

COOK ISLANDS.

REPORT OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 11th June, 1917.

In submitting my report for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1917, I am glad to be able to say that we have experienced a fairly successful year. There has been no hurricane in any part of the Group. Trade and revenue have been fairly well maintained. The public health has improved, and the census shows that our population is no longer diminishing.

VISIT TO THE NORTHERN ISLANDS.

In September last, thanks to the courtesy of the London Missionary Society (who, through their representative here, the Rev. G. H. Eastman, very kindly provided me and other officers of the Administration with passages on the mission steamer "John Williams"), I was enabled to visit all the Northern Islands of the Group.

At Aitutaki, Manihiki, and Rakahanga many ruined houses still bear witness to the fury of the great hurricane of 1914. But the plantations at Aitutaki and the coconut-groves at the other islands have made a splendid recovery.

In this round of visits I travelled upwards of two thousand miles. Besides the usual Court work a great variety of public business was disposed of.

The people of all the islands except Pukapuka and Palmerston are prosperous and contented. In Penrhyn, Manihiki, and Rakahanga they seem to be very well off.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The public health of all the islands was satisfactory. Dr. Trotter, Assistant Medical Officer, accompanied me to some of the islands. He has since then visited all of them.

There are twenty-seven lepers in the Group, nearly all of whom are found in the extreme north, where the disease, introduced, it is believed, from Hawaii, first obtained a footing. Our Resident Agents at Aitutaki, Manihiki, and Penrhyn look as carefully as possible after the lepers under their care. It is manifest, however, that the patients are too scattered. After careful consideration it has been decided, on the recommendation of our Medical Officers, Dr. G. Pearce Baldwin and Dr. R. S. Trotter, to segregate at Penrhyn all leper patients from islands north of Aitutaki, whilst any cases at Aitutaki or from islands south of Aitutaki are to be dealt with there. Penrhyn is our most northerly island, seven hundred miles from Rarotonga. The uninhabited islands in its great lagoon offer special advantages as a site for a sanatorium. There are only three cases of leprosy at Aitutaki, and none at all in the islands of the Lower Group. There are grounds for hope that, with the closer isolation and better medical care that will result from the new scheme of segregation, the disease may eventually be stamped out.

At Penrhyn, Manihiki, and Palmerston the water-supply was deficient, although there is an ample rainfall. To remedy this we have just built two large storage tanks at Penrhyn, two at Manihiki, and another is being constructed at Palmerston.

The Chief Medical Officer's report is attached.

CENSUS.

The census of last year shows that the Maori population of these Islands is holding its own. In the following table are the figures of the three last census periods :—

	1906.		1911.		1916.	
	Whites and Half-castes living as Whites.	Natives and Half-castes living as Natives.	Whites and Half-castes living as Whites.	Natives and Half-castes living as Natives.	Whites and Half-castes living as Whites.	Natives and Half-castes living as Natives.
Rarotonga	107	2,334	139	2,620	163	2,913
Mangaia	8	1,523	5	1,466	4	1,241
Aitutaki	8	1,154	16	1,221	8	1,294
Atiu	4	914	2	810	4	1,752
Mauke	2	444	10	447	10	480
Mitiaro	2	208	1	198	1	236
Palmerston	..	82	..	107	..	1,190
Penrhyn	6	414	3	332	3	312
Manihiki	2	519	4	440	4	775
Rakahanga	1	351	..	315	..	..
Pukapuka	..	435	..	490	..	474
Totals	140	8,378	180	8,446	197	8,567