

At the present time 2,816 children are attending the various schools in the Cook Islands.

The following remarks of Sir Apirana Ngata, late Minister for the Cook Islands, in regard to education in the Cook Islands are of interest :—

Cook Islands Annual Report, 1932, Pages 1, 2, and 3: “The policy of New Zealand in the administration of the islands of the Cook Group was from the inception modelled on that of Native Affairs here; and their system of government, the sanitary regulations, and the method of determining land titles were based on New Zealand’s experience of the Maori branch of the Polynesian race.

“During the period from 1919–20 onwards there was a great expansion in the public services of the islands, especially in regard to education and health, the development of the island fruit trade, and postal and wireless facilities. In addition to administrative charges and salaries, large capital expenditure was devoted to the construction of schools, hospital buildings, wharves and landing facilities, wireless stations, roads, and the accommodation of officers.

“The great distance of these islands from New Zealand, their comparative isolation, and the difficulties of intercommunication among them have necessitated transplanting to them a larger measure of services than would be required in, say, a county or district on the mainland of New Zealand itself.

“The cost to the New Zealand Treasury in 1931–32 (apart from the m.v. “Maui Pomare”) was £23,852 for services rendered to 15,200 of its population, or £1 11s. 4·6d. per head, analysed as follows :—

					Per Head.		
					£	s.	d.
“Education	..	..	..	..	..	0	12 9·3
“Medical and Health	..	..	..	..	..	0	7 9·0
“Other services	..	..	..	..	..	0	10 10·3
					£1	11	4·6

“This compares more than favourably with many administrative areas in New Zealand, whether the services of the General Government or of local bodies are taken into consideration. (Note.—New Zealand’s contribution has in the last few years been considerably reduced.)

“The total expenditure by the State on education in New Zealand for 1931–32 was £3,409,877, equal to £2 5s. 1d. per head of mean population, or nearly four times as much as that in the Cook Group, and on medical and health services 14s. 7d. per head, or nearly twice as much as that in the Cook Group.

“Prior to 1915 Native education in the islands was almost entirely in the hands of the missionaries. It is true that the first Government school was established in Niue in 1911 under a European teacher. Rarotonga did not establish such a school until 1915. The cost to the New Zealand Treasury in 1915 was £373. In 1931–32, thirty Government and Mission schools had been established with a roll attendance of 2,887 pupils under fourteen European teachers and fifty-two Native Government teachers and a number of Mission teachers.

“The cost to the New Zealand Treasury for the financial year ended 31st March, 1932, was £9,732, or 12s. 9d. per head of population, or £3 7s. 5d. per head of the number receiving education. This may be compared with costs on the New Zealand mainland for 1930–31 as follows :—

“Cost of 8,133 pupils attending the Native schools (see Year-Book): £99,101, or £12 3s. 8d. per head. Cost of 227,165 pupils attending the primary schools (including Native schools): £2,636,520, or £11 12s. 1d. per head. Total cost of education: £4,101,933, or £2 15s. per head of population.

“On these figures the New Zealand taxpayer cannot complain that the white man’s burden in these islands is out of all proportion to what he bears in respect of the children of his own race or of that branch of the Polynesian race with which he has been more closely associated in New Zealand. European teachers in the schools of the Group are paid scale salaries as in New Zealand schools, with the necessary addition of tropical allowances. They are assisted by Native teachers, and in respect of the salaries of the latter no charge of extravagance can possibly be made. The average number of pupils per teacher in the Cook Islands schools is forty-four, which is considerably higher than the average number in New Zealand schools.

“New Zealand cannot now shirk the most important, the most far-reaching in implication and effect, the gravest task that any representative of white civilization can undertake in respect of a Native community. Experts may differ as to the method or standard or degree of education that should be aimed at. Governments may debate the wisdom of a “white collar” education or the safe extent of “English” in the curriculum. For good or for ill, the missionaries and the seamen, the traders and the tourists, and officers of the Government have brought the complicated problems of the great world to the reefs and atolls and to the beaches and palm-groves of the South Sea Islands, and their culture, with all its unrest and stirrings, its trials and tribulations, cannot now be barred by any device of man. To deny a sufficient education to the Polynesian tribes in these islands would not be humane; it would not be manly or sportsmanlike; it would not be worthy of decent British traditions. The Polynesian must be given a sporting chance to understand the world into which he has been projected and to fill his part therein efficiently; and civilization has not yet devised any better method than the patient impressing of itself upon the mentality of subject peoples