

We very often have natives turning out in the very early hours of the morning and who complete their work by ten or eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and the rest of the day they have for themselves. In addition to that, very often a native will bring in some of his relations, getting task work meted out in advance, and by the middle of the week will have completed his week's work.

You say most of the farmers here do not know how to use their labour economically; is not that rather a sweeping statement?--- It is not in the least. It is a thing I have always put before them; they do not know how to handle their labour; they try to get far too much out of them; they make them work far too long hours.

Do you tell that to the old farmers, as well as the new-comers?--- All the farmers in the country. I think the old ones are worse than the new-comers. I think the rest in the middle of the day is an important point. The majority of the farmers, to me, seem to give the native in the middle of the day one hour for food, and during that hour he has to cook his own food and eat it. Whereas if provision were made for the native to have his food cooked when he leaves the field, he has a certain period for rest.

Have you any knowledge of native labour, etc., in other districts?--- Yes.

Do you think this district is more backward in the economic use of native labour than other districts?--- I think it is getting better gradually, but I cannot think it is generally backward, but I think that applies to the utilisation of native labour in general - that the native is not understood.

In the whole of the Transvaal?--- In the whole of the Transvaal, and where I came from last, in the Portuguese territory, the same conditions exist there on the majority of the farms

It.....

It is simply an effort to get very much more out of the native than he could reasonably do.

Have you knowledge of conditions in other parts of the Transvaal?--- Other parts of the Transvaal, no, except Hetersburg area and the Zoutpansberg area.

Because I would say the system of allowing a native to cook his own food would not go down in my district, for instance? --- It happens all over the place.

We find all kinds of conditions here, such as making the wives of the natives work, and employing natives and not giving them food?--- It is done. And the man who has to work ninety days per annum has to work a quarter of a year for the right to live, generally on the worst piece of land on the farm. Not only has he to work, but the women and children as well; and when they work they have to cook their own food.

MR. LUCAS: That is the point Mr. van Niekerk was making. We were surprised to find it existed here?--- There is no provision made here at all. They have to leave their homes early in the morning, get to work and are not allowed to stop work until the sun is down. Consequently it is dark when they get home. To my mind, it is a most impossible position.

These portable houses you refer to; what do they cost?-- It takes about 24 sheets of iron, I should think, at about 10 ft. a sheet. The cost of iron would be roughly about 6d. per foot.

That is £6 for 24 sheets?--- Yes, and there are only three strips of wood.

THE CHAIRMAN: It would be under £10?--- Yes.

MR. LUCAS: Are they easy to move?--- Yes; the boys just lift them up and carry them along to wherever they are working.

How many natives do you put in them?--- About 10 or 12 per house.

Is there any ventilation?--- There is always ventilation

to.....

to a corrugated iron roof - the lap of the iron, you see, and one end is generally left open.

What was it you said they did to keep them cool?--- They cut grass and thatch the outside of it.

Have you any knowledge of labour conditions in the towns?--- Yes.

Have you worked with natives there?--- Simply utilising them in office work, and that sort of thing.

You did not employ them on a large scale?--- No; but I do not think the native would be very much inclined to run to the mines, and that sort of thing, if he found he could make a reasonable living out of the sale of produce grown on his own areas under improved methods of cultivation.

With such a huge native population you have to get boys from Rhodesia?--- That was before the natives got to know us, but now that they find conditions are good we can get any amount of labour.

MR. LUCAS: You only got 50 originally, of whom you have 30 now?--- As a rule when a native's contract is finished he clears- you do not see him again, but these 30 have remained on. The conditions are good; the native is evidently of the same opinion, or else he would not be there. This ninety-day proposition, again, on the squatter is unfair; he has to pay for stock which he carries on the farm in addition; it is at the rate of 3/- per head per annum for big stock, and 6d. per annum per head for small stock; and in addition to this he is charged for dipping. We found a certain number of squatters on this Oceana Development Company's farms working on these conditions; but we stopped compulsory work so far as the women and children are concerned, and if they are utilised at all in connection with agriculture the women were paid at the rate of 1/- per day, and the children the ordinary standard wage being paid; in addition to that we considered that the natives should be allowed to run a certain number of cattle

free when living on the place as squatters, and each squatter was allowed to run ten head of oxen free of charge, paying only the actual cost of the dip.

THE CHAIRMAN: What is that?--- It comes to under a penny. Wehn we took over these farms the natives were paying a certain rate for the dipping of their cattle, but as they were paying the stock charges of 3/- per head for cattle and 6d. per head for goats, we simply handed the dips over to the natives, the dips being under the control of the Government Dip Inspector and the natives furnished dip themselves whenever it was required by the Dip Inspectors. The dip they obtain from the

Native Affairs Department at specially reduced rates. We found under these altered conditions that we got very much better service from our squatters; but, as we do not like the squatter system at all, we applied for permission to put all squatters on to a rent paying basis of £2 per head per annum, with the ordinary stock charges. So we now have no squatters; every native that we have being a tenant.

MR. LUCAS: What is the effect of that change?-- That they are very much happier.

Very much happier; and do you require them to work for you?-- They are always so keen to work that we never have any trouble in getting ~~them~~ to come and work at any time at all.

Are they then allowed to cultivate land?-- Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: But you do not actually farm these Oceana farms for these squatters, do you?--- At the moment we do not do so; we did for a period of three years.

MR. LUCAS: That is the cotton you told us about?--- Yes; we simply stopped growing cotton down there because of the difficulty of supervision. It was considered better to have this breeding of seed nearer headquarters, headquarters now being Louis Trichardt.

THE CHAIRMAN:.....

THE CHAIRMAN: That system of turning a squatter into a rent-paying native, which also goes under the name of squatter in this country, would be rather a revolutionary method if every farmer were to employ it?-- Yes, quite. I certainly think it is very unfair to the native.

How many years have you been in this district?-- Eight

Have you in that time noticed any tendency for change in the ninety days' system, and the employment of women?-- Well, what I find is that on these farms which we have down below....

No, I mean amongst the farming community, can you see there is a tendency to do away with this ninety days' work and the employment of the women too?--- No, none whatever; the tendency is if anything otherwise.

Now, as regards the natives on your own farm; you say you have 50⁰ natives?---- At certain times of the year we have up to 50⁰ natives working; on the Oceana Development Company's Farms, we have, I should think, in the neighbourhood of 2,000 tenants.

Is there any medical provision for these natives, should they become seriously ill?--- Natives working with us?

Yes?--- We endeavour to make them take quinine daily, as our own Europeans frequently get attacks of fever. The native is very keen on these prophylactic measures.

Do not you provide them with mosquito-proof huts?-- No; it is not a mosquito area; there is a certain amount of fever, but it is a very dry area. Sometimes there is a little, and sometimes not at all; it is not sufficiently bad to need any such provision. The natives who become ill are certainly attended to by a Doctor at the expense of the Company.

MR. LUCAS: Is there any provision for education for the children; is there any school available for them?---- Yes; on the O.D.C., the farms down below, we have given permission to one of the Missions to build schools on the farm, wherein

the native.....

the native children are taught. We consider no provision necessary on the farm near Mara, as school facilities exist in the location.

Accessible to the location there?--- The location which adjoins our farm at Mara, and many of the children attend that Mission school.

Have you got a store on your place?--- No.

Where do the natives buy their requirements?-- There are stores round about.

Do you think that is an economical factor which has to be looked into?---the question of the stores; do you consider that the stores' prices are reasonable?----- I certainly think they squeeze the native and get as much out of him as they possibly can.

MR. LUCAS: It is not run on the basis of working in the interests of both?--- I am afraid not. The majority of the stores are carried on by Indians.

THE CHAIRMAN: What would you put down the requirements of the natives at now, who are in your employment, as regards clothing?--- You feed him well, give him medicine, and so on; how much can a native save out of his 26/- a month?--- It is 30/- for thirty working days.

MR. LUCAS: It is 26/- a month?--- As to how much I think he saves out of that, well, that is a very difficult question. He has very little expense beyond his hut tax, and, as a matter of fact, I know that our Rhodesian natives save at least 25/- out of the 30/-.

Do the Rhodesian boys all get 30/-?--- No; these boys that have now been working for a period of five years get 35/- because of the fact that they have long service. It is very useful to us to have these boys who know the work.

THE CHAIRMAN: You say they save 25/- out of the 30/-?-- Easily that. I very often transfer their money to Rhodesia for them. Many of my boys bank with us; their money is put

into.....

into envelopes which are kept in the safe.....

It is human nature, of course, everywhere that you pay the current wage, more or less; but if you can hire a man for a pound, you are not going to give him two pounds. Human nature is that way all over, and you cannot blame a man very much in that way?--- I do not know!

Apart from a business point of view, would you consider that a fair wage for a boy - a 1/- a day?--- It is the customary wage.

Yes, that is so; we agree; but can a farmer afford to pay much more?--- Undoubtedly he can afford to pay it. A farmer as a rule does not debit his crop with the cost of his own time, and, from working costs kept on our particular farms, which are kept very carefully, the average last year of one particular farm where natives are paid a 1/- a day, a further additional supervision charges of 10/- per acre under crop and debited for European supervision, returned a profit of £5 net per acre after debiting all possible charges on the capital invested.

MR. LUCAS: That is per acre?--- Yes, that is per acre. At that particular period the value of maize was 12/- per bag. If a farmer can make £5 profit he can afford to pay a native 1/- a day who there works.

THE CHAIRMAN: What is the position of the ordinary middle-sized farm owner; is he able to produce at a cheaper rate than you people who farm on a large scale?--- He is able to produce at a cheaper rate because he does not debit his farm costs with any of his own time; he values his time as nothing.

He may not debit himself with anything, but he is worth something?--- The private farmer will show a bigger figure in his method of book-keeping.

You are in a better position to pay better wages than an ordinary farmer?--- Not in the least.

You.....

You are debiting 10/- supervision costs?-- He would show 10/- more profit than I do.

That would probably be too low a figure for his living wage?-- £5:10:0. per acre?

I mean that 10/- overhead charge?-- I should not think so; that is putting a value of £30 a month on the man.

Does it work out at £30 a month?-- Yes.

MR. LUCAS: It is sixty acres?-- I think the farmer can well afford to pay a 1/- a day to his native, and show a big profit.

And probably show more?-- But that figure given you was when maize was 12/- a bag; today maize is 6/6 a bag. And beans, which we were selling last year - I sold a few thousand bags last year at anything less than thirty-six to forty-two - today they are 9/6. It is a very different proposition.

Have you any experience of native labour in other parts of the world - I mean of native farm labour?-- Except the ordinary labour at home, where we were trained.

How would you compare out labour here as regards efficiency and cheapness?-- Of course, the home European can think; it is difficult to get the native to think. One of the points in farming out here is to arrange work so that the native does not have to think - at least the native as he is today. For instance, in the planting of cotton, we have tried to do certain work with machines to obviate the necessity of the native thinking, because it takes him a long time to think. For instance, in the thinning out of cotton, cotton plants have be placed anything from 12 inches to 3 feet apart; cotton is planted in a long string or ribbon of plants, and has then to be thinned out into single plants at certain given distances. A native is generally given a stick which indicates to him the distance between plants, and he removes the plants in between; but if a plant does not happen to come immediately at the end

a stick, he stands up and thinks the matter out, and it takes him a long time thinking; we endeavour to obviate that by planting in such a way that the plants are in a correct place without the native having to think. It is a very difficult thing to compare the two labourers.

What would you say; is South African labour cheap?--- Yes, when organised properly.

MR. LUCAS: Would your natives respond to a higher figure on your task work basis, giving you a bigger output of work? You say on task work some of them finish at ten o'clock in the morning sometimes, and others will finish their whole week's work by Wednesday?--- Yes.

Do you think it would be any incentive to them to pay them more for any work after the time they had finished their task?--- Certain natives make a practice in task work of having a week's work marked out for them; if they finish by the middle of the week, they will very often work the balance of the week at the ordinary standard rate of wage.

You do have that system?--- They are free to go and do it. They are marked out; whatever the tariff is, different areas are given them. In dirty fields, for instance, a new boy - hoe work - will do an acre a day. If the field is not too clean, he will do three-quarters of an acre a day. We take an average, according to the condition of the fields; or we work out the area which the native is given on task work; then ordinary work in connection with kaffir corn, the planting of corn, the cutting of corn is issued in task work, and if the native finished his task by the middle of the week he very often wants to work the other days of the week at the standard rate of wages.

The Chairman: Does the native respond to increase of wages - I am not speaking of task work now, because the ordinary small farmer would not be able to give him task work the whole year round - he has to do other tasks such

as milking.....

as milking, cooking, and so on?--- Do I think he would respond to an increase of wages?

Yes?--- I do not. Owing to our methods of organisation, the native does as much as he possibly can under the conditions which exist, and I do not think any increase of salary will produce increased work; in other words, they work satisfactorily and work well.

MAJOR ANDERSON: You say they will do extra work?--- They prefer when they have finished their task work to spend the rest of the time round the location, if their homes are not far away.

THE CHAIRMAN: If instead of paying 25/- a month you had to pay your natives £2 a month, would you still be able to show a profit in your operations?--- It depends altogether on the prices of produce.

What do you consider a fair task for a boy on piece-work?--- Our method of picking cotton comes out at a figure very much less than that; about 1/- a hundred pounds has been our average cost; but our cotton picking is generally done by children when children are available, and in addition to the wage which the child gets the pickers are divided into gangs of 25, and in addition to that wage the sum of 2/6 is divided up daily between 25 in the form of 1/- for the first prize, 9d. the second, 6d. the third and 3d. the last. That is for the best pickers. When we started this system of bonus, or introducing that element of hope into the work, the natives who were before picking from 25 to 30 lbs. per day immediately got into figures weighing 60 to 70. That was a different method of picking.

How does that compare with the Southern States of North America?--- Oh, it runs to about 2/6 a hundred. That is where they get this figure from I think.

Now, at the present prices, if you were to pay 20/- per month for native labour, is it a paying proposition?--- At

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