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INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES:
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION TRANSMITTED
UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER. REPORT OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Pacific Territories

COOK ISLANDS^{1/}

/ In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1332 (XIII) this summary is also submitted to the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories.

59-07417

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NOTE: The following symbols are used:

Three dots (...)	data not available
Dash (-)	magnitude nil or negligible
Slash 1948/1949	crop or financial year
Hyphen 1948-1949	annual average

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The Cook Islands with an area of 903 square miles consists of fifteen islands scattered over some 850 square miles of ocean. Low-lying coral atolls form the Northern Group while the Southern Group, with Raratonga, the seat of the Administration, has hilly islands.

The Cook Islands are in the hurricane belt of the South Pacific, about 1,800 miles north-east from New Zealand.

The inhabitants are Polynesians closely akin to the Maoris of New Zealand.

		<u>Population</u>		
		<u>1947</u> (31 March)	<u>1953</u> (31 March)	<u>1956</u> (25 September) (census)
Indigenous		14,570	14,978	16,373 ^{a/}
Non-indigenous		251	365	307 ^{a/}
	Total	<u>14,821</u>	<u>15,343</u>	<u>16,680</u>

a/ Europeans only.

<u>Vital statistics</u>			
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1957</u>
Birth rate per 1,000 population	38.8	43.00	47.4
Death rate per 1,000 population	23.3	16.40	16.6
Infantile mortality, rate per 1,000 live births	139.9	139.53	92.6

GOVERNMENT

The islands became a British Protectorate in 1886 and were proclaimed a part of New Zealand in 1901. Provision is made for their government by the Cook Islands Act, 1915. A Resident Commissioner is in charge of the Administration and he is represented in the outer islands by Resident Agents. The islanders are British subjects and New Zealand citizens.

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Under the Cook Islands Amendment Act, 1946, each of the ten main islands have Island Councils consisting of official and elected members. Europeans are represented by one elected member on the Raratonga Island Council. The Territory as a whole has a Legislative Council, consisting of ten unofficial members, of whom nine are elected by the Island Councils, and eleven official members. The tenth unofficial member is the European representative of the Raratonga Island Council.

Laws for the islands are made by Act of the New Zealand Parliament or by Orders in Council and by regulations. The Legislative Council passes ordinances for the peace, order and good government of the islands; they require the assent of the Resident Commissioner. It has no power to appropriate or authorize expenditure. The Island Councils also have the power to enact ordinances, (island ordinances) which require the assent of the Resident Commissioner as well.

An important constitutional development was the passing of the Cook Islands Amendment Act, 1957, which provides for the establishment of a twenty-six-member Legislative Assembly with twenty-two elected representatives. It is empowered to appropriate and authorize expenditure of all revenue derived in the Cook Islands and to legislate on all matters except on certain reserved subjects (such as defence and external affairs) or in respect of ordinances which conflict with reserved New Zealand acts or regulations. An Executive Committee consisting of elected and official representatives is to be created to advise the Resident Commissioner. Village committees with limited police and judicial authority are also to be formed. The first elections to the new Assembly are to be held late in 1958.

A High Court exercises civil and criminal jurisdiction; a Native Land Court deals with litigation on lands and titles; a Native Appellate Court hears appeals against decisions of the Native Land Court. Appeals in criminal and civil matters decided by the High Court go to the Supreme Court of New Zealand.

The heads of government departments are in most cases officers seconded from the New Zealand Public Service. Most of the government personnel consists of Cook islanders. Local and Overseas officers have had a unified salary scale since 1956. Efforts are being made to give an increasing share in the responsibility of administration to qualified Cook islanders. The services of scholarship pupils are expected to become available to the Government in a few years; many of them will have the qualifications for senior positions.

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The South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Health Service have assisted the Territory with advice in the economic and social fields. A delegation of the Cook islanders has participated in the work of the South Pacific Conferences, organized by the South Pacific Commission in 1951, 1954 and 1957. The Fiji Government offers training courses to Cook islanders in medicine, dentistry, nursing, police, agriculture and meteorology.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The economy of the islands is based on the products of the soil, which provides food and export crops. The fertile Southern Group produces oranges, tomatoes and arrowroot for the New Zealand market, while copra is the staple product of all the islands. The less fertile Northern Group exports pearl shell, grassware, shell and coral curios.

Fish are in fair supply as a supplementary food, but are not deemed suitable in quality and quantity for commercial exploitation. There are no timber resources. High-grade manganese ore was discovered in 1950, but a geological survey in 1955 showed that the deposits had no commercial value.

There are no secondary industries other than a few small factories. A clothing factory, locally-owned and managed, caters to the New Zealand market. A shoe factory closed down in 1957, when the islanders took to the use of plastic sandals from overseas. A jeweller established himself in 1957 and manufactures shell jewellery; Raratonga also has an orange juice plant and a biscuit factory.

Two economic experts visited the islands in 1955 to carry out a survey. Their report, "A Programme for Economic Development in the Cook Islands" was tabled simultaneously in the New Zealand Parliament and in the Cook Islands Legislative Council. Following its adoption in principle by the Council, it was approved by the New Zealand Cabinet as a "broad approach to the economic development in the Group." Several of its proposals have subsequently been followed up. The economic development of the islands is largely dependent on increasing the export of oranges, tomatoes and copra. Lack of shipping has led to large quantities of fruit being left to waste and manufacturers of non-perishable items have faced serious financial losses as a result of shipping delays. To improve this situation, tenders have been placed for a new vessel with

a refrigerated cargo capacity of 70,000 cu. ft.; the Government is building a cold storage and packing shed which will be in use in 1959; and a cannery expert was invited to visit the islands in 1957 to report on the possibilities of establishing canning and processing plants. However, private operators have not shown interest in this project so far. The Government has also investigated the possibility of setting up a quick-freeze industry, and has prepared information to enable private industry in New Zealand to state the terms on which it would be prepared to commence operations.

Apart from small-scale trading and manufacturing interests, partly financed by outside sources, there was little private investment.

A local Works Organization was created in 1951 to build roads, water tanks, housing and school and hospital buildings. To speed up the general development programme, a central construction, repair and storage depot was established. In its first year, the depot found a new building medium in a combination of crushed stone and lime.

Raratonga's power plant has a capacity of 450 kw. No public power supply exists outside Raratonga.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

Local agriculture, apart from produce grown for export, is mainly on a subsistence basis, the main crops being taro, yams and bananas.

Most of the land is held as family land. The sale of land is prohibited. The Cook Islands Amendment Act, 1946, contains a provision by which an occupational right is given for purposes agreed on by the owners to an individual desiring to plant long-term crops on family land. This provision enables the individual to find the security of tenure necessary for the planting of perennials and has made possible the introduction of a Citrus Replanting Scheme.

Citrus and bananas are purchased from the growers under the Cook Islands Fruit Control Regulations, 1937. The fruit is sold at fixed prices, which are negotiated annually, to a company in New Zealand. Under Citrus Replanting Scheme, begun in 1945, growers receive interest-bearing advances in the form of citrus trees, materials, labour and the use of mechanical equipment. Repayment is made by deductions from the proceeds of crops. An (elected) Fruit Advisory Committee keeps in touch with the latest developments in production and shipping.

Tomatoes, graded by the Administration, are purchased by trading firms in New Zealand.

As a result of a recommendation made in 1957 by the Legislative Council, a Tomato Marketing Board is to be created, with authority to allocate space for tomato shipments and to raise funds through levies on tomato exports for guaranteeing freight when it is necessary to arrange for special shipping calls during the peak of the tomato season.

Copra was sold to the British Ministry of Food on a nine-year contract, beginning 1 January 1949. A new contract was negotiated in 1957 with a New Zealand firm which will buy all the copra produced in the Territory.

Coffee is grown for local consumption. Cotton has been planted in limited quantities and the recent establishment of a textile industry in New Zealand is expected to create a demand in a few years for Cook Islands cotton. Pineapple and arrowroot are also sold on the New Zealand market.

In an effort to encourage the banana industry, a New Zealand firm announced in 1954 that, irrespective of the actual shipping space available, it would purchase all bananas packed for shipment. The growers have shown interest, and the export of bananas has increased.

To foster the use of fertilizer, a small levy has been made since 1949 on shipments of citrus, bananas and tomatoes. These deductions are kept as credits in the name of individual shippers and each year fertilizer to the value of credits is issued.

The Department of Agriculture maintains several citrus and banana nurseries and leases tractors, rotary ploughs and sprayers to growers. The Department is responsible for the Fruit Inspection and Citrus Replanting Schemes.

No organized livestock breeding exists on the islands; animal husbandry has been introduced as circumstances have permitted.

The Fisheries Adviser to the South Pacific Commission visited the island in 1955 and supervised the transfer of live pearl-shell oysters, which were over-fished, from one lagoon to another with the aim of increasing the reserves which may be fished commercially. The export of shell amounted in 1957 to 222 tons with a value of £794 per ton. The Adviser also recommended the extension of pond cultures. A full-time fisheries officer was appointed in 1956.

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In view of the nuclear tests in the Pacific and the possibility of contamination of edible fish and drinking water, samples of fish and other materials are collected and forwarded to New Zealand at regular intervals for analysis.

	<u>Principal crops</u>		
	Area (acres)		
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1957^{a/}</u>
Coconuts	18,000	30,250	28,250
Citrus	650	1,810	767
Kumaras, taro, cassava	...	2,110	975
Bananas	...	1,380	1,380
Tomatoes	300	800	800
Pineapples	...	400	250

a/ Figures are based on a revision of the 1953 agriculture census. In many cases, crops are inter-planted and the assessment of the acreage of each crop presents difficulties.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

A thirty-three year-old government vessel, the Maui Pomare, as well as ships of the Union Steamship Company on the trans-Pacific run, call at the island ports. The new ship which is to replace the Maui Pomare will be bigger and is being designed to cope with the increased export of citrus and other perishable crops. It will have a refrigerated cargo capacity of 70,000 cubic feet and accommodation for forty passengers.

The widening of existing reef-passages and the blasting of new ones, a matter often discussed in the Island Council but postponed on account of the high cost involved, was undertaken in 1957 by the Public Works Department with explosives made available and transported free of charge by the New Zealand Military Departments.

Inter-island shipping services are provided by six commercially-owned powered vessels, ranging from 10 to 150 tons. In 1957, a total of 22,150 tons of cargo passed through the ports, compared with 16,700 tons in 1953. A fortnightly flying boat service between New Zealand and Tahiti also serves Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. Raratonga has had no direct air link since 1952, when the company concerned ceased its service.

PUBLIC FINANCE

The largest proportion of the revenue is derived from import and export duties (on pearl shell and copra). At one time the sale of stamps was an important source of revenue, but sales have diminished in recent years. Deficits are made up by subsidies or grants from the New Zealand Government. The Legislative Council approved an income tax in 1957 to replace the New Zealand income tax.

Revenue and expenditure (in thousand New Zealand pounds)

	<u>1947/1948</u>	<u>1952/1953</u>	<u>1956/1957</u>
Revenue	79	226	306
Expenditure	147	454	623
Subsidies and grants	71	276	275
<u>Main Heads of Revenue</u>			
Customs duties and excise	...	57	56
Stamp sales	...	7	7
<u>Main Heads of Expenditure</u>			
Education	26	64	128
Health	29	68	96
Public Works	33	77	55

The money order and savings-bank branch of the post office provide the only banking facilities in the Territory.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Imports and exports reached the highest level in the Territory's history in 1957. They showed an increase in value over the previous record trade year because of the high prices realized for pearl shells. Foodstuffs form the principal imports.

Imports and exports
(in thousand New Zealand pounds)

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1957</u>
Imports	253	552	788
Exports	159	352	541
<u>Principal imports</u>			
Foodstuffs	84	167	230
Piece-goods and wearing apparel	38	53	101
Fuel oil	...	27	55
<u>Principal exports</u>			
Citrus	49	50	112
Copra	36	74	52
Tomatoes	21	77	66
Pineapples	5	25	5
Pearl shell	25	72	176
Manufactured goods (apparel)	12	17	84
Bananas	-	2.9	6.4

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The legal provisions relating to human rights which apply in New Zealand generally also apply to the Cook Islands. The principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been taught and encouraged, and implemented in every practical way; these principles have been observed, although some customs of the Maori people in relation to family landownership and the recognition of the status of the traditional chiefs appear to conflict with certain articles of the Declaration.

Two of the social problems are housing and youth education. An advisory committee has proposed the establishment of youth centres, four of which have already been set up in Raratonga. There have been very few cases of serious crime.

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LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

In the Northern Group, where the inhabitants subsist on coconuts and fish, there is little demand for labour. On the pearl shell islands of Manihiki and Penrhyn a number of islanders are employed as pearl-divers. It is on the fertile islands of the Southern Group that labour is required for the harvesting and packing of fruit and copra; a large part of this work is seasonal. Wage-earners also find employment in government departments.

The 1956 census indicated that, of a total of 4,851 males over fifteen years of age, 3,680 were engaged in primary production; 2,803 were planters, 405 were labourers, fifty-eight were shell-divers and 128 were fishermen. Of the rest, 460 worked in public administration and the professions, 125 in trades, 185 in transport and communications and 172 in commerce.

Following the adoption of the Cook Islands Industrial Union Regulations in 1947, a Cook Islands Industrial Union of Workers, embracing all classes, was registered. The Union is affiliated with the New Zealand Federation of Labour, and membership is not compulsory. The Regulations provide for settlement of disputes by conciliation or by decision of an Industrial Relations Officer. Appeals can be made to an Industrial Magistrate from New Zealand.

Basic wage rates for labourers in 1947 ranged from 7s. to 9s. a day, and for more responsible work up to 18s. a day. In 1950, it was agreed that awards and conditions should follow the pattern governing the same class of workers in New Zealand. The minimum wage was raised from 7s. a day to 8s. with proportionate increases for skilled and semi-skilled work. The two largest employers agreed also that preference would be given to members of the Union. A further increase in all basic wages was negotiated in 1951 and 1952. In 1957, the wages for unskilled labour ranged from 10s. 6d. to 11s. 6d. per day, and those for skilled labourers were 12s. 6d. per day.

The subsistence economy of the Cook Islanders assures the landholders of economic security, but a small group which migrated from the outer islands to Raratonga has been divorced from its family lands and is entirely dependent on wages.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Regular co-operative societies were first formed in 1955. The Co-operative Societies Regulations, 1953, came into operation two years later with the appointment of a Registrar of Co-operative Societies and the training of co-operative officers. By the end of 1955, eight societies had been formed, with a membership of 656 and £308 in assets. Today, twenty-nine co-operative societies are in existence on three of the main islands with £9,967 in assets and a membership of 2,600. Eighteen are thrift and credit societies, two are for processing and marketing and eight for school savings.

TOWN AND RURAL PLANNING AND HOUSING

The pandanus and coconut palms supply the basic building material for the islander's house. Material and skilled labour for the modern type of house are lacking.

On Raratonga and Aitutaki, where building does not always follow the Maori pattern, the homes are often dilapidated, dark and badly ventilated. This type of sub-standard housing prompted the Legislative Council in 1954 to recommend the granting of building loans against approved security. In the following year, a select committee of the Council proposed that proper housing should be organized by village committees. A housing scheme of aided self-help by means of subsidies or loans for home builders was discussed by the Legislative Council at the end of 1957. As the Cook Islands law stands at present, the only mortgage that can be given is on a leasehold interest. The Government will make loans to persons who have such leases. It has suggested amendments to the law to permit restricted mortgages of freehold native land for housing purposes and to permit transfers of interest to ensure clearer land titles. The Council has endorsed the scheme in principle.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE

The need for relief hardly exists as the family groups recognize the responsibility of sharing assets and assistance.

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Several welfare organizations are active on the islands, the chief of them being the Child Welfare Organization, which is supervised on Raratonga by the district nurse and on the outer islands by medical practitioners.

A number of ex-servicemen receive pensions and allowances.

Community development

A Department of Social Development with a full-time director was created in 1956 to promote community life in the villages, to provide opportunities for training leaders, to develop a greater sense of responsibility among the people in the management of their own affairs and to inculcate a clearer understanding of government policy. The Officer for Further Education visited India and Africa in 1955 under a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization fellowship to observe community development and adult education in those areas. An advisory committee was set up in 1956 to ensure that community development plans were in accordance with the wishes of the people and were not repugnant to their customs.

Community centres have been in existence in the larger islands for some time and in recent years the Raratonga Community Centre has acted as a demonstration centre. In 1955 three Women's Institutes were established. The Government has offered subsidies to encourage the organization of more such centres.

The Department of Social Development took over responsibility for adult education in 1956 and has concentrated mainly on the education of young men and women between school-leaving age and the age of twenty-five.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Cook islanders are entitled to free medical and surgical treatment and school children receive free dental care under the Cook Islands Act, 1915. The Health Department, headed by a chief medical officer, has its headquarters in Raratonga, where the main hospital and sanatorium are located. The outer islands health services are in the hands of medical practitioners, dressers and nurses. The local medical practitioners were trained at the Central Medical School in Suva, Fiji; nurses are given a three-year course at the Raratonga Hospital.

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The general hospital on Raratonga has a capacity of fifty-seven beds and the sanatorium of sixty-four beds. Three of the larger islands have one small hospital each and the remaining islands are served by dispensaries.

The islands are free from tropical diseases, with the exception of filariasis, yaws and leprosy. Tuberculosis is the greatest single health problem. In 1955, about 35 per cent of all deaths were ascribed to this disease. The anti-tuberculosis programme for the islands is directed by a medical officer attached to the Raratonga sanatorium. Following a mass miniature X-ray campaign in 1955, a programme of home treatment, in addition to hospitalization, was begun on the outer islands. The anti-filariasis campaign is mainly carried out through the control of mosquito breeding and chemo-therapy, in accordance with the recommendations of two South Pacific Commission experts who visited the Territory in 1956. Regular leprosy surveys have been made on all the islands and known cases have been put on special treatment and all contacts have been surveyed.

Child welfare is one of the main activities of the Women's Village Committees. Trained nurses have been posted on the islands to deal mainly with maternal and child welfare under the guidance of the resident medical practitioners. A World Health Organization adviser on infant and maternal care visited the islands in the early part of 1957.

Studies made in recent years have established the cause of the high rate of infant mortality, particularly in the Northern Group. It is, to a large extent, an educational problem connected with changing patterns of nutrition. In the past, the islanders of the Northern Group lived on an adequate diet, composed mainly of fish and coconuts. In recent years, increased earnings from pearl shell and copra have led them to food bought in stores. This, combined with other changes in feeding, community life and working habits, has tended to affect the general and dental health, and has contributed to the high rate of infant mortality. To remedy the situation, steps were taken in 1957 to strengthen the district health nursing service in the Northern Group. A Maori staff nurse attended a South Pacific Commission health education course at Noumea and plans have been made for her to tour the islands. A European welfare worker has also been appointed to Manihiki.

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In the Southern Group, where organized child welfare services have operated for some years, the infant mortality rate is much lower and is on the decrease.

The Cook Islands Dental Service aims at giving dental examinations and treatment for children twice a year; this has been achieved on two of the main islands in the Southern Group. More staff is necessary before this can be achieved on the other islands.

The water supply for Raratonga comes from streams; storage tanks provide water supplies on the outer islands.

Medical and health staff

	<u>1947/1948</u>	<u>1952/1953</u>	<u>1956/1957</u>
Medical officers	2	1	2
Assistant Medical Practitioners	7	8	14
Dentists	1	5	6
Nurses	...	13	33
Nurse Trainees	...	30	28
Sanitary Inspectors	6	14	18

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

Education is free and compulsory between the ages of six and fourteen. The education policy is based on that of New Zealand with modifications to meet local needs. The Administration maintains twenty primary schools, one post-primary school and a teachers' training college. Religious missions maintain eight primary schools and one post-primary school, used mainly for the training of pastors. All schools run by the London Missionary Society in the Northern Group were taken over by the Government in 1952.

A change was introduced in 1953 with regard to the teaching and use of the vernacular. It became established policy to use the vernacular almost exclusively during the child's first two years at school, English being taught only as an oral subject. In the third and subsequent years, English reading is introduced. Maori is still taught, but the amount of time devoted to it diminishes each year as English becomes the medium of instruction and expression. This change was introduced gradually and results have shown that the child expresses himself in English more readily as a result of his early instruction in the vernacular.

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Many communities have set up school committees and parent-teacher associations. Apart from the assistance they give the head teachers, these committees have bought school equipment with a £1 for £1 government subsidy. A number of schools in the Northern Group have been built by the people on land they have donated.

The people participate in the formulation of educational policy through resolutions moved in the Legislative Council. In 1956, for example, the Council suggested that children should be allowed to enter schools at six years instead of five years and remain until they are sixteen instead of fifteen, as was the practice. This request was granted.

In 1954, a post-primary school was opened at Tereora, with twenty-four pupils. In 1957, the school enrolment was 106 and was the main source of supply of teacher trainees as well as of employees for the Administration and for business offices. Those students capable of further education are selected as scholarship pupils for study in New Zealand.

The Teachers' Training College was established in 1956 on Raratonga with a primary school as an associated practising school. In 1957, sixty-nine trainees were in attendance, with an additional sixteen doing practical teacher-training in Rarantonga schools. With the award of eleven new scholarships for 1958 under the government scholarship scheme for study in New Zealand, the total number of awards made since 1946 is sixty-seven. Many of the scholarship students are now members of the Cook Islands Public Service.

The Administration schools had 240 locally-trained teachers, five New Zealand-trained and sixty-nine teacher trainees in 1957, compared with 173 locally-trained, fourteen New Zealand-trained and twenty-six trainees in 1949.

	<u>Pupils</u>		
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1957</u>
Primary schools	3,700	4,212	4,403
Post-primary schools	209

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Cultural institutions and mass communications

Polynesian legends and historical incidents are recorded in the School Journal through articles written in the vernacular by teachers. Tape recordings have been made of some of the lesser known traditional chants from the northern islands.

A Maori grammar, published recently, has been adopted in the schools. The manuscript of a dictionary in the vernacular was prepared for publication in 1957. Raratonga has a small public library which is open to all on a payment of a nominal membership fee.

There are no privately-owned newspapers. News is distributed through a daily press sheet prepared by the Administration and relayed by radio to the outer islands. The monthly Cook Islands Review issued by the Administration is printed in English and Maori. The Social Development Department broadcasts a one-hour programme once a week. Special programmes for the Cook Islands are broadcast nightly by the New Zealand Broadcasting Service.
