

Inspection of Schools.—For a period of five weeks in August-September, Mr. D. G. Ball, M.A., LL.B., Senior Inspector of Native Schools, New Zealand, was in the Cook Islands on a visit of inspection. Mr. Ball outlined a number of helpful suggestions that would be for the betterment of the system, the most important being—

- (1) The appointment of an Education Officer whose duties would be solely to direct and to supervise education in the Cook Islands, and would not include the Headmastership of Avarua School as formerly.
- (2) The appointment of an experienced infant-mistress to organize the work in the lower grades and to conduct refresher courses at regular intervals.
- (3) The establishment of a post-primary school which would carry on the work of the present schools and which would serve as a training-school for teachers and for cadets required in the various branches of the Administration.

Numbers (1) and (2) have already been given effect to, and number (3) has been approved, and plans and details for the establishment of a school of that type are under way.

Mr. Ball's sympathetic understanding and advice were greatly appreciated. His visit was of infinite value and an inspiration to European and Native teachers alike in their work of education in the Cook Islands.

AGRICULTURE.

Citrus.—Considerable improvement is noticeable in the Native orange-trees growing on the Island of Rarotonga, principally due to the pruning operations and thinning-out of worn trees which were undertaken last year. The Native growers entered into this work with enthusiasm, the system adopted being to encourage community efforts on the part of the people by organizing them into "tapere" or district gangs under the direction of a foreman in charge of each gang.

Some thirty-three gangs were in operation, ranging from ten to twenty or more men in each gang, distributed all around the Island in practically every "tapere." The men worked together, assisting each other by pruning the trees on their respective holdings in turn.

The first pruning and general renovation was commenced on the 13th July and continued intermittently by various gangs until the end of September. The gangs provided themselves with meat and rice, obtained through the medium of their district fruit-shed funds. Altogether about 520 men were engaged on this work at various times, the total approximate expenditure on food being £140.

The total number of trees treated was 30,060, some 6,305 trees being removed entirely on account of being worthless due to diseased condition or detrimental on account of their very close proximity to other better trees, and some 23,755 trees pruned by removing all dead and diseased wood from the trees, with a limited amount of thinning so as to avoid any unnecessary reduction of the orange crop for this season. All cuts made were treated by painting with coal-tar.

Continuous supervision was exercised over each gang by the Assistant Fruit Inspector in each district, and a general supervision was given by the Director of Agriculture and the Field Officer.

With the object of establishing citrus plantations on modern lines at Rarotonga, a nursery for raising young trees has been established at Takuvaine in which some 23,000 young trees have been raised and are now planted out in nursery rows preparatory to budding with selected varieties of oranges this year.

The total export of citrus fruits from the whole Group for the period under review was 69,115 cases. Of this quantity, 11,958 cases of oranges and 392 cases of other citrus fruits were exported from Rarotonga and 56,765 cases of oranges from the Outer Islands.

During the year the new system of Government control of shipping and marketing oranges came into operation. The change-over was carried through successfully, and resulted in satisfactory cash prices being returned direct to *bona fide* growers. Unfortunately, some of the shipments arrived in New Zealand in not the best condition. This is only to be expected until such time as a proper processing plant is installed whereby the oranges can be processed and treated after harvesting at the proper stage of maturity for exporting overseas, a practice that has proved to be essential in all citrus-exporting countries throughout the world. There is no logical reason for supposing that the Cook Islands oranges, grown under semi-tropical conditions are any less susceptible to the development of fungus troubles than those grown in more arid countries.

Bananas.—Planting of bananas, while in the total lower than the previous year, has increased during the latter part of the period under review. Encouragement was given in this direction, also, by organizing growers into gangs to assist each other in planting on similar lines to those brought into operation for the pruning of the orange-trees, working under supervision of the District Inspectors and providing themselves with food from the fruit-shed funds. The prospect of better and more consistent returns under the expected Government control was one of the principal factors in the encouragement of setting out new plantations.

The total export of bananas for the period was 37,360 cases, all from Rarotonga, being considerably lower than the export of the previous year.

Tomatoes.—The tomato crop was normal. Increased plantings were made, but owing to growers not giving their plantations the necessary attention, particularly in the nature of spraying to prevent disease attacks, the best returns were not obtained. The total export of tomatoes for the year was 53,883 boxes.