

PART III--EDUCATION CONDITIONS

A. EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The aim in Niue is to provide as high a standard of education as possible for all children between the ages of six and fourteen, and to extend the period of learning for the most promising children to enable them to train for the task of taking over the control of the affairs of their island and people. Since the population of Niue is too small to warrant the establishment of large secondary schools or training colleges, this policy is carried out by sending successful scholarship candidates to New Zealand secondary schools, and by the services of a small nucleus of European teachers whose principal task is to assist local teachers to improve their own standards of teaching. One of the greatest difficulties to be overcome is the keen desire of the Niueans themselves that school subjects should be taught solely in English, a language in which they are not proficient and one which is rarely used by them outside the schoolroom. An endeavour is being made to convince the Niueans of the importance of their own language in education and to assist them in the mastery of both languages.

The Administration maintains three schools, which are under the control of a European Education Officer. The London Missionary Society provides the education in those villages where there are no Administration schools, and during the year under review a subsidy of £800 was paid to the Society for its services. Four additional schools are expected to be built by the Administration during the current year to extend Government educational facilities to all parts of the island. When these are completed, the system of free Government education which at present obtains in the Administration schools will be provided to all children of school age. The Administration schools are in permanent buildings constructed of limestone, most of which are in good condition and are well suited to tropical climates, whilst the Missionary Society conducts its schools for the most part in Church or Sunday School buildings.

The curriculum for the schools was laid down by regulations in 1934, when special emphasis was placed on the teaching of the English language. The intention now, however, is to increase the amount of vernacular used in the schools until the people appreciate its value and the need for teaching younger children more through this medium. The indigenous culture of the island is being fostered in schools, and Native handicrafts are being increasingly encouraged as a part of school activities. Training in good habits of health, elementary hygiene, and sanitation is given, and physical education is taught in all classes. A 16 mm. sound-film projector has been made available to schools, and teaching aids, European text-books, and film-strip projectors are supplied by the New Zealand Government.

Six Niuean boys are at present being educated in New Zealand secondary schools under the New Zealand Government scholarship scheme referred to earlier. Two Niuean boys are also training as Native medical practitioners at the Central Medical School, Suva, and four girls are training as nurses at the Apia Hospital, Western Samoa. The London Missionary Society provides selected students with further education prior to calling them for duties as Native pastors in the villages.

Manual-training classes are maintained for the senior boys of Administration schools and it is planned to develop this work. Girls learn sewing and mending under a European teacher. There are no other facilities for technical training, and the only industry in which this is needed or can be given is the local Public Works Department.

Teachers are trained by a pupil-teacher system supplemented by two afternoon lectures per week, and demonstration lessons given by the European Education Officer and the infant-mistress. Local teachers are required to pass examinations to advance in