

FRUIT-INSPECTION.

No. 37.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 31st March, 1908.

With reference to the very important question of certificates issuable under the new fruit regulations, I have the honour to submit for your consideration that the Department have either forgotten or do not fully realise the circumstances of these Islands. Certificates may freely be given for all fruit coming from the Islands of Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro. Aitutaki may also prove a clean island; but in Rarotonga, where we have no orchards, and the orange-trees extend over some five thousand acres, certificates could only be given after close examination by an officer of the Department.

I submit that no certificates would carry the required authority and be absolutely satisfactory unless issued by an officer who has been trained to the work in New Zealand, is absolutely unconnected with the industries of this island, and under the orders of the Department in New Zealand. It may be said that the inspection could be made in New Zealand as heretofore, but at the present moment there is an earnest desire on the part of many shippers, both Native and European, to send only the best fruit; and these men, who deserve encouragement, are willing to spend both time and money in a thorough examination of their produce with the view of obtaining a clean certificate. I would also point out that the mere presence of a competent inspector would do much to improve the class of fruit exported. The Maoris are much interested, and I could now obtain the concurrence of the Council in an Ordinance giving the Inspector extended powers. It would, however, be premature to do this until I know that you are prepared to approve the suggestion that an officer of the Department should be stationed here.

I propose that the officer should be entirely under the jurisdiction of his Department, and that we should pay him £200 per annum salary and £50 per annum house allowance, and afford him all the assistance in our power during inspection. The cadets in the Land Department are, for instance, very smart boys, and it might be worth while training them as assistants. It seems to me that a strict inspection of oranges here would remove a source of danger to the New Zealand orchards.

I cannot say that I regard the fruit fly as a source of danger to this island, for I now know that we have had it among us for the last ten years, and not only has not increased, but has really decreased. In any case, it does no mischief before the month of July or August, and it would be at that time we should require the services of an inspector.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. James McGowan, Minister administering Islands.

No. 38.

SIR,—

Cook and other Islands Administration, Rarotonga, 4th June, 1908.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st March, suggesting that an officer of the Agricultural Department should be appointed Fruit Inspector at Rarotonga.

In reply, I have to inform you that the Agricultural Department is prepared to send a qualified officer to Rarotonga; but it is proposed that he should reside in the Islands for a time to thoroughly study and report on the conditions of the fruit industry with a view to the passing of an Ordinance by the Cook Island Government conferring such powers with regard to effective inspection in time for the next fruit season as may be found suitable, but he would not in the meantime undertake the duty of inspecting the fruit for export.

The salary and expenses of this officer would probably be between £300 and £400 per annum; and if the Cook Island Government would pay £250 per annum, as suggested by you, the New Zealand Government is prepared to contribute towards these expenses. If you are agreeable to these proposals, arrangements will be at once made for sending an officer to Rarotonga.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MCGOWAN.

The Resident Commissioner, Rarotonga.

No. 39.

SIR,—

Cook and other Islands Administration, Wellington, 28th April, 1908.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant, stating that Captain Nagle has resigned his appointment as Resident Agent at Penrhyn, and recommending Mr. E. F. Hawk for appointment in his stead.

In reply, I have to inform you that the appointment of Mr. Hawk has been approved.

I regret that, owing to my absence, I did not receive your letter in time to reply by the April mail.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MCGOWAN.

The Resident Commissioner, Rarotonga.