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CONDITIONS IN THE TRUST TERRITORY OF NAURU

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

Note: The Secretariat has prepared the following working paper as a preliminary draft of the section dealing with conditions in the Trust Territory of Nauru to be included in the next report of the Trusteeship Council to the General Assembly. Each sub-section of the draft will be supplemented by such additional information as may become available during the Council's examination of conditions in the Territory and by such observations and recommendations as the Council may wish to include.

I. GENERAL

Land and people; future of the Nauruans

1. The Trust Territory of Nauru is a small island located in the central Pacific near the Equator with a land area of approximately 8.2 square miles. On 30 June 1957, the population totalled 4,303, of whom 2,093 were Nauruans, 373 Europeans, 732 Chinese and 1,105 other Pacific Islanders.
2. The Territory's only important economic resource consists of extensive deposits of phosphates; approximately three-quarters of the total land area (6.43 square miles) are classified as phosphate-bearing. At the present rate of extraction, it has been estimated by the Administering Authority that these deposits may be exhausted in roughly forty years at which time, it is believed, the remaining resources of the Territory will be insufficient to maintain the inhabitants at their accustomed standard of living. To meet this eventuality, the Administering Authority has been making continuing efforts to find a suitable area elsewhere for the planned and progressive resettlement of the Nauruans if and when this is decided upon.

3. The future of the Nauruan community has been a matter of concern to the Trusteeship Council which, at past sessions, has recommended both that the Administering Authority should intensify its efforts to formulate plans for resettlement at the earliest practical date and that there should be continuous consultations with the Nauruans on the matter, preferably through a standing joint consultative body. At its twentieth session, the Council, informed that the Nauruans were being fully consulted through a special committee of the Nauru Local Government Council created for the purpose, recommended that the Administering Authority continue efforts to find a practical solution of the problem of resettlement and that it submit to the Council concrete proposals which would accord with the wishes of the population and be in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement. In response to this recommendation, the Administering Authority assured the Council that it was continuing its efforts and that it would report its proposals as soon as possible.

II. POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT

Development of representative, executive and legislative organs and the extension of their powers

4. The administration of Nauru is vested in an Administrator who is responsible to the Australian Government through the Minister of State for Territories and has the power to make ordinances for the peace, order and good government of the Territory. There is no executive or legislative council, but certain local government matters are handled by the Nauru Local Government Council which consists of nine elected members.

5. The functions and powers of the Nauru Local Government Council have been fully described in the Trusteeship Council's report covering the period 1955-1956.^{1/} Briefly, it is generally responsible for the peace, order and welfare of the Nauruans and it may make rules to that end subject to their approval by the Administrator. It may also advise the Administrator in relation

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 4 (A/3170), p. 327.

to any matter affecting Nauruans, including the making of new ordinances or regulations and the repeal or amendment of existing ones. The Administrator may, nevertheless, act in opposition to the advice of the Council on any matter where, in his opinion, he is justified in doing so.

6. At previous sessions, the Trusteeship Council has been concerned to see the eventual extension of the Local Government Council's powers and the development of a legislative organ with powers in the territorial field. At present, however, according to statements by the Administering Authority, the immediate problem is to encourage the Local Government Council to exercise all the powers which it already possesses. The Administering Authority assured the Trusteeship Council at its twentieth session that everything possible was being done to educate the members of the Local Government Council in their responsibilities and duties and that as soon as the Council exercised its powers to the full, the Administering Authority would gladly consider granting it additional ones. The Trusteeship Council, noting this statement, urged the Administering Authority to continue its efforts and reiterated its previous hope referred to above.

7. One of the difficulties to which the Administering Authority has referred in the past has been a tendency for the work of the Local Government Council to be delayed by a reluctance on the part of its members to take decisions on controversial matters without consulting their constituencies. During the period covered by the annual report one rule, relating to the control of the erection and maintenance of buildings in the districts was adopted by the Council, bringing the total number of rules adopted to five. A number of other draft rules and ordinances were under consideration on 30 June 1957.

Consultation with the inhabitants in regard to measures taken or contemplated towards self-government

8. The annual report of the Administering Authority does not indicate that any consultations with the inhabitants specifically in regard to measures taken or contemplated towards self-government took place during 1956-1957. The Administering Authority has stated, however, that it is in full and close consultation with the special committee of the Nauru Local Government Council in regard to the formulation of plans for the possible resettlement of the Nauruan community.

Development of universal adult suffrage and direct elections

9. All adult Nauruans over twenty-one years of age are entitled to enrol as electors in their home districts. They are eligible to vote and eligible for election in the district in which they are enrolled. Voting is compulsory and by secret ballot.

10. At its twentieth session the Trusteeship Council, noting with satisfaction that elections are held by direct, universal adult suffrage with a secret ballot, considered that the electoral laws would be further improved if the position of Returning Officer was held by some person other than the Administrator, and that appeals in connexion with an election should lie to a court. In response to this recommendation, the Administering Authority stated in its annual report for 1956-1957 that it was giving consideration to an amendment of the Nauru Local Government Council Ordinance which would change the provision that the Administrator may act as Returning Officer and would provide for appeals in connexion with an election to lie to the Central Court.

Civil service; training and appointment of indigenous persons for positions of responsibility in the administration

11. At the end of June 1957 there were 336 established posts in the public service of which 312 were filled by Nauruans. Additional Nauruans are employed on a temporary or casual basis.

12. At past sessions the Trusteeship Council has been concerned to see an increased participation by Nauruans in higher administrative posts and also in the phosphate mining industry. In this connexion, the Administering Authority has stated that it is its established policy to work towards the introduction of Nauruans into increasingly high positions in the Administration and that training programmes, including a cadetship scheme were being actively pursued with this end in view. At its twentieth session, the Council noted an assurance by the Administering Authority that as these programmes provide Nauruans with the necessary technical knowledge, more of them would be appointed to responsible posts in the Administration and on the staff of the British Phosphate Commissioners. The Council recommended that the Administering Authority continue these efforts in order that the appointment of Nauruans to responsible posts should be achieved as rapidly as possible.

13. In its annual report for 1956-1957, the Administering Authority stated that it was continuing to develop and implement the training programmes. During the year two more cadetships were awarded, one to a teacher and one to a personnel and administrative officer. On-the-job training was also continued.

Judiciary

14. The judicial system of the Territory is separate from the executive except at the highest level where an appeal against a judgement of the Central Court lies to a Court of Appeal consisting of the Administrator. At its twentieth session, the Trusteeship Council noted with satisfaction that a new Judiciary Ordinance was under consideration which would amend the constitution of the Court of Appeal in order to establish a complete separation between the judiciary and the executive. On 30 June 1957, this draft ordinance was still being considered by the Nauru Local Government Council.

III. ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

General

15. The economy of Nauru is entirely dependent on the phosphate industry. There is very little land suitable for cultivation and, although the Administering Authority is endeavouring to encourage the development of the Territory's limited agricultural potential by providing training and demonstration for the Nauruans, the possibilities are restricted by lack of suitable water supplies. Continued efforts are being made, however, to find an assured supply of subterranean water to permit the establishment of an agricultural experimental station. Fish abound in the surrounding sea and large numbers are caught for local consumption. An administration proposal to develop a fishing industry, which was noted by the Trusteeship Council in its previous report, is still under consideration by a committee of the Nauru Local Government Council. The Trusteeship Council has in the past evinced continuing interest in the efforts of the Administering Authority to develop agriculture and fisheries and at its twentieth session it expressed the hope that these efforts would be vigorously pursued and would meet with success in the near future.

16. The Territory's sole export is phosphate, valued at £2,236,808 in 1956-1957. During the same year, imports, chiefly from Australia, totalled £1,170,218, an increase of £292,218 over the preceding year.

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Public finance; development of adequate public revenue

17. Under the terms of the Nauru Agreement of 1919, all expenses of the administration, so far as they are not met by other revenue, are paid by the British Phosphate Commissioners out of the proceeds of phosphate sales. Other revenue is obtained from import duties, postal services and sundry items. There is no direct taxation, although an ordinance promulgated in 1956 empowers the Local Government Council to levy rates and taxes. Revenue received by the administration during 1956-1957 totalled £218,916, as compared with £261,164 the previous year. This consisted of £198,064 paid by the British Phosphate Commissioners and £20,852 from the other sources mentioned above. Expenditures totalled £302,349 in 1956-1957 compared with £257,274 during the preceding year.

18. Since 1946-1947 a royalty of 10-1/2d. per ton was formerly paid on phosphate to cover the repayment of an advance of £350,000 to the Administering Authority for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Nauru at the end of the war in the Pacific. Repayment of this advance was completed during 1956-1957. Another royalty of 9d. per ton is paid on phosphate exported for the amortization of an advance of £303,775 by the British Phosphate Commissioners for the construction of homes for Nauruans. The balance owing at 30 June 1957 was £4,764.

19. Apart from its contribution to the general revenue of the Territory, the phosphate industry pays royalties to three funds designated for specific purposes. The first is the Nauru Royalty Trust Fund which is reserved for the purpose of financing such activities of the Nauru Local Government Council as are approved by the Administrator. The Fund is maintained from the proceeds of a royalty of 3d. per ton of phosphate exported. Its income during 1956-1957 amounted to £17,584 and the credit balance at 30 June 1957 was £10,469.

20. The two other funds are intended to meet the economic needs of the Nauruan community in the future. Out of a royalty of 10d. per ton payable to the Nauruan landowners, 2d. is invested on their behalf in the Nauruan Landowners Royalty Trust Fund which at 30 June 1957 had a balance of £208,341. A separate royalty of 5d. per ton is paid into the Nauruan Community Long-Term Investment Fund which had a credit of £211,696 on 30 June 1957. As was noted in the previous reports negotiations were in progress during 1956-1957 between the

Local Government Council and the British Phosphate Commissioners for an increase in the royalty rates.

21. During the year under review shipments of phosphate from Nauru totalled 1,278,176 tons valued at £2,236,808. In addition, 300,666 tons were exported by the British Phosphate Commissioner from Ocean Island and they also purchased and distributed a total of 394,431 from mining companies on other islands. The trading account for all operations during the year showed a net credit of £3,080,575 for phosphate sales and a net cost, including royalty and other payments, of £3,076,304.

22. The total amount payable from phosphate proceeds in respect of the administration and the Nauruans in 1956-1957 was £397,164 compared with £477,343 the preceding year.

23. At its twentieth session the Council recommended that the Administering Authority should submit the fullest possible information concerning the operations of the British Phosphate Commissioners as specifically related to Nauru. It also suggested that the Administering Authority should review the present system whereby the Commissioners make direct payments to cover the expenses of the Territorial administration in order to remove any possibility that the Commissioners might exercise influence on the Territory's budget.

24. In its annual report for 1956-1957, the Administering Authority noted the first recommendation and assured the Council that it would continue to furnish the fullest information available on the operations of the Commissioners in respect of Nauru. In response to the Council's further suggestion, it reiterated earlier assurances that the present system of direct payments had not and would not result in the Commissioners exercising any budgetary control over the Territorial administration.

Land Tenure

25. With the exception of 207 acres owned by the administration almost all the land in the Territory is owned by Nauruans. Most of the administration's land titles date from the former German administration but approximately 97 acres non-phosphate-bearing land was acquired in 1952 for the purposes of an aerodrome after consultation with the Council of Chiefs.

26. In 1956 the Council was apprised through its Visiting Mission of a request by the Local Government Council for the return of the airstrip land to indigenous ownership. On the Council's recommendation, the Administering Authority examined this matter and reported that a decision had been reached that the airstrip was needed in the general interests of the Nauruan community and that, in order to accommodate four-engined aircraft, it should be expanded, making use of land included in the original acquisition. In response to a request made by the Council at its twentieth session for information concerning the air traffic which was expected to use the airstrip, the Administering Authority further explained that it was intended primarily for emergency use for medical and other purposes.

IV. SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

Public health

27. Medical and dental services are provided free of charge by the administration and the British Phosphate Commissioners. Expenditure on health services during 1956-1957 amounted to £40,913, representing an increase of £10,629 over the preceding year.

28. The Public Health Department had a staff of seventy-one persons at 30 June 1957, compared with forty-three the preceding year; fourteen of the additional staff were, however, classified as domestic personnel. The staff in 1957 included five Europeans (governmental medical officer-in-charge, dental officer, matron and two nurses), four Nauruan medical practitioners and forty-eight other Nauruan medical staff.

29. The administration maintains a modern general hospital, the construction of which was completed during the year under review, with twenty-nine beds and separate wards for children, maternity, surgical infections and mental cases. The general hospital also maintains two out-patients clinics, a dental clinic, and also eight infant welfare and three ante-natal field clinics. There are separate hospitals for tuberculosis (the capacity of which was increased from fourteen to twenty-four beds in 1957) and leprosy (ten beds). Each of these hospitals maintains a clinic for out-patients.

30. The British Phosphate Commissioners maintain two hospitals, one for European employees (ten beds) and the other for Chinese, Gilbert and Ellice

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Island employees. The capacity of the latter was increased from ninety-six beds in 1955-1956 to 140 at the end of June 1957, the increase being due to the construction of a new tuberculosis wing which, when completed will contain four wards with fifty-six beds. The staff consisted at 30 June 1957 of twenty-six medical personnel (an increase of four over the preceding year) including a European registered medical practitioner, a trained nurse, a dispenser and twenty-three orderlies and probationers.

31. At its twentieth session, the Trusteeship Council noted with satisfaction the increase in medical staff which occurred during 1955-1956 and hoped that the Administering Authority would continue to develop the medical services taking appropriate measures to increase the number of trained Nauruans. As indicated above there was a further increase in medical staff during 1956-1957. In addition, two Nauruan medical students and one dental student were in training at the Central Medical School, Suva, during the year and two Nauruan nurses returned to the Territory after completing their training. On-the-spot training continued to be given to the Nauruan medical staff in the Territory.

32. Tuberculosis continues to be one of the most prevalent serious diseases and the Trusteeship Council has in the past been concerned to see further measures for its control and prevention. During 1956-1957 a survey of the whole population was carried out by a team supplied by the New South Wales Anti-Tuberculosis Association during which every person was examined by X-ray and skin tests. Forty-seven cases of tuberculosis were found among the Nauruans, twenty-one among the Gilbert and Ellice Islanders and sixty-eight among the Chinese community. All active cases were hospitalized and six Nauruans requiring surgery were sent to Australia. Non-infective cases are receiving regular treatment at the out-patient clinics. In future, all persons, other than permanent residents, will be required to obtain chest X-rays before, or upon, arriving in the Territory. The Administering Authority believes that these measures, together with the B.C.G. vaccination of all persons found susceptible to infection, should provide an effective control of the disease in the future.

Labour

33. The principal employers are the British Phosphate Commissioners and the administration. Owing to the size of its labour requirements the phosphate industry employs both Nauruans and also Chinese and Gilbert and Ellice Islanders who are recruited under contract. The total number of employed persons increased from 1,904 to 2,131 at the end of June 1957. A noteworthy development during the year under review was the entry into force on 17 September 1956 of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance which provides for the payment of compensation to workers for injuries arising out of or in the course of their employment.

34. The Nauruan basic minimum wage is determined on the principle of the cost of living of a married couple and is reviewed at six-monthly intervals by the administration in consultation with the Nauruan Workers Organization, which is the only trade union in the Territory. At 30 June 1957 the basic wage was £4.16s.9d., an increase of 1s.9d. over the previous year. In addition, a dependents' allowance is paid which varies by 1d. for every variation of 9d. in the basic wage. At the end of June 1957 this allowance was 10s.7d. The minimum wages of unmarried youths and women are determined as percentages of the adult male basic wage. The wage scale of immigrant labour employed by the British Phosphate Commissioners is based on that prevailing at the place of recruitment.

35. At its twentieth session, the Trusteeship Council suggested that the Administering Authority might eliminate any differentiation in pay scales between Nauruans and immigrant groups by providing a single pay scale covering the various job descriptions. It also considered that the Administering Authority should encourage the British Phosphate Commissioners to establish an equal work week for all groups engaged in the phosphate industry. In the report under review, the Administering Authority stated that both these suggestions were under consideration.

36. The Council hoped that the Administering Authority would increase its efforts to raise the capacity and skill of workers. In response to this, the Administering Authority stated that its policy was to provide Nauruans with the necessary training to enable them to take a progressively more significant part in the work of administration and industry. It believed that, with the existing training facilities and the opportunities available

for education, the achievement of this policy depends mainly on the potentialities and efforts of the Nauruans. Training programmes, including on-the-job training, are provided by both the administration and the British Phosphate Commissioners. It was reported, however, that during 1956-1957 it was difficult to obtain suitable candidates for the latter's apprenticeship scheme owing to the small number of Nauruan youths leaving school and the greater attraction of professional, administrative and other occupations.

V. EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

General

37. Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of five and fifteen (if European) and seventeen (if Nauruan). At 30 June 1957 there were 487 pupils in administration schools and 199 pupils in a school run by a Roman Catholic mission. The teaching staff in the administration schools consists of nine qualified European teachers, nineteen Nauruan teachers (including one Nauruan domestic science teacher who joined the staff in 1957 after completing two years' professional training in Australia) and one Gilbertese teacher. Expenditure on Nauruan education totalled £35,595 during 1956-1957 compared with £26,335 the preceding year. In addition, £9,343 was spent on new school buildings.

38. The administration maintains a consolidated primary, a secondary, a European and a Gilbert and Ellice Islanders' school. The Administering Authority has explained that, although the names of the last two schools describe the race of the majority of the pupils attending them, there are Europeans and Gilbert and Ellice Islanders in Nauruan schools and some Chinese in each of the schools. European children normally go to Australia for their secondary education and during 1956-1957 there were no Europeans in the secondary school. Education is, at present provided only up to the secondary (intermediate) level and Nauruans desiring higher or vocational training proceed overseas. At 30 June 1957 there were thirty-four Nauruans studying in Australia, of whom thirty-one were at the secondary stage, one was receiving teacher training and two were administration cadets. In addition, there was one other Pacific Islander in New Zealand and three Nauruans were attending the Central Medical School at Suva, Fiji.

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39. As stated in previous reports, the district primary schools were consolidated in 1954 in order to improve the efficiency and quality of the primary school system. Construction was begun of a single school building to house all pupils in grades II to VI, leaving the district school buildings to cater for the younger children in the preparatory grade and grade I who are best accommodated near their homes. During 1956-1957 further progress was made with the new school building which was expected to be substantially completed by the end of 1957. The Administering Authority informed the Council in 1957 that the reorganization had resulted in a general improvement in primary education which would eventually be seen in the examination results at the secondary level.
40. At its twentieth session the Council hoped that when sufficient numbers of students came up from the junior levels, the Administering Authority would accelerate the extension of the secondary course up to university matriculation standards. The Council also recommended that the Administering Authority should continue its efforts to provide Nauruan students with higher education.
41. In the annual report for 1956-1957 the Administering Authority commented that the small number of pupils at the higher secondary level made it impractical to consider establishing education to matriculation standard on Nauru at present. As soon as the number of students was sufficient to justify the cost, however, it would consider doing so. In the meantime, scholarships would continue to be provided to enable Nauruans who passed the intermediate secondary examination in the Territory to continue their studies in Australia. The Administering Authority stated that it would also provide financial and other assistance, as might be required, to Nauruans with the necessary qualifications who wished to continue their studies at universities or other institutions of higher learning.
42. The council was also concerned to obtain more detailed information on the progress made in the certification of untrained Nauruan teachers and expressed the hope that the Administering Authority would consider providing inducements to encourage qualified teachers to remain in their profession in the Territory. With the exception of one qualified domestic science teacher who returned to the Territory in 1957 after training in Australia, none of the Nauruan teaching staff possesses professional qualifications, although two

have been awarded a competency rating which carries an increase in salary. In-service-training was continued during 1956-1957 and early in 1957 eight Nauruan teachers, accompanied by the head teacher of the consolidated primary school, visited Australia to observe teaching methods in Australian schools. The Administering Authority reported that these measures had resulted in considerable progress in teaching methods being made by individual teachers. During 1956-1957 one Nauruan was awarded an administration cadetship to follow a teacher-training course in Australia.
