

Hon. Sir R. H. RHODES: I understand that if the Chinese are dissatisfied they can appeal to the Consul?—Yes.

Is there any one to represent the black boys?—No. They can complain at headquarters in Apia if they are ill-treated on the plantation by any white man.

Mr. LUKE: Can they appeal to the British Governor?—They can.

No obstacle is put in their way?—No.

Mr. WITTY: If they do ask for the protection of the Consul, are they in any way punished for doing so?—No, not as far as I know. They are free to complain.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: Have you had any trouble with the black boys at any time?—Very little. They are obedient and, with very few exceptions, very good boys.

Mr. YOUNG: In the event of its being decided to subdivide this estate for the purposes of sale, would it be possible for a white man to take up a suitably sized section and cultivate and work it himself without outside labour and make a living from it?—I do not think so. From my experience no white man is able to work in Samoa unless he is in the shade. A wheelwright, or a blacksmith, or any worker like that might work in Samoa for a time, but not steadily. No white man, even with his family, would be able to keep 100 acres of coconuts in order and collect the crops and do the watering of the cattle.

Taking this estate as we see it to-day, and assuming that it was subdivided, what would be the smallest area into which it could be suitably cut up for one man to live upon and make a fair living from, and how much labour would a man require to employ on his small holding?—50 acres would do for a white man and his family if they were hardworking people, but nobody would be able to keep it up for four or five years with his wife here in Samoa working hard. They would have to send their wives to New Zealand to recover.

Assuming that the white man with 50 acres requires to employ labour, how much labour will he need to keep his plantation clean and in order, without including his family at all, but assuming that he would oversee and supervise himself: how much labour would the 50-acre holding require?—About three men.

Mr. YOUNG: I presume he would make a living after he paid the three men?—Yes. I always assume the people work in the proper way.

Mr. WITTY: What area of land would be required for a returned soldier, for instance, who had no knowledge of the work? I am assuming he is given a plantation already under cultivation. How much could he manage?—I think he could manage, on an average, not more than 10 acres.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: You impressed upon me in the car that it required a great deal of experience on the part of the manager to run even a copra-plantation successfully. Would you mind telling the members what you think about that?—When I took over the plantation eighteen years ago the weeds reached my shoulder on horseback. It took me ten years with the full amount of labour which the manager thought was necessary to work the plantation into a proper condition. In 1910 I went home on furlough for eight months, and another manager, a vice-manager, was put to run the plantation. When I left the plantation was thoroughly clean, as you see it to-day. When I came back, after eight months' absence, it took me five years again to put it into the condition in which I left it. I want you to understand that a plantation like that can only be managed by an energetic man with a good knowledge of what is needed and experience from boyhood. If any manager comes here and he is not a capable man the plantation will go back. As I told you, we are about 170 boys short. You cannot expect the same work from 140 as from 320. If there is not enough labour it means a tremendous increase in the growth of weeds. If a plantation is not kept in order each nut has to be searched for; but when it is like you see this plantation, the labourer simply walks along and finds the nuts and puts them into his basket.

If a New-Zealander were to come down here with the idea of taking up, say, 100 acres of copra land, how long would it take him to manage it successfully?—Sometimes it is not possible to put in a man with the knowledge and grip of a manager.

I am assuming he is an ordinarily intelligent man with some knowledge of agriculture?—If he were an intelligent man and a good supervisor, you might break him in to manage the place well in two years.

Not less than a couple of years?—No.

Mr. WITTY: Could not the income produced from this plantation be much increased by your having a better selection of cattle?—The question is one which is hard to answer. No doubt we could have a much better stock of cattle, but my plan was to get as many cattle as soon as I possibly could to work the plantation. We want a good strong type suitable for the tropics. Your cattle are not good enough. We want cattle from Ceylon and India.

Mr. HOLLAND: How many boys have you on the plantation?—One hundred and forty-five.

How many are married?—About fifty.

How long have the others been here?—Their contract was for three years. They were to have been repatriated, but they were obliged to stay here during the war-time, and the shortest time is about eight years.

What are the moral conditions?—Very good, I should think.

The bulk of the men are not married?—No.

Do they all lead celibate lives?—Yes.

Are you sure of that—that they live lives apart altogether from women?—Yes, I think so, more or less. They may have some Native women of which I do not know. The morals of the boys are good. May be one does not hear all that is going on.

Either the man marries, or leads a celibate life, or an immoral life. These boys live and sleep together in the one hut?—Yes.

When you had the full number here, how many would be in one of those huts?—According to the new regulations there would be about eight boys in each house.