

Briefly, the land is inalienable by way of sale save to the Crown for public purposes, and Maori customs are recognized by the Court in all matters pertaining to land. In practice, land required for public purposes is now acquired by lease in perpetuity, thus avoiding alienation. Land may not be taken in execution of debt, and no contract entered into by a Maori is enforceable without the consent of the High Court.

Generally speaking, the laws of the Cook Islands are the same as the laws of New Zealand. There is no difference made between indigenous and non-indigenous residents. Enactments of the Parliament of New Zealand do not automatically come into force in the Cook Islands unless specifically applied.

No distinction is made between the rights of men and women in the area.

## PART II—SOCIAL CONDITIONS

### A. LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

Conditions relating to labour and employment vary widely in the Cook Islands. The reason for this is to be found largely in the differing quality of the arable land. In the Northern Group, which are mainly coral islands, the typical Polynesian subsistence economy prevails, the Maoris making sufficient copra to earn some income. In certain of the islands—namely, Penrhyn and Manihiki—pearl-shell is found, and this is utilized as an additional source of income. The output of copra is determined largely by the number of nuts that have to be used for drinking purposes, and it therefore fluctuates in quantity between wide limits. Land is held throughout the Cook Islands on a communal basis. The Southern Group present, however, a different picture. These islands are more fertile and have an adequate rainfall in most cases. These factors enable export crops such as citrus fruits and arrowroot to be grown. In addition, the presence of an export industry creates a number of tertiary industries which employ some of the population. These industries include stevedoring and handling of fruit for export.

Wage standards are fixed for all types of work following the sitting of a special Wages Tribunal in 1946. Particulars of this body were given in the annual report for 1947. Further progress on questions of industrial relations was made with the passing of the Cook Islands Industrial Union Regulations in 1947. These regulations enabled the registration on the 12th July, 1947, of the Cook Islands (except Niue) Industrial Union of Workers. This union includes all classes of workers and is affiliated to the New Zealand Federation of Labour. Membership is not compulsory, and there are at present no provisions for preference being given to unionists in respect of any work offering.

Provision was also made in the regulations for the settlement of disputes by conciliation or, failing a voluntary settlement, by decision of an Industrial Relations Officer appointed from the Cook Islands Administration. Appeal from such decisions is to an Industrial Magistrate appointed by the Minister of Island Territories for the purpose.

Basic wage-rates range from 7s. to 9s. per day; and for more responsible work, up to 18s. per day.

There has been no industrial dispute this year.

### *Migratory Labour*

The only labour recruited in the territory is that employed by the French Phosphate Co. of Oceania, who work the phosphate deposits at Makatea, in the Society Islands. This work is popular, as it provides a relatively high scale of wages, and many workers seek re-employment. The labour is recruited on an individual basis and is for a period of one year. Workers are medically examined both before and after their term, and a compulsory allotment is paid either to their dependants or to their Savings-bank account.