

1928.
NEW ZEALAND.

COOK AND OTHER ISLANDS.

[In continuation of Parliamentary Paper A.—3, 1927.]

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

MEMORANDUM.

Cook Islands Department, Wellington, 21st June, 1928.

I SUBMIT the annual report of the Cook Islands and Niue Administrations.

The territory has not yet recovered from the severe storm which visited Rarotonga in April, 1926, nor from drought conditions that existed in Niue during that year, the results of which are reflected in the trade and finance returns.

Owing to the limited resources of these Islands, it is usually necessary during periods of stress caused through such visitations for the Government to render financial assistance to the local Treasuries. With heavy curtailment of expenditure, however, both Administrations have carried on through the last two very difficult years with only a small additional advance made in aid to the Rarotonga Treasury.

I paid a very brief visit to Rarotonga in March last to preside at a Conference, attended by Government representatives, New Zealand fruit merchants, local merchants, and representatives of growers, both European and Native, which was convened with a view to reconstructing the methods of handling fruit in the islands. Due to the helpful attitude of all parties, some very important decisions were arrived at, and I have good reason to believe that the result will be a definite improvement in the quality and grading of fruit exported henceforth from Rarotonga to New Zealand, and that this improvement may later be extended to the outer islands of the Group.

The Native growers of Rarotonga displayed a most commendable spirit of self-help by proposing to erect, at their own cost and with their very limited resources, the packing-sheds necessary under the new regulations, but I anticipate that at a later date it may be advisable to render them some assistance in this direction.

Good work is being done by the Education Department, and through the system of training of pupil-teachers now established it should be possible within a few years to strengthen very materially, by appointments from within the territory itself, the present teaching staffs.

From a medical point of view the position in the territory is very satisfactory. Births continue to show a marked increase over deaths. It is a great pleasure to me to be able to report that at this date every known case of leprosy in our Pacific territories has been transferred to the central Leper Asylum at Makogai (Fiji), where the patients are receiving the very best of medical care and attention. Already several cases have been returned cured from this station, and it is anticipated that a large percentage of the children and those who through strict medical surveillance have been taken in the early stages of the disease will eventually be returned to their island homes.

It is with regret that I refer to the retirement on the 31st March last of Mr. J. D. Gray, whose services as Secretary to the Department during the past seven years have been associated with many important advances in the territory.

M. POMARE,
Minister for the Cook Islands.