

## No. 149.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 3rd March, 1906.

No. 122.

In replying to letter No. 32, of the 20th January, I may say that I think that the main question has already been answered. I may, however, add to anything I have previously said that our only scientific observer is Mr. Connal, who, from the nature of his work, is often away. He will, however, instruct Mr. Blaine to take his place.

We have no mercurial barometer, but have an aneroid and thermometer. An anemometer and barograph should be sent, and we will endeavour to build a frame to support the wind-gauge and weathercock at the end of the wharf, it being somewhat difficult to ascertain the direction of the wind, living as we do under the shadow of the mountains.

If the Meteorological Department can send general directions to Mr. Connal as to his observations it will be as well to do so.

I have, &amp;c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

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

## No. 150.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 5th March, 1906.

No. 139.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 63, of the 16th ultimo, and to report that I have communicated with the Fruit Committee of this island as far as I thought advisable, and hope to be in a position to forward their views to you this mail.

With reference to the form that the assistance should take, in order to encourage the fruit trade of these islands, it appears to me that it would not be expedient to guarantee "a payable price." This would be a very risky measure, for the Maori who lives close to the place of shipment would probably consider himself well paid on receipt of 1s. per box clear of all expenses, whereas the European who lives ten miles from port, and takes care to send nothing but the best fruit and well packed, would require 1s. 6d. clear. Those who buy fruit for shipment would require something more.

Whatever arrangements may be made, I think there can be no doubt but that the granting of a small bonus will increase the export, and this being the case, the Government would accept a heavy liability by guaranteeing any price. I object to the payment of freight either wholly or in part, for any such arrangement would relieve the middleman of the necessity of finding a buyer at such a price as shall provide for the freight.

The best possible method of assisting the fruit-grower of these islands will be by giving a bonus of 6d. on each box containing 2 cubic feet of fruit or over, and 3d. for the 6 in. box; such bonus to be given for bananas, oranges, and pines only, and the money to be payable in Rarotonga immediately after the departure of each steamer.

The Resident Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Inspector, should have the power to stop the bonus for any one of the following offences: (1) Placing the mario among the ordinary banana of commerce; (2) packing any variety of plantain among the true bananas; (3) shipping undeveloped bananas to New Zealand; (4) shipping small unripe oranges that are known to be unfit for market, or rotten oranges, to the detriment of the whole cargo, or unsound oranges of any description.

A local Ordinance should define the powers of the Inspector, and every facility should be given to him to prevent the shipment of any fruit not of the first quality. It should also be his duty to prevent the rough handling of the fruit, which is now the rule rather than the exception, not only on the wharf but in the boats and steamer.

I may also remark for your information that the majority of shippers appear to think that a three-weekly service, that should run through to Wellington *via* Auckland, would be of more value to them than any other service.

I have, &amp;c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

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

## No. 151.

Union Steamship Company of New Zealand (Limited),  
Dunedin, 6th March, 1906.

SIR,—

I notice that a deputation from the Wellington Chamber of Commerce waited upon you a few days ago to discuss the question of a direct steam service between Wellington and the Cook Islands.

I would remind you that I wrote you on the 25th August last, suggesting that, if desired, the experiment of a second steamer during the three or four months of the fruit season could be tried, but expressing a doubt whether sufficient supplies of marketable fruit would be available. In reply to this you intimated that you had sent my letter to the Resident Commissioner for his report.

I shall be glad to know if you have any report from him, and if it is likely that sufficient fruit will be available. Our advices indicate that the crop for the coming season is likely to be smaller than for last year.