

PART VIII.—SHIPPING.

Up to the present time the only shipping available has been the Union Steamship Co.'s vessels.

Rarotonga is served every four weeks by the San Francisco - Wellington mail steamers, which are not fitted for the carriage of perishable fruit cargoes, excepting in the very limited cool-storage accommodation provided. Very heavy losses occur in transit of fruit shipments in these steamers.

In order to cater to some extent for the Outer Islands oranges, the Union Steamship Co.'s trans-Pacific cargo steamers call about once a month at one or more of these Lower Group Islands, but the quantity of oranges shipped by this means is usually restricted to 8,000 cases per monthly steamer.

This is sufficient to transport only a very small proportion of the oranges available at these Outer Islands, and is a most serious deterrent to their economic welfare. It is true that the Union Co. do at times despatch a special cargo vessel from Auckland to assist in this trade, but the type of vessel is totally unsuitable for the trade, and heavy losses have frequently been sustained from this cause. Further, the present practice whereby the Union Steamship Co. grants a charter of all space in the vessels which trade to the Outer Islands to certain New Zealand fruit auctioneers is detrimental to growers requiring shipping-space in certain circumstances.

The new motor vessel "Matua" should undoubtedly be of great benefit to the fruit trade of the Cook Islands.

Better grading and packing methods, together with the refrigerated shipping facilities of the "Matua," should reduce to a minimum losses to which the trade has been accustomed.

The trans-Pacific mail service is now the subject of Government consideration, and if new ships with refrigerated holds come into the service in conjunction with the "Matua" service, thus giving a fortnightly connection between Rarotonga and New Zealand, a satisfactory service will be provided.

ANCHORAGE.

The present anchorage at Rarotonga leaves a good deal to be desired. If means could be devised to enable ships to lie closer to the shore, it would substantially reduce lighterage costs, and the subject is commended for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

PART IX.—GENERAL CONTROL.

CONTROL BY DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE OR GENERAL MANAGER.

The whole of the fruit trade of the Islands should be under the personal supervision and direction of a Director of Agriculture or General Manager, who should have full powers to carry out Government policy and general control of the industry.

This officer's powers should be subject to veto by the Resident Commissioner only in extreme cases where the Resident Commissioner considers that Government policy is not being given effect to or when any action is being taken that is contrary to the best interests of the people or the good government of the Islands. In all such instances the Resident Commissioner should be required to make a full report of the position to the responsible Minister after having submitted the same to the officer concerned, whose comments should accompany the report to the Minister.

STAFFING : EMPLOYMENT OF CITRUS EXPERT.

The present Director of Agriculture is on loan by the New Zealand Government, and is due to return to New Zealand when his services are required by the New Zealand Department of Agriculture. It is suggested that a citrus expert should be appointed to the staff under the direction of the Director of Agriculture, and that for preference a suitable officer should be selected and sent abroad for experience in citrus culture to a country with similar conditions to those pertaining in Rarotonga. It should be a condition of this officer's appointment that he should remain in the Islands, subject to the pleasure of the Government, for at least ten years.

He should immediately undertake the training of an understudy.

LONG-TERM PLANTING PLAN.

The Delegation is deeply impressed with the need for the inauguration at the earliest possible date of a long-term citrus-planting plan, to be developed concurrently with the growing of crops on existing trees, in order to avoid a disturbance of growers' incomes.

As has already been pointed out, there are but few modern plantations at Rarotonga, and fruit-growing methods of the past can no longer compete commercially with the modern methods of planting, cultivation, harvesting, grading, and packing that are practised in other citrus-producing countries.

The members of the Delegation do not consider themselves sufficiently versed in the technique of citrus culture and production to formulate a comprehensive replanting-scheme, but strongly recommend the Government to obtain competent advice with a view to bringing down proposals for placing the Rarotongian fruitgrowing industry on a proper basis.

Putting into operation any replanting-scheme presents difficulties on account of the peculiar system of land tenure.

A considerable portion of the land of Rarotonga is vested in the respective titles of Ariki, Mataiapo, and Rangatira.