

In granting portions of the Island to the Admiralty, they point out to me that such grants must be subject to the existing lease and the powers therein contained.

I have not been able to obtain a copy of this lease from my Government in time to catch this mail, but I presume that there was a sufficiently strong reservation clause to enable what land may be needed to be taken for defence requirements.

His Excellency the Admiral has asked for a portion equal to more than one-third of the land of the island, which is itself of small extent.

The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain,
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

I have, &c.,
RANFURLY.

No. 78.

(No. 13.)

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 5th March, 1902.

In reference to your despatch, with enclosures (New Zealand, No. 73), dated the 16th July, 1901, regarding transport "Tagus," I have now the honour to forward you a report on the Bluff Harbour, also a map showing details with reference to depth of water.

My Government desire to point out that the chart clearly proves that the Bluff Harbour is quite safe for vessels even of a larger size than the "Tagus."

The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain,
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

I have, &c.,
RANFURLY.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

Bluff Harbour, 8th November, 1901.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 21st September referring to the objection which was made to the troopship "Tagus" coming to the Bluff, and requesting to be supplied with certain particulars, together with any other information which would show that the port and access to it, and the surrounding waters, are safe for vessels of large tonnage.

In submitting to you this information, which will prove that the port has been frequented for many years past by vessels of much larger size than the "Tagus" in every dimension, I am directed by the members of my Board to express their opinion that the reputation of the port has been aspersed by the refusal of the authorities to allow the "Tagus" to come to the port on the plea that it was not safe, and by the publicity which has been given in the House of Representatives, and in the public Press, to statements reflecting upon it; that an inquiry into the truth of these statements, and the safety of the port, or otherwise, is absolutely necessary; and that the result of such inquiry should be communicated to the Board.

I have the honour to enclose herewith, in accordance with your request,—

(A.) Plan of harbour, showing details with reference to depth of water throughout the harbour and also at the wharves.

(B.) Statement showing the names and tonnage of all vessels over 2,000 tons net register entering the port for the two years preceding 1st October, 1901.

(C.) Statement showing draughts of certain vessels which have left the harbour at various periods since 1895.

(D.) Statement of vessels, over 3,000 tons net register, which have entered and left the harbour since the 1st January, 1897.

With reference to statement (B), I regret that no systematic record has been kept of the draught of vessels leaving the harbour, but the Harbourmaster has occasionally noted some in his logbook, and I have in statement (C) furnished you with these. They extend back to 1895, and the most notable is the s.s. "Rakaia," which left port drawing 27 ft. 9 in.

Statement (D) shows a list of equal to sixty vessels, all of larger net tonnage than the "Tagus," fifty of them of greater length, which have entered and left port since the 1st January, 1897. All these vessels have been berthed at the wharves and handled without the slightest mishap. I compare the two largest with the "Tagus":—

5—A. 1.