

No. 73.

(No. 108.)

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 12th September, 1885.

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a memorandum from my Ministers forwarding a report of a Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider a petition from settlers and colonists of Fiji for annexation to New Zealand, and the general position of the Western Pacific Islands in their relation to this colony.

2. I beg to draw special attention to the paragraph concerning the importance of bringing the Island of Rapa (Opara) and the Cook group under British control.

I have, &c.,

WM. F. DRUMMOND JERVOIS.

The Right Hon. Colonel Stanley, M.P.

Enclosure.

MEMORANDUM FOR HIS EXCELLENCY.

MINISTERS have the honour to forward, with the request that His Excellency will be good enough to transmit a copy to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the enclosed report of the Committee of the House of Representatives which was appointed to consider the petition received from settlers and colonists of Fiji for annexation to New Zealand, and the general question of the Western Pacific Islands in their relation to the colony.

Ministers have further the honour to request His Excellency to forward a copy also to His Excellency the Governor of Fiji.

Wellington, 10th September, 1885.

ROBERT STOUT.

Sub-Enclosure.

REPORT.

THE Committee appointed to consider the petitions received from settlers and colonists of Fiji, and the general position of the Western Pacific Islands in their relation to New Zealand, have the honour to report,—

That they have had before them a large amount of correspondence from the Agent-General and others, much of which is of a confidential nature, in which a variety of matters connected with Fiji, Samoa, and other groups of islands in the Pacific is very fully dealt with. It has been quite impossible for the Committee in the time at their disposal to inquire fully into all the many questions in relation to the Pacific Islands referred to in the papers submitted, but they arrived at the conclusion that, in view of the probable early completion of the Panama Canal, and the growing interest taken in those islands, it is most desirable that some of the eastern groups should be brought into closer relations with New Zealand.

They are of opinion that, under certain conditions assuring proper attention to the interests of German subjects, the German Empire would not be unwilling to approve of such closer relations as between New Zealand and Samoa, but the Committee think that New Zealand should not at present accept any serious pecuniary responsibility. As regards Fiji, the Committee sympathize cordially with the settlers of that colony in their desire to procure a Government less arbitrary and more considerate of their interests and feelings than that of a Crown colony. They are decidedly favourable to closer relations of that colony with New Zealand. The Committee strongly recommend the acquirement of control by Great Britain over the Island of Rapa (Opara) and the Cook group. They recommend the adoption of the following resolutions as covering the points indicated :—

That it is desirable, in the interests of the Empire, that the Fijian and Samoan groups should be brought into closer relations with New Zealand, provided this can be effected without any serious pecuniary responsibility on the part of this colony, and with the friendly concurrence of the German Empire and the United States; and that negotiations be opened up with the Imperial Government with a view to its taking such steps as may lead to such closer relations.

That, in view of the probable early completion of the Panama Canal, it is of the utmost importance that the Island of Rapa (Opara), which lies in the direct route of steamers between Panama and New Zealand, and also the islands of the Cook group, should be brought under British control, and that urgent representations to that effect should be made to the Imperial Government.

That a copy of the foregoing resolutions be transmitted through His Excellency the Governor to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies and to His Excellency the Governor of Fiji, and that the Agent-General be urged to press upon Her Majesty's Government the views expressed by this report.

4th September, 1885.

W. J. STEWARD,

Chairman.