

VISIT OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER TO NORTHERN ISLANDS.

During the year I paid a ten-weeks visit to all our Northern Islands, accompanied by the Registrar, Mr. Savage.

The health of the people was found to be good, the villages (with the exception of Pukapuka), clean, and matters generally in a satisfactory condition. At meetings with the various Island Councils and with representative Natives many matters were discussed and explained for the general welfare of the people in these remote islands. At Penrhyn and Manihiki matters connected with the pearl-shell fisheries, and the regulations governing the same, were considered, and a few minor points adjusted.

Since my visit the passage through the reef to the wharf at Penrhyn has been marked with beacons, and it is now safe for fairly large vessels. At Manihiki, Rakahanga, and Pukapuka the existing passages through the reefs have been improved and made safer, and new ones blasted out, thus facilitating working of vessels in almost all weathers. Further work in this direction will be done during the coming year.

The 5,000-gallon concrete tanks which have been erected in all the villages of the various islands were found to be in good order. Additional tanks are being built at Pukapuka.

All the leper stations were visited, and the conditions of segregation noted. Reference to this matter will be found under the heading of "Health."

Several long-standing and important cases in the High Court were dealt with, and arrears of work wiped out. A few Land Court matters and compensation claims were also disposed of.

Visits were paid to all schools, and the new scheme by which we have the supervision of same was found to be working smoothly. All routine matters requiring the attention of the Resident Commissioner and the Registrar were brought up to date, and altogether the visit was of considerable mutual benefit to all concerned.

Several changes took place during the year. Mr. J. C. Cameron was transferred from Mauke to Mangaia, *vice* Mr. Thomas Duncan (deceased), and Mr. W. J. Dyer was transferred from Atiu to Mauke. Mr. W. H. Scott was in July last appointed Resident Agent at Atiu and head teacher of the school, with his wife as assistant teacher. Mr. A. A. Luckham having been promoted to the office of Resident Commissioner at Niue, the position of Resident Agent at Aitutaki is being filled by the appointment of Captain E. C. Vellonoweth, late of the Union Steamship Company, who has a first-hand knowledge of Aitutaki and island conditions generally.

Arrangements are in hand to appoint a suitable European Resident Agent for Pukapuka, in the Northern Group. The Pukapukans are the most backward of our people, and as the proposed appointee has teaching qualifications, in addition to a wide knowledge of and experience amongst Native races, it is anticipated that the step being taken will be of great benefit to these people.

POST-OFFICES.

On the 8th May, 1924, the Cook Group was created a separate postal district, with Rarotonga as chief office. The district comprises the following offices, which were transferred from the Auckland District, *viz.* : Rarotonga (chief office), Aitutaki, Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, Penrhyn, Manihiki, and Rakahanga.

Money-order and Savings-bank.—Both European and Native residents have taken advantage of the new system whereby withdrawals may now be paid to depositors on demand at Rarotonga, instead of having to wait for the return of the steamer as heretofore. It is anticipated that with the advantages of the savings-bank being more widely known to the Natives the new order will be more fully availed of in the present year. As some of the Group offices have only been created savings-banks during the year, the position as shown is considered highly satisfactory. It is further anticipated that the interest earned in New Zealand under the favourable conditions of investment provided by the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department on our behalf will show a balance in our favour after taking into account the interest allowed to depositors and working-expenses.

Savings-bank: Number of accounts opened, 358; amount deposited, £25,240 3s. 3d.; interest allowed depositors to 31st March, £424 17s. 9d.; total, £25,665 1s. Number of accounts closed, 27; amount withdrawn, £8,701 10s. 5d.; balance at credit of depositors on 1st April, 1925, £16,963 10s. 7d.

Money-order: Number issued, 966; commission charged, £66 5s. 11d.; amount, £16,001 4s. 6d. Number paid, 651; amount, £16,449 12s. 6d.

Stamps.—The reversion to penny postage, and the withdrawal of the older issues of stamps from sale, have reduced the revenue from this source considerably.

Telephones.—During the year extensive additions have been made. The new line to Matavera has been opened, and the construction of the line to Ngatangia is well in hand. It is proposed to make an early start on the line to Arorangi. New telephones and a thorough overhaul of the Avarua installations are badly needed.

Radios.—The amount of radio business for the year has been well maintained, the stations at Aitutaki and Mangaia being well patronized from this island.

WIRELESS STATIONS.

Regulations providing for amateur receiving stations in the Cook Group.

The linking-up of Aitutaki and Mangaia telegraphically with the outside world has satisfied a long-felt want on the part of the inhabitants, the service being fully appreciated. These stations are being operated by Rarotongan scholarship boys in a very creditable manner.