

A further important bearing would be the effect on the Native-debt question. With continuous harvesting (and organized marketing) the immediate and day-to-day wants of the Native grower could be supplied by payment for fruit collected and accepted.

MARKETING IN NEW ZEALAND.

Negotiations should be entered into between the Government and the New Zealand merchants to dispose of the fruit at an "agreed-on fair price." The improvement in the quality of fruit exported, together with the improved shipping, should enable merchants to pay a higher price than at present.

Such negotiations should include provisions for marketing in New Zealand at regulated prices, with provision for adequate payment for all useful service rendered, and should result in a substantial reduction in the New Zealand retail price of fruit to the public.

In view of the fact, however, that a Commission is at present inquiring into the system of marketing fruit in New Zealand, the Delegation has conferred with that Commission.

It is proposed, when the present inquiry is concluded, to make a separate and joint report covering proposals for the future methods of disposing of Cook Islands fruit in the New Zealand markets.

DEBT EXTINCTION.

A tribunal should be set up to deal with this question to which either debtor or creditor could apply for an assessment of the actual present value of his debt. Such assessed value should be liquidated by a charge against each case of fruit exported by the grower concerned. Such a deduction should be made after provision for the payment of production costs and a reasonable return for the labour involved.

To prevent a recurrence of the present debt situation the law should be amended making Native debts irrecoverable.

NOTE.—Such an Ordinance operates at Niue. There are no debts on the Island of Mangaia, which demonstrates that debt is not an essential to the fruit industry.

REGULATED SUPPLIES.

In carrying out the present arrangements made by the Government to regulate supplies of citrus fruits to New Zealand in accordance with the market demand special consideration should be given to regulating shipments from the Cook Islands, with particular consideration for South Island demands.

SHIPPING.

It appears that the Union Co.'s new vessel "Matua" will make Auckland its only port of discharge, and the Delegation cannot too strongly urge that Wellington and South Island ports should be included in the itineraries of fruit-carrying vessels in order to serve the needs of those markets.

The provision of adequate suitable shipping services between the Cook Islands and the North and South Islands is of vital importance, and Government is recommended to ensure that this is provided.

SHIPPING-SPACE.

The question of the allocation of shipping-space at Rarotonga and the Outer Islands should be taken up by the Government with the shipping company, to prevent any restriction to trade that may at present exist.

FREIGHTS.

The disparity in shipping-charges on Cook Islands bananas to Southern ports compared with the charges on Samoan and Niue bananas is commended to the Government for investigation.

USE OF FIELD CASES.

The present system of sending out cases to be filled by the growers should be discontinued, and a system instituted whereby field cases of strong construction should be used for delivery of fruit from plantation to packing-shed.

ORGANIZED COLLECTION.

A system whereby the fruit could be collected at points around the Island and delivered to the packing-shed should be organized, on the lines followed by the New Zealand dairy companies in collecting cream. This would eliminate the present system whereby agents of the traders, termed "supercargoes," distribute cases to growers and deliver the fruit to packing-sheds and thence to the wharf. This latter method has proved inadequate and costly.

MARKING OF CASES.

Some greater degree of uniformity in marking is desirable, especially regarding stencil sizes, in order to improve the outward appearance of cases. When quality has been improved, a suitably designed label of attractive appearance would more than return its cost.