

COOK ISLANDS.

The Dominion proper each year does a substantial trade with the Cook and Savage Islands. During the past three years, there have been received from this Group goods to the value of £125,446 in 1923, £149,676 in 1924, and £126,465 in 1925. These figures are representative of our purchases of bananas, oranges, and tomatoes, which were valued in 1925 at approximately £106,000. The total also includes some copra (from Niue Island) to the value of £15,334.

The Dominion sends to the Group each year a considerable quantity of manufactured goods and foodstuffs. The value of these in 1925 was £80,977, as against £100,670 in 1923 and £96,757 in 1924. It is satisfactory to note that 70 per cent. of the island requirements are drawn from the Dominion, the remainder being largely composed of goods not produced in New Zealand. There does not appear to be any likelihood of any marked increase in our share of the trade.

FIJI.

The Colony of Fiji had in 1925 a total external trade of £3,427,392, imports being valued at £1,271,135, and exports at £2,156,257.

Fijian exports are represented mainly by sugar, copra, and bananas, while trocas-shells, molasses, and rubber are also of some importance. New Zealand is Fiji's best customer, particularly in relation to sugar and bananas. Of a total export in 1925 of 91,744 tons of raw sugar, the Dominion took 64,020 tons, valued at approximately £980,000. New Zealand also purchases practically the whole of Fiji's export of bananas, to a value of approximately £125,000 per annum. Molasses and other commodities place the total of our purchases from the colony well in advance of those of any other country.

On the other hand, while Fiji imports goods to a value of over a million sterling each year, New Zealand's share of the business in 1924, for example, was only £127,839. Australia in that year supplied goods to the extent of £438,715, and from the United Kingdom Fiji bought to a value of £269,231. A close consideration of the classes of goods bought from Australia in 1924 again shows that, for reasons by no means apparent, New Zealand is not securing the proportion of the Fijian trade which our opportunities would appear to warrant.

The following classes of goods to the values stated were supplied in 1924 by Australia and New Zealand :—

| | Australia. | New Zealand. |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | £ | £ |
| Biscuits | 9,121 | 86 |
| Beer in bottles | 5,334 | 38 |
| Boots and shoes | 2,158 | 688 |
| Brushware | 1,107 | 82 |
| Canvas | 2,945 | Nil |
| Cordage and rope | 5,894 | 739 |
| Drugs | 5,186 | 336 |
| Furniture | 2,029 | 405 |
| Hardware | 23,581 | 2,957 |
| Jams.. .. . | 2,640 | 22 |
| Leatherware | 7,908 | 392 |
| Agricultural machinery | 13,597 | 2,768 |
| Manures | 19,282 | 6,211 |
| Soaps | 3,181 | 1,118 |
| Twine | 1,317 | 104 |

In respect of other commodities, of course, either Australia or New Zealand have special competitive advantages, but in the foregoing, and in regard to other goods now mainly supplied by the United Kingdom, there is ample opportunity for better New Zealand business. Probably our greatest disadvantage is the lack of direct shipping facilities from southern New Zealand ports.

TONGA.

New Zealand already has an appreciable share in the external trade of Tonga, but there, as in the case of other Pacific islands, a better market is available to Dominion manufacturers and traders. The imports of the kingdom in 1925 were valued at £258,322, of which New Zealand supplied £95,306, Australia £79,482, and the United Kingdom £37,831. The trade has grown rapidly during the past few years, the total imports in 1922 being little more than half the figure reached in 1925.

The main product of Tonga is copra, which to a value of over £280,000 was sent in 1925 to the United Kingdom and Europe. Other exports were negligible, the total value of all, including copra, amounting to £290,115.

SHIPPING FACILITIES.

A great deal of attention has recently been given by South Island interests to the matter of direct shipping facilities between southern ports and various Pacific islands. There is little doubt that if better opportunities offered it would be possible largely to increase the Dominion's share of the island import trade. The question is mainly one of transport, and from that point of view is dependent upon an improved demand for island products, of which fruit clearly offers the greatest possibilities. Unless the South Island demand for tropical fruits can be proved to be greater than at present indicated it must remain a difficult matter to arrange on a satisfactory financial footing regular direct steamer connections between the islands and Lyttelton and Dunedin. The subject is now receiving full consideration, and trial shipments have been arranged, as a result of which it may be possible to bring about a regular service satisfactory to both importers and exporters.