

All of these evils might be obviated by the local Government being authorised to lease direct from the Native owners, and sublet to suitable men who desire to become planters. The conditions imposed by our Land Act are not onerous, for people have already experienced the trouble incidental to cutting down all timber at once and will not repeat this mistake.

I may be wrong, but I can hardly see the necessity for legislative action in such a case. Your authority for the expenditure of the local revenue in the leasing of lands for settlement should surely be sufficient, for those lands would not be on our hands for six months in any case. If, however, legislation should be necessary, I would suggest that Rarotonga should legislate for their own lands, on the following lines:—

Leases for not less than fifty years, at not exceeding 5s. per acre, or 6s. in special cases.

No one settler to hold more than 100 acres of flat or first-class land, or 500 of second-class land (mountain-slopes).

Lands to be sublet to suitable settlers with capital for not less than forty-nine years; all rents received by the Government to be paid direct to the Treasury.

Treasury to keep a debtor and creditor account as against all lands leased from Native owners, and to report on the 31st March in each year for information of Parliament.

The question is not a large one so far as Rarotonga is concerned, for I do not think that more than 700 acres could be leased by the Government under the most favourable circumstances.

That the leading Natives will approve the scheme I am quite sure, for I have already spoken to them on the point.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,
Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. C. H. Mills, Minister administering the Islands, Wellington.

No. 63.

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 13th September, 1905.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward a hastily written report and plan of the Island of Takutea for your information. There has been no time for revision of the report, as we are on the eve of departure for the north, but Mr. Connal's report will give you a fair idea of this valuable property.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,
Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. C. H. Mills, Minister administering the Islands, Wellington.

Enclosure.

REPORT ON THE ISLAND OF TAKUTEA, COOK ISLANDS.

HAVING been directed by the Resident Commissioner to proceed to Takutea to survey, report, and plant in cocoanuts as much land as the time at our disposal would permit, I left Rarotonga with a party of thirteen, in the Government schooner "Countess of Ranfurly," about 9 p.m. on the 30th August, and arrived at Takutea on the 1st September about 9 a.m.

Takutea is a coral island, the only others in the Cook Group of any size being Manuae or Hervey Islands and a few of the motus of Aitutaki.

Position.—The position of Takutea as shown on the Admiralty charts—viz., latitude $19^{\circ} 49'$ S. and longitude $158^{\circ} 16'$ W. for the centre of the island—I should say is practically correct. I make a concrete block shown on my plan of the island as Δ , from the mean of seven star and three sun observations for latitude S. $19^{\circ} 48' 35''$; and for longitude, $5^{\circ} 51'$ east of Δ Rarotonga ($159^{\circ} 46' 10''$), which gives the longitude $158^{\circ} 18' 25''$ W. But as this is got from depending on one chronometer I call the longitude of Δ to the nearest minute $158^{\circ} 18'$ W. as near as I can give it with the instruments at present with me.

Area and Height.—I make the total area of Takutea 302 acres to high-water mark, of which 75 acres are mostly sandy beach, leaving 227 acres as land for the cocoanuts, and from high-water mark to the centre of the island is about 25 ft. in height. Most of the scrub land is about from 15 ft. to 25 ft. above high-water mark.

Direction of Length.—The direction of the length of the island shown on the Admiralty chart—S.E. and N.W.—is not correct, the length being in direction east and west. At the eastern end there is a long reef running out under water as shown on the chart, and at the western end another reef running also as shown on the chart.

Landing.—At the north-west side there is a good landing on the reef with the wind and sea anywhere from south-east to south-west. This landing, being protected by the two end reefs, seems superior to any of the other islands' landings of the Group excepting Rarotonga.

Hurricane, January, 1905.—The sea in the hurricane of January last seems to have reached just a little above the edge of the scrub land.

Soil.—The soil of Takutea is composed of a thick strata of coral sand, which is covered by a thin layer of humus, which by the rains gets washed in amongst the sand below and forms a sandy loam. In several places the soil was fairly black for a foot in depth. This soil is considered a good one for the propagation of the coconut-palm.