

PUBLIC WORKS.

During the past year the following public works have been carried out in the several islands :—

				£	s.	d.
Rarotonga—						
Three concrete bridges, Arorangi District	..	..	..	572	16	2
Resumption of land, Sections 10 and 3	..	..	..	250	0	0
Waterworks, Avarua (for year)	..	..	..	317	18	6
Rarotonga and Mangaia—						
Painting Government buildings	..	..	..	118	14	6
Mangaia Reef passage	..	..	..	336	11	4
Aitutaki—						
Addition and repairs to Government building	114	7	0
Resumption of land, Section 3	47	0	0
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				£1,757	7	6

In addition to the above, £68 16s. 1d. has been expended from the local Public Works Fund in repairs to roads and bridges damaged by the high seas on the 7th March last.

With reference to the item, "Resumption of land, £250," I may explain that the whole of the amount due on the "Whare Manahiri" site and village-site taken four years since has now been paid off. Section 3, Arutanga, was taken to extend the Government offices site at Aitutaki and to prevent the erection of stores within a few feet of the Courthouse.

In the matter of the water-supply, thirty-one houses have been connected with the main pipe-line during the year. The total expenditure on this work to date has been £2,232 15s. 2d., of which sum £446 7s. is recoverable from ratepayers, leaving £1,786 8s. 2d. as the net cost of the work to this Administration. Of the £446 7s. chargeable to ratepayers, the sum of £362 5s. 4d. has already been recovered, leaving a balance of £84 1s. 8d. still due. There are now 120 ratepayers on the roll, who return an income of £120 per annum, or 6½ per cent. on the outlay.

The total expenditure on public works during the last ten years has been £12,929 1s. 2d.

FUTURE WORKS REQUIRED.

Concrete shed, 20 ft. by 15 ft., on the end of the Aitutaki Wharf, as a store for copra or fruit, to protect same from the weather. Urgent. £100.

The heavy seas of the morning of the 7th March destroyed or damaged five wooden bridges and swept away the approaches of three concrete bridges. These damages we are now making good, and the cost will probably amount to £400.

The continuous rains of the last fifteen months have prevented all work on the Maraerenga Lagoon. This work must, however, be finished during the present year, and may cost anything up to £200. Urgent.

At Mangaia, I propose to vote £60 towards the cost of cement for two tanks at Ivirua and Oneroa respectively, the people of the island providing stone and gravel and doing the work.

I propose also to place £400 on the estimates in aid of the reef-passage. I have always been doubtful as to the utility of this passage, but it may be worth the trial.

About 30 acres of the Island of Takutea remain to be planted, and the 170 acres already planted must be cleared. Cost, £100.

At Rarotonga we must meet the requirements of the place, viz.: Hospital, £400; Medical Officer's residence, £200; two fumigating-chambers, £200; cement-store and two cells, £200.

It may be that we shall find that this large sum of £2,260 is beyond our financial power, but in such case the least important of these works can wait.

THE ISLAND OF ATIU.

This very fine island has hitherto been left severely alone by reason of the fact that the people are the least civilised of the whole Group, and that it was advisable that they should observe the influence of civilisation on the other islands before it was tried on themselves. Moreover, our finances did not permit us to establish European officers on every island, however much they might be required. As to all of these islands, it may be truthfully said that we have had to develop the trade and revenue before we could take the civilising measures that are apt to cost money.

The area of Atiu is about the same as Rarotonga, but the percentage of good land is somewhat greater; but, notwithstanding these advantages, the exports of the island are very small, and do not exceed those of Mauke, an island that has about one-fifth of the area of Atiu, and not half the population.

The population of this island does not exceed nine hundred of all ages and sexes, but it is absurd to find that they did not export more than 41 tons of copra during the year 1907, only 13,762 cases of oranges, and 36 tons of candlenuts—a most inadequate return for an island that could well support five thousand prosperous people.

I would suggest that the time has now arrived when this island should be placed under the tutelage of a Resident Agent, and taught how to take its true position in the Group. The sooner the people are encouraged to call in the Land Titles Court to settle their numerous disputes, and prevent the further encroachments of the *aronga mana* (chiefs), the better will it be for them, for it has already been demonstrated that security of tenure only will develop the resources of an island. If we can give a valid title to the lands, leases to Europeans will follow, and the rapid development of the island under European methods will encourage the Native landowners to imitate those methods. These things can only be