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No. 1129.

ST. HELENA.

REPORT FOR 1921.

(For Report for 1920 see No. 1084.)



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No. 1129.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1921.

I.—FINANCIAL.

(A) REVENUE.

The revenue for the year, including a Grant-in-Aid of £3,200, amounted to £10,229, or £2,894 less than the sum received in 1920, being £1,009 under the estimate for the year.

The drop is, however, considerably accounted for in that during 1920 the Government Flax Mill made contributions to the general revenue of £2,100 on account of refund of passage money and other items, whereas in 1921 its contribution was £400.

Customs revenue was down £1,175, owing to bad trade; Post Office receipts by £196.

(B) EXPENDITURE.

The expenditure for the year amounted to £11,178, or £418 less than the figure for 1920.

The expenditure sanctioned was £12,212. Increases in expenditure amounted to £724, the principal item being £606 under the head "Miscellaneous," due to interest paid to the Crown Agents for the Colonies on overdrafts; the rate of interest being very high in the year under report.

Decreases in expenditure occurred under twelve heads, the principal being £255 under Customs, and £206 under Works Extraordinary.

(C) ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

On 31st December, 1921, the Colony's liabilities exceeded its assets by £1,950, an increase of indebtedness of £1,528, as compared with 1920, due to the deficit on the year's working.

(D) CURRENCY.

Bills on the Crown Agents amounted to £12,689 during the year. No imports or exports of coin took place in 1921. Coin in circulation may be put at £11,500; this sum includes British Treasury and Bank of England notes to the value of £2,500.

II.—TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRIES.

(A) TRADE.

Revenue.

The Customs revenue for the year under report amounted to £3,249 13s. 7d., as against £4,424 16s. 2d. in the previous year; showing a decrease of £1,175 2s. 7d.

This decrease is due to a general stagnation in trade brought about by lack of employment, due to some extent to post-war conditions, reduction of the Garrison, and withdrawal of deportees; and to the fact that merchants had large stocks in hand at the end of 1920, thereby reducing imports in 1921.

The principal sub-heads under which the decrease in revenue noted above took place, are Import Duties, £412 15s., due to the working classes not having the necessary money to indulge in dutiable luxuries, the selling price of which continued high, and Export Wharfage, £550 3s. 5d., due to only 448 tons of fibre and tow being exported in 1921, as against 838 tons in 1920. Also, in consequence of the London market price in 1921 being under £50 and £25 per ton for fibre and tow respectively, only 10s. and 5s. per ton tax was levied, as against 20s. and 15s. per ton in 1920.

Expenditure.

The Customs Expenditure for 1921 amounted to £390 5s. 4d., as against £644 15s. 7d. in 1920, showing a decrease of £254 10s. 3d. In 1920 a refund of £214 0s. 2d. was made on Export Wharfage Dues overpaid on fibre and tow exported, which did not occur in 1921, and personal emoluments in 1920 were £371 0s. 2d., as against £358 13s. in 1921, hence a saving under both sub-heads.

Imports.

The total value of imports in 1921 amounted to £44,647, as against £67,441 in 1920, showing a decrease of £22,794. This is not only due to less imports, but to the falling cost of materials during the year. Decreases in value appear under almost every item, mainly as follows:—Boats, £805; Coal, £1,543; Drapery, £2,093; Flour, £6,469; Grain, Seed, and Oilcake, £2,981; Foodstuffs, £2,218; Oilman's Stores, £1,203; Sugar, £2,730; and Spirits, £625.

The only large increase is £340 (for Aloe Fibre Mill, and instruments and machinery for the Eastern Telegraph Company); Paraffin Oil, £480; and Rice, £2,672.

During 1920, rice could not be imported for many months.

Exports.

The value of exports during the year amounted to £14,334, as against £41,857 in 1920, showing a large decrease of £27,523, which is practically all due to the value of fibre and tow exported in 1920 being £38,797, as against £11,984 in 1921. No wool was exported in the year under review, as against £574 in the previous year.

Increase under export occurs in St. Helena rope of £685 for 1921, as compared with £391 in 1920, and potatoes £319.

(B) AGRICULTURE, STOCK, FORESTS, AND GARDENS.

The year under review may be regarded as a satisfactory one from an agricultural point of view. The rainfall was sufficient, and well distributed throughout the months when it is most needed for farming operations.

Potatoes and sweet potatoes were plentiful, and prices dropped considerably. This was no doubt of great benefit to the poorer classes, particularly to the people living in Jamestown.

Owing to the abnormal cost, it was impossible to import seed potatoes, as small growers could not have afforded to buy. The lack of markets for their produce acts as a deterrent to the poorer classes taking full advantage of the capabilities of production. More vegetables are, however, grown in cottage gardens than was the case when I came here, and every endeavour is made to induce the people to become more self-supporting. Thanks are due to Messrs. Deason, Solomon, and Thorpe for planting seeds of various trees. In the instances where these seeds have been protected, the results have been most satisfactory; but it is considered that planting, owing to the depredations of animals—principally goats—is useless unless it is done thoroughly, which means much expense. It would be of undoubted benefit to St. Helena to have more plantations of young trees. Fruit is generally unsatisfactory, owing to the depredations of grubs and the general lack of attention to the trees on the part of their owners.

The sale of fruit from Maldivia Garden amounted to £84 14s. 9d., and the expenditure, including £11 6s. 10d. on tree planting, to £83 9s. 6d., showing, with the balance brought forward a small balance in hand at the end of the year of £5 6s. 4d. The Government pasture lands at "Botley's Lay" produced a revenue of £81 10s. 3d., against an expenditure of £75 5s. 10d. The balance standing to the credit of this fund now amounts to £26 15s. 6d.

The average number of animals maintained on the Lay in 1921 was 277 sheep, 34 oxen, and 10 asses.

(C) INDUSTRIES.

Fibre.—The Government Flax Mill worked for 159 days during the year, as compared with 186 in 1920, producing 76 tons of fibre, and 38½ tons of tow.

The average prices obtained on the London market were £33 a ton for fibre, and £17 a ton for tow, as compared with £54 15s. for fibre, and £36 for tow, in 1920.

The year under review was an extremely difficult one for the flax industry. Not only was there an abrupt fall in value from £54 a ton in November, 1920, to £28 a ton offered for the following shipment, but for many months it was impossible to dispose of fibre at any price, and shipments were not advised by the agents. I am glad to say that, after considerable correspondence with the Union-Castle Shipping Company, freights were somewhat reduced during the later months of the year, and had this not been done the flax industry as regards St. Helena would have become a dead letter.

Private Mills.—Messrs. Solomon's mill at Sandy Bay ran for 293 working days, and produced 110 tons of fibre and 38 tons of tow. Their mill at Broadbottom worked for 96 days, and produced 21 tons of fibre and 22 tons of tow. This mill was closed early in the year.

Messrs. Deason's mill at Hutts Gate ran for 308 days during the year, and produced 93 tons of fibre and 78 tons of tow.

Messrs. Solomon employed 90 males and six females at their two mills, some for only part of the year, while Messrs. Deason employed 50 males and 23 females at their mill, a total of 169 persons employed directly in the industry in the private mills in 1921, as compared with 212 in 1920. The Government mill had 25 employees in both years.

Rope.—Captain Mainwaring employed 20 men and boys in rope making in 1921, and produced 12 tons of rope, of an approximate value of £700. It is much to be hoped that this infant industry may have a successful career before it.

Lace.—The lace industry is now managed by private enterprise, and I hear quite satisfactory accounts of its progress.

(D) SHIPPING.

The number of vessels calling at this island during the year under review was 26, being 11 less than in the previous year. All of these were British, with the exception of one French and one Swedish. H.M.S. "Dublin" visited the Colony in September.

The total number of vessels sighted at the station was 42, being 12 less than in 1920, of which number two traded with licensed traders.

Nineteen vessels entered and cleared at the Port of Jamestown, shipping and discharging 7,544 tons, as compared with 7,426 in 1920. This, however, includes 4,433 tons of coal from vessels in distress, as compared with 2,273 tons in 1920.

The mail service was continued by the Union-Castle Company.

III.—EDUCATION.

There are eight elementary schools in the Island, of which three are Government schools.

During the year a general census was made, which showed the numbers attending to be—

Government schools	...	...	...	...	236
Other schools	...	...	...	...	376

612

as compared with 564 in 1920. The average attendance at all the schools was exceptionally high, and the health of the children good throughout the year.

The Superintendent visited the schools regularly, examining the children at the end of each quarter, and also more fully at the end of the year. He was satisfied with the progress made, and also with the general conduct and tone of the schools.

Eight pupil-teachers attended the weekly classes, of whom two obtained first-class, and four second-class certificates in the examination at the end of the year. The important change in the schools was the separation of the boys and girls in the two town schools. As this did not take place till late in the year, it is early yet to report results. Much, however, is expected in the way of improved discipline, attendance, and moral benefit, and so far these expectations have been entirely fulfilled.

IV.—GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

(A) HOSPITAL.

There were 197 admissions to the hospital during the year, a decrease of four as compared with 1920.

There were five deaths, representing a mortality of 2·5 per cent. of the total admissions, as compared with six, or 3 per cent., in 1920, and 2·8 in 1919.

(B) SAVINGS BANK.

On the 31st December, 1921, there were 107 depositors having accounts with the Government Savings Bank, as against 141 in 1920.

Cash deposits amounted to £602 13s. 3d., as compared with £1,273 12s. 1d. in 1920. This decrease is accounted for by the public placing their money in the National Bank of South Africa, where they obtained a higher rate of interest. It is surprising in a way that, in view of this, there should have been any deposits during the year in the Government Savings Bank. It may be explained by the idea that many have here that banks may come and go, but the Government is stabilised. Repayment to depositors amounted to £5,448 12s. 5d., as against £7,302 1s. 8d. in 1920.

On 31st December, 1921, the sum of £6,578 4s. 8d. was standing to the credit of depositors in the Government Savings Bank.

Stock to the value of £12,082 0s. 10d., cost price, was invested on the 31st December, 1921.

V.—JUDICIAL STATISTICS.

(A) CRIMINAL.

Supreme Court.—No cases were brought before the Supreme Court during the year, as compared with one in 1920, and four in 1919.

Police Court.—Seventy cases were dealt with in the Police Court, as compared with 110 in the previous year; 29 of these were for non-payment of road tax.

Dog Tax.—£82 10s. was collected under Dog Tax, as compared with £80 10s. in 1920. There were no prosecutions under this head.

(B) PRISONS.

Thirty persons were committed to the gaol during the year, as compared with 33 in 1920. The daily average number in gaol was 1·4, as compared with 4·8 in the previous year.

The cost of maintaining the gaol was £126 16s. 5d., as compared with £240 15s. 3d. in the previous year, duly carrying out the forecast I ventured to make in the last annual report.

VI.—VITAL STATISTICS.

(A) POPULATION.

The estimated civil population on the 31st December, 1921, amounted to 3,670, being a decrease of six on the actual population, 3,676, on 31st December, 1920, which was ascertainable by the Census.

Civil emigrants in 1921 numbered 144 (including labourers to Ascension), and immigrants 67, as against 83 emigrants and 101 immigrants in 1920.

The number of deaths during the year was 24, and civil births 93. There were also two births in the Garrison. Twenty-three illegitimate births took place in 1921.

The death-rate in 1921 was 6·5 per 1,000, as compared with 8·87 in 1920; I think I can venture to say the lowest recorded death-rate in the Island, or probably in any other Colony.

The civil birth-rate for 1921 was 25·3 per 1,000, as against 22·6 in 1920.

There were 20 marriages solemnized during 1921, as compared with 17 in 1920.

(B) PUBLIC HEALTH.

The general health of the community continued to be satisfactory.

The infant (*i.e.* under one year) mortality constituted a record, *viz.*, 10·4 per thousand births; only one infant died in 1921 as compared with seven in 1920, or a rate of 82·3 per thousand births in that year. Legislation came into force this year forbidding the insurance of children under five years old.

A mild form of influenza prevailed in the month of September; large numbers were affected but no deaths occurred. Two cases of diphtheria occurred during the year in different parts of the Island, but no connection could be traced between them.

(C) SANITARY.

The Board of Health met eight times during the year. No matter calling for special remark came to notice.

(D) CLIMATE.

Meteorological Station, Hutts Gate.

Barometer.—The mean pressure for the year was 28·123, slightly higher than the mean pressure for the previous year, which was 28·108.

Temperature.—The mean temperature was 62·9 (63·0 in 1920). The absolute maximum was recorded on 26th February, and read 83·6, which is the highest since the present observer has been in charge of the station (24 years), the highest temperature in 1920 being 82·5 on 9th March. The absolute minimum temperature was 51·6, registered on 8th September, as against 51·0 recorded on 14th July and 5th August in the previous year.

Rainfall.—The total rainfall measured at Hutts Gate was 40·50 in., at Plantation 46·17, and in Jamestown 15·05. The maximum fall, 1·72 in., was recorded on 28th March, 1920. June and July were particularly wet months, and the last four months of the year were very dry. The number of rainy days totalled 162 at Hutts Gate and 205 at Plantation.

Wind.—The mean force for the year was 2·0, the same as in 1920; there were, however, two more calm days in 1921.

The direction for the year was as follows:—

E.	...	...	...	2	days.
E.S.E.	...	...	...	6	„
S.E.	...	...	...	166	„
S.	...	...	...	36	„
S.S.E.	...	...	...	125	„
Calm	...	...	...	30	„

From the above report it may be noted that the weather in St. Helena is apparently getting more and more equable. There is

a tendency to record more calm days annually—a few years ago about eight was usual, this year the number is thirty. There are many days which could be classified as calm, but a calm day, meteorologically speaking, is when the wind is really west, but is so slight as not to be recorded by the anemometer; on these days rain is not unusual.

VII.—POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE SERVICES.

(A) POST OFFICE.

Revenue.—The Postal Revenue for the year amounted to £741 15s. 2d. as compared with £917 7s. 2d. in the previous year, showing a decrease of £175 12s. 0d. due principally to small orders from stamp dealers, viz., £326 18s. 5d., as compared with £417 16s. 10d. in 1920.

Expenditure.—The expenditure of the Department amounted to £417 18s. 7d., a decrease of £84 14s. 10d. as compared with 1920. This decrease is due principally to the claim from the General Post Office for sea carriage of mails not being presented for payment.

(B) TELEGRAPHS.

The charges on telegrams remained the same as in the previous year, and the Staff of the Eastern Telegraph Company was as in 1920.

(C) TELEPHONES.

Receipts for 1921 were £97 13s. 11d. and expenditure £93 10s. 7d., as compared with £103 19s. 3d. and £81 17s. 0d. in 1920.

VIII.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

(A) ROADS.

The amount spent on the repair and maintenance of rural roads came to £940 10s. 11d., out of which the tax on fibre and tow contributed £190 12s. 7d.

The sum available for the repair of the roads, of which we endeavour to keep in order some 60 miles, is quite inadequate. The hilly nature of the country, together with a heavy rainfall and wear caused by flax donkeys, makes constant repair necessary. On the present sum patching is practically all that can be done, regular repairs, which are much needed, being out of the question. A thoroughly good road foreman is also a necessity which has to be dispensed with.

The amount collected under the Road Tax Ordinance was £68 5s. 0d., as compared with £84 7s. 0d. in 1920. The decrease is due to men going to Ascension for employment. There were 29 prosecutions under this Ordinance.

(B) LAND GRANTS.

1,254 acres of Crown Waste Land at " Prosperous Bay Plain " were leased to Mr. T. R. Sales for the purpose of cotton growing. The general value of land remains unaltered.

(C) RATE OF WAGES AND COST OF LIVING.

The following comparative table shows that the cost of living dropped considerably during 1921. On 64 articles of common household consumption the net decrease during the year may be put at 41·54 per cent., that is to say that, while in 1920 the figure was 176·08 per cent. over that of the pre-war period, in 1921 it was 134·54 per cent. over. Fish was plentiful during 1921.

	1920.	1921.
Flour	4½ <i>d.</i> per lb.	4½ <i>d.</i>
Bread	7½ <i>d.</i> per 1½ lb.	5½ <i>d.</i>
Sugar	1/3 per lb.	10 <i>d.</i>
Dripping	2/- ,, ,,	1/2
Tea	3/2 ,, ,,	2/-
Salt	2 <i>d.</i> ,, ,,	2 <i>d.</i>
Rice	5 <i>d.</i> to 5½ <i>d.</i> ,, ,,	4 <i>d.</i>

The cost of clothing also remained abnormally high.

Rate of Wages.—The same as in 1920, namely, 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* daily.

Much unemployment is chronic on the Island. With a death-rate of 6·5 per 1,000, and a birth-rate of 25 per 1,000, it is obvious that this must be so until some stable outside source of occupation or some new Island industry be found. It is none the less distressing.

The Red Gate Food Depot continued its good work in relieving the distress of very old people by providing a weekly ration to 67 persons on Fridays. I am glad to say that this very deserving and necessary charity has been generally well supported.

During the course of 1921, I also restarted the Soup Kitchen in Jamestown, which has been of very great benefit, principally to underfed or semi-starved school children. A daily meal is provided for these at 3 p.m.

My most sincere thanks are due to subscribers to both these institutions.

(D) DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

The expenditure during the year under " Works Recurrent " amounted to £2,444 1*s.* 11*d.*, of which £940 10*s.* 11*d.* was spent on rural roads. This is less by £500 than the expenditure for 1920, but the saving, both from the point of view of repairs and employment, is really not satisfactory.

Poor Board.

The Revenue of the Poor Board for the year amounted to £964 10*s.* 0*d.*, and the expenditure to £969 14*s.* 6*d.*, as compared with £824 6*s.* 8*d.* and £837 18*s.* 7*d.* in 1920.

Public Market.

The Revenue amounted to £21 11s. 5*d.*, and the expenditure to £15 3s. 5*d.* The Market continued under the supervision of the Board of Guardians.

(E) MISCELLANEOUS.

Dr. F. de C. Keogh was appointed Assistant Colonial Surgeon, and arrived in the Colony in November.

From an economic standpoint the cost of living showed a considerable reduction from that prevalent in 1920. On the other hand, owing to a very heavy fall in the price of fibre, wages showed a tendency to drop, while unemployment increased. Under these circumstances the opportunity to send 45 men to Ascension for work under the Admiralty in September was particularly welcome.

From an agricultural point of view seasons were good, and crops all round satisfactory.

The Boy Scout movement was revived, and the different troops now number about 60 members; Girl Guides were also inaugurated. Both these bodies are now provided with uniforms, and it is hoped that the training they get will be of advantage to them in later life.

R. F. PEEL,
Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

THE CASTLE,
ST. HELENA,
26th June, 1922.