

## COOK ISLANDS.

### REPORT OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER OF RAROTONGA FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1918.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 27th July, 1918.

During the past year we have made steady progress, in spite of the disadvantages of war conditions.

The following message from His Excellency the Governor-General to the people was translated into Maori and read in all the churches and in all the Island Councils throughout the group. It was greatly appreciated, and has done much to stimulate the fine feeling for the Empire that is universal in these islands.

“As the representative of His Majesty the King, I want to express to you the deep appreciation that I feel for all you have done in sending your sons to fight for the Empire. Your contributions have been splendid, and I hear nothing but praise of those men who are now actually in the fighting-line. Lady Liverpool and myself have never forgotten the warm welcome which you extended to us both in 1914; and we want now to congratulate all the workers who have laboured so whole-heartedly for patriotic objects since war broke out. To those who have returned sick and wounded we tender our warmest good wishes for a speedy recovery, and to those who have lost their loved ones we extend our deepest sympathy. May God watch over the people of the Cook Islands, and give them happiness and prosperity in the future.”

“LIVERPOOL, Governor-General.”

#### FINANCE.

The Treasurer's report shows that, notwithstanding an unusually heavy expenditure on public works and roads, and the increased general expenses resulting from the war, we have maintained a satisfactory financial position.

Our revenue, of £11,068 is higher by £1,357 than that of the previous year. Its principal items are—Customs duties, £5,489; stamps, £1,015; fees and fines, High Court, £1,167; fruit-inspection, £1,245.

On the debit side it will be seen that public works and roads cost us £3,775, as against £1,200, and the rat plague £1,160, as against £668 in 1916–17. Whilst our efforts to cope with this plague make no small drain upon our resources, the improved copra crop is regarded as some proof of their success. We closed the year with a credit balance of £1,262.

We are gradually strengthening and increasing our sources of revenue, and in regard to that we may look forward with confidence to the future.

#### PUBLIC WORKS.

The Public Works Department has had a busy year. Large concrete tanks for water-storage have been built at Palmerston Island, Penrhyn, and Manihiki. At Aitutaki new beacons have been erected, the wharf has been repaired, and improvements have been made in the water-supply. A new Courthouse has been built at Rakahanga. At Mangaia a comfortable Council Chamber and Courthouse, with mail-room, dispensary, &c., have been provided. At Rarotonga a large public school for Avarua district has been built, and the telephone service installed. In addition, there has been the usual upkeep of public buildings, the renewal of several bridges, and the maintenance of roads, &c.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH.

There have been several changes in the medical staff. After a long period of faithful service as Chief Medical Officer Dr. G. Pearce Baldwin resigned. Dr. R. S. Trotter has taken his place, and Dr. E. J. Moore is now Assistant Medical Officer, *vice* Dr. D. N. Matheson, who was, unfortunately, compelled to resign, owing to ill health.

Our medical service is impeded even more than other Departments by the absence of regular communication between the Islands; but notwithstanding this it has a very good year's work to its credit.

In the Northern Islands a general clean-up of the settlements, and the burning of a number of old and infected dwellings, has improved the hygienic conditions. Severe dengue fever at Mangaia, Mauke, and Aitutaki caused many deaths.

At Rarotonga the public health has been satisfactory. The number of leper patients in the isolation camps at Penrhyn, Rakahanga, and Aitutaki shows no increase. There have been no cases in the Southern Group.

Sister M. M. la Fontaine, a trained New Zealand nurse, has been appointed Island Nurse at Aitutaki, an important island of 1,200 inhabitants. Reports of her work show that she is dealing with upwards of seventy cases per week. Her services are evidently in great demand, and there is no doubt that they will prove of great advantage to the island.

If this promising experiment proves successful, proposals for the appointment of an Island Nurse to Mangaia, and to each of the other important islands of the Group, will be submitted for your approval.