

## No. 153.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 6th March, 1906.

I have the honour to forward attached a letter from the Fruit Committee of this island, No. 150. which seems to me to require no special remark except as to duty on coffee and limejuice in paragraph 3. As to this I am inclined to think that a bonus on coffee of 1d. per pound would probably cause some 50 tons to be gathered this year that would not otherwise be touched. As for limejuice, our exports are small.

As to paragraph 3, I do not see how we can begin to build the fumigating-shed for the next three months. We have so much pressing work on hand, and I would ask you to remember that in this place either Mr. Connal or myself must be present, and there are only two reliable carpenters in the Group to which one can intrust important work.

This work properly carried out will be expensive, and I submit that a charge of 1d. per box should be made on all cases fumigated.

I fear that we shall find a good many difficulties facing us in this local fumigation. The owners of the fruit minimise the long passage by picking the fruit only a few days before the arrival of the steamer, and they will expect us to inspect fifteen thousand cases in the two days, and fumigate about nine thousand of these. In such case the inspection will be merely perfunctory. It will be night and day for the short time before the steamer arrives in any case, and I am quite certain that no one will keep the appointment long.

As to the profits of an experimental orchard paying the Inspector's salary, we could not now get a suitable piece of land without taking it under the Act, and it would never pay its own working-expenses. The water-supply of Rarotonga and Aitutaki ought first to be provided for.

I do not know that the appointment of Mr. P. Brown will be satisfactory to the shippers of Rarotonga, but I am quite certain that he will perform the duties of the office without fear, favour, or affection.

I have, &amp;c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

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

## Enclosure.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 5th March, 1906.

Your committee has the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 1st instant containing extracts from various letters from the Minister in Charge of the Islands, and wishes to comment upon the proposals as follows:—

1. *Fumigation*.—Upon the proposal to fumigate fruit here prior to shipment: There can, in the opinion of the committee, be only one objection. Some shippers (rightly or wrongly) are of opinion that the keeping qualities of fruit suffer very much in the process of fumigation, and, therefore, that fruit fumigated here would not reach New Zealand in such good condition as unfumigated fruit. If the Government's expert advisers are satisfied that such is not the case the committee is satisfied that fumigation here would be an undoubted advantage.

2. *Duty*.—Whilst the committee regrets that the New Zealand Government does not feel prepared to impose a duty upon foreign fruit (which, in its opinion, is much the most satisfactory means of establishing the fruit business upon a sound basis), it is pleased to see that the authorities are prepared to take some steps to assist the grower, and trusts that, failing the imposition of duty, both coffee and limejuice will be included in the bonus scheme.

3. *Inspector*.—The committee approves, provided the Inspector appointed is a man with the requisite technical knowledge, and whose certificate would have the same value in New Zealand ports as those of the present Inspectors of the Agricultural Department in New Zealand; who would be able to instruct the Native grower in better methods of cultivation and packing, and who could carry on an experimental orchard, the proceeds from which, together with the fees for fumigation, would go far towards paying a reasonable salary.

4. *"Countess of Ranfurly"*.—The sailing of the "Countess" two trips to Wellington is, in the committee's opinion, solely a question of whether shippers are sufficiently satisfied to find a cargo of fruit by a sailing-vessel.

We have, &amp;c.,

PERCY BROWN,

MAKEA DANIELA,

THOS. SHEARMAN,

J. W. SHARPE, Chairman.

To Lieut.-Colonel Gudgeon, C.M.G., Resident Commissioner.

## No. 154.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 6th March, 1906.

I have the honour to forward herewith a petition from certain residents of Mangaia asking for a passage through the reef.

They ask for this as though it was an easy matter to make such a passage, and do not consider the fact that no workable passage has ever yet been made through any reef except at a cost of nearly £1,000. There is only one man who has any knowledge of mining in this Group, and he lives at Mauke, and for the last eighteen months has been engaged on that reef, which is more easily dealt with than Mangaia, and, so far, the passage is valueless.