

1938.
NEW ZEALAND.

COOK ISLANDS.

[In continuation of Parliamentary Paper A.-3, 1937.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

REPORT OF THE COOK ISLANDS ADMINISTRATION.

ACCESSION TO THE THRONE OF HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI AND QUEEN ELIZABETH.

The accession to the Throne of Their Majesties was suitably celebrated in every Island of the Group, and messages of loyalty were forwarded from the various Island Councils, Arikis, and people.

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER-SHIP.

During the year under review, Judge H. F. Ayson, Resident Commissioner and Chief Judge of the High Court, returned to New Zealand after nearly twenty-two years' service as Judge of the Native Land Court and fifteen years as Resident Commissioner and Chief Judge of both the High and Native Land Courts. During the period of his administration many important advances were made in the public services of the territory, and his departure from Rarotonga was accompanied by a demonstration as a mark of the esteem in which he was held by both European and Maori of the Cook Islands.

Mr. S. J. Smith, Secretary, Cook Islands Department, Wellington, was appointed on 16th June, 1937, as Resident Commissioner and Acting Chief Judge of the High Court as successor to Judge Ayson.

GENERAL.

Some of the more difficult problems of administration are summarized herein. The Cook Islands contain a population of 12,844 souls—12,593 Natives and 251 Europeans. They are settled on relatively small Islands scattered over a considerable expanse of ocean, stretching from Penrhyn (9 degrees South) to Mangaia (22 degrees South). The Group is divided naturally into two portions, the Southern Group of Rarotonga (headquarters), Mangaia, Mauke, Atiu, Aitutaki, and Mitiaro; and Palmerston, Suwarrow, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Pukapuka, Nassau, and Penrhyn in the north. The distance between Rarotonga and Penrhyn is 737 miles. Sea communication with the Northern Islands is by two local (trader-owned) schooners and is necessarily irregular, and for at least four months each year (during the hurricane season) there is no sea communication whatever, which presents difficulties to the Resident Commissioner and officials in carrying out their duties in the wide-flung territory. The Southern Group Islands are visited more frequently by the schooners, and also between April and October by the Union Steam Ship Co.'s vessel "Matua" for the purpose of shipping oranges to the New Zealand markets.

The Northern Islands are merely coral atolls and the people exist principally on coconuts and fish. Despite this they are a healthy community, increasing rapidly in numbers. In past years they have supplemented their food-supplies by the sale of copra, and, in Penrhyn and Manihiki, of pearls and pearl shell; but, both these commodities now being a glut on the world's markets, the