

Cook Islands Administration Accounting Work

The Department of Island Territories has made available to the Audit Office a report by the Treasurer, Rarotonga, which discloses an unsatisfactory state of the accounting work in the Treasury there. Unless it is remedied it is likely to result in loss to the Administration. The report of the Treasurer, which is detailed and careful, makes it clear that he will require additional staff to place his work on a satisfactory footing, and the Audit Office understands that some assistance has recently been given him. The last accounts certified by the Audit Office covered the financial year to 31st March, 1947, but they are not required to be published, and they are not included in the report of the Administration presented to Parliament.

Cook Islands Fruit Control Scheme

In 1937 the Cook Islands Administration assumed control of the export of citrus fruit and bananas from the islands of the Cook Group, and an advance of £30,000 for working capital was made in that year by the New Zealand Government, and a further advance of £20,000 in 1948-49. To provide the funds necessary for the ordinary expenses of the scheme a levy was imposed on all fruit exported. The accounts disclose a surplus on the annual operations until the 31st March, 1942, since when losses have been incurred, due partly to the fact that fewer shipments have resulted in a decreased revenue from levies and partly to the expansion of the original scheme by the establishment and maintenance of nursery plantations.

Losses are stated to be £11,000 to 31st March, 1949, but the accounts have not been completely audited past 31st March, 1947. The Audit Office has been informed that provision has been made on the Island Territories Department's estimates for 1949-50 for a grant to cover this loss and for a further loan of £30,000 to provide additional funds for making advances to growers.

The accounts relating to this scheme have not been published as required by the Cook Islands Fruit Control Regulations 1937.

Railways Department : Claims for Loss or Damage to Goods

The liability of the Railways Department for loss or damage to goods whilst in the custody of the Department is limited in terms of section 15 (b) of the Government Railways Act, 1926, as amended by section 25 (2) of the Statutes Amendment Act, 1944, and section 6 (2) of the Carriers Act, 1948. Section 15 (f) of the first-named Act provides that the Minister of Railways may make special arrangements to insure any goods delivered on a railway against all loss or damage from any cause whatever. The position may briefly be set out as follows :—

The limits set out in the Government Railways Act (as amended) apply to all goods accepted at " Railway risk," and, subject to payment of a premium of one-sixth of the relative tariff charge, also to goods accepted at " owner's risk " on which otherwise no liability is accepted.

If insurance to an amount in excess of the statutory limit is desired, cover is available on payment of a premium depending on the declared value of the goods and the distance they are to be carried.