

Subject: Native Labor Survey--New Caledonia and Dependencies.

4. Concerning the distribution ratio of guides, laborers, etc., who are employed at the present time by various U. S. Army authorities, two factors are taken into consideration; (1) the pressure of priority work and (2) the necessary distribution of district and tribal workers.

5. Camp Montravel (reference a) is located two kilometers north of Noumea on the road to Ducos and is controlled by the French Colonial Administration working in conjunction with the French Militia. At the present time, there are 550 workers under contract by both French and American authorities, and 200 native militia quartered there.

6. Tribal Chiefs have agreed to furnish selected young men that can be spared from their normal duties as workers in the lumber yards, public works department, and in the local nickel plant. The French have levied as heavily as possible on the various tribes on New Caledonia and its Dependencies in order to provide sufficient workers for their own needs. The comparatively small man-power pool available has made their problem difficult in the extreme. Every conceivable means have been used in order to gain the extra few hundred laborers assigned to U. S. Army Forces on New Caledonia. All French authorities with whom the labor situation was discussed have stated that they are neglecting their own problems in order to make the compromise that present conditions demand.

7. Labor is normally obtained by making written contracts with the tribal chiefs who agree to furnish the above mentioned young men who can be best spared from their normal duties. These contracts and relationships are written and maintained by the Bureau Des Affaires Indigenes. The American Army authorities have made labor contracts directly with the French Colonial Administration as all natives are wards of the French Government. The usual basis of employment is given in reference (b).

8. The coffee crop which utilizes a good deal of native labor retains its economic importance despite war conditions. Formerly, most of the crop was exported to France but arrangements are being made to arrive at a reciprocal trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand in which coffee would be exchanged for commodities from the Antipodes. All authorities consulted agree that a very real economical distress would result if the labor now employed in agricultural pursuits was to be further diverted. The native elements

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directly control one-third of the coffee industry and, seasonally, have to draw upon tribes from other districts to help them in the picking. Similarly, workers not so engaged draw upon coffee plantation labor to help them in their own agricultural pursuits. An economic condition has resulted wherein the labor rotation is in direct proportion to the crop rotation. This situation is Island-wide. Another point of interest, economically, is the fact that the coffee ripening varies in certain districts--which means that there is no definite coffee "season".

9. French authorities have released to the U. S. Army some of the workers used for normal public works, and are most emphatic in stating that a further diversion would be an error; road laborers in particular are needed, due to the heavy punishment military trucks are giving the highways at present. The recent revolt (November 12, 1942) at Hienghene was a direct result of conscripting more than a normal quota of natives.

10. There are no skilled artisans available locally. This class of labor has never been included among the native element.

11. There are not enough Javanese or Tonkinese laborers to fulfill the nickel plant requirements. On the contrary, some native Melanesians are working at the nickel plant--which is authoritatively stated to be undermanned.

12. Until November 16, 1942, Captain Da Acosta believed that up to 200 convict laborers might be available to the First Marine Amphibious Corps. These laborers were expected to have been rounded up by the French Militia for taking part in the sporadic rebellion at Hienghene on November 11-12, 1942 (Paragraph 9). However, on November 17, 1942, the Captain stated that only twenty five natives had been captured, so must be discounted as a source of labor.

13. Captain Da Acosta stated on November 17, 1942, that he had received definite information to the effect that 300 laborers were immediately available from Wallis and Fortuna Islands; 200 from the former and 100 from the latter. This labor is semi-indigenous to the islands and includes many persons of mixed racial ancestry--the principal races represented include Javanese, Hindus, Negroes, and Polynesians mixed with local native stock. These people are wards of the French Government, and terms for hiring them would be based

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on a similar contract now existing between U. S. Army authorities and the French Colonial Administration (reference b). Briefly, the following contractual precedence has been established: Employer (U. S. Army) is obligated to furnish transportation to and from point of origin, a wage and subsistence scale of twenty seven and one-half francs per day per man, an overtime wage scale of two francs per hour per man (a working week consists of six nine hour days), housing facilities, and a work tenure not to exceed three months. This later provision, however, may be subject to amendment in the case of natives not originating in New Caledonia or its Dependencies.

14. Captain Da Acosta stated that there was a remote possibility of supplementing the 300 laborers mentioned above with 50 to 100 natives taken from various local sources.

15. Attached is a supplementary map of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Group which shows the labor distribution as nearly as it is possible to determine at the present time.

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H. E. M. Thompson,
Lieutenant, USNR