

PUBLIC WORKS.

During the year the main school building at Arorangi was completed, and a start made upon the erection of the smaller building. The cost to date for material and labour is £1,148 2s. 11d.

The other main activities of this Department have been as follows: Maintenance and repair of roads and bridges, £986 0s. 2d.; repairs and extensions to Government buildings, £1,310 9s. 2d.; making of furniture, &c., for Government buildings and residences, £677 2s. 4d.; construction of telephone to wireless station (with Australian hardwood poles), £283 17s. 2d.

New Works.—The following are the principal new works which are contemplated: Erection of a new Residency at the Island of Atiu (estimated cost), £1,200; hospital alterations and extensions, £1,500; schoolmaster's house, Avarua, £1,200; quarters for single officers, Rarotonga, £200; telephone extensions, Matavera and Arorangi, £400; new freezer, plant, &c., £1,500; improvements to "Whare Manuhiri," £250; completion of Arorangi School, £350; repairs and extensions to other Government buildings, £1,000.

Roads.—As indicated in the last report, the work on the main road has been done by our own working gang, and the change from the old contract system has proved quite satisfactory. It is contemplated that the expenditure upon upkeep, repair, and new work on roads and bridges will cost £1,200 during the coming year.

Telephones.—The lines in Avarua, and from Avarua to the wireless station, have been reconstructed with Australian hardwood poles and a heavier-gauge bronze wire during the year, and the whole system is now in much better order. It is hoped by the end of the coming year to complete the lines to Arorangi on the one side and Matavera on the other, thus giving about eight miles of new work.

LAWS.

Regulations have been made by Order in Council providing for proper inspection and audit of the accounts and transactions of Native companies.

The Trades and Industries Regulations have been made by Order in Council, conferring upon the Resident Commissioner authority to make investigation into any matter relative to any industry carried on or proposed to be carried on in the Cook Islands, and for the purpose of obtaining information which may be required for the due control, regulation, and maintenance of the industries of the Cook Islands; the due observance and enforcement of the laws thereto; the discoveries of breaches of those laws; the prevention or suppression of monopolies, unfair competition, and other practices detrimental to the public welfare; the proper regulation, in the public interest, of the prices of goods and the rates of services; or for any other purpose relative to the industries of the Cook Islands.

A Local Ordinance has been passed in Rarotonga prohibiting, for health reasons, the keeping of pigs within any village or within 150 ft. from any dwellinghouse.

HIGH COURT.

Criminal Jurisdiction.—The total amount of fines inflicted was £964 5s., of which £573 0s. 6d. has been paid and £215 8s. 6d. worked out by imprisonment leaving the total outstanding for the year £175 16s. The balance of outstanding fines for the previous year was £65, but of the total outstanding it is considered that some £38 3s. is irrecoverable, so that the actual asset under the heading of outstanding fines is £202 3s.

Civil Jurisdiction.—The total number of cases heard was 233, made up of applications for divorce, breaches of contracts, debts, &c. The position of cash receipts during the financial year is as follows: Fines paid for the year ending 31st March, 1924, £573 0s. 6d.; amounts paid on account of fines for the year ending 31st March, 1923, £101 13s. 6d.; civil fees, £31 6s. 6d.; sundry fees, £3 8s.; total cash receipts, £709 8s. 6d.

Return of Offences.—A total of 764 cases were heard for criminal offences, breaches of regulations, and for breaches of Local Ordinances, as follows: Wilful damage, 7; contempt of Court, 3; animals trespassing, 52; theft, 28; drunkenness, 99; manufacturing intoxicating liquor, 36; selling intoxicating liquor, 2; consuming intoxicating liquor, 271; gambling, 6; assault, 18; adultery, 1; being in possession of intoxicating liquor, 1; insulting language, 5; profane language, 2; actual bodily harm, 1; breaking and entering, 1; smuggling, 10; bribery, 1; setting fire to house, 2; mental case, 1; breaches of Fruit Regulations, 92; breaches of Education Regulations, 25; breaches of Noxious Weeds Regulations, 6; breaches of Local Ordinances, 94: total, 764. Of the above total cases heard 86 were sentenced to imprisonment, 562 convicted and fined, 23 convicted and discharged, 92 dismissed, and there was 1 mental case.

NATIVE LAND COURT.

The most important work done during the year was the somewhat lengthy hearing of the dispute over the succession to the Ariki title of Makea-nui. The Court's judgment determined the position of the present law and Native custom in all matters regarding Ariki titles, including the relative rights of an Ariki, the Ariki family, the Mataiapos, priests, rangatiras, and the common people, in relation thereto. As this judgment is one of great interest and value, a copy appears as an appendix to this report.

During the year the Court held sittings at Rarotonga, when the following work was done: Succession order made, 1; partition orders made, 2; confirmations of alienation, 2; hearing dispute as to title of Ariki, 1; cases adjourned, 2.

Fees.—Total fees imposed for new work, £8 2s. 6d. Fees collected during year: Court fees, £34 14s. 6d.; office fees, £12 2s.; total, £46 16s. 6d. Total outstanding fees on 31st March, 1924, £840 2s. (including amount of £8 2s. 6d. for new work).