

COOK ISLANDS.

REPORT OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER.

No. 1.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 30th April, 1910.

I have the honour to forward to you herewith my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1910.

I arrived here on the 14th July, 1909, to relieve Colonel Gudgeon, Resident Commissioner, upon his retirement, and was received by him with every courtesy. The assistance and valuable information supplied was appreciated.

FINANCE.

It will be seen from the Treasurer's report attached that the revenue for the year totalled £7,655, compared with £7,146 for the previous year—an increase of £509.

The expenditure amounted to £8,230, compared with £5,718 during the previous year. Of this amount £3,807 was expended on public works, as against £1,320 during the year 1908–9.

It was found absolutely necessary for the health of both Europeans and Natives throughout the Group to erect, at a cost of £1,368, a hospital for their requirements, to replace the old dilapidated building formerly used for the purpose.

After completing various other public works, and paying salaries, subsidies, and odd amounts, the cash balance in hand amounts to £4,437.

The £2,000 accumulated in former years—£1,000 of which is on fixed deposit at the Bank of New Zealand, Auckland, and £1,000 invested in New Zealand Government 4-per-cent. debentures—is now earmarked as the nucleus of an insurance fund to cover the buildings of the Government throughout the Group in case of fire. Not a single building is insured, and in the event of a fire occurring the destroyed buildings would have to be replaced out of revenue, which I submit, the Administration could not do and carry on at the same time necessary public works.

The imports and exports are steadily increasing, and the bulk of the trade is being done with New Zealand.

The imports totalled no less a sum than £67,737 last financial year, as compared with £55,021 in the former year, being an increase of £12,716.

The exports reached £73,653, as against £60,652 in 1908, an increase of £13,001.

There is very little doubt that in a comparatively short space of time the imports and exports will reach £100,000.

FRUIT-EXPORT.

The Fruit Inspection and Diseases Ordinance, 1909, is now in full working-order, and it is anticipated that, as a result of the successful working of the regulations made under this Ordinance, the fruit will arrive in New Zealand in much better condition, and will command a better market.

Each Resident Agent is now appointed a Fruit Inspector, with power to reject overripe or badly packed fruit, as well as infected fruit.

Instructions have been given as to the picking, packing, and shipping, and careful attention is being paid to them.

These Islands are in their infancy as far as the production of fruit is concerned—in fact, when one comes to look at the quality of the land, its area, and the climate, very little planting has been done by the Natives in comparison with what yet remains to be done. These remarks do not apply to European planters, who have done excellent work on their plantations: such work is a splendid object-lesson to their Native neighbours, who are quick to follow when they see the advantages derived from careful cultivation, picking, and packing of fruit.

It is intended to furnish the islands of Mangaia, Aitutaki, and Atiu with a supply of plants free of cost, which will be planted under the supervision of the Resident Agent. I am of opinion that this should be done each year, with the object of encouraging the Natives and increasing their exports. The Union Steamship Company has agreed to carry the plants free.

The shipment of oranges during the year consisted of 98,007 cases, an increase of 18,961 cases on the previous year. The orange-crop fluctuates according to the season.

The output of bananas during the year was 98,934 cases and 10,123 bunches, the number of cases having increased by 9,495. Rarotonga supplied an increase of 11,383 cases, but the other islands did not come up to expectations.

I hope that in my next annual report I shall be in a position to inform you that the other islands, with the increased facilities being granted to them, have increased their output.

COPRA.

During the year 1,705 tons of copra were exported, as compared with 1,317 in the previous year. High prices for copra ruled during the year.

It must be borne in mind that it takes at least ten years before cocoanuts come into full bearing. A fairly large tract of country has now been planted, but it will take some time before