

## 5. GOVERNMENT

The Cook Islands are within the boundary of the Dominion of New Zealand and provision is made for their government by the Cook Islands Act, 1915. Under this Act there is appointed a Resident Commissioner charged with the administration of the executive government of the Cook Islands. The Resident Commissioner resides in Rarotonga and is represented in the outer islands by Resident Agents. The Native inhabitants of the islands are British subjects.

Popular representation is effected by the Island Councils in each of the ten main islands, each Council consisting of *ex officio* members (officials and arikis, or leading chiefs) and elected members. Elections were first held in March, 1947, and will henceforth be conducted triennially in each constituency, the franchise extending to all Natives who are British subjects of eighteen years of age or over. The Resident Commissioner in Rarotonga and the Resident Agents in the outlying islands preside over the respective Island Councils. Previously to 1947, Island Councils consisted of the Resident Commissioner or Resident Agent, the arikis, and a number of nominated members.

Europeans are represented by one elected member on the Rarotonga Island Council.

The Cook Islands Amendment Act, 1946, under which these Island Councils were reconstituted, also provides for a Legislative Council of the Cook Islands. This Legislative Council consists of ten unofficial members elected by Island Councils, and ten official members of the Cook Islands Public Service appointed by the Governor-General, with the Resident Commissioner as President. At meetings of this Council the Resident Commissioner has a casting but not a deliberative vote. Following the prescribed elections and official appointments, the inaugural session of the Council commenced on 5th November, 1947. In the unavoidable absence of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister, the Government of New Zealand was represented by the Secretary of Island Territories at the opening session, when messages from His Excellency the Governor-General, the Right Hon. the Minister of Island Territories, and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary were received and read.

The first session of the Council continued until 25th November and a wide range of subjects was discussed. Standing Orders for the Council were adopted and two Ordinances were passed.

The establishment of the Legislative Council and the successful first session mark an important stage in the political progress of the Cook Islanders.

Laws governing the Cook Islands are made by Act of the New Zealand Parliament or by Orders in Council and regulations issued thereunder. Ordinances applicable to the whole of the Cook Islands may be made by the Legislative Council of the Cook Islands, subject to certain statutory restrictions. These Ordinances require the assent of the Resident Commissioner, and may be disallowed either wholly or in part by the Governor-General within one year after the assent of the Resident Commissioner has been given. Ordinances restricted in their application to the islands in which they are made may be enacted by the local Island Councils. These local Ordinances require the consent of the Resident Commissioner, or they may be reserved for the signification of the Governor-General's pleasure.

The following Legislative measures with effect in the Cook Islands have been enacted since the last report :—

In New Zealand—

- The International Air Services Licensing Act, 1947.
- The International Air Services Licensing Regulations 1947/67.
- The Cook Islands Legislative Council Regulations 1947.
- The Cook Islands Industrial Unions Regulations 1947.
- The Cook Islands Police Regulations 1947.
- The Cook Islands Native Appellate Court Rules 1947.
- The Emergency Regulations Revocation Order No. 7, 1947.
- The Cook Islands Applied Regulations Order 1947.
- The Cook Islands Trade Dispute Intimidation Regulations 1948.
- The Cook Islands Customs Duties Order 1948/50.