

# PACIFIC STUDIES

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## **LOGGING LABOR ON VANIKORO, SOLOMON ISLANDS: THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF "THE MOST FEEBLE IN THE COMMERCIAL WORLD," 1923-1964**

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Logging commenced in 1923 on Vanikoro in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and ceased almost forty years later. The Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company employed Melanesians and workers of European descent, the latter mainly from New Zealand and, increasingly, Australia. These men worked closely together in an industry involving heavy manual work, a very unusual situation in the protectorate. There is some evidence that before World War II the European workers supported Melanesian attempts to obtain better conditions. Management, by and large, tried to prevent worker solidarity across the race divide, but tolerated interaction if the job got done. Likewise, the company tried to recruit Melanesians from Malaita as well as the Santa Cruz District partly because Malaitans were good workers and partly to weaken local district solidarity. Before World War II mortality rates were high among the indentured Melanesians, as were resignations due to ill-health among the Europeans. After the war health improved, but industrial problems continued with the Melanesians making the most of new opportunities to strike, which had been illegal under the old indenture system. Their increasing skills, alternative opportunities for paid employment, and the demands of timber processors overseas gave them considerable clout in labor-management relations, enabling them to extract better wages and conditions.

**LABOR HISTORY** in the precolonial and colonial Pacific Islands reveals a preoccupation with plantation workers and, to a lesser extent, mine workers.<sup>1</sup> Laborers in the early timber and logging industry have received some attention, notably in Dorothy Shineberg's classic *They Came for Sandalwood*. No study of labor in this industry in the colonial Pacific Islands exists; indeed, it is a neglected area in the pantropics. This article seeks to open the discourse, examining the parameters of labor-management relations, methods

by which workers contested the workplace, and the factors influencing the alliances of labor across the spectrum of race and island identity in the case of Vanikoro.

### **From Australia and New Zealand**

With European colonization in Australia and New Zealand the forests were cleared for settlement and to provide building timber. New Zealand kauri (*Agathis australis*) found a market at home and in Australia. In 1888 a group of Melbourne businessmen formed the Kauri Timber Company to carry on logging in New Zealand." By 1910 the days of an unlimited kauri supply were over. The company sought an alternative source. Through Melbourne business connections it bought into a coconut-planting company, Fairley, Rigby and Company (after 1916 called the San Cristoval Estates) that had a provisional lease in 1913 to cut kauri (*Agathis macrophylla*) and other timbers on Vanikoro, in the Santa Cruz group of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. The concession was not taken up until 1923, due to World War I and competing claims.<sup>3</sup>

Given the background of the new subsidiary, the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company, it is no surprise that the first "bushmen" employed came mainly from New Zealand, where they had experience in kauri felling. These men, both of European and Maori descent, were strong, resourceful workers, inured to tough conditions and isolation in the bush camps. Their working week had been fifty-eight hours in New Zealand. Non-unionized labor, they, in the workplace, lived by a code that included sobriety, no gambling for money, teamwork, and mutual help for the sick and injured. Their world was very much a male one and few had wives with them in the camps. When payday came, they often "blew their cheque" on drink and the pleasures of the milling towns, then sobered up and returned to the bush to work another stint.<sup>4</sup>

The first party of fifteen destined for Vanikoro in late 1923 fitted this pattern. Their background was in logging and milling and two were Maori. Unlike the average European in the Solomons, they came expecting to do heavy manual work and not to make the islands their home. Except for the seventy-five-year-old medical doctor, they were in their twenties and thirties and in good health as they sailed from Tulagi for Vanikoro.<sup>5</sup>

Four hundred miles from the colonial capital of Tulagi, reef-fringed Vanikoro rose to a height of over three thousand feet. Its shoreline mangrove-covered, the island of seventy-two square miles had almost no flat land, the kauri growing along the rugged ridges inland. Before the logging company came, the last European inhabitants had been from the two ships of La

Pérouse, which had been wrecked in a 1788 storm on the reefs off Paeu on the south coast. They did not last long; sickness and the local people finished the few survivors.<sup>6</sup>

In 1923 Vanikoro and adjacent Tevai (Te Anu) had changed little since Dillon in 1827 and Dumont D'Urville in 1828 came looking for relics of the French, except that the population had dropped from about fifteen hundred to eighty-three.<sup>7</sup> The colonial labor trade had brushed lightly over the Santa Cruz District, with some men and a few women kidnaped or volunteering for Queensland, Fiji, the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia until the early 1900s.<sup>8</sup> Mission contact was just as light but more congenial--though not for Bishop J. C. Patteson and his companions of the Melanesian Mission (Anglican), who died in 1871 at the hands of the people of Nukapu, Reef Islands. Adding to the fearsome reputation of this district, the Santa Cruz people had killed a British naval commander in 1875. Following the extension of the protectorate in 1898, visits by officials were rare and concentrated mainly on Vanikoro.<sup>9</sup>

The bushmen from New Zealand knew little of the French and nothing of the terrible epidemics that had swept Vanikoro as late as 1915.<sup>10</sup> Closer to their own concerns, the New Zealanders did not know that in 1913 a party of Australians, bushmen like themselves, had been employed by Lever's Pacific Plantations to clear its land at Kolombangara and had lasted only four weeks." Vanikoro was one of the wettest parts of the Solomons with an annual rainfall of about 250 inches, which fell daily for two-thirds of the year. The temperature was about 32 degrees centigrade by day and 22 by night. This hot, humid island was full of anopheles mosquitoes, full of malaria.<sup>12</sup>

### **Melanesians: Negotiating the Workplace**

The forty Melanesians who came with this first group of bushmen, and their successors, faced the same difficult environment, although having survived infancy in a malarial climate they had a certain immunity to the disease. In this pioneering phase the company took the advice of experienced "Island hands," and so hired Malaitans. Malaita had been the major supplier of labor to Queensland and Fiji in the pre-protectorate days and filled the same role within the Solomons following the advent of the British administration in 1896. Malaitans were recruited for Vanikoro initially through the Tulagi-based merchants and shippers W. R. Carpenter, but mainly by trader-recruiters based in the Santa Cruz District, Fred Jones in the *Quand Meme* and, until their deaths in 1932, the partners Charles Cowan and Norman Sarich in the *Navanora*.<sup>13</sup> These recruiters also canvassed the district, with

most local recruits coming from Santa Cruz island (Ndenö) and the Reef Islands, and a few from the small populations on Utupua and the Duffs. Most managers preferred Malaitans<sup>14</sup> because they were “far superior to the local labour for work in the kauri.”<sup>15</sup> However, a disadvantage was the expense involved. To transport, Malaitans each cost about £6 to £8 more than Santa Cruz District recruits because of the greater distance to and from Vanikoro, a cost the company had to meet under the regulations for indentured labor. The company thus had to compromise between economy and efficiency. So most managers chose “mixed labour” for “best results and harmony” and to discourage the possibility of any concerted resistance.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920s the company complained of a shortage of local labor,<sup>17</sup> a complaint shared with the dominant commercial enterprise in the protectorate --copra plantations. Planters as early as 1910 had urged the British, as the company did, to import “coolies” to solve the problem, but without success.<sup>18</sup>

Since the minimum wage for Islanders was £12 a year (20s. a month) for the two-year indenture period, the obvious solution was to offer a higher wage. But the company faced opposition from recruiters whose major customers were the big planting companies such as Lever’s Pacific Plantations and the subsidiaries of Burns, Philp and Company. Burns Philp, along with W. R. Carpenter, also had extensive wholesale, retail, and shipping interests in the group. Prior to 1924, when the legal minimum wage had been £6 a year (10s. a month), Solomon Islanders, knowing they were in demand, had forced up the real wage by demanding of recruiters, and thus employers, bigger “beach payments” in trade goods that mainly went to the recruit’s relatives. The payment steadily increased in value from £6 in 1911 to £20 in 1920: the cost to the planters of a finite labor supply. As a consequence of the planters’ protests, in April 1924 the beach payment, by law, became a fixed cash advance of £6, but as a trade-off the government increased the minimum wage to £24 for two years. The big companies were relieved to be rid of real wage competition. If recruiters on the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company’s behalf were to offer a higher wage they “would very quickly find the screws being put on them by the big firms” and so would the company because Burns Philp and Carpenter’s controlled the steamers that serviced Vanikoro. Likewise, if the company offered better wages and used a recruiting vessel of its own, competing recruiters would “make it their business to warn the natives against Vanikoro.”<sup>19</sup>

An alternative was to offer bonuses for experience or to employ for a shorter term, as well as giving an extra meat ration to the bush workers. In 1928 those on the standard two-year indenture received the minimum wage, but got an added 5s. a month after six months’ service and 10s. after a year’s service. Experienced Santa Cruz District men received between 25 and 35s.

a month for a year's contract, a term preferred by most labor, which was easy to administer as the district office was adjacent to the company's base at Paeu. Company strategy was to encourage the return of experienced men and to save on transportation expenses by drawing most labor from the local district.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this was less likely to antagonize recruiters from elsewhere in the Solomons, since few went as far east because of costs. This suited the men of the Santa Cruz District because, like most Melanesians, they preferred to work close to home. With the better wage, from 1929 at least until the end of World War II practically all chose work at Vanikoro rather than on plantations far beyond their district.<sup>21</sup>

Protectorate-wide, Melanesians already had a considerable input into the context of labor, the spiraling beach payment being one example.<sup>22</sup> Vanikoro provided another example as laborers soon learned that the work was more demanding than on plantations. One contract period was all it took for the word to spread from the first returners and for Malaitans to demand 30s. a month for logging work in 1927, so the company's wage policy of 1928 was not generous. The company also had to accommodate Melanesian cultural patterns. In 1926 laborers refused to have their fingerprints taken in token of signature, probably because anything personal to the individual could be bespelled by sorcerers.<sup>23</sup> The company also found that it was no use trying to recruit on Malaita until November, after the "dancing season"<sup>24</sup> associated with the harvest of canarium almonds.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, when the company wanted big, strong recruits it was obliged to accommodate the Melanesian collective orientation and accept "small" kinsmen as well, or the entire group from a particular area would refuse to sign on.<sup>26</sup>

Small, as well as inexperienced, laborers had caused problems for the company in the early years, a situation partly responsible for the company's drive to recruit experienced men. Most early recruits from Santa Cruz knew no Pijin, the Melanesian lingua franca, so teaching them new skills was hard.<sup>27</sup> The men's ignorance appalled early managers: "This class of labour could be described as the most feeble in the commercial world. It is also more expensive than appears at first sight, owing chiefly to the unremitting supervision that is necessary, even for the most simple jobs--no native can be left to do anything by himself even for an hour, to hustle him in his work is to bring about his complete collapse."<sup>28</sup>

Strange tasks and tools had to be mastered. As subsistence horticulturists, the Melanesians were proficient at clearing paths, carrying timber, cutting trees and firewood, weeding and cooking--appropriate skills for working on copra plantations and for basic tasks in a logging operation. They understood and could use levers to move logs and skids.<sup>29</sup> However, "they are not easy to learn [*sic*] to use a hand saw or drive a nail, they are only good for the

lifting and jacking part of carpentering.”<sup>30</sup> Earth work was foreign as was the use of a shovel--not an easy tool for anyone in bare feet. “If left alone awhile they get back to the pointed stick for loosening the earth and their hands for removing.” The men were just as awkward with picks. However, with small work teams and alternative approaches the men did learn. The company modified the edge of the shovels so that a flat place was made for the men’s feet to push against.<sup>31</sup> They learned to use the crosscut saw and work with the timber-jack.<sup>32</sup> Progress was slow in these early years, as most laborers took a year to become semiskilled.<sup>33</sup>

### **Melanesian and European Relations**

Running at a loss, the company tried to remedy matters by disposing of native labor, the reverse of the pattern of local substitution for expensive white workers that several mining companies aimed for in the 1930s and 1940s elsewhere in the western Pacific.<sup>34</sup> Yet Lever’s had warned that white men could not do hard labor in the tropics.<sup>35</sup> This proved no convenient European myth: by 1929 the company could see that most white men, no matter their initial good health, had a short working life on Vanikoro, where they quickly succumbed to malaria and other illnesses to which they had not been exposed before. Many lasted only eight or nine months, instead of two years, and this pattern continued beyond World War II. Such attrition and lack of continuity in personnel added considerably to the company’s costs. Management was forced to rely on local labor more than it had intended.<sup>36</sup> Skilled Melanesians were scarce. The Bougainvillean Mac Savoit, or “Black Mac,” one of the original recruits, learned to drive the steam hauler that pulled the logs “as well as any white man”<sup>37</sup> and, with a wage of £48 a year in 1932, he was “one of the highest paid natives” in the islands.

Savoit had expressed a desire in 1926 to learn to read and write; so the manager, M. Court, took him to Australia for a few years’ schooling.<sup>38</sup> But few Solomon Islanders had basic literacy or technical education, so for decades men like Black Mac remained a rarity.

Training for Melanesians was “hands-on” and practical. On Vanikoro they found themselves working beside Europeans rather than simply being instructed by them. Although pioneer white planters had got among their labor to show them the simple tasks involved in copra production, they soon stepped back and managed their workers, leaving it to “boss boys.”<sup>39</sup> This social distance increased away from the workplace, as interaction for accommodation, sport, recreation, and the like was rarely across racial lines within plantation society.<sup>40</sup> The Vanikoro situation was unique, for when the company began its operations, no one had ever heard of whites “being employed

in other than in management positions. There was no white labour at present employed in the group.”<sup>41</sup>

The overseas staff, excluding Asians, was at its maximum strength of twenty-seven in 1927, when the company ran a mill at Paeu as well as logging. Eleven worked in the bush. Of the 70 Solomon Islanders employed early in 1928, 31 were in the bush gangs, but this increased when a full complement of 160 were hired later in the year (Table 1).<sup>42</sup>

On Vanikoro this blurring of the labor-management divide, demarcated on racial lines in the rest of the Solomons, had interesting social consequences. The conventional wisdom was that it was unacceptable to have natives (“boys”) and whites (“men”) doing the same kind of work. Doing so would mean a loss of prestige for the whites.<sup>43</sup> The occasional European at Vanikoro who had worked as a tradesman elsewhere in the colonial Pacific also had firm notions about what work was beneath the dignity of the white man.<sup>44</sup> However, most of the New Zealand bushmen who came to Vanikoro in the 1920s and 1930s did not seem to hold this attitude, nor on isolated Vanikoro were they long enough in the society of other colonial whites to have absorbed it. Some expressed dismay at the way, in the Solomons, the white man’s “burden had been shouldered by the black boys.”<sup>45</sup>

Among the men of both races in the bush gangs, a camaraderie developed. For several weeks at a time these men lived in shacks in the bush in close proximity, as they logged an area. When they returned periodically to headquarters at Paeu where they played football together and had similar accommodation, these friendly relations persisted, but not without comment.<sup>46</sup> In 1926 the doctor, Charles Deland, was upset about the unsanitary conditions at Vanikoro, reflected in the high incidence of sickness. Contact by Europeans with Melanesians contributed to the malaria problem because the latter were all infected. Although this was true, there was ample opportunity for the mosquito vector to sting both Melanesian and European at work anyway, so separation in leisure time seemed a little precious. The doctor was concerned too about the spread of ringworm and scabies (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) among the Europeans and deplored the fact that “a number of the men are unduly familiar with the boys and are given to fondling them and wearing armlets, etc. they have worn. Also the boys are allowed to come into the men’s quarters and sit on beds, etc. I have already spoken of the danger of this in regard to the spread of malaria and dysentery.”<sup>47</sup>

This level of intimacy between the races was rare in the Solomon Islands.<sup>48</sup> Where it occurred, such white men were considered to have “gone native,” lowering the dignity of the white race. The district officer at Paeu, A. Middenway, saw it very much in these terms: “the familiarity is to be regretted as its effect is evident in the casual manner of the natives.” The manager,

**TABLE 1. Numbers and Origins of Vanikoro Employees**

Year	Total Solomon Islands	Malaita	Santa Cruz District <sup>a</sup>	New Zealand-Australia	Others	Indentured from Santa Cruz for all BSIP <sup>b</sup>
1923-1924	40	40		15	1 Bougainvillean	184 <sup>c</sup>
1925	50	40	10	7		91
1926	21	20		21	4 Japanese	223
1927	72			27	1 Chinese	171
1928	160	28+		26	3 Chinese	120
1929	164	40		24+		116
1930	100	70	30	20		71
1931	77	50	27	3		23
1932	31-45	15	16	5		41
1933	64	27	37	9	1 Chinese	26
1934	111	23				62
1935	127					23
1936	82	32				38
1937	80			12	1 Chinese	57
1938	120					41
1939	160	22	98+			23
1940	115					85
1941	120					?
1942	23	23		12		?
1944	20	0	20			
1950	100	0		22		
1951			85	20		
1952	100					
1953					6 Fijians	
1954	130					
1956	150			15		
1958	150					



1959	150	
1961	110	11
1962		8
1963	134	6

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**Sources:** VR: de Bondy to Secy., 17 Apr. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from; Secy. to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; de Bondy to Secy., 31 Dec. 1925; Court to Chairman, n.d. 1926; Court to Chairman, 15 Nov. 1926; Report, Vanikoro, 9 Apr. 1931; Manager to Secy., 16 Feb. 1928; Smith to Secy., 16 Feb. 1928; Butler, Report re. Vanikoro, Aug. 1926; Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925-1931; Director's Minute Book, 27 Jan. 1931; Dawe to Secy., 27 Dec. 1932, Corres. 1932-1936; Secy. to Woy Sang Tuen Co., 5 May 1933, Employees' Corres. 1932-1953; McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951; McEwin to Secy., 8 Jan. 1953, Corres. to and from 1949-1960; Kerr Bros. to Secy., 2 Feb. 1950, Corres. 1949-1950; Filewood to Secy., Dec. 1956; Report, Vanikoro, 23 Apr. 1959, Reports Monthly and General 1949-1963; Rogers, Report, Vanikoro, Sept. 1961; Wilber Saxton, Report, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930-1944; BSIP 9/V/5: RC(?), Inspection Notes, Vanikoro, 1929; Diary, Santa Cruz, 1934; BSIP 9/III/3: Quarter y Reports 1929-1937; WPHC 2894/27: ARSC 1926; WPHC 1422/29: ARSC 1928; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/I: ARSC Tour Report, Dec. 1950; ARED 1954; WPHC 1121/24: ARLD 1923; WPHC 1197/25: ARLD 1924; WPHC 1170/26: ARLD 1925; WPHC 1510/27: ARLD 1926; WPHC 1835/28: ARLD 1927; WPHC 1426/29: ARLD 1928; WPHC 809/30: ARLD 1929; WPHC 755/31: ARLD 1930; WPHC 1228/32: ARLD 1931; WPHC 506/33: ARLD 1932; WPHC 920/34: ARLD 1933; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934; WPHC 1598/36: ARLD 1935; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD 1936; WPHC 1638138: ARLD 1937; WPHC 2469140: ARLD 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940.

<sup>a</sup> Some discrepancies occur between sources, apparently owing to the timing of returns to different government officials, such as the district officer at Vanikoro and the labor inspector based at Tulagi. Several workers at Vanikoro were on short contracts for less than two years and this will have skewed returns as well. Partly because of this, there has been no attempt to estimate the workers from the Santa Cruz District employed by the company by subtracting those known to be from Malaita from the Solomon Islands total. Only actual numbers recorded are cited.

<sup>b</sup> May include those just beginning a contract period and those in their second year.

<sup>c</sup> Averaged for 1923 and 1924.

Captain C. Curtis, as new to logging in 1927 as he was to Melanesia,<sup>49</sup> was more interested in the workers' output than colonial conventions, when he told his superiors that "I am aware the bushgangs are on most friendly terms with each other, which makes for willing work, which with these natives is the only way to get the job done, treated otherwise they become sullen and take to loafing."<sup>50</sup> Other managers, though, had misgivings.<sup>51</sup> Malcolm Smith, a year later, urged the Melbourne office not to employ any more Maori despite the fact that they were exceptionally good bushmen because "it is inadvisable to have them handling native labour."<sup>52</sup> Whether this was because the Maori might identify with the Solomon Islander or because the Islander might aspire to the social and economic status that the Maori bushman shared with his European counterpart on Vanikoro was not stated. Certainly Maori were employed subsequently and liked by the Melanesians.<sup>53</sup>

It was difficult for management to hold a united front based on race when the bulk of the Europeans were themselves wage labor. Vanikoro was the least salubrious place of work for Europeans in the islands.<sup>54</sup> Although they did not complain about what the resident commissioner considered "disgraceful" living conditions, several turned to alcohol for solace and this caused some absenteeism. It was at Vanikoro that the first strike by European labor in the protectorate occurred, triggered in July 1929 by a wage reduction. The new manager, trying to reduce absenteeism, altered the pay structure from a contracted monthly rate of £30 to an hourly rate of 2s. 9d. for a forty-eight-hour week, on a no-work/no-pay basis, except for a minimum payment of 10s. a day for certified illness. This meant at least a loss of almost £4 a month, without illness. The men refused to work. Although the district officer and indeed the resident commissioner were sympathetic, they intervened to prevent violence in the small, divided community, taking away the two leaders on the government vessel.<sup>55</sup> How Solomon Islanders perceived this strike is unknown; certainly the government's action would have been seen as a predictable sanction since its supervision of the indenture system created the impression it was instrumental in determining the relations between employer and employee, indentured or not.<sup>56</sup>

### **Working through Depression**

By 1930 the worldwide Depression had hit the protectorate's plantation-based economy. As timber sales in Australia fell, duty on imported logs tripled in June 1930.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the company abandoned its bonus system for Melanesians, reverting to a minimum monthly wage of £1 and stopping the extra meat rations. Wages and salaries at all levels were cut among the Europeans on Vanikoro and in the Melbourne parent firm. The following year it

reduced staffing levels at Vanikoro and production fell by over a third in 1932-1933. The number of European workers dropped from twenty to three. Although the number of Melanesians was also reduced, the full effect of this was not evident until 1932 when most two-year contracts finished, leaving only thirty to forty-five laborers (Table 1).<sup>58</sup> Attracting Malaitan labor proved difficult. Experienced men demanded double the minimum wage of a pound a month, which the company found "out of the question."<sup>59</sup> Some relief came in early 1933 when the protectorate was granted Empire preferential tariff status by Australia, reducing the duty on logs by a third, and the market revived.<sup>60</sup>

There was no relief for Solomon Islanders, however. The protectorate reduced the minimum wage for native workers by half in 1934 in response to planter pressure as copra prices continued to plummet.<sup>61</sup> Several of the "pro-native" European workers sympathized with the Melanesians, much to management's annoyance.<sup>62</sup> Fewer Melanesians offered to work, but then planters could not afford to hire many. Malaitans also refused to recruit for Vanikoro until the need to pay a head tax forced some to.<sup>63</sup>

Survival, rather than wages, dominated the minds of Melanesian laborers on Vanikoro between 1934 and 1936 and precipitated their first walkout. Murmurs of problems came to the district officer in May 1934. There was tension between the Santa Cruz and Malaita men at the bush camp in the Kombe area. Unlike plantation practice, these two groups had been housed together. The Santa Cruz men, who outnumbered the Malaitans, suspected the Malaitans of sorcery. Each group wanted separate accommodation. The manager, Dawe, appears to have settled this until a series of deaths took place at the other bush camp, farther east at Saboe. One after another six men died during August: the doctor, Kelly, attributed four of the deaths to subtertian malaria, one to pleurisy and pneumonia, and one to an internal hemorrhage. These causes were not the way the Melanesians perceived them, believing malign spiritual forces to be at work or, in the vague Pijin term, a "devil-devil." Even before the last death the men fled to Paeu. They also deserted the camp at Kombe because the company buried five of the dead only five hundred yards from their quarters; the Santa Cruz men there were afraid of the ghosts. The district officer got these men back to work, but the next day he had fifty Malaitans on his doorstep. Again he tried persuasion, but thirteen completely refused to return to the bush. As they were under indenture and its attendant penal clauses, the district officer prosecuted and fined them for failing to obey a lawful order of their employer, but he could not get them back to the bush so the company was forced to find them work at Paeu.

An inquiry disclosed no abuse of the regulations, but the district officer

ordered the company to have the doctor based in the future at Saboe camp, not ten miles away at Paeu.<sup>64</sup> The year's total of eight deaths in a local labor force of 111 constituted more than a third of all deaths among indentured labor in the protectorate. The mortality rate of 5.4 percent, almost nine times the protectorate average for 1934, was a frightening statistic.<sup>65</sup> The company soon replaced Dr. Kelly as he was showing signs of paranoia and physical deterioration that were to lead to his hospitalization in Australia, one of several such cases over the years among Vanikoro's Europeans.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the Solomon Islanders had been right about the ghosts after all.

Disease--or, in Melanesian eyes, malign spiritual forces--and possible neglect had brought protests from labor. Another environmental factor precipitated more. Early British administrators, focusing on investment possibilities, liked to believe the Solomons was outside the hurricane belt.<sup>67</sup> Nothing could be further from reality, as the company discovered on 10 December 1935 when a great cyclone hit. Earlier, to avoid the mosquitoes and sandflies, the company had built some of the quarters for their Europeans on a pier over the sea. The cyclone carried away these and those along the shore at Paeu, except for the manager's substantial house on the east bank of the Lawrence River. As for Vanikoro, the district officer recorded it "looks as if it had been fired, trees are just brown sticks and leafless." At Utupua, thirty miles distant, the island was "completely destroyed" and looked like "a newly ploughed field."<sup>68</sup>

In this desolation were new recruits, including thirty-two from Malaita who were among the first to recruit since the partial boycott of employers following the protectorate wage cut of late 1934. Most were assigned to the Sunde River camp, inland to the northwest of Paeu. By late June 1936, eleven were dead, including seven Malaitans from east 'Are'are, two from Santa Cruz, and one from the Reefs.<sup>69</sup> Ten had died of beriberi, a vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamine) deficiency disease. The company had given the workers the stipulated rations, the carbohydrate component being polished rice, normally with some thiamine content. Workers often supplemented their rations by fishing, foraging, and hunting wild pigs. However, if their bellies were full, the laborers sometimes neglected the subtleties of dietary balance.<sup>70</sup> The cyclone had destroyed most of the vegetation and the camp was miles from any village. The Santa Cruz men seem to have been able to exploit the sparse environment more successfully than the Malaitans: the latter, for example, would not have found the wild possum, endemic to the western and central Solomons. The Santa Cruz men possibly obtained more fresh food from the Vanikoro people, more akin to them than to the Malaitans. Dr. C. Courtney believed the Malaitans did not cook their rice enough, leaving it indigestible. However, an inquiry by the government doctor

revealed that the rice was old and had been poorly stored for several months; being full of weevils and rat droppings, it had to be washed thoroughly before cooking. This and its age meant the vitamin B content was lost. Full of malaria himself, Courtney, doctor and acting manager, had diagnosed the first cases in May, following an epidemic of dysentery due to appalling sanitation, as well as influenza with pneumonia, along with the perennial malaria and blackwater fever, which had afflicted the weakened Europeans and Melanesians. After seven of their number died in three days, the Malaitans, supported by a European employee named Ken Whitford, went to the district officer and asked to cancel their contracts.

Although the indenture system was a powerful instrument for worker compliance, the government saw that driving labor to death was both counter-productive and inhumane. So the resident commissioner in Tulagi approved the cancellations while the district officer managed to secure four hundred pounds of vegetables from Buma village on Tevai to supplement the men's diet until he was able to get them on a ship to Malaita. With such a horrendous death rate the government refused to allow the company to resume recruiting until it provided more balanced and fresher rations in August, but the total deaths for that terrible year were fifteen out of eighty-two workers, a mortality rate of 18.29 percent, almost fifteen times the protectorate average and more than a third of all indentured labor deaths."

Diet was always a problem at Vanikoro because of poor shipping, isolation, and the lack of a reliable local source. The regulation food for Melanesians was not nearly satisfactory until 1938-1939 when the meat ration was increased and the rice changed to semi-unpolished.<sup>72</sup> Although several infectious diseases knew no racial boundaries, Europeans escaped beriberi because they usually had some vegetables from their garden at Paeu, got all the catch from men the company sent out to fish, and could buy additional provisions from the company store as well. Of course, the comparatively low-paid Melanesians could also buy at the store to supplement their rations, but only at double the markup charged Europeans, or, in the mid-1950s three times this<sup>73</sup>--a standard practice throughout the Solomons as a way to "get back some of the native money we pay out."<sup>74</sup> Additionally, in order to prevent debt servitude, and so alienate the laborers' families and thus inhibit the labor supply, government regulations prevented laborers from receiving more than a quarter of their wages monthly until the end of their contracts, further limiting their purchases.<sup>75</sup>

In the 1920s and early 1930s Melanesians' wages represented from 3 to 5 percent of the European workers'; after 1934 the proportion dropped to about 1.7 percent, exclusive of rations to both groups.<sup>76</sup> Towards the end of the thirties the number of Melanesians employed at £1 a month increased,

but European wages also improved, to between £32 10s. and £35 a month (about 20 percent more than they would have been paid in Australia). Thus the Melanesians received only about 2.6 percent of the European wage, so discontent remained.<sup>77</sup> In 1939 on Nggela, Savo, and Santa Isabel there had been peaceful political meetings (called the Chair and Rule or Fallowes movement) among predominantly Melanesian Mission adherents, requesting of the government, among other things, a fantastic wage of £12 a month.<sup>78</sup> Soon after in 1940, when the resident commissioner made a rare tour, villagers on Santa Cruz (Ndenö) asked for a wage increase from the standard 10s. a month to £6, plus £2 10s. for rations;<sup>79</sup> and “one bright youth wanted a wage of twelve pounds a month.”<sup>80</sup> Islanders on Santa Cruz, through its Melanesian Mission connections, certainly were aware of the wage demands of the Chair and Rule movement.

In contrast to the situation in the rest of the protectorate, Melanesians at Vanikoro received support and perhaps even inspiration from European workers in their wage demands. In 1940 the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company had yet to make a profit, so to cut costs the then-manager, Sven Boye, decreased the number of laborers on wages in excess of 10s. When in August 1941, some Europeans told the Melanesians of their wage scale, it so heightened discontent that some went to the district officer, asking for more money.<sup>81</sup> A couple of months later a European, Colliss, was telling the men, “They can’t make us work in the rain.”<sup>82</sup> This fell on receptive ears, and by the end of the year the Melanesians, encouraged by Colliss and others, demanded overtime and often stopped “working at the slightest rain or even hint of it.”<sup>83</sup>

Despite bonds between the workers of the two races, the Melanesians themselves had not developed an ethnic or even class consciousness strong enough to forestall management’s successful manipulation of island or area identity for the purpose of controlling refractory employees. In about 1939 one of the European bush foremen, “Jimmy,” found his gang taking it easy when they were supposed to be working. After being reprimanded, a Malaitan threatened to kill the foreman, pointing out that as Malaitans had killed District Officer William Bell in 1927 on Malaita, they could do the same to him. “Jimmy” taunted them by contrasting their laziness to the industry of the Santa Cruz District men, which only inflamed the Malaitans more. They retorted that the Santa Cruz men were all like women, which angered the Santa Cruz party. The Santa Cruz men and presumably the Malaitans asked both the district officer, Wilson, and the manager, Boye, if they could resolve the matter among themselves. As perceived by the Santa Cruz men, Boye’s attitude was that the Malaitans had it coming to them, as they had insulted the local men and defied the Europeans. In a rather sur-

real setting on the foreshore of Paeu under the floodlights of the steamer, the men fought late at night, before the ship sailed at dawn. Fighting was hand to hand with sticks and the odd knife, but no one was seriously injured, even among the outnumbered Malaitans.<sup>84</sup>

Fighting of greater magnitude was to affect Vanikoro. The Japanese invaded the Solomons in 1942, capturing Tulagi in May, then were forced back and out of most of the islands in late 1943 by the Allies. The Japanese did not occupy the eastern Solomons, so Vanikoro escaped direct fighting, although both Japanese and American air and sea craft reconnoitred the district.<sup>85</sup> The company had evacuated most of its European staff via the New Hebrides in March 1942. There was no transport going west into the war zone to return the twenty-three Malaitans employed, but Boye found transport to send the Santa Cruz men home. Boye and his wife, Ruby, who was running the former company wireless for the Allied coastwatchers, chose to stay, and they kept the Malaitans employed in maintenance work, their irregular food supplies supplemented by a big garden. The contracts of the Malaitans expired in June 1943 and Boye wanted them as casuals until he could get them home.<sup>86</sup> They had had enough: a “bush lawyer” led the refusal and the manager had to make do with a few men from the Santa Cruz District.<sup>87</sup>

### **Post-World War II: Contracted Loggers, Contracted Labor**

After the war, logging did not resume in earnest until 1949, under a different arrangement. In 1941 the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company had gone into liquidation and its operations were absorbed by the parent company in Melbourne, the Kauri Timber Company, which then ran Vanikoro as a branch. The company’s main object was to use the logs for peeling in Melbourne and Brisbane. To boost production above prewar levels the logging was contracted to A. E. and E. Haling from north Queensland. The company organized shipping, supervised the contract *in situ*, sprayed the logs against borers, initially assisted the contractors with recruiting, and employed about ten laborers to maintain company property.

Before this, most overseas employees of the company had been from New Zealand, with some Australians in the 1930s. From 1949 on most were from Australia, and locally the company came to be called the “Melbourne company.”<sup>88</sup> Another difference was that the indenture system, with its attendant penal clauses, was abandoned in 1947 to be replaced by civil contracts for no longer than a year. This lessened the need for reopening the district office at Vanikoro, closed in October 1944. The demise of indenture saw the Melanesians in a more powerful position vis-à-vis their employer as

the latter still had considerable responsibilities within the new regulations to provide shelter, medical care, and transport for them.<sup>89</sup>

There were changes in the protectorate labor context that emanated from Solomon Islanders' political activities elsewhere, but these had minor repercussions in the Santa Cruz District. During the war there had been much interaction between Americans and the Solomon Islands Labour Corps (SILC), formed in mid-1943 to organize Solomon Islanders for war work. Discontent with the British regime, especially among Malaitans in the corps, crystallized as a consequence of discussions with the Americans. A political movement called *Maasina Rulu*, or *Marching Rule*, developed on Malaita, Makira, and parts of Guadalcanal that, among other things, demanded a wage of £12 a month and boycotted plantations to get it. Eventually, widespread civil disobedience resulted in the imprisonment of the leaders in 1947.<sup>90</sup>

About twelve men from the Santa Cruz District had left for the SILC in March 1945.<sup>91</sup> Upon their return they brought back American largesse and word of *Maasina Rulu*, as did returners from school on Makira and the police force. In 1947 on the Reef Islands, rarely visited by government, members of the newly formed council heard of the plantation boycott in letters from Walter Karnape of Liebe, a Reef Islander employed as a clerk in Honiara, the postwar capital. They decided to stop men recruiting for plantations and even as crew on Fred Jones's ship, although one member said men could go at £6 a month. (Jones went instead to the Duff Islands, his wife's home, and hired a crew.) The wider objectives of *Maasina Rulu* were not supported in Santa Cruz,<sup>92</sup> perhaps because the people who knew of it regarded the movement as inferior to the power and organization of the Allied war machine.<sup>93</sup>

The largest increase in wages for Solomon Islanders came not from the demonstrations and boycott of *Maasina Rulu*, but from the successive agitations of laborers in the Santa Cruz District. Although *Maasina Rulu* was waning by 1950, the logging contractors, like their predecessors, found recruiting locally much less expensive. In May 1951 a group of Santa Cruz and Reef Islanders went on strike at Vanikoro, probably the first organized strike by nonindentured labor in the peacetime Solomons. With the demise of the indenture system, employers were not obliged to supply rations, except customarily where the minimum wage of £2 was paid. The men at Vanikoro were "contract" labor, employed from month to month. They received £5 a month but had to buy their own food, just as the Europeans did, which was also the standard practice when the government employed labor. The Melanesians wanted rations supplied as well as the same money. They managed to stay on strike for two weeks, which must have been very difficult as they were away from their homes and had to buy food from the expensive com-



pany store or from Fred Jones's at "the Settlement" in Paeu. Although often critical of the Halings and their Queensland logging methods, the company manager, R. McEwin, a Tasmanian, determined to counter the strikers' demands and to support the contractors.<sup>94</sup> "We are of course not prepared to meet these demands, and have been compelled to accept the consequent slowing of recruitment, which we hope will be only temporary. We propose recruiting a gang of labourers from the island of Tikopia partly as a trial measure, and partly for the psychological effect it should have on the natives of the other islands from which we recruit."<sup>95</sup>

Increasing population on Tikopia had created both a need for cash and a rationale for recruiting. With government approval, required since Tikopia with its epidemiologically vulnerable Polynesians had been closed to recruiters between 1923 and 1949, the Halings took on forty naive recruits in July 1951 on a year's contract. However, the experience with the Tikopians was that of the Santa Cruz laborers of 1926 repeated. While useful at boat repairing and jetty work, these small-island dwellers had few skills suitable to logging operations. They knew no Pijin, resulting in frustration for the foremen and a disinclination to employ any more. Their greatest asset was their docility or, as management saw it, their "loyalty" to the company. When food shortages angered the Santa Cruz and Reef Islander laborers, the Tikopians accepted them stoically.<sup>96</sup> With Tikopians, the Halings reverted to paying the minimum wage of £2 plus rations. When word of the wage got around the district men on Santa Cruz, the Reef Islands, and Utupua refused to be recruited. Finally, in March 1952 the Halings had to compromise and raise the wage to £4 plus rations (equivalent to a total of £6) for men with previous experience and £5 and rations for the four "boss-boys" employed. Counting bonuses and overtime for both races, the Melanesians' real wage was now 4.8 percent of the average European bush workers'.<sup>97</sup>

The Santa Cruz, Reef Islander, and Utupua workers succeeded in their wage demands because labor, at least half of the men experienced by this time, was in limited supply.<sup>98</sup> The attempt to split the labor force on the ethnic lines of Melanesian versus Polynesian failed because the contractors needed a skilled work force much more than they needed a docile one. And the docile Tikopians preferred Lever's plantations in the Russell Islands, where they found the work familiar and were given land.<sup>99</sup> The Melanesians capitalized on the parameters of logging on Vanikoro. The logging concern could not afford to play the waiting game with labor as the lyctus borer on land and the teredo worm in the water ruined valuable logs within a few months of felling, and expensive ships sitting unloaded in the lagoon could cost the company thousands of pounds.<sup>100</sup> Plantation work, on the other hand, was less urgent, as coconuts did not need to be processed quickly and

processed copra could be stored for months, allowing planters to take their time finding amenable cheap labor.

One of the worst confrontations in the logging industry erupted on 28 December 1952, unrelated to wages. There was a background of discontent among the labor about living conditions and food shortages, which had not been improved by a cyclone in January 1952, as well as frictions among the Europeans, some of whom were actively antagonistic to the Halings. In fact, fifty-four Europeans had resigned before completing their contracts over the previous four years. Whatever the immediate cause, forty Santa Cruz laborers dragged two of the European bush foremen from their huts, threatening to fight them. The laborers refused to work for the Halings, who radioed for government help.<sup>101</sup> The district officer from the government station at Kira Kira arrived with "a posse of seven police" to hold an inquiry.<sup>102</sup> Although evidence was lacking, two other Europeans were thought to have provoked the incident. These two were sent out on the next ship and all the Santa Cruz participants sentenced to several months' imprisonment at Kira Kira for conspiracy, forcible entry, and assault.<sup>103</sup> The rest refused to work and the contractors had to let them go. The inquiry failed to find a reason for their "hostile demonstration,"<sup>104</sup> other than those described, and as ever "undue fraternisation between some of the Europeans and the native employees of the Company" was thought to have somehow contributed.<sup>105</sup>

Disgruntled European employees aired their grievances in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* regarding the high prices they had to pay for imported food at the Halings' store, which eroded their £30-a-week wage. The publicity made attracting staff even more difficult. The Halings provided no leisure facilities for Europeans, refusing to let them take a boat across to the pleasant islet of Nanunga on weekends. The field for football and cricket, well used by all before the war, had become covered in scrub.

Although the cost of food remained an issue, there were fewer shortages in the 1950s as a seaplane could be chartered in an emergency.<sup>106</sup> The Halings ran a bakery and workers could get wholemeal bread. Local "dressers," wives of European staff, and European nurses did the medical work. Unlike the doctors, these dispensed nursing care, not simply medicine, and the new sulfa drugs, antibiotics, and antimalarials made the control of most infections far easier than before the war.<sup>107</sup> Serious cases were sent to the Kira Kira hospital. Deaths among the Melanesian laborers were almost nonexistent after the war.<sup>108</sup>

Experiencing difficulty hiring Europeans, the contractors brought in six Fijians in January 1953, at £25 weekly, as drivers for the trucks and tractors. Tinkering with the labor composition did not bring long-term solutions, so

the Halings tried a more radical measure in early 1954. They instituted a shortened five-day week of forty-five hours for all employees, although the labor regulations provided for a maximum of fifty hours.<sup>109</sup> The combination of high wages plus shorter hours had ramifications, if not throughout the protectorate, certainly for other employers in the little world of Vanikoro. Normal hours, prior to 1954, had been nine hours on weekdays and five on Saturday for Melanesians, a total of fifty, with some Europeans working the same while others with different duties worked only forty-five hours.<sup>110</sup> Both the on-site company manager, McEwin, with his ten laborers and the resident trader, Fred Jones, with his were “perforce obliged to fall into line as regards the working hours, although we both agree that in the case of the Natives, two clear days a week of idleness is very liable to breed mischief”—an interesting assumption that was not applied to European workers!<sup>111</sup> This aggravated the strained relations between McEwin and the Halings, and meant a high overtime wages’ bill when the pressure was on to fill an incoming ship.<sup>112</sup> As well, the new forest officer, Chris Hadley, had to increase wages by 10s. above the protectorate standard of £2 plus rations a month, “due to agitation by his Native employees in order to be in line with wages paid here and partly on account of the high cost of staple foods at the local store upon which his ‘boys’ were reliant.”<sup>113</sup> The Forestry Department expected further pressure “to raise the labourers’ wages to approach the mill wages.”<sup>114</sup>

The agitation did not stop with Hadley’s laborers. The wireless operator and the meteorological observer, both in government employ, were paid a lower wage than the “raw recruits doing manual labour” for the Halings. This precedent hardly pleased them or the government. Moreover, the company’s European spray supervisor (who treated the logs to prevent borer infestation) received £20 weekly, while the lowest paid of the contractors’ European employees received £25, another glaring anomaly in the eyes of the workers and another contentious point between company and contractors. All this, along with the five-day week, brought resentment from other employers and interest by alert employees beyond Vanikoro.<sup>115</sup>

Throughout early 1954 men in the Santa Cruz District continued to push for even higher wages to the point where Alex Haling blamed the trader Jones. Although the district officer found nothing to support this, Jones had been a key figure in labor recruiting throughout most of the company’s history. The company had tried to charter Jones’s boat to recruit in 1928, but he refused. Thereafter the company had to rely on him and he had a virtual monopoly within the district. Jones had long been in good standing with the company, the government, and the local people. He continued recruiting in

the first years of the Halings' contract, but refused to cooperate when the company decided to introduce Tikopians to break the resistance of the workers from the rest of the Santa Cruz District. This forced the Halings to rely briefly on Captain Georgetti's *Loma* and subsequently on their own vessel, *Toby*. With his wife from the Duffs, Jones's sympathies were with the district's people; and in 1954 he had reason to resent the Halings' new venture in trading kauri gum and shell, which reduced his business at Vanikoro.<sup>116</sup>

With or without Jones's aid, the laborers could get messages to their home communities as some, through the Melanesian Mission schools, were literate: letters were sent to the Reefs and Ndenö advising would-be recruits to hold out for £7 a month plus rations. The headmen of these communities, government appointees who were often leaders in their own right, supported the strategy and so recruiting stopped.<sup>117</sup> The Haling brothers ceased meeting production targets and the Kauri Timber Company complained about logs damaged by borers and worms. The company's plywood factories relied on a regular, quality supply of peeler logs in part from Vanikoro to keep the lathes and driers producing an economically viable throughput.<sup>118</sup> The Halings became so angry with the intransigence that they told the laborers they "were finished with them" and would instead recruit Malaitans, who were now back in the labor force--without having achieved their £12 a month wage goal--following the passing of Maasina Rulu.<sup>119</sup> But Vanikoro did not appeal to the Malaitans, who were finding more congenial work in and around Honiara.<sup>120</sup> Knowledge of Malaitan lack of interest spread among laborers at Vanikoro, thanks to the Melanesian government meteorological operator who took down the wireless message, and "the news was soon abroad, with consequent loss of 'face' to the Contractors that is already apparent in the natives' attitude."<sup>121</sup>

The touring district officer intervened with "severe warnings" to the headmen concerned that no coercion was to be used to stop recruiting.<sup>122</sup> Recruiting resumed, but the Halings' labor relations went from bad to worse. The contractors brought some of this on themselves. Curiously coincidental with the new forty-five-hour week for his workers in early 1954, Alex Haling had started large-scale purchases of trochus shell from the surrounding reefs to which, of course, he had no rights. But the one hundred workers collected it anyway in their spare time, as they did the kauri gum.<sup>123</sup> Thus Haling as trader and storekeeper, in competition with Jones, was trying to win custom from the very men he employed, a role-conflict that meant he could not "afford to offend the natives in any way in relation to the way they work, for fear of losing their custom in the store, and the

privilege of buying their Shell and Kauri gum.”<sup>124</sup> This had some effect on the workers’ attitude. In August 1955 an inexperienced foreman reprimanded one of the hauler gangs for laziness, so the men walked off. Eleven ended their contracts, but most of these “no excuse time-breakers” were accommodated by friends among the Forestry Department employees.<sup>125</sup> The contractors again found themselves short of labor. They attributed this to a planned Forestry Department survey of Santa Cruz, which was creating the impression that logging was imminent and men soon would have employment close to home.<sup>126</sup>

The Haling brothers as employers had no prior experience with Melanesians and it would be easy to attribute the success of labor in extracting better wages and conditions to this. Yet some of the prewar managers had been in a similar position. These, unlike the Halings, had penal sanctions for disobedience and striking attached to contracts. However, the Vanikoro situation had been far more subtle then, as before 1947 few convictions were recorded relating to labor regulation violations, except for the 1934 walkout. Now and again a laborer had made a complaint and the European was warned or fined; a couple of men were charged with failing to obey a lawful instruction and the odd few with gambling. Most court appearances followed Christmas “celebrations.” In times of food shortage, a couple of laborers were charged with trading their rations. Isolated Vanikoro was not an island that encouraged desertion, a form of labor resistance on many plantations. Jailing at Paeu meant the offender was accessible to his fellows, given that most prisoners did maintenance work around the government station and were locked up only at night. Equitable solutions to conflicts had to be found within this minute society of workplace and government station. And the government had a big stake in conflict resolution as each log cut represented a royalty to the treasury. In the main, the district officers acted as brokers, arbitrating problems regarding indenture as well as many civil matters between Melanesians in an informal way, the extreme being the highly irregular “settlement” of the dispute between the Malaitans and the Santa Cruz group in 1939 and the norm being some form of reconciliation or compensation in the Melanesian manner. Both indentured labor and management had to accommodate each others’ demands at times to keep the enterprise operating and fill the ships. This was possible because the district officer was on the spot and was a third party perceived as being generally neutral. The Halings realized this and as early as 1950 asked to have an officer back on Vanikoro, not only to ratify yearly contracts, but also to adjudicate labor disputes, all the more delicate without the penal clauses of old.<sup>127</sup> They did not get a district officer, and in the absence of an adju-

dicator, the brothers seemed to have bowed to Melanesian demands rather than risk strikes. Early in 1954, when the government sent forest officer Hadley to conduct silviculture experiments, it hoped that his "presence at Vanikoro will assist matters"<sup>128</sup> as a "Deputy Commissioner with limitations," but he busied himself with forestry and making the semidecrepit government house at Paeu habitable for his English wife.<sup>129</sup>

### **Women in a Man's World**

Only a handful of European women lived with their company husbands on Vanikoro in the late 1920s and 1930s and these were mainly women who had previous experience of the tropics.<sup>130</sup> In 1934 the district officer welcomed the wives of his Melanesian policemen and other government employees, providing them with rations. The women, he felt, contributed to "the civilising influence of the government station."<sup>131</sup> Civilizers they may well have been, but women were poorly paid for it by the company. The company early discovered local women could be legally employed as laundresses for less than half the wages they had to pay males.<sup>132</sup> However, among a male population of one to two hundred, women could make better money in other ways. At least one local woman, the charming Navanora of Tenema, found favor with, and sold hers to, the Melanesian government and company laborers in the 1920s to which the district officer turned a blind eye. Navanora has entered into the mythology of both the Europeans who lived on Vanikoro and the Vanikorans who, after she died, attributed her spirit with the ability to lure young men to their deaths, like other Melanesian women of sexual power.<sup>133</sup>

A definite contribution to the health of the Melanesian workers was, for many, the presence of their wives, a policy initiated by the Halings. These women made gardens on company land, thus supplementing their rations with fresh vegetables and fruit. They had their children with them and life for married workers was closer to normal.<sup>134</sup> Most found life pleasant and relished the variety the company rations provided for their family. However, these women experienced some unwanted attentions from Reef and Santa Cruz men. After the Forestry Department began work on Vanikoro, the number of workers grew to eleven in 1958 and around sixty in 1963.<sup>135</sup> These were particularly troublesome. The mainly Malaitan and Nggelan would-be Lotharios came "creeping" around the women's houses. The Santa Cruz District husbands set a series of compensatory fines for dealing with the troublemakers and, if that failed, persistent offenders were handed over to the touring district officer. Married women and their husbands were not always

averse to arrangements that paid, and dealing in women's sexual services by Santa Cruz men has a long history.<sup>136</sup> In 1958 the company manager found two cases of "social disease" among his laborers. He shipped them home and sent the woman concerned and her husband to the Kira Kira hospital.<sup>137</sup>

### **Contesting Company Control**

The Halings' contract was up for renewal in December 1955, but the Kauri Timber Company resumed control of logging as it was dissatisfied with log production and the Halings' request for higher payment.<sup>138</sup> The company inherited the Halings' labor relations legacy: "a very great prejudice against Vanikoro" that needed to be overcome as Lever's and Faerymead plantations were recruiting heavily in Santa Cruz District. The company set about rectifying matters immediately by reducing store prices to Solomon Islanders, as well as to Europeans.<sup>139</sup>

Disputes continued, nevertheless. Early in 1956 laborers demanded two shillings an hour overtime instead of one: a reasonable demand in their eyes as Europeans on a much higher wage scale got time-and-a-half. The rate was certainly an issue, but the laborers also expressed fears of working when they were tired, as there had been two accidents involving hauler "boys." The company desperately needed overtime work to fill the ships. It considered ways to force the men back to work: deletion of the traditional but nonregulation tobacco, soap and matches, free transport from the bush workings to Paeu, the Saturday morning holiday, and so on. Several of the European workers wanted these measures and more, to assure the laborers would know "who were the big white masters."<sup>140</sup> Extended discussions over a week revealed that the Solomon Islanders deeply resented the racist way some of the European bushmen were behaving. They refused to work with Phil Haebeck, who swore roughly at them, a particularly insulting act in the eyes of Melanesians.<sup>141</sup> The manager, L. Filewood, dismissed Haebeck, censured the actions of another European who "romps with them [Solomon Islanders] on Sunday and curses them on Monday," and monitored the behavior of others of whom the laborers had complained. These, Filewood believed, "are a poor type and whilst they may know their job they have not yet learned the way to handle the natives. . . . They are incapable of realising that they have no more right to swear at them and abuse the boys than I have to do the same to them; also that they are not in a position to impose 'fines' upon the boys when the mood dictates, which happens after a heavy weekend and is tempered more with bile than justice."<sup>142</sup>

Although Haebeck's dismissal got the men back to work, trouble broke

out again a few months later over the overtime question. Filewood, deciding that "force, applied correctly, must be exerted," threatened to terminate the men's contracts and require them to find their own way home. The workers capitulated.<sup>143</sup> Between 1956 and 1960 the company gradually created a better working relationship with the Solomon Islanders and wages rose to a minimum of £5 a month plus rations, total value being 6.8 percent of the European wage. In 1960 Solomon Islanders again demanded higher wages, but had other difficulties with the company. Santa Cruz men refused to sign on, so the main source became the Reef Islands. A recruiter named Tom Hepworth alienated these people, who refused to sail with him. The company was forced to send its own small vessel, the *Toby*, if it wanted men. Another issue concerned a bush foreman named Kealy who, in the view of both the Reef Islanders and the manager, acted unjustly when he sacked five men from the Reefs. All the Reef Islanders walked off the job, demanding that their countrymen be reinstated. Although the manager reprimanded the men and deprived them of their tobacco ration for a week, he did reinstate the sacked workers, knowing that if he did not he ran the risk of getting no more from the Reefs. Kealy took umbrage and resigned. Agitation for an increase in wages underlay this, the men wanting a raise from £4 to £8 a month with rations.<sup>144</sup>

The company was prepared to pay for skills and had to compete with the Forestry Department.<sup>145</sup> By 1963 the company had raised wages to £6 plus rations with a bonus of £5 for anyone who stayed for a second one-year term. The Santa Cruz men returned and, for the first time, men from Makira were recruited. With the gradual increase in mechanization over the years the company valued its skilled labor, but had no systematic training scheme. Bill Powell, the manager in 1963, who had worked for both the Halings and the company, wanted to see more Solomon Islanders doing skilled work, so he trained several men to drive tractors. He also had the logging camp at Emwa completely run by Melanesians. By late 1963 the company employed three local men as tractor drivers. They were good as drivers of the diesel haulers. Powell was training two men to operate chain saws.<sup>146</sup> And, "as seamen on launches, or anywhere connected with the water, the natives are better than the whites."<sup>147</sup> The company gradually reduced the European workers from about twenty in the Halings' time to six (see Table 1). Melanesians were now being paid 10 percent of the Europeans' wage. These skills were not to be long utilized by the company as its losses had been so great over the decades that it ceased operation in 1964, with kauri left scattered in the forest, just at the time major logging commenced in the western Solomons. Former laborers in the Santa Cruz District regretted the company's demise.<sup>148</sup>



## Conclusion

After the war the workers of European descent who came to Vanikoro were Australians, whose record in relations with indigenous people was poor by comparison to the New Zealanders who had preceded them. This could be a simple explanation for the outbursts of animosity between Europeans and Melanesians in the postwar era. But there were other factors. Although resistant to any erosion of their wages and terms, the prewar Europeans, the earliest inured to demanding conditions in the kauri bush in New Zealand or fleeing the Depression there and in Australia, had lower expectations regarding creature comforts than their successors. This left them open to greater contact with, and often sympathy for, the Melanesians. From these men the Melanesians learned work skills and considerably more about methods available to the worker to win demands than anywhere else in the Solomons. Over time, management was ambivalent about “fraternisation” between the races; such contact could help get the job done, but it could also lead to solidarity, hence it was feared and blamed for almost any labor trouble. The postwar Europeans left the increasingly robust economies of Australia and New Zealand. Tantalized by the occasional visit of a seaplane and chaffing under the trying climate, the lack of amenities particularly in the caravan accommodation of the camps, the grudging attitude of the Halings, and the high store prices for food, they grew discontented and this discontent overflowed into relations with the Solomon Islanders. For several men, their stay was so brief that they hardly had time to get to know the Melanesians. Some were from Tasmania and others from Queensland; each group had different ways of logging. A more fundamental difference among postwar Australians was between the “old” Australians of British extraction and the “new” Australians, refugees and immigrants from war-ravaged Europe. They often fell out with each other. Moreover, it would have been improbable that “British” Australians’ liking for, say, a former member of Hitler’s Youth was any greater than his for the dark-skinned Melanesians.<sup>149</sup>

Unlike the European bush workers, many Melanesians had their families with them and were relatively close to their homes. These workers did not lose the feeling of continuity in the year or more they were away earning money. For some families the time at Vanikoro was good because they had access to foods that were a luxury in the villages. Essentially, in the Halings’ era the Europeans wanted better conditions that included less outlay on food and the Melanesians wanted more money, as they early had forced the contractors to provide valuable rations. Thus the two groups of labor did not share the same objectives, reducing the possibility of labor solidarity.

The European community was particularly fragmented, a situation known

to the Melanesians. The standard employer tactics of divide and rule that Boye had invoked successfully before the war, pivoting on the presence of Malaitans, backfired on the Haling brothers when they failed to bring the more experienced Santa Cruz work force to heel on the wages issue, leaving them with untrained Tikopians and subsequently no Malaitans. The brothers compromised their authority as employers by trading with their employees in 1954 and by hiring incompetent foremen, providing the Melanesians with justifiable excuses for wage leverage and protest. All these factors gave the men of Santa Cruz District the tactical and psychological edge.

However, the primary factor in determining the relations between Melanesian labor and management was the limited number of skilled workers and the costs that precluded an alternative supply from beyond the district. Vanikoro itself, with its isolation and trying environment, had earned a bad reputation among Malaitans as well as Tikopians, so they selected more attractive propositions when the opportunity arose. Moreover, when the Forestry Department began its work the alternative for other local employment forced the company to compete for skilled workers. Vanikoro presented an industrial situation unique in the Solomons because loss of labor-time had expensive ramifications, with log-carrying ships and the company's Australian mills dependent on its output to maintain an economic throughput. This state-of affairs placed severe constraints on management's bargaining power at Vanikoro, particularly after the war. Once the indenture system had disappeared, wage-bargaining and strikes became not only more feasible, but also legal. These were the circumstances that the laborers, mainly of the Santa Cruz District, exploited with notable success. By the early 1950s they had regained their pre-1934 relativity with the European wage, and within a decade had doubled it to 10 percent of the European scale. In the process their regulation hours of work diminished by 10 percent. They had proved not so feeble, after all.

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

ARED	Annual Report, Eastern District
ARLD	Annual Report, Labour Department
ARSC	Annual Report, Santa Cruz District
BSIP	British Solomon Islands Protectorate Series, National Archives of Solomon Islands, Honiara
DO	District Officer
HC	High Commissioner
<i>PIM</i>	<i>Pacific Islands Monthly</i>
QRSC	Quarterly Report, Santa Cruz District
RC	Resident Commissioner

- VR Vanikoro Timber Company Records, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, Australia
- WPHC Western Pacific High Commission, Public Record Office, London

## NOTES

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1. Clive Moore, "Labour, Indenture and Historiography in the Pacific," in *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations*, ed. B. Lal (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, 1992), 129-148; Atu Emberson-Bain, *Labour and Gold in Fiji* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.

2. Michael Roche, *History of New Zealand Forestry* (Wellington: New Zealand Forest? Corporation, 1990), 107-115.

3. See Judith A. Bennett, "Pacific Forest? A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, Towards 2000," manuscript.

4. A. H. Reed, *The New Story of Kauri* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1964); Ted Ashby, *Blackie: A Story of an Old-time Bushman* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1978); Duncan Mackay, "The Orderly Frontier: The World of the Kauri Bushman 1860-1925," *New Zealand Journal of History* 25, no. 2 (1991): 147-157.

5. Ashby, *Blackie*, 68-77, 83.

6. Bennett, *Pacific Forest?*

7. Jules S.-C. Dumont D'Urville, *An Account of Two Voyages to the South Seas*, trans. Helen Rosenman, vol. 1 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987), 236; WPHC 1023/22: Middenway to RC, 24 Feb. 1922.

8. Charles Price with Elizabeth Baker, "Origins of Islands Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note," *Journal of Pacific History* 11, part 1 (1976): 115; Jeff Siegel, "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji," *Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 42-45; Dorothy Shineberg, pers. com., 6 Nov. 1995. See WPHC 10/90, 359/90, 52/99, 175/99, 241/99.

9. Cecil Wilson, *The Wake of the Southern Cross: Work and Adventure in the South Seas* (London: John Murray, 1932), 57-148; David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1942* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), 66-67; *British Solomon Islands, Report, 1898-99* (London: HMSO, 1899).

10. BSIP 9/111/3: QRSC, Sept. 1936.

11. WPHC 63/13: Vernon, Notes on the Solomon Islands, 9 Jan. 1913.
12. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954.
13. Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, ca. 1800-1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 82-83, 165; Ashby, *Blackie*, 72; Roy Struben, *Coral and Colour of Gold* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 19; WPHC 1525/32: RC to HC, 10 May 1932.
14. VR: Secy. to [HC], 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from 1926-1934.
15. WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929.
16. VR: Dawe to Secy., 24 Feb. 1932, Corres. 1932-1936.
17. VR: de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926; Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.
18. VR: de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926, Corres. 1925-1931; Hugh Laracy, "Unwelcome Guests: The Solomons Chinese," *New Guinea and Australia, the Pacific and South-east Asia* 8, no. 4 (1974): 27-37; Bennett, *Wealth*, 150-152.
19. VR: Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.
20. WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/111/2: ARSC 1930; VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.
21. Bennett, *Wealth*, 83; WPHC 1121/24: ARLD 1923; WPHC 1197/25: ARLD 1924; WPHC 1170/26: ARLD 1925; WPHC 1510/27: ARLD 1926; WPHC 1835/28: ARLD 1927; WPHC 1426/29: ARLD 1928; WPHC 809/30: ARLD 1929; WPHC 755/31: ARLD 1930; WPHC 1228/32: ARLD 1931; WPHC 506/33: ARLD 1932; WPHC 920/34: ARLD 1933; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934; WPHC 1598/36: ARLD 1935; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD 1936; WPHC 1638/38: ARLD 1937; WPHC 2469/40: ARLD 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940. Compare with William Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands, British Solomon Islands Protectorate," in *Pacific Atoll Populations*, ed. Vern Carroll (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1975), 81.
22. Bennett, *Wealth*, 162.
23. VR: Dawe to Administrator, 23 Jan. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from.
24. VR: Court to Chairman, 15 Nov. 1926, Corres. 1925-1931; Dawe to Secy., 4 Nov. 1933, Employees' Corres. 1932-1953.
25. Harold M. Ross, *Baegu: Social and Ecological Organization in Malaita, Solomon Islands* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 107.
26. VR: Smith to Secy., 31 May 1928, 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.

27. VR: Cowan to de Bondy, 28 Dec. 1925, Gov. depts. to and from 1926.
28. VR: Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.
29. VR: Butler, Report, Vanikoro, Aug. 1926.
30. VR: Zinneck to Curtis, 26 Oct. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from.
31. VR: Butler, Report, Vanikoro, Aug. 1926.
32. VR: Cowan to Curtis, n.d. [Oct. 1926], Gov. depts. to and from; photographs in collection.
33. VR: Secy. to Pilling, 10 Dec. 1925, Gov. depts. to and from.
34. VR: Secy. to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; Cohn Newbury, "Colour Bar and Labour Conflict on the New Guinea Goldfields 1935-1941," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 21, no. 3 (1975): 30-33; Emberson-Bain, *Labour and Gold*, 83-85.
35. VR: Director's Minute Book, 27 Nov. 1925.
36. VR: Secy. Melbourne to Secy. of Gov., 7 Aug. 1929, Gov. depts. to and from; Proposed Logging Policy, 24 June 1953, Reports; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1953.
37. VR: Dawe to Court, 31 May 1932, Corres. to and from 1932-1936.
38. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; A. M. Deland to mother, 25 Oct. 1926, A. M. Deland Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra. See also VR: Dawe to Secy., 30 May 1932, Corres. 1932-1936.
39. F. J. Hickie, "Coconut Planting in the British Solomons," *The Planters Gazette* (Solomon Islands Planters Association, Sydney), Dec. 1922, 12.
40. Bennett, *Wealth*, 167-191.
41. VR: Cowan to Secy., 30 Nov. 1925, Corres. 1925-1931.
42. VR: Curtis, Report, June(?) 1928, Corres. 1925-1931.
43. VR: Cowan to Secy., 30 Nov. 1925, Corres. 1925-1931.
44. VR: Secy. to Madden, 4 June 1930 and encls.
45. Ashby, *Blackie*, 77.
46. BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; VR: photographs.

47. BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; VR: Deland, Report, Apr. 1927, Corres. 1925-1931.
48. Bennett, *Wealth*, 167-191; WPHC 1525/27: Middenway to RC, 10 Mar. 1927.
49. WPHC 1525127: Middenway to RC, 10 Mar. 1927.
50. VR: Curtis to Chairman, 7 May 1927, Corres. 1932-1936.
51. See VR: Boye to Secy., 7 Oct. 1941, Corres. 1939-1949; Boye to Secy., 22 May 1939, Corres. 1937-1939.
52. VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Island Reports.
53. Joseph Odofia of Mari Mari, Malaita, interview, 1976.
54. VR: Kelly to Secy., 28 Mar. 1935, Employees' Corres. 1932-1953; Struben, *Coral*, 83. For comparison, see Manager to Carpenter, 4 May 1929, W. R. Carpenter Papers, in writer's care.
55. BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929; BSIP 9/V/5: Ashley, Inspection Notes, Sept. 1929; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929 and encl.; VR: Shortland and Driver to Directors, 5 June 1930; O'Shea to Court, 27 June 1930, Corres. A-Z 1935-1941.
56. Bennett, *Wealth*, 150-166.
57. VR: Secy. to Gullett, 4 Feb. 1932, Gov. depts. to and from.
58. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930; VR: Secy. to Kelly, 30 Nov. 1932, Corres. 1932-1936; Report, 9 Apr. 1931, Corres. 1925-1931; Director's Minute Book, 27 Jan., 19 Aug. 1931, 4 July 1932, 2 Aug. 1933. Real wages for Europeans were reduced by requiring them to supply their own rations, valued in 1930 at £1 a week. VR: Employees' Accounts and Contracts 1930-1940.
59. VR: Dawe to Secy., 4 Nov. 1933, Corres. 1933-1934.
60. VR: Secy. to Gullett, 4 Feb. 1932; Hall to Secy., 23 Dec. 1932; Synan to Director, 27 Feb. 1933, Gov. depts. to and from; Secy. to Wilson, 20 June 1933, Corres. 1932-1936.
61. Bennett, *Wealth*, 222.
62. VR: Dawe to Secy., 24 Nov. 1934, Corres. 1932-1936.
63. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, 8 Jan. 1935; WPHC 1541/34: ARSC 1933; VR: Secy. to Manager, 15 Jan. 1935, Corres. 1932-1936; Bennett, *Wealth*, 197-198. The tax was imposed in the early 1920s and continued throughout the 1930s.
64. WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, 14 May, 16-31 Aug. 1934; Bennett, *Wealth*, 172-173; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1934; VR: Kelly, [ca. June 1935], Employees' Corres. 1932-1953.

65. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1934; WPHC 1612/35: ARLD 1934.

66. Ashby, *Blackie*, 91; VR: Director's Minute Book, 14 Sept. 1934; Dawe to Secy., 24 Nov. 1934, Con-es. 1932-1936; Kelly to Director, 6, 28 Mar., 29 June, 27 Aug., 9, 23, 25, 26 Sept., 30 Oct., 19 Nov. 1935; Mrs. Kelly to Brunell, 19 July 1935; Courtney to Barwell, 11 Nov. 1937, Corres. 1937-1939; Board Minutes of Kauri Timber Co., 20 Aug. 1925. See also BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Mar. 1929, June 1936.

67. WPHC 477/96: Annual Report, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1896; *The Sun* (Sydney), 6 Aug. 1911; WPHC 8311932: Garvey, The Depopulation of Vanikoro, 2 Jan. 1932.

68. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, 10-30 Dec. 1935, Mar. 1936.

69. WPHC 2122/36: Miller to Manager, 4 July 1936; Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936 and encls. The Malaitans were Tariria (of Itum, Taka Taka), Isnarna (Apapor), Kahui (Huareah), Onomai (Waiaha), Marmia'a (Huapenalia), Paemae (Saroasi), and Marsmia (Alalo); the Santa Cruz men were Membalu (Noli) and Menora (Venga); and the Reef Islander was Matoko of Tenga (*sic*).

70. VR: Wilson to Secy., 16 Aug. 1933, Corres. 1935; Bennett, *Wealth*, 177; Chris Hadley, *A Forester in the Solomon Islands, Diary and Letters, 1953-1958* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1991), 54, 95.

71. WPHC 1587/35: Diary, Santa Cruz, May-Nov. 1936; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, Apr., June 1936, encl.; WPHC 2122/36: Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936 and encls.; WPHC 2744/37: ARLD; VR: Wilson to Secy., 16 Aug. 1933; Courtney to Miller, 11 July 1936; Courtney to Secy., 14 July 1936, Corres. 1932-1936; Hadley, *A Forester*, 234.

72. VR: Courtney to Burwell, 30 Sept., 11 Nov. 1937, Corres. 1937-1939; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1938, ARSC 1939; WPHC 2399/41: ARLD 1940.

73. VR: Smith to Secy., 18 Aug. 1928; Secy. to Curtis, 25 May 1927, Corres. 1925-1931; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; WPHC 2122/36: Hetherington to Acting RC, 25 Aug. 1936; Crichlow to Hetherington, 12 Dec. 1936.

74. VR: Boye to Secy., 10 Nov. 1941, Corres. 1939-1949. See also WPHC 2464/14; WPHC 1538/16; WPHC 3091115; WPHC 2667/22.

75. WPHC 827/30: King's Regulation No. 7 of 1923 (encl. with Report of Labour Commission, 1929).

76. VR: Faithfull, 1925, Reports; de Bondy to DO, 28 Jan. 1926, Corr. 1925-1931; McGregor, 9 Nov. 1929, Contracts; Director's Minute Book, 11 Dec. 1925.

77. VR: Dawe to Secy., 22 Mar. 1937; Employees' Accounts and Contracts, 1930-1940; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1939.

78. Bennett, *Wealth*, 259-263.

79. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1940.
80. BSIP 9/V/5: Notes on RC's Tour, 1940.
81. VR: Boye to Secy., 8 May 1940, 13 Aug. 1941, Corres. 1939-1949.
82. VR: Boye to Secy., 7 Oct. 1941, Corres. 1939-1949.
83. VR: Boye to Secy., 6 Dec. 1941, Corres. 1939-1949.
84. Dudley Kiau of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992.
85. Bennett, *Wealth*, 286-292.
86. VR: Boye to staff, 9 Feb. 1942; Boye to Secy., 19 Feb. 1942; Boye to Gibson et al., 17 Mar. 1942; Boye to Secy., 17 Mar., 2, 26 May, 24 June, 18 Sept., and 31 Dec. 1942, 25 Mar. and 5 July 1943, Corres. 1939-1949.
87. VR: Boye to Secy., 5 July 1943, Corres. 1939-1949; Kiau, interview.
88. VR: Smith to Secy., 18 Aug. 1928, Corres. and Reports; O'Shea to Court, 27 June 1930, Corres. A-Z 1935-1941; Rogers, Report, Sept. 1961, Reports; Walter Rapo of Lavaka, Vanikoro, interview, 1992.
89. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1944; British Solomon Islands Protectorate, *The Laws of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate: Labour* (London: HMSO, 1963), 313-353. See also VR: King's Regulation No. 5 of 1947, 1 Aug. 1947.
90. Bennett, *Wealth*, 292-299; Hugh Laracy, ed., *Pacific Protest: The Maasina Rule Movement, Solomon Islands, 1944-1952* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1983).
91. R. A. Dethridge, former company employee, led the recruiting expedition. BSIP F 28/14 part I: Archer to Parkinson, 9 July 1945 and encl.
92. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1947; Ben Tua of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992; BSIP 9/I: Jones to DO, 20 Apr. 1947. Cf. Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands," 82.
93. William Davenport, "Experiences of Santa Cruz Islanders," in *The Pacific Theater: Island Representations of World War II*, ed. Geoffrey White and Lamont Lindstrom (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 270-274; Tua, interview.
94. VR: McEwin to Secy., 4 Apr., 23 May 1951, 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960; *PIM*, Mar. 1933, 133; George Moody, pers. com., 1994. McEwin was the assigned officer to witness the maximum one-year contracts as well as other government business.
95. VR: McEwin to Secy., 23 May 1951, Corres. 1949-1960.
96. Raymond Firth, *Social Change in Tikopia: A Re-study of a Polynesian Community after a Generation* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 47, 115 n, 121-122; Moody, pers. com.



97. Eric H. Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration to the Russell Islands," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 77, no. 2 (1968): 163, 165, 172; Bennett, *Wealth*, 177; VR: Monthly Reports, July, Sept. 1951, Mar., June 1952; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; WPHC F 15/52: DC to Secy. to Gov., 11 June 1953.
98. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1941.
99. J. Spillius, "Polynesian Experiment: Tikopia Islanders as Plantation Labour," *Progress*, 46-47 (1957): 91-96; Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration," 163-175.
100. See, for example, VR: Boye to Secy., 23 June 1939, Corres. 1937-1939; McEwin to Secy., 20 Mar. 1950, Corres. 1949-1960; Davidson(?), Reports, Apr. 1950-22 July 1954, Victorian Manager's Reports.
101. VR: McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951, 8 Jan., 10 Feb. 1953; Moody to Secy., 3 Feb. 1952, Corres. 1949-1960; Kiau, interview; *PIM*, Mar. 1933, 133.
102. VR: McEwin to Secy., 8 Jan. 1931, Corres. 1949-1960.
103. BSIP F 15/52: DC to Secy. to Gov., 11 Jan. 1953.
104. VR: McEwin to Secy., 10 Feb. 1953, Corres. 1949-1960.
105. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1953.
106. *PIM*, Feb. 1953, 16; Apr. 1953, 45; Jan. 1955, 80; VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports.
107. Clifford S. James, *Diseases Commonly Met with in Melanesia and Polynesia* (Auckland: Institute Printing and Publishing Society, 1956), 5, 10-14, 34, 47-50, 61.
108. *PIM*, July 1952, 107; VR: Boye to Secy., 8 and 18 May 1940, 10 Nov. 1941, Con-es. 1939-1949; McEwin to Secy., 20 Oct. 1949, Corres. 1949-1960; Monthly Reports, 1951-1960; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1941, 1944-1955; Hadley, *A Forester*, 50, 89-90; Tua, interview; Caspar of Malo, Te Motu Neo, interview, 1992.
109. *PIM*, Mar. 1953, 133; VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960; *Annual Report of British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1953-1954* (London: HMSO, 1955), 11. The task or "contract" system by which bonuses for extra production were added to minimum wage was common on plantations in the 1930s. Bennett, *Wealth*, 160, 221, 226; Larson, "Tikopian Labour Migration," 169-170.
110. VR: McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960.
111. VR: McEwin to Secy., 18 Jan. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960.
112. Jonah Menape of Niep, Ndenö, interview, 1992; Kiau, interview. For an account of a typical loading operation see *PIM*, Jan. 1955, 80, 94-95.

113. VR: McEwin to Secy., 12 Apr. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960.

114. WPHC F45/5/7: Logie to Financial Secy., 8 Mar. 1954.

115. VR: McEwin to Secy., 18 Jan. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960.

116. BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1932; BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954; VR: Smith to Secy., 16 June 1928, Corres. 1925-1931; McEwin, Monthly Report, Mar. 1951; McEwin to Secy., 31 July 1951; McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960; Rapo, interview; Kiau, interview. William Davenport mistakenly states Jones left the district permanently during the war. He left about ten years later. Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands," 81.

117. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954.

118. VR: Secy. to Manager, 22 Apr. 1953, Corres. 1949-1960; McEwin, Proposed Logging Policy, 24 June 1953; Davidson, Report on Logs from Vanikoro, 21 July 1954, Victorian Manager's Reports; Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954; Rogers, Report, Sept. 1961, Reports; Haling to Secy., 3 Oct. 1955 and encl.; Davidson(?), Reports, Apr. 1950-22 July 1954; Greentree to Secy., 18 Jan., 15 Mar., 14 May 1954, Newmarket Plywood Pty. Ltd. Corres.

119. VR: Monthly Report, Apr. 1954.

120. Bennett, *Wealth*, 308.

121. VR: Monthly Report, Apr. 1954.

122. BSIP 9/III/1: ARED 1954.

123. VR: McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960. A ton of shell bought for £75 at Vanikoro fetched £280-300 in Sydney. VR: McEwin to Secy., 30 Mar. 1954, Corres. 1949-1960.

124. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports.

125. Hadley, *A Forester*, 164-165.

126. VR: Beckett, Report on Logging Operations, Dec. 1954, Reports; Monthly Report, Aug., Nov. 1955; Filewood to Secy., 30 Sept. 1955, Corres. 1949-1960; Hadley, *A Forester*, 164-165.

127. WPHC 1422/29: ARSC 1928; WPHC 1290/30: ARSC 1929; BSIP 9/III/2: ARSC 1930-1944; WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, May-Sept. 1934; BSIP 9/III/3: QRSC, 31 Dec. 1935; BSIP 9/V/5: Diary, Santa Cruz, 20 Apr. 1937; BSIP 9/I: Tour Report, Santa Cruz, Dec. 1950; Mo'ea Pepechi of Vatumanivo, Guadalcanal, interview, 1976.

128. BSIP 9/III/1: Comments on ARED 1953; VR: King's Regulation No. 5 of 1947.

129. Hadley, *A Forester*, 29, 35-36, 40-43, and following pages.
130. VR: Smith to Secy., 5 Oct. 1928, Con-es. 1925-1931; Kelly to Secy., 18 Mar. 1935, Corres. 1937-1939; Moodie, Application, 31 Aug. 1937, Job Applications, 1932-1938; *Sun and Guardian* (Sydney), 10 July 1932; B. Burke, pers. com., 1994.
131. WPHC 1359/34: Diary, Santa Cruz, 2 Mar. 1934.
132. VR: Dawe to Administrator, 23 Jan. 1926, Gov. depts. to and from. Women came under the "light work" category. WPHC 827/30: King's Regulation No. 7 of 1923 (encl. with Report of Labour Commission, 1929).
133. Hector MacQuarrie, *Vouza and the Solomon Islands* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1946), 48-65; see also Struben, *Coral*, 85; Hadley, *A Forester*, 54-55. The same is said of a ghost woman who haunts the Kira Kira area.
134. Mari Lauli of Buma, Vanikoro, interview, 1992; Kiau, interview
135. Forestry Dept., *Annual Reports 1954, 1960-1963* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1955, 1961-1964).
136. Lauli, interview; Davenport, "The Population of the Outer Reef Islands," 73-75; WPHC 1187/26: RC to HC, 21 May 1926 and encls.
137. VR: Monthly Report, July 1958.
138. VR: Outline of Proposed Increase in Production, June 1957, Reports.
139. VR: Monthly Report, Jan. 1956.
140. VR: Monthly Report, May 1956.
141. VR: Filewood to Secy., 29 May 1956, Corres. 1949-1960.
142. VR: Monthly Report, May 1956.
143. VR: Filewood to Secy., 9 July 1956, Corres. 1949-1960.
144. Forestry Dept., *Annual Report 1956* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1957); VR: Bennett(?) to Secy., 3, 15 Oct., 7 Dec. 1960, Letters from Manager 1960-1964; Hanson, Royalty Appraisal, Oct. 1958.
145. Forestry Dept., *Annual Report 1960* (Honiara: Government Printer, 1961), 18.
146. VR: Powell to Secy., 3 June, 6 Nov. 1963, Letters from Manager 1960-1964; Menape, interview.

147. VR: Rogers to Taylor, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports 1949-1963.

148. VR: Wilber Saxton Report, 21 Nov. 1963, Reports; Reginald Walter Bila and Benjamin Kase of Lavaka, Basile Yabwe of Vanikoro, interviews, 1992; Tua, Caspar, Menape, interviews.

149. Hadley, *A Forester*, 91-92, 171, 290.