

Throughout the year attendances have been excellent, very high percentages being obtained in most schools. This is the result of the enthusiasm of the teachers and the generally good standard of health of the pupils. An influenza epidemic in September resulted in schools being shut for a period of from one to two weeks. Active steps are being taken to make the children more conscious of the principles of hygiene. Liaison with the Medical Department has been strengthened, and through their co-operation regular daily health inspections are carried out, schools being fairly well supplied with medical equipment. As has already been stated, the pupils receive dental treatment at regular intervals. The milk scheme continued to function during the year, and the results have had a marked effect on the children.

Three scholarships tenable in New Zealand secondary schools were awarded during the year, increasing the number of studentships to a total of fifteen since the scheme commenced in 1946.

The general shortage of building-supplies has limited the erection and improvement of school buildings that would normally have taken place, but the standard of school buildings in the Group compares more than favourably with that of most other Pacific islands. During the year two additional Native-style class-rooms were erected at Avarua, and two more authorized. At Mauke two further Native-style classrooms are being built to an improved design, which utilizes lime for walls, sawn timber for shutter and door frames, and pandanus leaf for the roof. Though this style of building is more expensive, it is felt that this is more than compensated for by improved lighting-conditions, the better protection from bad weather, safety from intruders, and the permanency which the construction offers. There is still need, however, for a more permanent design of building, and consideration is being given to a type which would obviate the heavy upkeep costs involved in both the old and the improved Native-style school. A school was erected by the Roman Catholic Mission at Omaka, Penrhyn Island.

In addition to teacher's tables, chairs, and cupboards, six hundred pupil tables and chairs were distributed throughout the Lower Group islands. Requirements have not yet been fully met, and further supplies will be necessary.

The Officer for Islands Education, Mr. F. R. J. Davies, visited Rarotonga in November, but his work was restricted owing to quarantine requirements. During the year, Mr. T. A. Fletcher, Senior Inspector of Maori Schools, inspected the five Rarotongau schools.

PART IV—ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural resources of the Cook Islands vary within the Group. The Southern Group islands possess suitable soils for the cultivation of tropical products for export, but the Northern Group agricultural activities are mainly confined to subsistence farming and the production of some copra. There are no forestry resources in the area, but planting of trees to prevent soil erosion and provide timber for fruit-cases has commenced. No minerals are known to exist and no sources of power are available. It would appear that the economic future of the Group is limited to the production of tropical products and the possible derived processing industries.

B. AGRICULTURE

The agricultural administrative organization in the area is headed by a Director of Agriculture, who is to be assisted by a Crop Development Officer, and two Orchard Instructors who are to be appointed shortly. The amount of specialization which the arrangement permits is not as great as would be desirable, but represents the most