

In the case of Niue, as at Rarotonga, the local Administration carries out its own public works without assistance, except that on this occasion a grant of £1,000 is being made towards the local hospital as a subsidy on the donation of £1,000 contributed by the Red Cross Society through His Excellency Lord Liverpool, who took a keen interest in the matter, and whose action has been deeply appreciated by the Niue-Islanders.

The proposal made by the Trade Commissioners in regard to the control of the output of copra at Niue is one that appears worthy of consideration, and the matter will be thoroughly inquired into.

The cost of the Administration in New Zealand is about £250—Salary of Secretary, £100; and clerical and office expenses, £150.

Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Liverpool paid a farewell visit to the Islands in June of last year, and were received with great cordiality, genuine regret being expressed at their departure from New Zealand.

M. POMARE,
Minister for the Cook Islands.

Cook Islands Department, Wellington, 31st July, 1920.

COOK ISLANDS.

REPORT OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER OF RAROTONGA FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1920.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 20th June, 1920.

I have the honour to submit the following report :—

FINANCE.

We have had an exceedingly prosperous year. Our revenue of £22,880 is a record. For the previous year the revenue was £13,846. The chief sources of income are—Customs duties, £11,290; export duties on copra and pearl-shell, £2,492; stamps, £4,672; High Court fees and fines, £755; and the wireless station, £662.

The expenditure was £17,060. Our credit balance for the year, £5,200, is also a record.

TRADE.

With exports valued at £127,729 and imports £142,925, the volume of trade for the year reached the large sum of £270,645, an amount considerably in advance of that of any previous year.

Whilst the value of the imports was in part due to increased prices, it is satisfactory to note a substantial advance in the export of copra and pearl-shell, our most valuable commodities. Copra this year reached 2,145 tons, as against 1,750 tons last year and 700 tons in 1917; whilst 162 tons of pearl-shell, valued at £14,480 (£90 per ton), were exported, as against 35 tons (£2,450) last year. In tomatoes also there was an increase of 13,000 cases over last year's export, whilst pineapples this year show an increase of nearly 1,000 cases over 1918, in spite of the fact that the greater part of the crop was lost because of inability to ship the fruit to a market. Only bananas and oranges show a reduced export; 70,000 cases of oranges were exported, as against 84,000 cases in 1918, a deficiency of 14,000 cases. This was the result of insufficient shipping-space. With adequate space three times the quantity of oranges could have been exported.

Another element that has helped trade in the prosperous year that has passed is the fact that to a much larger extent than ever before the true value of the produce of the islands, hitherto reaped by the middleman in New Zealand, was received and spent in Rarotonga.

It is worth noting, too, that the valuation of our exports is on a very conservative basis. For example, our copra exported last year, 2,145 tons, is valued at £45,235—i.e., only £21 per ton. Practically the whole of this copra went to the United States, only one small shipment of 50 tons being made to Great Britain. The Administration is doing what it can to encourage a trade in copra with New Zealand, whence it will naturally find its way to the Home market.

FRUIT EXPORTS.

The Treasurer draws attention to the serious falling-off in the export of bananas—from 108,520 cases and 11,814 bunches in 1911 to 31,494 cases in 1919. The committee of the Native Fruitgrowers' Association (representing six hundred planters), to whom this matter was referred, explains that, after the war broke out, the smaller and diminishing shipping facilities and the poor prices obtained by the Native growers so discouraged the planters that replanting (necessary every year for bananas) was gradually abandoned until it almost ceased. Last year, however, under the new system by which they now reach a competitive market, they obtained prices that have served as a great stimulus to planting, and they are now making up for lost time. The Inspectors under the Planting Ordinance confirm this. They report the planting during the six months ending 31st March, 1920, of not less than 150,000 banana-plants.

At Mangaia, where the Natives, discouraged by the impossibility of getting their fruit to a market, had also ceased planting, the Resident Agent also reports a very gratifying revival.

At Rarotonga a co-operative credit bank has been established to assist the Natives by making advances to them for such purposes as improving their plantations by clearing and planting, the purchase of agricultural implements, stock, wagons, &c. The idea has been taken up so heartily that a second bank is being formed.