

A heavy infant mortality, tropical diseases, and diseases introduced by Europeans and foreigners took a heavy toll of life.

Not only have the ravages of these afflictions been arrested, but modern medical science, improved hygienic conditions, the spread of education, the provision of a hospital and of efficient medical and nursing staffs have turned the tide, so that at the present time population is now increasing at a rate estimated at 20 per 1,000 per annum. It is estimated that the population of the Cook Group (excluding Niue) is now 12,000, which is a gain of 50 per cent. since New Zealand took over the Administration of the Islands. Two thousand of this gain has been in the last ten years.

Under the provisions of the Cook Islands Act, 1915, it is the duty of the Administration to provide in the Cook Islands such medical and surgical aid and attendance as may be reasonably required and is reasonably practicable, and gratuitous to the Native population.

The more important work carried out in the past ten years has been—

- (a) The removal of lepers to the central leper asylum at Makogai, Fiji, for segregation and curative treatment. (One hundred and twenty-two lepers have been transferred to Fiji, and of these over thirty have been cured and returned to their homes.)

The cost of the erection of hospital accommodation, transportation, maintenance, and treatment are necessarily high, which partly explains the increase in the Cook Islands medical vote.

- (b) The making of a tropical diseases and hookworm survey by Dr. S. M. Lambert of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1925. His valuable and interesting report is printed as an Appendix to the Cook Islands Annual Report of 1926.

Following this survey mass treatment for hookworm was given in all inhabited islands of the Group in the years 1926 to 1928, and systematic treatment has since taken place.

- (c) The carrying-out of a soil sanitation scheme in the years 1932 to 1934, the expense of which was borne by the New Zealand Government and the Cook Islands Treasury and subsidized by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Practically every house or place of habitation in Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro has been provided with a fly-proof pit-privy.

The scheme to date has involved the building of over two thousand privies.

In addition, all schools, maraes, and public places have been provided with sanitary conveniences.

The result has been that the spread of disease from ground-borne infection has been greatly reduced.

- (d) The carrying-out by Dr. Lambert of the Rockefeller Foundation of a tuberculosis survey.
- (e) The training of Native students at the Suva Medical School to enable them to qualify as Native medical practitioners.

(Three have already qualified, and are assisting in the medical work of the Group, and three more are in training.)

- (f) The extension of water-supplies in Rarotonga and the Group Islands.

- (g) The provision of a school dental clinic at Rarotonga. This was opened in 1926.

- (h) The importation of pedigree Saanen goats as the nucleus of herds in Rarotonga and Lower Group Islands, with the object of increasing and improving the milk-supply.

- (i) Extensions to the Hospital at Rarotonga, and the provision of an up-to-date outpatients department, including dressing-room, dispensary, laboratory, consulting-room, and dental clinic.

(A further extension of the hospital to provide for an additional twelve beds is now under construction.)

A new nurses' home, rendered necessary by the recent hurricane, has been built.

- (j) The provision at the hospital of an X-ray plant.

- (k) The establishment of "au vaine" or women's committees, to assist in improving hygienic conditions, and also child welfare committees, who are given lectures and are coached in the work they carry out.

- (l) The introduction of gambusia, a small fish that devours the larvæ of the mosquito. These were introduced into Rarotonga over eighteen months ago, and have been liberated in many places in Rarotonga and also in the Lower Group Islands. They have multiplied rapidly, and are assisting in bringing the mosquito pest under control.

Owing to the financial position it has been impossible for some years to adequately staff the medical services.

An assistant medical officer is to be attached to the administration for a period during the coming year.

For the whole territory, comprising a land and sea area of some 850,000 square miles, and a population of 12,000, the present staff consists of—

One qualified medical officer;

One matron and one European nurse at the hospital at Rarotonga—the European nurse also doing district nursing;

Four Native probationers at the hospital;

Three Native medical practitioners who do duty at Rarotonga and throughout the Group;

One European nurse at Aitutaki;

One European nurse at Mangaia.