

SESSION II.
1923.
NEW ZEALAND.

COOK AND OTHER ISLANDS.

[In continuation of Parliamentary Paper, A.—3, 1922.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMORANDUM.

SUMMARIES of the annual reports of the Cook Islands and Niue Administrations are attached hereto.

During the past year Mr. J. G. L. Hewitt, S.M., completed his term as Resident Commissioner, Cook Islands Administration, and was succeeded by Judge H. F. Ayson, of the New Zealand Native Land Court.

Mr. G. N. Morris, a former Resident Commissioner of Niue Island, was reappointed, and assumed the duties of his office in November last.

It is a pleasure to record a marked improvement in finance and trade in the Cook Islands in the last twelve months as compared with the immediately preceding years. It will be seen from the report which follows that the total trade of the Cook Group shows the substantial increase of £70,193 over that of last year, and a most gratifying feature in this connection is the fact that of the total increase the large sum of £56,441 represents an increase in the value of fruit and produce exported. The balance of trade has now turned most definitely in favour of the Islands. The Treasury balance-sheet also shows that the financial year ended with a surplus of £2,802 14s. 5d., and, further, that the Administration is in possession of assets to the value, on a most conservative basis, of over £60,000. From every point of view, therefore, the prospects for the future are most encouraging. In fact, the only serious obstacle to a rapid expansion of production and trade is the existing poor facilities for transport. The lack of means of reliable communication with some of the most important of the outer islands of the Lower Group also imposes a severe handicap. Every effort will be made to remove the latter disability by the installation of wireless telephones at the Islands of Aitutaki and Mangaia. The Cook Islands Department has had a vote on its estimates for this purpose for more than a year, but up to the present it has not been able to secure a reliable equipment. It has been very disappointing that wireless communication was not established with Aitutaki for the present orange season. Every effort will be made to link up the island with a Rarotonga radio-station before next season.

A contract has been entered into with Geo. H. Scales (Pacific), (Limited) for a steamer service between the Dominion and Niue. It is anticipated that the vessel's itinerary will be extended to Apia (Western Samoa), and, should conditions warrant, other of our Pacific island possessions. Hitherto communication between New Zealand and Niue has been maintained in a very unsatisfactory fashion by sailing-vessels of different types. Apart from the great hardship which this class of contract vessel has always imposed on the people of Niue by leaving them isolated from the rest of the world during the four or five months of the hurricane season, in recent years two of them have fared forth never to return. These disasters not only seriously dislocated the life and trade of the islanders, but also entailed a heavy expenditure in chartering steamers to search and make special trips. It is certain that these happenings may always be expected so long as the service is carried out by vessels of the type previously employed.

It will thus be readily understood that the new contract marks a most important event in the history of Niue, and opens up great possibilities for the development of trade with that island and our other Pacific groups. It will also largely help to solve many of the medical, educational, and other administrative difficulties now confronting our respective Islands Administrations.

The steamer—one that has hitherto been employed in the fruit trade—is now being overhauled and refitted in London, and is expected to be available for her new employment about the end of September. She will have some accommodation for passengers, and, as far as can be gathered, will be an eminently suitable vessel in all respects for the development of this trade.

M. POMARE,
Minister for Cook Islands.