

I. INTRODUCTORY

The Cook Islands were proclaimed a British Protectorate in 1888. On the 11th June, 1901, under the provisions of the Colonial Boundaries Act, 1895, the Group was annexed to the British Empire and proclaimed part of New Zealand.

The island of Niue has been administered separately since 1903. A report upon Niue comprises the latter part of this report.

Excluding Niue, the Cook Group comprises fifteen islands, which, with a total land area of a little under 100 square miles, are scattered over an ocean area of approximately 850,000 square miles. The Group is enclosed on the west and east by the 167th and 156th meridians of west longitude respectively and on the north and south by the 8th and 23rd parallels of south latitude. Penrhyn, 9 degrees south of the Equator, is the most northerly island, while Mangaia, just north of the Tropic of Capricorn, is the most southerly island. Niue is situated at S. 19 degrees, W. 169 degrees 48 minutes, and has itself an area of 100 square miles.

The Cook Islands, other than Niue, divide naturally into the Southern or Lower Group and the Northern Group. Of the islands of the Lower Group, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke, and Mangaia are elevated and fertile, and these are the orange-producing islands, while Manuae and Takutea and the islands of the Northern Group, comprising Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka, Palmerston, Nassau, and Suvarrow, are low-lying atolls. Rarotonga, the seat of administration, is 1,633 nautical miles from Auckland.

The whole of the Group lies within the hurricane zone and a number of destructive storms has been experienced, the latest of which occurred in January, 1946. From December to March is the "hurricane season," and it is during these months that there is the possibility of severe storms. This is also the rainy season and the climate is hot and humid at this period. From April to November the climate in the Lower Group islands is mild and equable. The average temperature in Rarotonga during the last thirty-five years was 74 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average annual rainfall in Rarotonga during the same period was 83.7 in.

On the 31st March, 1946, the Native population totalled 14,776, and, with 4,271 in Niue, the Native population of the Cook Islands was 19,047. The total population was 19,294.

Rarotonga is well watered by creeks and streams and all villages are supplied with water by a reticulation system; all the outer islands suffer from a lack of streams and wells, but water is provided from public tanks the number of which is being steadily increased.

II. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(The following report does not refer to Niue; see page 17.)

Laws governing the whole of the Cook Islands are made by Act of the Parliament of New Zealand or by Orders in Council and regulations issued thereunder. Ordinances, restricted in their application to the islands where they are made, are passed by local Island Councils, of which there are ten. Ordinances require the assent of the Resident Commissioner, or they may be reserved for the signification of the Governor-General's pleasure. The Resident Commissioner in Rarotonga and the Resident Agents in the outer islands are the Presidents of the respective Island Councils, which consist in Rarotonga of elected, nominated, and *ex officio* members, and in the other islands of nominated and *ex officio* members. In practice, nominations are made only upon evidence of public choice, but amendments to law are under consideration with a view to providing that each Island Council shall consist only of *ex officio* and of elected members. In addition, it is hoped that during the 1946 session of Parliament measures will be introduced to provide for the formation of a Council of the whole of the Cook Islands, to contain elective representation.