

Enclosure.

Sir,—

Government House, Suva, Fiji, 28th February, 1887.

In connection with the subject of the proposed trans-Pacific mail service from Vancouver to the Australasian Colonies (alluded to in High Commission despatch of the 7th December, 1886), I trust I may be permitted to call attention to the great importance to this colony of one of its ports being made one of the points at which this line will touch.

2. I believe that this group lies directly in the track of steam-vessels from Vancouver to Sydney, and very little out of the course from Vancouver to Auckland.

3. If the approaches to Suva Harbour be considered too dangerous,—although, when the light on Solo Rock, now on its way from England, has been erected, there will be no real danger to the navigation of the channel to the harbour,—there is the magnificent harbour of N'galoa on the south side of Kandavu, which appears to me to possess all the advantages necessary for a coaling-station and a port of call.

4. If the acquisition by the company of any reasonable quantity of foreshore and land for warehouses and buildings in N'galoa Harbour would be an inducement to the company to call there, I think, with your permission, there will be no difficulty in meeting all their requirements in this respect.

5. I have received a report on the relative advantages of Suva and N'galoa harbours, of which I have the honour to enclose a copy.

6. It will be seen that Lieutenant Malan, R.N., contemplates, if the route through the islands be the one taken, the erection of several lighthouses at various points; but if the steamers choose the safer, though slightly longer, course outside and to the southward of the group, a single light on Ongea N'driki Island will be all that will be necessary; and this, I think, we shall be able to supply without difficulty.

7. If N'galoa be the one chosen, harbour lights and a pilot establishment will be required there; but if Suva Harbour be preferred, as Mr. Malan appears to think it would be, the establishment of lights and pilots is already provided.

I have, &c.,

The Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies, &c.

C. B. H. MITCHELL.

Sub-Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM to His Excellency the GOVERNOR concerning Ports of Call, &c., for Trans-Pacific Mail Steamers in the Colony of Fiji (Relative Advantages of the Harbours of Suva, Viti Levu Island, N'galoa, and Kandavu Island).

SUVA HARBOUR, as a port of call for a steamer, may be considered comparatively easy of approach, and entry both by day and by night. The leading lights and lightship are good and sufficient; the passage broad (viz., three cables), deep, and clear of dangers, besides having smooth water throughout its length. The harbour is capacious, has good holding, and always very smooth water. Pilots are established, who meet vessels requiring their services at the Outer Horn of the eastern reef. As a coaling-station the same remarks apply, if the coal supply is carried in a hulk; for, unless the Government wharf be utilised, there is no spot on the harbour's foreshore where any vessel of considerable draught could approach near enough for coaling purposes without first having to run out a wharf, and probably have to reclaim a certain portion of the foreshore upon which to make a coal store. Even punts could not be worked at all times of tide from the shore without having some wharf to go alongside of. The present hulk, belonging to the agents of the United States Steamship Company, is now so old that it may not be depended upon much longer.

As regards N'galoa Bay: The immediate approach to it is funnel-shaped, and rather open to the prevailing winds. A dangerous reef, on which is a heavy break, and which extends four miles and a half from the land, forms the south side of the entrance. This safely passed, however, tends to make the water smoother near the entrance, three miles to the westward. This entrance is about three cables broad, and somewhat shorter than that at Suva. However, there is a considerable patch named "McGregor," after one of the Pacific Mail Company's steamers that stranded on it when proceeding out of the harbour, which lies across the fairway just inside the entrance, and dries at low water. This danger passed, the harbour is very commodious, with varying depths from 12 to 20 fathoms (mud). There is an inner harbour accessible to large vessels, and thoroughly protected on all sides, with anchorage in five fathoms. The outer anchorage, and the one usually made use of, is free from all dangers excepting one shoal (Wood's), with rocks awash on it, and which has to be passed in proceeding to an anchorage. The water here is not as smooth generally as that in Suva Harbour. The entrance of this harbour is not so easily made out as the approach to Suva Harbour, the natural landmarks not being so clearly defined. In the event of making Suva a port of call, I would recommend that the white upper leading light (at an elevation of 320ft.) be replaced by a more powerful light (dioptric or holophote), so as to answer the double purpose of a leading light and an approach-light for vessels coming from the direction of Bengha Island or from the south-eastward past the Solo lighthouse; probable cost £250, but large after-saving in consumption of oil. On the other hand, should N'galoa Harbour be chosen, it would be necessary to replace the two wooden leading beacons which were formerly erected for the Pacific Mail Company's steamers, and which have been destroyed by fire and decay. These beacons would be somewhat similar to those in use in Suva Harbour, and carry at night similar lights, that is, a red and white light, the lower (red) lighthouse being placed on the south point of N'galoa Island, and the upper (white), whose light should be visible at least fifteen miles, being on the main island. It would also be necessary to re-establish the iron beacon at the north end of the Pearl Reef (south side of entrance), to place one or two buoys on the McGregor Patch, and to erect another beacon or place