr.	0 10 9	0 8 0	0 5 3
10	Tobacco smoking.	0 ½	0 1½	0 ¾	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 saris Rs. 2 = Rs. 10 Females—3 saris worth Rs. 7, 3 kurtas or photoi worth Rs. 3 = Rs. 10	0 13 6	...	...
Adolescents	{ Males—3 dhotis Rs. 4, 3 kurtas Rs. 2—total Rs. 6 Females—3 saris Rs. 4-8, 3 kurtas Rs. 1-8—total Rs. 6	...	0 8 0	...
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

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:—

1909-11.	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	2-5	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 a 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 off 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., hereinbefore 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.	Zilla.	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 whereof the said labourer hereby acknowledges he the said labourer agrees to labour as a coolie on the _____ Tea garden of the Assam Company, and to do
312
and perform 624 full and complete *haziras*, Sundays not being counted as working days, according
936

to the usual and customary mode computation 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 will not absent himself from work without permission of the employer or refuse or neglect to perform the daily *haziras* till
312

624 full and complete *haziras* are worked off, and that such neglect or refusal to perform or non-performance 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 at the rate of Rs. _____ for each full and complete 26 *haziras* or her 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 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.	Tuanna.	Village.	

Signed, sealed and delivered
in the presence of

EMPLOYER,
for the Assam Company.

WITNESS.

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.	Thaunah.	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 advisor.

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. 800 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
Cachar	179	80,838	57,158
Sylhet	155	96,896	77,379
Kamrup	14	2,829	1,628
Darrang	130	82,101	60,587
Nowgong	33	15,380	10,979
Sibsagar	158	141,211	118,381
Lakhimpur	142	152,321	113,406
Total	811	571,526	439,518

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