

NIUE ISLAND.

REPORT OF DEPUTY RESIDENT COMMISSIONER.

SIR,—

Niue Island, 11th April, 1918.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration a report on the work of the Niue Administration for the year ended 31st March, 1918.

FINANCE.

The accompanying statement of receipts (marked "A") shows that the revenue derived from all sources amounted to £2,787 2s. 11½d., which, added to the balance of £1,047 11s. 3d. from the preceding year, made a sum of £3,834 14s. 2½d. available for use during the year under notice. Compared with the year 1916-17 this gives an increase in receipts of £1,039 19s. 4½d., which is mainly due to the payment of £553 10s. contributed by the Natives under the Aid to Revenue Ordinance. A very pleasing feature, too, is the fact that with the exception of one there is an increase under every head of the revenue.

TRADE.

During the year ended 31st December, 1917, the value of exports amounted to £9,400, as against £3,379 for 1916. This great increase is strong evidence of the grand recovery the island has made after the disastrous hurricane of 1915 and the subsequent drought. There was nothing during the year to give the island a set-back, consequently everything grew well. Of this amount, copra to the value of £7,634 was sent to New Zealand; but there is one regrettable feature in connection with the trade of this island—the means of getting stuff away are nothing like adequate enough. The "Awanui" came down only five times. As she can take away at the most only 75 tons every trip, there was left awaiting shipment at the close of the year no less than 280 tons of copra. Had this been taken away the value of the exports would have amounted to over £15,000, an increase of 66½ per cent. on what was actually shipped. Conditions like these are most discouraging to the traders, who, far remote from a market and having to pay high freights quite incommensurate with the returns and advantages they obtain, are able to get away only a modicum of what they buy. When these conditions exist little trading is done, for when Natives know that traders cannot get the produce away they will let the nuts rot rather than dry copra for low prices. The island now is in a flourishing condition from a growing point of view, but it will never be so commercially and financially while high freights and an unsatisfactory service, such as we have now, exist. It must be noted that unless the copra can be shipped things are at a standstill and every one suffers. Low freights, a more frequent service, or a larger boat at stated intervals are the remedies for the evils existing at the present time.

As in the case of exports, the value of imports has materially risen. Goods to the value of £13,079, against £9,572 for 1916, were shipped to Niue.

PUBLIC WORKS.

The first annual payment under the Aid to Revenue Ordinance on the part of every male Native over the age of eighteen became due during the months of July and October last. Consequently, on receipt of a sufficiently large sum from this source a start was made with the repairing of the roads. The first road attended to was that portion of the Alofi-Liku Road called Motutapu, extending from Mana Corner to the top of Peta Hill. The amount paid for the work, £373 13s. 9d., was £20 3s. 9d. in excess of that collected for the purpose, but to complete the specified portion of the work the latter sum was paid out of the general funds of the Administration. The amount collected under the Ordinance is not sufficient for the amount of roadwork to be done. With such an amount as mentioned above it is possible to do only a small portion of the work; then the rest of the roads have to wait till the next payment is due. In the meantime the already bad roads are getting worse, while the parts repaired are suffering from lack of funds. On this island, where it is necessary to cart the copra—the staple product—good roads are absolutely necessary. Bad roads hamper trade considerably. May I suggest, then, that the Department give the Administration assistance in the direction of granting it a subsidy of £1 for £1 of the amount contributed under the Ordinance. There is at present a very bad piece of road which requires urgent attention. I see no way of being able to repair it until the next payment of the tax is due.

By means of prison labour other roads have been efficiently repaired, but the labour of this form is very restricted.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

During the year all necessary repairs to Government buildings were made. These were in all cases small and unimportant.